ELMER L. TOWNS, A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL PRESENTATION OF HIS WRITINGS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Theology
Fuller Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

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May, 1988
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DISSERTATION/PROJECT ABSTRACT

TITLE: "Elmer L. Towns, A Biographical and Chronological Presentation of His Writings."

The purpose of this dissertation/project is to analyze the contribution Elmer L. Towns has made to the area of Church Growth through his various writings. Towns has published over 40 books in the general area of religion including contributions in religious education, Sunday School, Church Growth, Bible commentaries, Christian life, and church history. Perhaps his best known book is The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow, Baker Book House, 1969, which was eventually listed as a best seller in the Christian Book Seller magazine.

Not all of the publications of Towns have been in the area of Church Growth. However, an annotation was made of all his works, especially noting works in the area of Church Growth and related areas that contribute to Church Growth, with an analysis of the contribution of each.

For 12 years Towns was Sunday School editor of Christian Life magazine, contributing approximately three articles each month to the magazine. In the capacity of Sunday School editor, he used the magazine’s resources to first develop the list of the
"Ten largest Sunday Schools in America." The list ultimately grew to the "100 Largest Sunday Schools." Towns wrote for five years in the Gospel Illuminator and Sunday School Times, publishing an article in each edition. Beyond these regular publications, he has written a great number of articles. An attempt was made to gather and list all of the magazine articles that he published over the years in Sunday School, general Christian periodicals, journals, and secular magazines. An annotation was made on articles that had a focus on the field of Church Growth.

Total Number of Words: 283
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation/project is to analyze the contribution that Elmer L. Towns has made in the area of Church Growth through his various writings. Towns has published over 40 books in the general area of religion including contributions in religious education, Sunday School, Church Growth, Bible commentaries, Christian life, and church history. Perhaps his best known book is The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Made Them Grow, Baker Book House, 1969, which was eventually listed as a best seller in the Christian Book Seller magazine.

Not all of the publications of Towns have been in the area of Church Growth. However, an annotation will be made of all of his works, especially noting works in the area of Church Growth and related areas that contribute to Church Growth, with an analysis of the contribution of each. Towns has written approximately ten book-length manuscripts that have not been published. These will be listed in an annotated bibliography pointing out their strengths, weaknesses, and perhaps why they were never published.

For 12 years Towns was Sunday School editor of Christian Life magazine, contributing approximately three articles each month. In the capacity of Sunday School editor, he used the magazine's resources, (advertising, copy space, mailing list, reputation, etc.) to first develop the list of the ten largest
Sunday Schools in America. The list ultimately grew to the "100 Largest Sunday Schools." Then he developed the list of the "Fastest Growing Sunday Schools" in each of the 50 states. This gave him an orientation and/or reputation in Church Growth.

In addition to this, Towns wrote for five years in the Gospel Illuminator and Sunday School Times, publishing an article in each edition. Beyond these regular publications, he has written a great number of articles. An attempt will be made to gather and list all of the magazine articles that he has published over the years in Sunday School, general Christian periodicals, journals, and secular magazines. An annotated chronological presentation will be made on each article that has a focus on the field of Church Growth. Because Towns has made a habit, profession and hobby of writing, it is almost impossible to gather a complete bibliography of all of his works. Even in conversation with Towns, he admits he does not have a complete listing of all his published work. It is this writer's intention to make this bibliography as complete and comprehensive as possible; then to evaluate those major selections that he has contributed to the field of Church Growth.

Why should an analysis be made of the writing contributions of Elmer Towns in general and his contributions to Church Growth in specific? This question will give meaning to the dissertation/project.

One of the major contributions of this project is arriving
at criteria by which literary publications should be evaluated. Inasmuch as the author is the son of Towns, some may not fully accept his conclusions due to the charge of nepotism or favoritism. The author is aware of this criticism. However, the author will establish effective criteria for evaluation based on a study of the following: (1) book reviews, (2) the use of Towns' books as college texts, (3) correspondence with Church Growth authorities to assess their evaluation of the contribution of the works by Towns, and (4) correspondence with pastors and Christian workers concerning the practical use of publications by Towns in Church Growth situations and the effectiveness of these suggestions in practical implementation.

Who is Elmer Towns? The author will include a brief biography of Towns, giving specific attention to those areas in his development that contributed to his insight and work in Church Growth. The author will not attempt to write a complete biography of Towns, nor can he hope to include a complete analysis of every aspect of the contributions that Towns has made to Church Growth. However, those areas that have significant contributions will be discussed and analyzed.

Since all of the entries in Chapter Three will be by Towns, each section will be arranged chronologically. This departs from the norm; but there is no need for an alphabetical listing. The chronological listing will show a progression of thought and the maturing process in Towns' writings. This chapter will ask the
question, "What are the published articles, books, cassettes, films, videotapes, recordings, Sunday School campaigns, contests, courses, and programs that have been developed by Towns?" The annotations will serve to answer the question, "What is the content and contribution of each of these works?" Most entries will have an annotation, but only those dealing with Church Growth and Christian education will be analyzed for their major contribution.

At the suggestion of Dr. Ray Anderson at Fuller Theological Seminary, several letters have been included in this study. Recognized leaders in the field of Church Growth and Christian education were asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the ministry of Towns. Their task was to include a discussion of the contributions by Towns to the field of Church Growth from their view.

This element would decrease the subjective nature of this work (due to any supposed problems caused by the personal relationship this author has with the subject). Each letter will be included in its entirety without regard to positive or negative responses. This author will also attempt to chart the responses as an evaluative tool. (See Appendix D)

What are both the general and unique contributions to Church Growth by Towns? At the present time the author believes that some of these unique contributions are as follows: (1) the application of the science of Church Growth to the laws of Sunday School growth; (2) the application of the sociological cycle of
Church Growth to the science of Church Growth; (3) the understanding of charismatic leadership and its application to Church Growth; (4) the gift of faith as it relates to Church Growth (Towns' dissertation at Fuller Theological Seminary); (5) Towns' definition of the Church and its unique application among Independent Baptist churches; (6) Towns' unique tie between religious education and the science of Church Growth; (7) the influence of Towns and sociological role-modeling (his use of churches as illustrations) to communicate the principles and science of Church Growth (The Ten Largest Sunday Schools, America's Fastest Growing Churches, The World's Largest Sunday School, etc.).

The author has chosen to carry out his research on the contribution of one man to the area of Church Growth. The topic was chosen (1) because of the family relationship of the author to the subject; (2) because of the general reputation that Towns has in Church Growth and Christian education; (3) because there needs to be a compilation and evaluation of the academic contribution of Towns, and (4) because the findings of this study can have general benefits to the Church. Out of this study, the author hopes that scholars can be challenged to a broad area of research and contribution, practical research can be made that leads to evangelism and Church Growth in general settings, and that a demonstration of a tie between theology and Church Growth can be shown, just as there was a tie between evangelism and the local church. Finally, as others understand the motives, work
habits, productivity and contributions of Towns, they will be given insight into how to interpret his readings and be challenged to a life of productivity and their own personal scholarship.
Elmer Leon Towns, Jr. was born 21 October 1932, in Savannah, Georgia. His father, a Georgian by birth, was a hardware clerk in the same store for 41 years until his death in 1964. Elmer's mother, Erin McFaddin, was reared on a tobacco/cotton farm in Sardinia, South Carolina. Both his father and mother were reared in above-average income families, and Elmer Jr. grew up with high values, high expectations, and an upper-middle class value system. However, their home was actually impoverished because Elmer Sr. was an alcoholic. He died of cirrhosis of the liver and the onset of cancer.

As a child, Towns was an average student in school, not because he did not have the ability to excel, but his family's situation caused problems. Young Elmer delivered an afternoon newspaper from the seventh grade through high school graduation. The last two years of school he delivered both the morning and evening papers, covering one of the largest routes in the city. Making money became important to him because of his father's alcoholism.

Two events in his childhood years gave an indication of what his future vocation would be. In the fifth grade, he wrote a novel of two grandmothers (Eula and Erin, using the names of his grandmother and mother) who captured a
German submarine in the Mississippi River during World War II. This rambling story was without much of a plot and had no characterizations but is noted for its length, which filled a school tablet. A second writing project also noted for its length was written by Towns in the seventh grade at Chatham Junior High School. Mrs. Margaret Logan apparently motivated him to make the honor roll (the only time he had ever tried) and to achieve academic excellence. He credits this teacher with influencing him in the following ways: (1) to read newspapers, (2) to read a book a day while in her class, (3) to discipline his time, (4) to work his free periods in the library, and (5) to write. Mrs. Logan assigned him to write a paper on the Panama Canal. After he had read several books, he turned in a seven-page report. She remarked that she had learned more from his paper than any other report she had ever read. Her comments motivated young Elmer, who at this time was an emerging teen. When Mrs. Logan assigned a second paper, the topic was "The History of The Wars between China and Japan," because of the war between the two at that time. He turned in a 99-page term paper, unheard of for its length. Today, Towns admits that the paper was not profound, not perfect in spelling, was handwritten on "three-hole loose leaf" paper, but was well researched and contained much information. The enormity of the project accomplished two things. It helped Towns
believe that he could do what others could not do, and it laid a subconscious foundation for a prolific pen.

Towns had been sprinkled in a Presbyterian church and had joined Eastern Heights Presbyterian Church at age 12. But later he testified that even while joining the church he knew he was not going to heaven. His conversion grew out of a two-week evangelistic meeting at Bonna Bella Presbyterian Church where a number of persons were experiencing conversions that appeared to him to be "life-changing." He began searching for God. Conversion did not come easily, as he prayed for a lengthy time, read religious literature, and talked to friends. Towns struggled with doubts before his conversion so that after he was saved he testified, "Because it was so real, I have never had a doubt about my assurance of salvation since the moment I was saved, although I have had doubts about guidance and ability in Christian service." Kneeling by his bed after returning home from an evangelistic meeting, Towns prayed to receive Christ. When he ceased trying to "find" God and simply yielded, he had an emotional experience that has given direction and self-affirmation from that time to present day.

The conversion of Towns on 25 July 1950 also influenced his character and, to some degree, the content of his writing. Even though Elmer Sr. was an alcoholic and seldom attended church, he believed that his son would be a
great preacher someday. Erin also had often suggested to Elmer Jr. that he become a preacher; but he decided to attend Georgia Tech and go into architecture when his blueprint in mechanical drawing class won an award.

Lack of finances prohibited Towns from attending Georgia Tech. Instead, he was able to attend Columbia Bible College in South Carolina for three years, (1950-53). There he met and married Ruth Jean Forbes on 21 August 1953. He credits the college with influencing him to seek the deeper Christian life and a mastery of the English Bible. During his junior year, he commuted to Savannah, Georgia, where he opened and pastored the previously closed-down Westminster Presbyterian Church. Before his senior year, he transferred to Northwestern College (1953-54) where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. At Northwestern he was introduced to Northern evangelicalism, as opposed to his southern revivalistic roots. The school had grown out of First Baptist Church where Dr. William B. Reiley had pastored. Also at Northwestern he made a theological shift from Calvinism and Amillennialism to Dispensationalism. The experiences he gained during this year became a subconscious model that Towns used later in forming the constitution of Lynchburg Baptist College, now Liberty University.

Upon graduation from Northwestern, Towns made another geographical move to further enhance his education and
career. The next school of higher education that he attended to was Dallas Theological Seminary. At Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS, 1954-58) he majored in theology. He was greatly influenced by many well-known faculty members. These men wrote textbooks and Towns was challenged to do the same. He dropped his affiliation with the Savannah Presbytery, was baptized by immersion, and attended First Baptist Church in Dallas, under the ministry of Dr. W.A. Criswell. There that he developed a "love for big churches" that he says "has never left." To put himself through school, he worked as a bank teller, was the Educational Director of Southwestern Baptist Tabernacle, and pastored Faith Bible Church. He began writing during the seminary days and for three years he wrote a monthly column "Missionary World at a Glance" in the Missionary Crusader.

While in Dallas, Towns also attended Southern Methodist University (SMU), receiving an M.A. in Education (1958). Most significant was that during his last year (1957-58) he took course work at DTS in the morning and SMU in the evenings, finished two theses, pastored a church and taught two classes at Dallas Bible College (Introduction to Missions and Introduction to Philosophy). Towns regrets not completing a doctorate before leaving Dallas, and did not receive one until the D.Min. at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1982.
After he graduated from DTS and SMU, Towns was anxious to teach full-time. He took the first post offered, at Midwest Bible College (1958-61) as an Assistant Professor of Christian Education. There he began holding seminars in local churches for Sunday School teachers, a practice he continues at the writing of this project. He perfected his teaching skills and outlined a systematic theology, which would be written later in detail. He also wrote an 82-page mimeographed book, Teaching Teens, that would later be published by Baker Book House. He later regretted rushing it into print, because the ideas were not uniquely his, but those used in general Sunday School conventions of the fifties. Wanting to make his own unique contribution, he expanded the manuscript, added the pastoral role of the youth director, and changed the focus from an evangelical perspective to include both evangelical and fundamentalist philosophies of youth work. While at MidWest, Towns became Executive Secretary of the Greater St. Louis Sunday School Association. He worked full-time in the summer of 1960 to bring the National Sunday School Convention to the city in October of that same year. This experience allowed him to work with a broad base of evangelical denominations. Also, he was placed on the board of the Accreditation Association of Bible Colleges (AABC) because of his work on the college committee that achieved accreditation for Midwest Bible College.
activities paved the way for his next position.

Through contacts with various Canadian members of the AABC, Towns was selected as the next president of Winnipeg Bible Institute and College of Theology (WBC) Winnipeg, Canada, 1961-65. Under Towns' administration, the college received accreditation, paid off all indebtedness, doubled in enrollment and laid a foundation for a theological seminary. When he accepted the position, his model for administration came from Columbia Bible College, emphasizing the deeper life. The college had a policy of "Full Information Without Solicitation." Yet, Towns realized that he could not accomplish his plans and dreams without a solid financial basis. He changed his perspective of only praying for finances and led the board of directors in an aggressive fund-raising campaign that became the basis for the college's future expansion.

At Winnipeg Towns continued to teach a full schedule, speak at Sunday School conventions and Bible conferences. His mimeographed book Teaching Teens was published and two textbooks were written for WBC's correspondence school: The Deity of the Saviour (a study of the Gospel of John) and Christ-Centered Youth Work. Towns spent four years at Winnipeg. Acting as administrator, teacher, fund-raiser and recruiter all contributed to firmly rooting Towns in Christian education. Except for a year of self-imposed retirement (1973-74), Towns has been teaching and
administrating as of the date of this project.

Towns' work at Winnipeg prepared him for serving in areas that might not have been open to him otherwise. He testifies to knowing that God had His hand on him during these days. Evidence for this was God's miraculous delivery of Towns and four WBC students when the vehicle they were riding in rolled over three times in a terrible accident. All five crawled out unharmed through the smashed windshield.

The appointment to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, was partly due to Towns' success with revitalizing the old school in Canada. Towns was Associate Professor of Christian Education at Trinity for six years (1965-70). He began to write in earnest there, publishing books, journal series and popular articles. On top of this he still continued to lecture and speak at Sunday School conventions.

At Trinity he was ministering to the core of the evangelical world, which was characterized by some in the Chicago-Wheaton area. This was because many important evangelical colleges and agency headquarters were located there.

He began a doctorate at Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, but had difficulty with the liberalized position of some of the faculty. Even though he served as a graduate assistant for a professor and maintained high
grades, he was not admitted into the Ph.D. program. The course work he took was transferred and he received a Master of Religious Education (MRE) degree instead.

Towns became the Sunday School Editor of Christian Life magazine in 1967 and held the position 12 years. This gave him a national reputation as a Sunday School leader and offered an opportunity to release to a popular market, the research he was doing at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. His experience at Trinity associated him with some of the well-known conservative scholars of the day such as Gleason Archer (Old Testament), Wilbur Smith (Bible), Ken Kantzer (Theology), John Warwick Montgomery (Apologetics), J.O. Buswell (Theology), and others. Their reputation enhanced Trinity and hence, helped to establish the reputation of Towns.

The research atmosphere of Trinity supported his desire to read, determine causes, and publish them. He established a habit of going to his study every evening after the 10:00 p.m. news and writing until 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. Out of this background came a tremendous surge of publications.

Towns made his first significant contribution to Church Growth at Trinity with the research and publication of The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Made Them Grow, (Baker, 1969, ten editions). The findings had a significant influence for several reasons. First, Towns
developed a sociological modeling research tool that integrated principles of ministry and Church Growth from growing churches. Second, these churches in turn became models that motivated many churches to grow (during a period when media reflected a downward trend in Church Growth). Third, Towns used his position as Sunday School Editor of Christian Life magazine to popularize the results of his study, especially the annual listing of the 100 largest Sunday Schools. Towns followed with five other books modeling growing churches: Church Aflame, (Impact Books, 1972); Capturing a Town for Christ, (Fleming Revell, 1973); America's Fastest Growing Churches, (Impact Books, 1972); The World's Largest Sunday School, (Thomas Nelson, 1974); and Great Soul-Winning Churches, (The Sword of The Lord, 1973). Towns compiled the list of the "100 Largest Sunday Schools" for ten years, 1967-1976 (Christian Life), and the list of the "Fastest Growing Sunday Schools" for ten years, 1973-82 (Christian Life and Moody Monthly). The main contribution of another book The Complete Book of Church Growth, (Wheaton, IL; Tyndale, 1981) concluded that there were seven church types that were catalysts for Church Growth. According to the publisher, this volume has been used as a text or for recommended reading at almost every seminary in America.

Towns was also a member of the advisory board for the Evangelical Teacher Training Association for whom he wrote
two teacher manuals and the textbook *Evangelize Through Christian Education*, 1970. He also wrote for the Accent Teacher Training Series *How To Grow An Effective Sunday School*, (Accent, 1979, which has been translated into three languages).

Towns left Trinity to be co-founder of Lynchburg Baptist College, Lynchburg, Virginia, with Dr. Jerry Falwell, Pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church. Drawing on experience from Winnipeg and Midwest, he organized the college as Executive Vice-President and Academic Dean. Utilizing his reputation in Church Growth and evangelism, he brought credibility to the new school. He continued to write and was especially influential with the 81 articles he wrote for *The Sword of the Lord* on great soul-winning churches. He also retained his position as Sunday School editor of *Christian Life* magazine, where he continued to list the 100 largest Sunday Schools and the fastest growing Sunday Schools in each state. Awards were given annually to these churches at the International Christian Education Convention in Detroit, Michigan. (Towns spoke at this convention yearly from 1961 to 1986, only missing 1963.)

While in Lynchburg, Towns served as Sunday School superintendent (1971-1973), applying the administrative principles he had learned over the years to build the attendance. The Thomas Road Baptist Church grew from
approximately 4,000 in attendance to over 7,000 during these two years.

Towns left Lynchburg for free-lance journalism (1973-74), during which he confesses that he did not grow and did not write significant material. In 1972 he began teaching two courses each summer at the California Graduate School of Theology and continued for ten years. During those free-lance days, his "self imposed retirement," he lived in Savannah, Georgia. He bought a home on Moon River near the home of songwriter Johnny Mercer who wrote the famous song by the same name.

Towns says that he did not get much done in Savannah, but the evidence is to the contrary. In the two years that he spent there, Towns created and operated a Sunday School Museum and the Sunday School Research Institute. This was the first organization for gathering Sunday School data of its kind. The environment helped to stir his creative "juices" and he came out of "retirement" a renewed person.

Towns was employed by Baptist University of America in 1974 as a consultant to merge seven small Bible colleges in the southeast into one strong "fundamentalist" college that would ultimately be located in Atlanta, Georgia. He merged them in Miami, Florida, moved it all to Tampa, and finally to Atlanta; keeping students, faculty, clientele, and educational objectives alive. What began as a consultant's job evolved into a position of vice president
and academic dean. He continued his relationship with Christian Life magazine and taught in Sunday School conventions. Baptist University of America grew in students (413 in his last semester), financial income, and received approval from the State of Georgia to offer degrees. In addition, a library of 20,000 volumes was accumulated and catalogued under his leadership.

The years there declare a low water mark of productivity, academics, and original contribution. What he did publish in these years was the result of previous research work. Yet, when asked what he thought the sovereign purpose of God was during the 42 months that he spent at BUA, he replied, "My son attended, was called to preach, and got an excellent academic education in a small college that emphasized soul-winning, separation, and Church Growth." (That son is this author.) When the opportunity presented itself, Towns returned to Lynchburg to work with Falwell as "Editor-in-Chief" of all publications. Here he was editor of the magazine Faith Aflame. He also began and edited the Fundamentalist Journal and The Journal Champion, later to become the Moral Majority Report. He traveled to over 20 foreign countries to write stories and in doing so managed to fly around the world twice.

When a crisis of leadership in the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary arose over a debate between Calvinism
and Arminianism, Falwell asked Towns to make a lateral move in the organization and become the Dean of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, (1979). Two years later he was given the position as the Dean of the B.R. Lakin School of Religion (1981). This involved leadership of 37 full-time and 15 part-time faculty members, approximately 1,000 students with undergraduate majors, graduate majors, and a seminary and Bible Institute. Under Towns' leadership, the seminary received accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1984, and the Doctor of Ministry degree was added in 1987.

Towns attended Fuller Theological Seminary and received the D.Min. in 1983. After his experiences at Fuller, Towns joined with Larry Gilbert to form Church Growth Institute, Inc., for the purpose of producing research material, conducting seminars, and distributing materials and curriculum that were uniquely Church Growth oriented for local churches. Towns had always held Saturday seminars for local churches and denominations on Sunday school topics. He developed a seminar around a unifying theme that reflected the unique area of Church Growth and applied it to Sunday School growth. The seminar was entitled "154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing." Over 60,000 people attended within the first five years it was offered. The Church Growth Institute purchased a mailing list of churches.
invited leaders to attend seminars, rented facilities, and sponsored seminars in the United States, Canada, and the Bahamas.

Resource packets were produced by Church Growth Institute for outreach, leadership training, stewardship education, and the Christian life. The most famous was Friend Day. The Friend Day campaign directs a local church in organizing itself so that members can enlist friends to visit the church on a specific day when everything is prepared to present Christ to them. Towns often says, "There is profundity in simplicity," and Friend Day reflects that principle. Over 15,000 churches purchased the program, helping to make the Church Growth Institute financially successful.

Currently, Towns' energies in Church Growth are centered on the Church Growth Institute. The aims of the Church Growth Institute reflect the influence of Fuller Theological Seminary and the School of World Missions in terminology and classification. The aims are as follows: (1) to help churches grow evangelistically by networking people to Christ and the Church, (2) to help churches equip every member to minister, so that everyone can understand, find, and use his spiritual gifts, (3) to help churches grow evangelistically by identifying, reaching out to, and bonding receptive/responsive people to Christ and His Church, (4) to help churches grow by understanding,
employing, and adding cells (either evangelistic cells or Sunday School classes) for outreach and nurture, and (5) to help churches grow by developing leadership in the local church. Towns often says in his seminar, "Leadership builds churches, ministry maintains churches." The five-fold aims of the Church Growth Institute appear to have been lifelong principles of Towns, yet some of the terminology reflects the terminology of the eighties.

At the writing of this project, Towns is working on two projects. The first is a classification of Christian experience, applying the sociological typologies to various expressions of Christian living. Tentatively called "A Guidebook of Christian Experience," it is an outgrowth of Towns' lifelong commitment to the deeper Christian life that first influenced him at Columbia Bible College. He attempts to positionize the normal Christian experience by identifying the various degrees or variations of Christian experience. The publishing house of Fleming H. Revell in Old Tappan, New Jersey, plans to release the volume in the fall of 1988.

Towns is also completing a manuscript for Victor Books, Wheaton, Illinois, "History Makers of the Old Testament." This book comes out of the Old Testament survey class that he teaches at Liberty University and is an attempt to survey the Old Testament historically in a sequence of events, by emphasizing the persons who
influence the work of God, either for good or evil. In analyzing growing churches, Towns coined the phrase "hot poker," which he explains as, "Great men build great churches, average men maintain churches, and poor men hurt churches. If a man would be great, he must attach himself to a great man and feed from his fire." Towns applies the principle of understanding great men to understanding the Old Testament.

During his ministry, Towns has given lectures at over 50 colleges and seminaries in this country and abroad. During the summer of 1984, total sales of his books reached one million copies; three have been included in The Christian Bookseller's list of best sellers.
CHAPTER THREE

ANNOTATED CHRONOLOGICAL PRESENTATION

This chapter presents an annotated list of the written works in chronological order. Each type of work will be divided by section with a chronological presentation of each area.

ARTICLES - GENERAL PUBLICATIONS

Elmer Towns was the editor of The Witness from September 1961 to December 1965. The publication was a four page newspaper that was published by Winnipeg Bible College, Winnipeg, Canada, where he served as president and professor of Christian education. As editor he wrote the majority of the stories, although there are no bylines in the paper. The articles basically described the ministry of the college. The paper had been published for 37 years before Towns became editor.


This may be the first article Towns wrote in Canada and the first of his writings on youth ministry.

"Teenagers and Maturity." The Evangelical Beacon, 15 September 1964, 18.

"Appoint Teacher For One Year." The Evangelical Beacon, 30 September 1964.
"The Permissive Will of God." The Central Canada Baptist Conference Link, (May 1965): 1

Towns saw this article as a major step forward in his journalistic strategy of writing. Instead of doctrinal explanation that is normative in approach, this article had a number of illustrations that were descriptive in nature. This article utilized a reporter's style and was so well received that it became the pattern of writing his future articles for popular magazines, and was the basis for an invitation to become Editor of Christian Life magazine.


This was the first article on doubt that Towns published. He indicated that not all doubt is sin and/or a descent from God, but rather, doubt has a positive contribution in every decision for God. Towns said that every time one examines the claims of Christ he must realistically examine both sides of a decision, hence he honestly looks at the reason to not believe in Christ. This is unbelief, not rebellion (which is wrong) hence it has a positive contribution in bringing people to salvation.


This article dealt with the permissive will of God in contrast with the directive will of God. It was significant in the life of Towns because it reflected his questions about his deterministic Calvinistic view of life. This article asked the questions he was facing, i.e., that maybe every aspect of life was not like a pre-determined blueprint, but the will of God was found in principles of God's Word. This article marked a change in Towns' attitude of taking control of his life according to the principles of Scripture and not being a slave to circumstances. This article became the basis for an invitation for Towns to become Sunday School editor of Christian Life magazine, a position he held for 12 years.


This article gave suggestions to make the Sunday School teacher's meetings more effective.

This article contained reasons for one year appointments for Sunday School teachers with a covenant for them to sign upon their appointment. It also contained a questionnaire to help teachers determine their efficiency.


An article on the use of questions in teaching.


This article contained ten suggestions to help teens relate to their parents, and ten suggestions to help parents relate to their teens.


"Adults Study?” The Evangelical Christian, (June 1966): 74.


This article presented a brief discussion of the nature and function of team teaching for the Sunday School.


This article by Towns was his summary of the Southern Baptist laws of Sunday School growth. This has been reprinted by several denominational magazines. He first printed this as a tract in 1958 to give out in his Sunday School meeting and has not changed his basic philosophy of Sunday School growth.

This was Towns' first article on the Baptist Bible Fellowship, Springfield, Missouri. He had been invited to speak at a seminar on youth work in Tulsa, Oklahoma, earlier in 1968. At this seminar several of the other speakers were from growing churches in the Baptist Bible Fellowship. At a luncheon with them he was so impressed with their growth that he grabbed a napkin and wrote this article at the table. This introductory article was his springboard into the Independent Baptist movement.


This article represented Towns' own ministry to youth in the early 60's. In this article, he suggested 10 commandments for parents and teens to live together in the home.


The story of writing the book, The Single Adult and the Church. This article told how Towns visited the First Evangelical Free Church, Chicago, Illinois, and worked with the single adult program in researching information for the book.

"Team Teaching With Teens." The Evangelical Christian, (July-August 1967).

A report of team teaching in the High School Department of the Calvary Baptist Church, Oakville, Ontario.


This article by Towns reflected his early view of the sociological cycle of growth and death among churches. It came out of his study of sociology at Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois. In this cycle, Towns made a distinction between a sect and institutional church (a fundamentalist and evangelical church). As a result of this study, he
realized that he was a fundamentalist who was teaching in an evangelical seminary; and in 1971, he left to become a part of a new college and the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia.


A survey of why Towns thought the Sunday School had a bright future. He spent time in researching Sunday Schools where he saw strengths in "small town U.S.A." He maintained the media centers such as Chicago and New York were biased against Sunday Schools because they did not have a national perspective. This article became a theme for Towns while Sunday School Editor of Christian Life.


This was the first article that Towns wrote on the sociological cycle of Church Growth and death. This article became foundational to his understanding of Church Growth and its decline. It was also the philosophic basis for why he left Trinity and the evangelical position. He then went to help establish Lynchburg Baptist College which was a fundamentalist school.


A descriptive article on Christian Service Brigade and their ministry.


This article was the result of a national survey of evangelical teens that reflected their attitudes to changing standards.


A condensation of Towns' book by the same title.

"Ten Largest Sunday Schools In the U.S. Today." The *Baptist Bible Tribune*, 11 October 1968, 4-6.

An adaptation of the article in *Christian Life* to the *Baptist Bible Fellowship*.


Towns has often been among the first to sense and write about trends in the church. He published a book by the same title, (Regal Books, Glendale, California) the same year this article appeared. Pointing out that there was a growing need for the church to minister to the young single adult.

Towns' concern for the young single adult came as the result of an independent study for graduate credit that he did at Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, in 1966. In this study, Towns surveyed bibliographical data and resources from secular sources and saw the growing need. He worked with the First Evangelical Free Church, Chicago, Illinois, to get practical insight into effective ministry to the young single adult. Out of these sources came this article and the book.


Towns reviewed Sunday School and Christian education books for this professional magazine for four years. Each issue included reviews over approximately 12 books. Usually two or three were major reviews, with the remaining ones being a short descriptive paragraph.
Towns indicated he received two things and no money from this project. First, he got to keep the books that he reviewed and his library grew. Second, he kept abreast of the trends in Sunday School and Christian education.


An adaptation of the Christian Life listing to explain why Sunday Schools could grow.


This was the first of a two-part article that surveyed the teenagers of the evangelical world in 1968-69. Towns surveyed the teens of 50 selected churches across the United States to reflect their attitude toward separation, dating, family, church service, and their vocation. Towns determined that the average evangelical youth was more conservative than the typical American youth, yet was influenced by and followed the trends of American youth.

This issue reflected five evangelical youth. Actually, the editors printed the stories in reverse order; these profiles should have followed the analytical study that appeared in the next issue, which was the foundation.


This is the second part of a survey of evangelical teens 1968-69. This is an early attempt by Towns to discuss and reflect national trends by doing a survey, opinion poll, followed by observation and interview. Towns visited five churches that he had previously surveyed to write a descriptive story of the world of teens, followed by a profile of teens based on observation of their homes and lives at school and church. The pictures for the covers of the magazine that illustrated the story were taken by Towns.

Towns predicted the rise of the large Sunday School in the 70's.


This article came out of Towns' classes at Garrett Theological Seminary. He claims to have settled his theological foundations at Dallas Theological Seminary and his historical theology at Garrett. Here he made a contribution to Dallas.


Towns used the pages of this journal to give a history of the church/religion lobby in the U.S. government. Ten years later he would have a part in founding the Moral Majority and would give Jerry Falwell guidance in influencing Washington D.C.


"Sunday School of the 70's." The Evangelical Beacon, 20 May 1969, 8-11.

This was a summary article from the book by Towns The Bright Future of Sunday School, the Beacon Press (the magazine and book publisher both belong to the Evangelical Free Church and the article was used to publicize the book to the denomination).

The things that Towns predicted that came to pass were the mega church, multiple adult classes, meeting diverse needs, ministry to hearing impaired, growth of "pocket books" as adult lesson curriculum, team teaching, and the use of cassettes as an educational tool. The things he predicted that did not grow in influence were the bus ministry and the master teacher method.

"Sunday School of the 70's." The Evangelical Beacon, 20 May 1969, 10.


"Are Evangelical Youth Rebels?" The Evangelical Beacon, 13 June 1969, 23.


A story for laymen on the founding of Sunday School by Robert Raiker.


An analysis of creativity and how to communicate it.


"Is Team Teaching for your Sunday School?" Christian Life, (February 1970).


This two part article was an analysis on the trends among teens.


A profile of Northside Baptist Church, St. Petersburg, Florida.

A 5,000 word article for laymen based on a survey of trends among teens. The article centered around ten basic questions used to survey evangelical teens.


This was a summary article of Towns' Th.M. thesis at Dallas Theological Seminary and was the foundation for his view on soteriology and anthropology. No one can properly understand his approach to evangelism without understanding his view of heart.


A historic survey of Savannah, Georgia, in the newspaper of the Baptist Bible Fellowship before they held a national convention in the city.


Towns took the pictures and wrote a travel article that described a family vacation from Charleston, South Carolina to Florida and return. He arranged with Rent-a-Boat to get a large house boat at a reduced rate in return for an article that would encourage others to take a similar vacation.

Towns examined the claims that someone other than Robert Raikes began Sunday School. By establishing a definition and empirical definition of Sunday School, he then compared prior claims to these standards and determined that Robert Raikes indeed began Sunday School.


An examination of the trend away from adult quarterlies to textbooks that can also be sold in the non-curriculum trade.


"Big Churches." Christianity Today, 5 November 1971, 6-10.

A study of the "Big" church and arguments why the church should and could be large.


A profile story of Thomas Road Baptist Church.

"How We Got 9,235 to Attend Our Sunday School." Key, (Summer 1972): 6-8.

The story of outreach in one day at Thomas Road Baptist Church.


The Story of the growth of Marietta Baptist Tabernacle, Marietta, Georgia.


An analysis of growing fundamental Baptist churches. The editor of Moody Monthly included a box to disclaim the principles in the article and then asked the readers to respond.


The Bethel Free Will Baptist Church, Hampton, Virginia, was featured because of their growth to 1,405 in 1973, from a small church of 52 only two years earlier.


A major article by Towns on the history of Sunday School busing. The magazine was insignificant, hence the article had little input.


An article advocating longer pastorates as a basis of Church Growth.


A survey of the bus ministry at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia.


This was the story of the first anniversary of the Canyon Creek Baptist Church, Richardson, Texas, where a crowd of 1,000 attended in a Gospel tent. The use of the Dallas (Texas) Symphony Orchestra and a southern quartet made the event unusual in that it attempted to cross cultures.


This was a poetic tribute to the city of Savannah, his birthplace. Towns wrote this in his one year of "retirement" while living in the city.


During this time Towns wrote and edited the four page newsletter for Baptist University of America, Decatur, Georgia. The articles consisted primarily of University news and promotions. No articles by
Towns were found in his scrapbook or files for 1974-1977. This does not mean he did not produce any articles, it may be he did not choose to keep them. There was a tremendous amount of reports and general paper work on the University, but this made no contribution to his discipline or the furthering of the Great Commission. These years could be described as his "Babylonian Captivity" where he worked hard yet produced little.


This article featured 27 creative ways a family can celebrate Christmas.

"No Mission Impossible For You!" The Sword of The Lord, 23 May 1975, 4.

This was the graduation speech that Towns gave to the Bible Baptist High School 8 June 1974, when the author of this project graduated from high school.


Towns traveled to Italy, Texas, the home town of Dr. Jack Hyles, to write this story of the dedication of a granite obelisk to Dr. Jack Hyles. The occasion was to recognize Hales as pastor of the largest church in the world. Friends came from across America (attendance approximately 500) to be present for the ceremony.


The story of the First Baptist Church, Hobart, Indiana, and their emphasis on separation and soul-winning.


The story of the growth of Marietta Bible Center (Ohio) Church, and its commitment to Bible teaching and evangelism.

"Glorious New Ways to Celebrate the Grand Old Story." The Sunday School Times, (December 1975).

The author of this project was present when this story was written and it gave him insight into Towns'
ability and drive to write stories. It was 4 July 1975, we as a family were leaving the Daytona 500 mile race when my father told us this was the time of year to write stories about Christmas. We began to tell him things we as children did to enjoy and celebrate Christmas. He took pencil and paper (mother was driving) and wrote a story within an hour. The author has seen him use spare time driving with the family to turn any conversation into an article.


A story of an interdenominational youth ministry that changed its focus and became Clayton (Georgia) Community Church and grew to 400 in attendance.


This was a trend article by Towns on the Sunday School. He did not like the title "Mr. Sunday School," and he tried to discourage anyone from using it. He felt his contribution was broader than Sunday School.


This was one of the few articles in which Towns intentionally used humor. He described the funny things that had happened to him at autograph parties, i.e., no one showing up, etc. He will not do one at a bookstore because of the bad experiences that he has had.


The story of the missions program at Colonial Hills Baptist Church in greater Atlanta, Georgia.


An article on Shiloh Bible College that was conducted by Shiloh Hills Baptist Church, Kennesaw, Georgia.

This cover article in the magazine for the Free Will Baptist Sunday School Department was an attempt to rally enthusiasm for the 200th anniversary of Sunday School.

(Editor) Faith Aflame, (March 1978 to December 1979).

When Towns became Editor-In-Chief of the Old Time Gospel Hour, he also became editor of Faith Aflame, a 16 page four color tabloid paper. This was the "show piece" of Jerry Falwell, in that it did not ask for finances nor involve advertisements. It was an attempt to be a beautiful devotional magazine with color pictures, poetry, short devotional articles, and a reflection on the current religious world. Towns took over for Harry Covert who had helped begin the magazine. He wrote few articles for the magazine but did give executive direction to the project.


This front page article was a sermon that Towns preached in the refugee camp of Thailand during the Christmas season in 1978. The sermon had been used to bring several thousand Thais to Christ.


"Francis Scott Key." Faith Aflame, (Summer 1980): 11.


This article announced the winners of the contest to find the 1980 Fastest Growing Sunday School in each state. This was a year-long research project by Towns.


A list of the 100 largest churches in America by average attendance in 1980 and an analysis of why they were growing.
"The Need For Money In A Growing Soul Winning Church."

An analysis of the need for a financial foundation for growth and evangelism.

"The Peril and Impact of the Independent Church."
Christianity Today, 1 January 1982, 32-33.

A survey of the strength of the Independent church around America. The editors of Christianity Today asked Towns to do this article that appeared with a survey of various Christian church groups of America.


The official magazine of the Christian Church printed this article from a lecture by Towns.

"What Happened To Sunday School Busing?"
Fundamentalist Journal, (September 1982): 34.

A summary of the reasons for the decline of busing as an evangelistic outreach ministry.

"Fundamentalism In Australia and Korea - A Report."

This was a report on Church Growth in Australia and South Korea in 1982.


This was the list of the Sunday Schools that had the largest average attendance growth in the previous year.


This article came as a result of a visit to the largest churches in the world. Towns went with John Vaughan, who eventually wrote the book, The World's 20 Largest Churches, as a result of the trip. Towns took the trip to rank the churches in order of size and determine the cause for their growth.
An examination of the reasons and methods of using multiple services for Church Growth.

"A Bible Baptist Fellowship Pastor in Nationalist China." The Baptist Bible Tribune, 1 April 1983, 1,6.
A descriptive article of the planting and growth of the Grace Baptist Church, Taipei, Republic of China, Towns preached in the church and interviewed the pastor concerning its growth.

An examination of how God heals in this dispensation and what a person must do to be healed.

The strong baptistic view of Elmer Towns on tithing to the local church was reflected in this article.

This was a brief historical survey of trends in general among Fundamental Baptists and not an article on what happened in each group of independent Baptists as the title implies.

A story on the planting and growth to 400 in attendance in one year of the Harvest Baptist Church Hagerstown, Md.

An analysis of the various kinds of evangelism with a definition for each. This article also examined the eight Greek words that describe evangelism in the New Testament.


A doctrinal study of the Ascension of Christ.


An analysis of the fact that methods change but principles are eternal. Towns attempted to instruct pastors to hold on to principles but change methods.


A description of the Church Growth Institute, Lynchburg, Virginia.


An analysis and definition of the call by God to full-time Christian service.


This was the introductory document for the 1984 conference in Washington D.C., of several fellowships of Independent Fundamental Baptists. The conference was called "BF 84."


This chart and explanation was one of the most extensive that Towns ever attempted. It included the leaders in the following areas: 1. Largest membership, 2. Largest Sunday School attendance, 3. Largest Financial giving, 4. Largest conversions, and 5. Largest Sunday School enrollment.


A descriptive article of the Church Growth Institute.


An article on how to read a book.


This was the first of a series of four articles on New Testament churches. Towns attempted to write a descriptive journalistic story of the historic churches in the exciting manner in which he wrote stories of current churches.


A distinction was made between social work, social action, and the social gospel. Towns indicated the fundamentalist church should be involved in social work and social action but not the social gospel.


An article on the seminar by the same name.


A summary of Towns' doctrinal dissertation at Fuller Theological Seminary and the role of faith in church planting and church growth.


This was given at the Fall Theological Lectures, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985. It defined Church Growth as part of practical theology, hence part of systematic theology. Towns then described the methods of formulating systematic theology and indicated the same methods should be used in Church Growth. The uniqueness of the article is the place that sociology has in both systematic theology and Church Growth.


The organ of the Christian church is used to picture the future of Sunday School.


An article on a Sunday School outreach campaign by the same name.


This was one of the first articles that Towns wrote in attempt to classify the types of evangelism. Almost none of the descriptive terms such as "Hippie Evangelism," are used today. He also had the tendency to confuse places of evangelism with methods of evangelism. However, he was ploughing virgin territory and had little help from others in classifying types of evangelism.
ARTICLES - THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

Towns, Elmer L. "Preparing To Teach The Lesson." The Bible Expositor and Illuminator, July 1967 to March 1971, 180 weekly articles.

This annotation described one of the most massive volumes of works compiled by Towns, involving 180 lessons, each comprising 1440 words. The lessons were written to an exact specification of editor T. T. Musselman of Union Gospel Press, Cleveland, Ohio. The lessons applied the Sunday School content to adults and was based on The International Uniform Sunday School Lessons. One of the reasons Towns resigned in 1971 was because the project was equal to writing a book a year. He wanted to give more time to researching books rather than preparing Sunday School lessons.

The Bible Expositor and Illuminator, was used by approximately 60,000 Sunday School teachers (based on sales figures). This gave Towns access to a vast number of Sunday School teachers in America. Plus his articles in Christian Life magazine gave him access to another 150,000 potential readers. Later, Towns credits his influence in Sunday School circles to these two sources.

Towns resigned from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator when he went to help found Lynchburg Baptist College, Virginia. He mistakenly thought he was getting out of Sunday School work.

ARTICLES - CHRISTIAN LIFE MAGAZINE


This article by Towns was his introduction to a new audience to which he would write for the next ten years. The contents of this article are embryonic of his strategy and approach: first to examine trends, second to be optimistic and supportive of Sunday School, and third to research the activities that happen in the church (a descriptive article), rather than doing research in books (a normative article).

Towns called for a congress of both professional and lay workers to research Sunday School for its improvement. The congress never materialized, and he apparently dropped the idea.


This article appeared about the time the book by Towns, *The Young Single Adult and the Church*, was released. This article was more than a condensation of the book; it contained case studies of young single adults, describing their need and desire to find God.


This was a monthly column in which Towns reported the trends, new products, events, and personalities in the Christian education world. It was broader than just Sunday School. Towns traveled extensively to Sunday School conventions and spoke to Sunday School workers in local churches. As he met with the editors of *Christian Life*, he shared what he had observed. It was here that a column was created as a vehicle to communicate these events to the readers.


This was the first in a series that Towns wrote as a result of his travels to speak to Sunday School workers at local churches. He profiled one significant educational ministry in one church each month. A plaque was awarded to the church after the story appeared in the pages of *Christian Life*.

"Tabulates Sunday School Records in 22 Seconds." *Christian Life*, (February 1968): 57. (Sunday School of the Month Column)

The story that acknowledged a church that put all their records on computer. Towns asked in the article if this was not the first church to use the computer for Sunday School records.

A story written about a day care ministry of a local church located at a camp.

"Mexican Tours Revitalizes Youth Group." Christian Life, (April 1968): 26-27. (Sunday School of the Month Column)

A story of high schoolers that traveled to Mexico for summer ministry.


This was a descriptive article about how group dynamics contributed to the ministry in an adult Sunday School class. This article, written before the emergence of the "body life" movement, reflected a coming trend in the church.

"Day Camp Served Community." Christian Life, (May 1968): 41. (Sunday School of the Month Column)


This was a sensitive topic when written, and the subject still raises temperatures 20 years later. Towns discussed the need for sex education in the educational program of the church, yet he was restrained in his call for changes.


An article written about the role of discussion as a method of teaching.

"Large Classes Stimulate Growth." Christian Life, (July 1968): 26. (Sunday School of the Month Column)

This was one of the first articles in which Towns described the benefits of large-group teaching. In a decade when most educators applauded small group teaching, this article noted that lecturing to large groups was built on stimulus-response psychology and had certain benefits. Just as discussion in small groups was built on cognitive psychology, it too had benefits.

An article that described the growing use of buses as an evangelistic tool.


This was the first list by Towns of the largest Sunday Schools of America. The response, especially from pastors, gave Towns immediate recognition and apparently, identified him permanently with the large growing church. Also, this article identified him with Sunday School, whereas up to this time he had been writing in The Evangelical Christian, primarily about youth. He had published two books in the previous year on youth. From this article on, he was not identified with youth but Sunday School.

Out of this article came his first best-selling book, The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow. Also, he met Jerry Falwell, Pastor, Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, (19th largest) and eventually became identified with the church and helped to begin a college there.

"Sign Language Class Serves Quick Success." Christian Life, (September 1968): 56. (Sunday School of the Month)

An article that described the special evangelistic outreach of Kingsport Tennessee Baptist Temple to the deaf community.


This was the second annual listing of the largest Sunday Schools in America. The article is longer and the chart is more inclusive of data to give readers a broader basis of comparing Sunday School growth and size.


An article listing the advantages and disadvantages of both the family pew and children's church.

An examination of evangelizing a new neighborhood by planting a mission Sunday School.


The types of evangelism that Towns saw for the 70’s were a revitalization of past methods. A decade later, Towns was much more sophisticated and called for new evangelistic methods based on the findings of research.

"Answer to Inner City." Christian Life, (November 1968): 82. (Sunday School of the Month)

An example of a church that reached the inner city.


This was a continuation of the article that was begun in the previous issue.


"Double Sessions, Up Attendance." Christian Life, (January 1969): 58. (Sunday School of the Month)

An early article written by Towns that advocated church growth by adding new cells. In this case, it came by organizing two sessions of Sunday school.

"Bus Service Puts Church’s Sunday School on Road." Christian Life, (February 1969): 62-64.

An article that raised the idea of using a bus for Sunday School classes, not just as a tool to transport pupils to the church campus.

"Don’t Tell This Church It’s Impossible." Christian Life, (March 1969): 56. (Sunday School of the Month)


This was a feature article that surveyed the past and future of Sunday School.
"Venezuelan Sunday School Zeroes in on Students." Christian Life, (April 1969): 42. (Sunday School of the Month)

A story written about an Evangelical Free Church in Caracas, Venezuela, that had an effective program of teaching adults.


Towns moderated a debate between Dr. Warren Wiersbe, William Greig, Jr., and Dr. John Rawlings. The debate focused on the use of Sunday School literature and its effectiveness. Rawlings took a position against Sunday School literature, he felt that the pastor should write it for the church. Greig was an editor of Sunday School literature, and Wiersbe was a pastor that purchased literature from a publisher and wrote the adult lessons himself.


This was a continuation of the article from the previous issue.


A story written about summer missionary work in Mexico by American high school students. The influence on the students was greater than the work they performed.


This was the annual list of America’s largest Sunday Schools.


This was a cover story about Dr. Dallas Billington and the Akron Ohio Baptist Temple. The article tells how he planted the church and how it became the largest Sunday School in America.

A number of different evangelical Sunday School curricula was surveyed to determine strengths and weaknesses.


Towns contacted several prominent national figures about their views of Sunday School. He edited letters from the following: Sen. Mark Hatfield; First Lady, Pat Nixon; F.B.I. Director, J. Edgar Hoover; Bible College President, Bob Jones Jr.; Sen. George McGovern; Governor Ronald Reagan; Evangelist Tom Skinner; Evangelist Billy Graham; and Sports Figure Randy Hundley. The results gave a positive testimony for Sunday School.


An article written about group discussion in adult classes in Sunday School.


A profile written about a church that experienced revival when the members transferred their church work from serving on boards to active involvement in evangelism.


The debate that Towns moderated and printed in the magazine came out too strongly against Sunday School literature. Editor Robert Walker instructed Towns to write on the trends and advantages of literature. The magazine was losing advertising. This article was one of the supportive pieces that Towns did in response to the problem.

In this article, Towns gave reasons why a Sunday School should grow and become large.


This article had the opposite emphasis of the one in the previous issue on the benefits of the large Sunday School. This article pointed at the benefits of the small Sunday School.


Towns reports on a teenager missions trip to Costa Rica.


An article on how door to door visitation, introduced in the 20's, was accelerated by the addition of buses.


This was the fifth listing of the largest Sunday Schools in America. By this time, the list had become an acceptable institution and people were looking forward to it at the end of the year. But, some of the large churches were no longer growing. They were remaining stagnant in the listing or dropping back. This became embarrassing to them, so they stopped supplying Towns with up-to-date figures. He began using the previous year's statistics to make the chart complete.


Towns made a commitment to follow the progress of one new church, Calvary Heights Baptist Temple, St. Louis, Missouri, and let the readers read yearly about its growth. This he felt would give the magazine credibility. Towns followed the church for five years with articles until the church reached over 700 in attendance.

This was the annual article that Towns wrote on the trends of Sunday School.


This article was an examination of the reasons why attendance in Sunday School was sliding. The purpose of this was so that concerned leaders could act to stop the downward trend.


This article was written at the height of the busing boom. Within two years the Arab Oil Embargo would send prices of gas climbing and bus riders attendance declining.


One of the first articles on "web evangelism" by Towns before the term was used. It emphasized how the Sunday School could use existing relationships to reach the unchurched for Christ.


An analysis of the motives behind some contests and attendance "gimmicks" that were used to reach people through the Sunday School.


A report on the mammoth Sunday School Convention sponsored by MASSA - The Mid-America Sunday School Association. This phenomenon was preceded by denominational business meetings by six groups. The Assembly of God; The Wesleyan Church; The Church of God, Cleveland, Tenn.; The Missionary Church; and The Free Methodist Church all planned to stay and attend the Cobo Hall extravaganza.

A descriptive article that described the benefits of getting Sunday School teachers to attend a Sunday School convention.


This was the annual listing of the largest Sunday Schools in America.


A descriptive article that described how certain churches used innovative ways to adapt space for classrooms that otherwise would not have been used.


This was another article on the continual growth of Calvary Heights Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri, where Pastor Carl Baugh planted and built a congregation. Christian Life committed itself to continued reporting of this one growing church so its readers could enjoy its growth.


A Story written about the First Church of God, Benton, Illinois. The church purchased a theater and grew from 120 to over 1,000 in attendance.


A general descriptive article written about the continual ministry of using buses to reach people for Christ.


This was the annual article by Towns that reported the trends among Sunday Schools.


This was the first major article by Towns on the emergence and growth of the Christian school movement, especially those located in local churches. The book by Towns, *Have the Public Schools Had It?* followed this article.


This article was a survey of the growth in the Free Will Baptist Denomination, Nashville, Tennessee.


A feature article that indicated the future of Sunday School would reflect a stronger teaching ministry, while the bus ministry and contests would have a secondary place.


Towns began a tradition two years earlier when he first wrote about the Central Baptist Church, Phoenix, Arizona, that had over 500 on their first anniversary. Thereafter, he would include every church that broke their previous first anniversary record. The mystique of the article was "who would do it next?"


A normative article written about how to get better discipline in the Sunday School classroom.


The use of puppets in Sunday Schools is described and surveyed in a reporting manner.


This was an article about the use of buttons as awards in Sunday School outreach programs.
"Master Teacher." This appears to be a journal article that is found in the scrap book of Towns (circa 1975).

No record was found of the journal. The article examined the nature of Jesus' teaching large groups. It did not negate the Master's instruction of small groups, but coined the phrase "Master Teacher" when applied to teaching large groups.

ARTICLES - CHRISTIAN YOUTH TODAY

In the introduction issue, Towns was listed in the mast head as consulting editor. This magazine was a four color, slick magazine slanted to the youth market in fundamental churches. It claimed to emphasize soul-winning, separation, and the local church involvement for Christian youth. It developed a subscription of approximately 8,000 youth, and over 100 churches purchased the magazine in bulk. Its "slick" and professional appearance gave youth a sophisticated image to rally around.


This first article by Towns was a poem on the broken dreams of youth.

"Where the Action Is." Christian Youth Today, (September 1969): 4

An article that described the soul-winning outreach of the youth of Landmark Baptist Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio.


A cover story article that described the teen musical outreach group of High Street Baptist Church, Springfield, Missouri.

This was a monthly feature article that answered questions that were written to the magazine by youth. The name Sue Ellen was hypothesized. Actually, Towns, Wes Hunt, and Roscoe Brewer wrote the answers. Towns helped prepare this column for three years.


A poem written by Towns that reflected teens feelings on self-identity.


A poem about the reaction of emerging youth to the traditions of Christmas.


A poem written by Towns and his daughter on peer pressure and growing up.


A poem on how youth handle problems.


This was a cover story of the youth group at Canton Baptist Temple, Canton, Ohio. It described camp CHOF, a year round camp for teens that is owned and operated for the youth of one church approximately 1,200 in size. The title CHOF was an acronym that stood for Christian Hall of Fame that was located in the church.


An article on the principles of separation.


A cover story that applied the principles of saturation evangelism to a youth department. Towns took all the photographs for this issue, plus wrote the side bar stories, "From Death to Life," "Ray Glover," and "Revival."

Before writing this series of articles, Towns had interviewed Jerry Falwell and included the church in the book, The 10 Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow. At the time, Towns had a greater reputation and Falwell was relatively unknown. After this issue came out, Falwell approached Towns about a co-authorship on a book about Thomas Road Baptist Church. They agreed and it was named Church Aflame.


Towns attended a Mike Crain rally in the Orange Bowl that was connected with the Super Bowl festivities in 1971. Towns took the photographs and wrote the article. Afterwards, he refused to attend or write on Karate, calling it in his own way, "God's Gimmick," feeling it did not have a place in Sunday School or youth ministry.


An interview article with several Christian athletes in the Super Bowl. Also, the issue contained a feature article on Paul Taylor, Olympic Gold Medal Winner.


A panel discussion that was conducted by Towns. The discussion was recorded and printed. It was conducted at Calvary Baptist Church, Bellflower, California.


This editorial surveyed the Bible Colleges that seemed to catch the attention of fundamentalist
churches because of their unique appeal to youth. He surveyed the apparent romance that fundamentalism had with Bob Jones University, 1950's; Tennessee Temple School, 1960's; Baptist Bible College, 1970's; and he predicted that Liberty Baptist College would be the "hot" one in the 1980's.


An editorial slanted to youth about the abuses of Christmas.

ARTICLES - THE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN

Towns was appointed Christian education editor of this Canadian magazine in 1965 and held the position for two years. He was placed in the office because he was traveling to Sunday School conferences across Canada. He traveled extensively because he enjoyed the reputation of being president of Winnipeg Bible College, second oldest Bible college in Canada.

Towns moved back to the States in September 1965, when he became assistant professor of Christian education at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. He wrote articles in the States and sent them back to Canada, but it was only a matter of time until he resigned to take the position of Sunday School editor, Christian Life magazine, Wheaton, Illinois.

This was a major 5,000 word article on church ministry to teens, adapted from his book, Teaching Teens.


This two part article reflected the thinking of Towns at the end of his experience as President of Winnipeg Bible College. He saw the weakness of interdenominationalism. In this article, he suggested that there were no illustrations in the Bible of a training school/college for preachers. He suggested that pastoral training was done in the church, and that that the modern Bible college should be separate from a local church but never disassociated from a church. Towns coined a phrase, "A Christian College is the extension of a local church at the college level." This philosophy became the foundation for beginning Lynchburg Baptist College, Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1971. The growth of the college to Liberty University has been phenomenal and the embryonic success was due to their philosophic foundation.
Out of this understanding and application. Towns later described "the youth pastor as the extension of the senior pastor into the high school department." Also, he coined the phrase, "the Sunday School teacher is the extension of the pastor's ministry into the Sunday School class. Everything the pastor is to the larger flock, the Sunday School teacher is to the Sunday School flock."


This was the last article that Towns did for The Evangelical Christian. He resigned to become Editor of Christian Life magazine, because he had relocated and was now ministering in the United States. It is interesting to note that the 16 articles he wrote for The Evangelical Christian were all normative, except the last (this one) where he described the process of team teaching with teens at Calvary Baptist Church, Oakville, Ontario. The writing he did at Christian Life was descriptive.

A second reason he resigned from the magazine was that he also resigned as president of Winnipeg Bible College, Canada. He did not see himself returning to Canada, so he sought an American magazine for an outlet to his energies.

However, the writing that he did for The Evangelical Christian was not lost. Most of the material (normative) became chapters in his textbook, The Successful Sunday School and Teacher's Guidebook.
Elmer Towns was appointed Editor-In-Chief of all publications at Thomas Road Baptist Church and the Old Time Gospel Hour, 1 February 1978. He began the Journal Champion, a 12 page bi-weekly, broad sheet newspaper. The purpose was to unite the family of Thomas Road Baptist Church, Liberty Baptist College, the viewers, and employees of the Old Time Gospel Hour. Also, it was mailed on occasions to those on the mailing list of the Old Time Gospel Hour, which reached over five million homes. The advertising was over $300,000 a year and subsidized the operation; very few subscribed because it was mailed to donors. There were newspaper boxes located around Lynchburg, Virginia, for non-church members to purchase the paper and keep up with the ministry. Eventually, there was a staff of nine that produced the paper.

The Journal Champion gave Towns a great opportunity to write on a number of topics. He wrote news articles, editorials, feature stories, and personality pieces. There are hundreds of side-bar stories in the Journal Champion without his by-line because the editor usually does not identify himself. Only those significant articles by Towns are included in this chronological presentation.

As the newspaper developed, it followed the emphasis of Jerry Falwell, becoming more politically oriented and
less reflective of the ministry at Lynchburg. Also, the paper included more normative articles and less descriptive articles. As the newspaper changed, photographs included less action shots and more pictures of authors who wrote articles.

About the same time that Towns was losing interest in the Journal Champion, he was asked to become Dean of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. After he resigned as Editor-In-Chief and Editor of the Journal Champion, the paper's name was changed to The Moral Majority Report.


These were editorials written about the relationship between the purpose of a newspaper and Christianity.


A story written about Calvary Chapel, Minster, Ohio. The church was planted and grew to over 1,400 in attendance.


These were front page news stories.

"We are fundamentalist," and "The Right to Die," Journal Champion, 26 May 1978.

The first editorial that established the use of the five fundamental truths of the faith, as emphasized by Liberty University (then Liberty Baptist College)
and churches that are influenced by the university. Whereas the historic list of fundamentals emphasized 12 doctrinal areas, Towns' article seemed to create a new arrangement of the doctrines for modern fundamentalism. The five fundamentals of the faith were as follows: (1) the inspiration and authority of Scripture, (2) the deity and virgin birth of Jesus Christ, (3) the vicarious substitutionary atonement, (4) the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and (5) the physical return of Jesus Christ. The listing of the five fundamentals (rather than twelve) was popularized by Jerry Falwell, a leader of fundamentalism.


These front page articles stressed local church news and articles about abuse of governmental power.

"We Believe in the Church," Journal Champion, 8 June 1978.

An editorial written about the supremacy of the Church in evangelism.


The history of a Liberty graduate who planted a church that grew to approximately 440 in attendance.


This article featured the economic strength, religious freedom, and high standard of living in South Korea because of the nation's democracy and the influence of the Christian church.


Editorials written about the philosophy and principles of the ministry of Thomas Road Baptist Church.

This described the planting and growth of Berean Baptist Church, Salem, Virginia, to an attendance of over 1,000. The pastor, Rudy Holland, was known for his emphasis on Sunday School, bus ministry, evangelistic preaching, and separation from sin.


Editorials written about the necessity of America to defend South Korea in the face of a threat by President Jimmy Carter of pulling out United States troops.

"High Street Baptist is Mother Church," *Journal Champion*, 7 July 1978.

An analysis of why the church in Springfield, Missouri, was considered the most influential church in the Baptist Bible Fellowship.


These front page articles featured local news. The ERA article by Towns became the fuel to Jerry Falwell's drive to block the amendment to the United States' Constitution. Many of the political positions that were popularized by Falwell were first researched and reported by Towns.


An editorial that examined the reasons why America is a great nation, particularly exploring its Christian roots.


A story written about Rev. John Maxwell and the Faith Memorial Church, Lancaster, Ohio. The church grew from 125 to over 1,200 in attendance by an aggressive soul-winning program.

Editorials written about the character traits of work, time, courage, and priorities.

"Dr. Abraham: Church Planter in India," Journal Champion, 4 August 1978.

A description of a Liberty graduate who planted over 50 churches in India.


These front page stories reflected the penchant that Towns had for long descriptive titles. While newspapers have headlines, and books have titles; Towns has followed the rule of inserting a verb in his book titles to give them action, a trait reflective of his newspaper experience.


A feature story written about the Open Door Church, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, that grew from 198 to 1956 in seven years on strong expositional Bible preaching.


A front page story that featured the opening of the school year at Liberty Baptist College and the need for 5 million dollars to support the college.


A foundational editorial that supported the quest by Liberty Baptist College for accreditation. At that time the majority of colleges in the Fundamental movement were opposed to accreditation because they felt it gave college control to the state government. Towns gave the reasons, both biblical and practical, why the future of the Fundamentalist college movement was tied to the accredited college and seminaries.
"Americans on Filth: Big NO!," *Journal Champion*, 15 September 1978.

Front page story written about a moral campaign with political implications. This campaign paved the way for the growth of the Moral Majority Incorporation.


An editorial that examined the sociological cycle of Church Growth and decline. The article applied to theological and sociological fundamentalism.


An article written in support of the right to bear arms. This editorial positioned the Liberty ministries in opposition of gun control laws.


A feature story written about Broadway Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee that emphasized its ministry of Sunday School bus outreach, tract distribution, and house-to-house visitation.


A front page story that recorded the results of a campaign to raise five million dollars for Liberty Baptist College in the new school year.


An editorial that examined the relationship between the agreement at Camp David between Israel and Egypt and the Biblical implications. Falwell and Towns interviewed Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to receive insight into the conservative view of Old Testament prophecies concerning the Jews' occupation of the "promised land."


Early in the growth of the television church, called the "electronic church," Towns realized that there
would be criticism and attacks on this unique type of ministry. He examined its weaknesses and strengths, then concluded it had a place in evangelism.


An examination of a Liberty graduate who planted and built a church in the capital city of New Guinea.


A feature story on the five major ministries among the Senior Saints at Thomas Road Baptist Church.


This was an explanation and listing of the Fastest Growing Sunday Schools in each of the 50 United States. Towns had compiled this list and it appeared eight years in Christian Life magazine. This was the first appearance of the list in the Journal Champion.


Editorials written about the responsibility that Christians have to register to vote.


A front page story that explained the role of Jerry Falwell in defeating the pro-gambling state referendum.


Editorials that applied the theology of open door church membership to Thomas Road Baptist Church.


A feature story that Towns wrote concerning the planting and growth of Liberty Baptist Church, Irvine, California.

A front page story that introduced a new program from Jerry Falwell, "America's Weekly Bible Class." This evangelistic program had an aggressive advertising program of $400,000 to promote establishing 100,000 Bible study classes in homes across America. Falwell used all of his resources to get this project off the ground, while Towns wrote stories and ran advertisements to support the project. Falwell wanted to launch a great soul-winning program through Bible classes, but the project did not succeed. Only 40 classes were established and the program was dropped.


Editorials written for the Thanksgiving season that featured traditional American values.


This article introduced the program by the Old Time Gospel Hour of feeding the Laotian refugees in Thailand. Towns traveled to the refugee camps of Thailand to write the story.


Editorials written about the need of the American church to become involved in the feeding and evangelization of the refugees in Thailand.


These were profiles and feature stories that reflected the condition of the refugees in Thailand. Also the program that the Old Time Gospel Hour in feeding the refugees was explained and presented.

An editorial that explained why believers should not be involved in a "Christian Socialistic" experiment. This article appeared shortly after the Jim Jones tragedy in Guyana, South America.


An editorial that exposed the abuses of John Todd, a traveling evangelist, among fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches. Information on Todd's police record, plus an examination of the discrepancies of his theology, brought an end to his invitations to many evangelical churches. Todd had threatened a potential "witches" uprising to scare churches and force them into unbiblical positions. This article was an illustration of "crusading journalism" that immediately influenced the church.


A front page story that introduced a "Feed the Hungry Program" in Haiti by the Old Time Gospel Hour.


An editorial written about the necessity of feeding the hungry.


A story that featured a former Liberty student who planted a church in his home town and built it to over 600 in attendance.


An editorial that described the necessity for freedom of the press to report the news.


These were three editorials that Towns wrote after he spent two weeks in the South China Sea on a ship.
purchased by the Old Time Gospel Hour for the purpose of picking up Vietnamese refugees.


A news story that featured the speech of presidential candidate Phil Crane and his platform. Towns had served for one year on the "Crane for Congress Committee."


These were stories of life in the refugee camps of Thailand and the South China Sea that Towns wrote while on the "mercy" mission.


A story written about an old downtown church that was revitalized and what it accomplished, growing from 150 to over 1,000 in attendance.


A front page article written about the ongoing program of feeding refugees in Thailand.


This editorial highlighted the benefits of a school in a local church.


An editorial that described the necessity of good character.


A front page story written about the growth of First Baptist Church, Bridgeport, Michigan, from 223 in 1978 to 1,303.
"Has the Bubble Broken?," _Journal Champion_, 9 March 1979.

An editorial written about the dark days in America because of rising oil prices and increasing inflation.


This was a feature story on the history, ministry, and philosophy of Word of Life Camps in Schroon Lake, New York.


These were front page articles that introduced the "I Love America" rallies that Jerry Falwell planned to hold at every state capital. This was the beginning of the movement of the Moral Majority Incorporation.


Two stories that described the deacons' task at Thomas Road Baptist Church and what they have accomplished.


This was a feature story about on the growth and ministry of First Baptist Church, Riverdale, Maryland, from 150 in attendance to 2,100.


Editorial that described how Christians should use money and the principles of stewardship.


A story that told about television Evangelist James Robison's fight with a television station in Fort Worth, Texas, that took him off the air because of the content of his preaching.

A feature story written about the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Stockbridge, Georgia, that grew as metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, moved towards it.


An editorial that featured the contributions of local churches to its members and its community.


A front page article that introduced the platform, principles, and purpose of the Moral Majority. Several have claimed to have thought up the name "Moral Majority," but the recurring use of the term in the writings of Towns indicates he is its originator. Also, the four-fold platform of Moral Majority was found in his articles, i.e., (1) anti-homosexuality, (2) anti-abortion, pro-family; (3) pro-Israel, and (4) a strong national defense. After the establishment of Moral Majority and its platform, Towns left the position of editor of the *Journal Champion* to re-enter theological education. The original platform was never expanded nor was significant research done to include other areas in the platform of Moral Majority.


An editorial that surveyed the accomplishments of the first year, written on the first anniversary of the newspaper.


Front page story on the progress of the "I Love America" rallies on the steps of state capitals.


An editorial that described the deterioration of the public schools of America.


An editorial that told about the growing contributions of Liberty Baptist College.

An editorial written about the supposed negative impact that a Christian school in a church has on evangelism and a church's soul-winning ministry. This editorial stirred a great controversy, many agreeing because their evangelism effort had been hurt by a Christian school. The Tabernacle Baptist Church, Riverdale, Georgia, responded by inviting Towns to preach in their morning service, then invited him to the parking lot where he rode at one time, two bicycles that had been welded together. The church had successfully grown in evangelism even though it had a Christian school, grades 1 to 12.


This was a survey of church planting done by graduates of Liberty Baptist College.


An editorial that described the reasons why Sunday School had to change in the decade of the 80's to grow.


This was an editorial written about the future of Sunday School.


An extended editorial written about the value of accreditation. When written, Liberty Baptist College had already achieved accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. This article was in defense of seeking accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools for Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.


An editorial written about the former contributions of The Old Time Gospel Hour in feeding the hungry projects.


An editorial that featured the second generation church member who did not help plant a church or build it up.


This was the last editorial and article by Towns in the Journal Champion. In the next eight years, he wrote only one or two articles for the paper where he previously wrote three or four articles per issue. The experience as Editor of Journal Champion seemed to have "cleansed" Towns of writing outside of his academic field and discipline. After this experience, he wrote almost exclusively in the area of Church Growth, theology and the Christian life.

ARTICLES - THE MISSIONARY CRUSADER


The Missionary Crusader is a monthly magazine of the World-Wide Missionary Crusades, Inc., located in Lubbock, Texas. It was organized to print Bibles for missionaries who had translated languages not previously reduced to writing. The mission printed Bibles, tracts, and books free of charge for distribution among unevangelized tribes.

Towns was a student at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, and worked weekends as the Sunday School Superintendent of Southwestern Baptist Tabernacle Oak Cliff, Texas. Rev. Homer Duncan, Editor of The Missionary Crusader spoke at the church and stayed in the home of
Towns. He asked Towns what he thought of the newspaper. Towns has never been reluctant to give his opinion, even as a student; and he told him the newspaper was intended to promote missions, yet had nothing in the pages to do the following: (1) inform about foreign missions, (2) promote foreign missions, or (3) raise money for foreign missions. The newspaper was tabloid format and followed the content of The Sword Of The Lord. It had articles about soul-winning and sermons from past great pulpit giants.

Editor Duncan asked Towns what was needed. Young Towns suggested sermons on missions, sermons by missionaries, and an article summarizing events on all the mission fields. Since Towns was an avid reader, (and continues to be) including various newspapers from different mission boards, he suggested the kind of material that should be included in The Missionary Crusader. Duncan replied positively and told Towns to begin immediately. For three years (36 issues), Towns prepared a monthly survey of the foreign mission field. The articles were approximately 1,500 words in length and were divided by subject matter on the continents of the world.

When Towns began writing the articles, The Missionary Crusader was in newsprint tabloid format, but during his relationship with the magazine, it changed to a magazine format and the articles by Towns were placed in the two center pages.

Towns wrote 81 articles for The Sword Of The Lord during the above time. All of the articles were back page stories that featured a great soul-winning church. Each article was approximately 2,000 words in length and included action photographs usually taken by Towns. It was his intent to capture the action and heart of a church, then communicate a feeling about that church to the readers. Towns visited each of the churches to gather statistics, find illustrations, and preach in the church. Because of the experience, Towns testified that he had preached in 86 of the 100 largest churches in America.

Dr. John R. Rice, Editor of the newspaper, noted that the stories on the back pages helped to increase the number of subscriptions, because this was news that pastors wanted to read.

Robert Walker, Editor of Christian Life, once observed that Towns gave a church personality and made it "breathe." Walker went on to observe that he interchanged the pronoun "he" in reference to the pastor with the pronoun "it" in reference to the church. Walker felt this was a weakness, while Towns felt it was the secret of growing churches; because the pastor so identified with a
church that there was a reciprocity between the two. Towns often said, "The church is the length and shadow of its leader."
AUDIO TAPES

This section includes tape albums made by Towns. Obviously, he has made many other single tapes as do most pastors and teachers. To be included in this section, a tape album must meet the following requirements: (1) be copyrighted, (2) be produced by a recognized distributor, (3) be packaged as an entity, and (4) have a continuing ministry.

**Cassette Campus** (Winona Lake, Indiana: Ken Anderson Films, 1974), three cassettes.

This series was recorded in a studio and contains three messages: "How to Grow a Church," "How to Grow a Sunday School," and "How to Start a Bus Ministry."

**The Laws of Successful Biblical Sunday School Growth** (Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1982), five tapes of ten messages.

These messages were recorded in a studio to instruct workers in Sunday School teaching, administration, outreach and growth. These lectures reflect the Sunday School philosophy of Towns before he took his work at Fuller Theological Seminary. These messages reflect the approach that he learned from his study of the Ten Largest Sunday Schools and the influence of the Southern Baptist Convention on his thinking. While these messages do not reflect what he later learned in terminology and sophisticated insight from Fuller Theological Seminary, it is his vintage philosophy and the foundation upon which he builds his Church Growth insight.

The message on **The Laws of Sunday School Growth** and **How to Grow a Sunday School from 100 to 300 in Attendance**, reflect Towns' early understanding and insight into Web Evangelism, networking, and growth through addition of cells.
Say-It-Faith (Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1983), six cassettes of 12 messages.

These tapes were the live recordings of 12 messages that Towns preached at Muskoka Baptist Conference, Canada in 1981. Even though they were delivered in a deeper life context, faith was communicated as a necessary ingredient in growing a church.

154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing (Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1983), four cassettes.

This packet contains four messages recorded live (55 minutes each) of the seminar that Towns teaches by the same name. It also contains workbooks and is designed for home study. It applies the principles of Church Growth to Sunday School.

The Faith of Abraham (Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1983), six cassettes of 12 messages.

This packet contains 12 messages on faith based on the life of Abraham. Even though Towns preached these messages at Muskoka Baptist Conference, Canada in 1982 in a deeper life setting, this series was produced and sold through Church Growth Institute because it was felt that faith was one of the ingredients needed to build a church.

BOOKS

Teaching Teens. Winnipeg, Canada: Winnipeg Bible Institute Press, 1963. Two printings of 1,000 copies each were released, then the manuscript was printed and released by Christian Publications Inc., Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1964, for a printing of 2,000 copies. The manuscript was assigned in 1966 to Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, who released nine printings.

This was the first book by Towns. The writing and release of this manuscript reflected insight into the nature and attitude of Towns. He taught a class on youth work at Midwest Bible College, St. Louis, Missouri, but there was no adequate textbook. He wrote five of the chapters from his classnotes, four of the class members wrote out his classnotes which he edited. A class member typed the nine chapter
manuscript onto 82 mimeograph stencils. Other members of the class ran the mimeograph machine. The remaining members collated the pages and assembled it into a spiral-bound book. Class members were given one free copy for their efforts and the remaining copies from a "press run" of 100 copies were sold in youth meetings conducted by Towns.

After the first "press run" of 100, others asked for copies. Towns ran the mimeograph himself, his wife and three children (including this author) collated the book. Two more printings (for a total of 300 mimeograph copies) were done before it was printed by Winnipeg Bible Institute Press, 1963.

The book ultimately sold over 80,000 copies. It was not researched, was culturally limited to the teenage world of the 1950's, and had no central theme or philosophy. Even though it was used as a college text, it was a simple lay-level, "how-to" manual. Later Towns would develop a philosophy of youth ministry but it was not evident from this manuscript. But like many best-selling books, it gave a reputation to the author. Towns' later books carry academic weight and philosophic consistency.


This book was written as a correspondence course. The text was divided into 24 chapters with 24 questions at the end of each chapter to be answered and mailed in for grading. The syllabus was printed and bound at the beginning of the manuscript with instructions for the correspondence student. The course was originally taught over a radio station based in Steinback, Manitoba, however less than 12 took the course for credit. The remaining copies were sold in youth seminars.

When the book was sold out, Towns re-wrote the manuscript and published it through Regal Books, Glendale, California, under the title Successful Youth Work, 1966. The title was chosen by the editors. In 1973 Towns re-wrote the manuscript again, dropping several chapters and adding several new ones especially relating to local church-centered youth work. The book was then released with the title Successful Church-Centered Youth Work, Import Books, 1973.
This manuscript Christ-Centered Youth Work was weak on evangelism, and was void of Church Growth terminology. It reflected a period of Towns' life when he emphasized counseling, education, adolescent psychology, and youth programs that focused on training, worship, and fellowship.


This book was written for the correspondence school of Winnipeg Bible College and was taught over the Radio School which was broadcast over a radio station in Steinback, Manitoba. Approximately 50 students took the course for credit.

The manuscript contained instructions for the correspondence school, outlines for each chapter, and questions for each lesson. Only 1,000 copies were originally printed and the remaining copies were used as a textbook in the college courses taught by Towns.

The manuscript represented a sketchy coverage of John and at times omitted some sections. The book was typeset by typewriter and printed on a college press. Towns was stung by the criticism that his book represented superficial scholarship. Later he wrote a verse by verse exposition of the Greek text for English readers entitled, John: The Greatest Book in the Bible.


This book was a re-write of Teaching Teens and Christ-Centered Youth. The publisher gave it the title because "success" was a popular marketing term in the 60's. The book was innovative in being (1) church-centered, the predominate theme was interdenominationalism at the time, (2) Bible-centered, it had a strong teaching emphasis, and (3) counseling-centered, because Towns defined, "ministry as the ministry of the Word of God, to individuals at their point of need." The book was used by Bible colleges, Christian colleges, and seminaries as a text and became the basis by which Towns was invited to several colleges to deliver lectures and/or teach on youth work. During the years 1958-68, Towns had a reputation as a youth specialist/authority because: (1) his writings, (2) his college teaching areas, (3) his ministry at
Sunday School conventions conducting seminars on youth work, and (4) his ministry to youth in youth evangelistic crusades, rallies, and retreats.


This was one of the first volumes in evangelicalism/fundamentalism on the topic of singles. The volume emphasized the needs of singles, their growing awareness by the church, and programs to minister to them. The topic grew out of Towns' growing ministry to the youth of the church.

The book was written as a research paper for Dr. Grant Shockley, Professor of Christian Education, Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois. Since there was little available in library research at the time, Towns surveyed singles in churches, local churches with ministry to singles, contemporary journalism, and a growing awareness in the social sciences of their existence and traits.

While a few colleges used it as a text, the book did not enjoy commercial success because it was ahead of its time. The church did not perceive singles as a significant need in the 60's.


This was a leaders guide to the E.T.T.A. textbook by the same name. It contained for each of the 12 chapters a lesson plan, questions, suggestions for teaching techniques, and suggestions for applications.


This was a practical book to help Sunday School teachers prepare their lessons. It contained suggestions on how to study the Bible, how to write a lesson plan, a sample plan, a job description for a Sunday School teacher, and qualifications for the task.

This book contains 14 articles by Towns on various aspects of Sunday School reprinted from several magazines. It was prepared by the Christian Education Department of the Evangelical Free Church of America, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Because it was the first book published by the department, there were an abundance of typographical errors in the copy.

The book was criticized by book editors for being a rehash of articles previously published by Towns. One suggested that Towns ought to prepare a volume that adequately dealt with the Sunday School. This stung Towns and was one of the motivations that led to the research for The Ten Largest Sunday Schools.


This was a descriptive study of the ten largest Sunday Schools in America in 1968 and the principles that made them grow. Two years previously, Towns had found the largest Sunday Schools in America and listed them in Christian Life magazine where he was Sunday School editor. Initially, the 50 largest were listed, then the 100 largest. The basis was actual attendance, not enrollment. The listing had caused a sensation because the general opinion was that Sunday Schools were weak and declining. What Towns established was that the Sunday School movement had some massive attendance levels.

Towns visited each of the ten Sunday Schools described in the book and used a qualitative and quantitative questionnaire to gather information for the book. The quantitative questionnaire gathered data for comparative judgement. The facts gave insight into the nature and growth of the organization and some clues concerning what produced its size. The qualitative questionnaire enabled Towns to interpret data, obtain background and stories, and develop a "feel" for the Sunday School.

Towns was one of the first to take an institutional organization (a church) and develop church typologies (the clustering of data into a sociological phenomenon so that a cognitive perception can be gathered concerning a generalized
trend). Thus Towns "typed" the growing Sunday Schools of the 60's to be: (1) pastor led, (2) evangelistically focused, (3) conservative in doctrine, (4) separatist in life-style, (5) use Sunday School busing, (6) organized, (7) taught loyalty to the institution, (8) Bible-centered, (9) family-oriented, and (10) had a ministry to multiple needs of the individual and the community.

The book was listed among the best-sellers in The Christian Bookstore Journal and sold 83,000 copies. Towns learned to market his books with this publication. He convinced seven of the churches to purchase 1,000 copies (pre-publication) for distribution among its members. This helped the momentum and guaranteed a place on the best-seller list. Towns preached a sermon on "The Ten Largest Sunday Schools" in churches, conventions, and ministerial fellowships, thus continuing sales and influence of the book. However the topic was enough to make it the most popular and influential book written by Towns. While other books by Towns have out sold this one and others have had much larger advertising budgets, The Ten Largest Sunday Schools established his reputation and effectively moved him from being a youth authority in the public mind to a Sunday School authority. So confident was Towns of his research that he predicted the 70's would be the decade of the large church (the mega church, super church, and mini-denominational church). When Towns first listed the 100 largest Sunday Schools in 1968, there were only 97 that averaged over 1,000 in attendance. Twenty years later in 1987, there were 8,160 over 1,000 according to Dr. John Vaughan, Professor of Church Growth, Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Missouri.


The Evangelical Teacher Training Association commissioned Towns to write a textbook to replace Sunday School Evangelism. This text defines terms related to evangelism and establishes a biblical basis for evangelism and principles, giving the total Christian education program a focus on evangelism. After 18 years, the E.T.T.A. had sold over 70,000 the textbook.
The book has no illustrations, statistics, denominational slant or any other geographical, time, or doctrinal facts that would create barriers in the reader's mind. Hence, the broad evangelical base of E.T.T.A. was well served, attributing to its popularity and effectiveness.

**Evangelize Through Christian Education (Leaders Guide).**

This was the resource guide to help teach the E.T.T.A. textbook by the same name to leaders in a local church. It contained lesson plans, review questions, suggestions for teaching methodology, and suggestions for applications.


This was the first book by Towns that analyzed and presented the methodology of one local church. Although both Falwell and Towns are listed as co-authors, Towns wrote the manuscript by interviewing Falwell. Working on this book led Towns to become co-founder of Lynchburg Baptist College (now Liberty University) and to invest most of his energies in various ministries at Lynchburg.

The theme of the book was saturation evangelism, "using every available means, to reach every available person, at every available time." Falwell adapted the phrase to American evangelism from Ken Stracher of Latin American Missions after touring various mission fields in Central and South America. Falwell applied it to one local church and demonstrated that an area could be saturated with the Gospel as water saturates a lawn. The book described how Falwell's church, Thomas Road Baptist Church, used television, radio, tracts, newspaper advertisements, bussing, billboards, local church newspapers, audio cassettes, visitations, etc. to evangelize its community. Included in the outreach was a jail ministry, alcoholic home ministry, Christian school and college, ministry to troubled teens, counseling center, etc.

The credibility of the book was based on the fact that Thomas Road Baptist Church was the youngest church in The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and the fastest growing, but when the book was published, the
church almost doubled from 2,400 in attendance to over 4,100.

Also, a number of testimonies were included of people won to Christ by the church, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of saturation evangelism.

The book also introduced the term "super aggressive evangelism" which was a challenge to be aggressive in faith because God had promised to bless the church that put all its energy in reaching the lost through a local church.


Towns previously prepared a mimeographed manual for local church librarians to begin organizing, administering, and using the church libraries in educational ministry. He joined with Cyril Barber who was the librarian at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, at the time. Barber added the bibliography and technical aspect of library science. When the manuscript was finally published, Towns added a new dimension to the traditional church library. He stated that it should no longer be just a depository for books to be loaned to members, but should contain resources for teachers to help in lesson preparation and presentation. As such, it should contain teaching tools, methods, and resources. The librarian should be considered a resource person to the teaching staff.

The book went through nine printings and was adopted by several evangelical denominations to guide their local churches to develop Sunday School/church libraries.


This book was written earlier by Towns (1967) but not published for four years by the publisher. It grew out of research at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School into the growing trend of team teaching in public schools. The book was well documented with research findings, yet had practical illustrations.
This was a unique blend since it was written for lay Sunday School teachers. The book was illustrated with charts, diagrams of room arrangements for teaching, illustrations, and check list for reader involvement.

Like some of the other manuscripts of Towns that did not sell well, this was another that was published before the market was ready to use team teaching in the lay Sunday School. Perhaps it was better suited for the college or research market.


This book describes the 82 men who are enshrined in the Christian Hall of Fame in Canton Baptist Temple, Canton, Ohio. Towns gave a brief description of each person and included a one page excerpt of a sermon, book, commentary, etc. The number of those enshrined was expanded to 96 in 1973 and Towns added the new names to the back and a second edition was released.


The majority of the manuscript in the M.A. thesis was written by Roberta Groff at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, 1969. Towns wrote two chapters, one dealing with the age of accountability among the mentally retarded and leading them to salvation. The second chapter deals with counseling the parents of retarded children. Towns' interest grew out of counseling courses he took at Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, but after the book was published, he lost interest in the topic and turned down invitations to speak on the topic at professional and lay functions. Groff became a leader in services to the retarded, serving with the government of Alberta, Canada.


This book was a sequel to The Ten Largest Sunday Schools, was listed on the best-seller list and sold more copies. Towns indicated in the foreward that these 10 churches might not be the actual fastest growing but were included because they possessed "growth qualities." The weakness of the book is that they were all Independent Baptist, while the strength
was their unusual rapid growth and aggressive evangelism. These churches reflected the spirit of the early 70's with busses, aggressive soul winning, growing church plants and large acreage campuses, use of media, and multi-ministry. Each church was chosen because it displayed a unique strength and an analysis of that strength was given.

The final two chapters dealt with the philosophy (as opposed to the practical techniques) of church growth. Chapter 11 explained the sociological cycle of church growth and death, which was an expansion of Ernest Troeltsch's dichotomy of sect-denomination. Some have noted this was one of Towns' unique insights into church growth, and his best research to that time, showing how a church grew from the theological/sociological typology of sectarian/fundamentalism through the institutional/evangelical type to the liberal/denominational typology to deterioration.

Chapter 12 was on examination of sociological phenomena of charismatic leadership usually found among fundamentalist/sectarian churches. The chapter is well researched with an examination of several doctoral dissertations on the topic. While most research on charismatic leadership related to political or military leaders, Towns may have been the first to examine and relate it to Christian leaders.


This is a reprint of the earlier book published by Regal Books, with a new title, The Single Adult and the Church.


This is a sequel to Church Aflame by Towns and Falwell. While Church Aflame dealt with methodology and technique, this manuscript included sermons by the author that caused Thomas Road Baptist Church to grow. Also, the book contained a number of testimonies by people in the church on how they came to salvation.

Falwell ordered 100,000 books to give away on television, and another 4,000 hardbacks were sold in
bookstores. The month the book was released, the
Securities and Exchange Commission announced an
indictment against Falwell and Thomas Road Baptist
Church, which curtailed the sales of the book.
Falwell and the church were eventually cleared by a
federal judge of all charges.

Great Soul-Winning Churches. Murfreesboro, Tennessee:

This book contains articles that appeared in The
Sword of the Lord newspaper in 1972-73. These
articles were about some of the churches that were
growing in America. Towns travelled to each church,
interviewing the pastor, staff and some members, then
wrote the story of their growth and evangelism.

While the articles had a wide and popular appeal
because of the size of the newspaper, the book had
limited influence.

Is the Day of the Denomination Dead? Nashville, Tennessee:

This book expands the thesis of the sociological
cycle of church growth and death, especially viewing
the role of deterioration at the liberal/
denominational level. Towns said two things:
first, that all churches that begin with sectarian/
fundamentalist qualities will evolve around the
cycle, become liberal in theology and lifestyle, and
die. Second, that the nature of connection between
local churches had both positive and negative in­
fluences on the churches and the individuals within
them. Towns concluded that denominationalism was not
a biblical normative standard, but that functionally
they contributed to evangelism, spirituality, church
planting, higher education, and justice and moral
influence in the world. In essence, Towns reflected
his view of ecclesiology, i.e. that denominations are
not found in Scripture, but God has used them to
carry out biblical mandates.

A survey of Towns' books in 1986 revealed that
over one million copies of his books had been
distributed. This survey revealed that Is the Day of
the Denomination Dead? was the poorest seller among
any book that he wrote. Towns was curious
because the book received some outstanding reviews in
religion and secular periodicals. There are reasons
for the poor sales, (1) the cover was too symbolic
and difficult to read, creating a barrier to those who might pick it up in a bookstore, (2) people do not care about the health of their denomination, only the health of their local church, (3) the research by Towns indicated a decline of interest by people in their denomination (Gallup poll) hence, they would not buy a book that analyzed the liberal denominations, so they did not purchase the book, (4) the book was one of the first religion hardback books to break the $5.00 barrier in individual copy price, (5) there was no specific market to which the book was focused, and (6) it was the first book that Towns ever wrote to a publishers specification (prior to this project, Towns chose a book topic as he chose a sermon, he "felt" God was leading him to meet a need). The publisher contacted Towns with the title, suggestions for comments, and gave him an advance. A New York advertising agency was retained to publicize the book and Towns was sent on a ten city tour to appear on local segments of The Today Show and other talk shows to "plug" the book. He appeared at autograph parties in major department stores. In some stores, not a single copy was sold while he was there. In no store were there more than a half-dozen sold. He went away determined never to do another autograph party, but signs books at conventions and seminars where he speaks. At a pastors' conference at Thomas Road Baptist Church, he signed over 5,000 copies of Church Aflame in a five day period.

Dr. C. Peter Wagner recommended the book in his Church Growth bibliography and the Fuller Theological Seminary Bookstore purchased and sold all remaining copies after Thomas Nelson dropped it from the catalogue.


This is a major re-write of the original book entitled Successful Youth Work, Regal Books. Nine chapters were dropped from the original book and eleven chapters added. The word "Biblical" was added to the chapter and it was released as a hardback book. The new book had three greater emphases that were only mentioned in the first release. First, it was given stronger local church orientation, aimed at preparing youth workers for local churches. Second, it made a distinction between the methodology of fundamentalist and evangelicals when applied to
youth. Third, it included research material on the sociological/psychological phenomena of the "who am I" identity crises of adolescence. To this subject, Towns gave practical principles of working with teens and helping them develop strong identities.

The book was dropped by Impact Books in 1977, and the Youth Department of Thomas Road Baptist Church, printed and sold 20,000 copies, primarily to Bible colleges for training youth pastors.


This manuscript represents a week long seminar that Towns taught at Gainesville Christian schools and University Baptist Church, Gainsville, Florida. Approximately 60 pastors attended to learn how journalism (print, photo, etc.) could be used in evangelism to build a super aggressive local church. This manuscript was prepared before the seminar and distributed to those who attended. They expanded the seminar on a regular basis. However, Towns realized that people did not come to learn how to write, but to learn Church Growth. The seminar was not repeated. Later Towns had the manuscript reprinted and used in journalism at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.


Towns saw the large churches developing Christian schools and sensed a trend in America. Some have suggested this book caused the trend to Christian schools, others say it was an initial outgrowth of movement. In any case, the manuscript is among the first to recognize the trend, growth, philosophy and coming problems of the Christian schools. Even in the embryonic love affair that churches had with Christian schools, Towns predicted court fights and pastors going to jail over the coming clash. From his training at Southern Methodist University in education, Towns knew the public schools would fight back when challenged by alternative education, and from his fellowship with fundamentalists, he knew they would fight.

Again, Towns' research and writings were on the cutting edge to influence trends, but this book was a
decade too early to be a popular seller. If published during the controversy of the early 80's, it might have given insight into its controversy with the public schools. Then again, if Towns had not written it, many fundamentalist might not have followed his lead and established a Christian school.


Towns wanted to write a book on the growth and principles of the First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana, and his friend Dr. Jack Hyles, Pastor. Hyles declined. Then Towns heard Hyles casually say in a sermon, "someone ought to write a book on just one Sunday at First Baptist Church." An agreement was made and Towns visited Hammond on Sunday in November, 1973, to observe and record what happened on that day.

The story actually began on Saturday when Towns visited with bus workers. Then Towns showed up at 6:00 a.m. to watch the first buses leave for a 200 mile round trip to bring sailors from the Great Lakes Training Base in Illinois.

The book contains three chapters on the life story of Jack Hyles. Towns has testified that this is the best journalism he ever produced.

For years, Towns could not understand why the crowds of 50,000 or 100,000 by Hyles did not get Christians excited, yet when Jerry Falwell had 18,019 in Sunday School, the results were electrifying. The sales of the book on Hyles had the same results. While books on Falwell sold over 100,000 copies, books on Hyles sold only 12,000 copies, and Hyles sold 10,000 of those in his "Sword of the Lord" conferences.


This volume is a historical survey of 27 educators, beginning with Jesus Christ and ending with John Dewey, judged by Towns to be the most influential in the history of the church.

After selecting the educator, Towns surveyed Dissertation Abstracts to determine the living scholar who was considered an authority on the
subject and had prepared a dissertation on education. Twenty three contributors were then chosen to prepare chapters according to a format suggested by Towns.

Towns prepared chapters on John Wesley from journal articles he published in Bibliotheca Sacra, and on Robert Raikes from a journal article he published in The Evangelical Quarterly (Manchester, England). He also included a chapter on Horace Bushnell he prepared for the volume.

The volume was prepared as a parallel text for students in a course on the History of Christian Education, or other general courses on church history. It is translated into Japanese and Korean.

Getting a Church Started in the Face of Insurmountable Odds with Limited Resources in Unlikely Circumstances.

This book grew out of a series of chapel messages at Lynchburg Baptist College. Towns was aware that a number of pastoral supporters of the new college had planted their churches in the same way that Jerry Falwell had. Towns invited many of these pastors to preach in chapel and tell their stories on how they planted their churches. Towns was interested in stretching the faith of the students and motivating them to evangelism. During the first chapel, Towns sensed something of significance was happening and began taking notes for an article. However, the articles were never published separately, but as this book.

The name of the book is a story in itself. One day in a Christian bookstore, Towns was disgusted with the names of books that he thought were cute or followed the influence of the secular market. He wanted to communicate the message of the book in its title. Then he jokingly said, "no one will ever remember the exact name of this book, but they will never forget that they can not remember and will ask for it by the book with the long title." He now says that is the way it has happened on many occasions. In his ministry, Towns testifies to having organized over 50 churches for church planters. Many of these church planters were motivated by reading this book. Towns said, "No other of my books have had as much influence for eternity, with the sale of only 5,000 volumes."
A Fresh Start in Life Now That You are a Christian.
Savannah, Georgia: Sunday School Research Institute, 1976.

Towns calls this project a publishing failure, probably due to lack of marketing. He wrote the book and self-published it with only 1,000 copies to sell in his seminars. The Institute then tried to sell these to pastors so they could print their name on the cover and information of their church on the back. It was intended to be both publicity and curriculum material for a new members class. It was designed to teach loyalty by members to their church.

Only several churches purchased lots of 1,000 copies and the project was dropped. Some of the churches re-ordered a second and third time suggesting the material was consumer-worthy, but not marketed properly.


Towns wanted to prepare for the 200th anniversary of Sunday School in 1980 so he wrote 24 pages to be included in a Bible for Sunday School teachers. The material included a general survey of the 200 years of Sunday School, plus a biographical sketch of those enshrined in the Sunday School Hall of Fame, Savannah, Georgia; i.e., John Wesley, Robert Raikes, Francis Scott Key, Stephen Paxson, and Dwight L. Moody. This special edition of the Bible was widely circulated during bicentennial celebrations.

The Successful Sunday School and Teachers Guidebook.

For several years, Robert Walker, Editor, Christian Life Magazine prompted Towns to prepare a Sunday School Almanac. He described it as everything any worker needed to know about Sunday School. With a contract in hand, Towns went through all his notes, files, and materials on Sunday School. The project became more than a guidebook, but an encyclopedia of philosophy, principles, techniques, charts, diagrams, and checklists on the Sunday School. Towns wrote all the articles except the ones on Sunday School bussing. It has continued for a decade as one of the major textbooks on Sunday School in Christian colleges and seminaries. Several denominations have
adopted it for their standards. The Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, printed 10,000 copies with their imprint for their teachers.


This book was prepared for a teacher training class in a local church to give a general introduction to working in the Sunday School. It presents the definition which Towns often uses: "Sunday School is the reaching, teaching, winning, maturing arm of the church." While Towns gives credit for this definition to the American Sunday School Union in the 1800's, he did revive and popularize it in the second half of the 1900's. Towns defines a Sunday School teacher as "the extension of pastoral ministry into the life of the class." This definition that he made famous makes the teacher more than an instructor; it gives the teacher a shepherd role in the class.

This book was well received because of its balanced approach, plus its emphasis on shepherding ministry. The book did not have any illustrations, data, or denominational references, hence it had a broad evangelical/denominational appeal. It was translated into Korean, Japanese, Afrikaner, Dutch, with two different denominations translating it into Spanish.


This book is designed as a textbook to instruct new members (new converts or people transferring into a church) on how they should relate to their church and how to grow as a Christian. It is included as a curriculum textbook for the Sunday School.

Church Aflame II. Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty Baptist Seminary, 1981.

This book contains an introduction to the principles for a super aggressive church to saturate its town with the Gospel. Towns took the principles of the book Church Aflame and re-wrote them into a propositional format for students at Liberty University to understand Thomas Road Baptist Church (all Liberty University students attend and perform Christian service in the church). This is the textbook for the introductory course to Christian Service which is required for all students.
This book is an introduction to the science and survey of church growth in America. It surveys the following seven Church Growth types or philosophies of ministry: (1) the Fuller Factor, (2) the Evangelical Bible Church, (3) Fundamentalism, (4) Body Life, (5) Charismatic Renewal, (6) Southern Baptist, and (7) Main-line Denominational Churches. The book describes local churches that reflect these different philosophies of ministry (at least one chapter to describe an actual church from each), basic principles of church growth, and contributions from leading authorities who represent the different philosophies of ministry.

The way the book developed reflects the growth of Towns in understanding church growth. Towns and John Vaughan prepared one chapter on Fundamentalism, then they came to the conclusion that Charismatics were growing by different principles, thus a second chapter reflected their approach. A third chapter was added to describe the Evangelical Bible church (Towns now wishes the name Expositional Bible Church had been used). Vaughan added the chapter on the Fuller Factor and was the one to coin the term. At this point of development, Towns had access to the doctoral dissertation that David Seifert wrote in which Seifert described several models of growth. The chapters by Seifert on Southern Baptist, Main-line denominations and general principles were used from his dissertation. Towns gathered descriptive articles from other sources on the local churches. The chart comparing the seven church growth typologies/philosophies of ministry was constructed by Towns.

The book has been used as a text in most seminaries according to the publishers. It was re-written and a second edition was published in 1986.

Even though this book has little to do with church growth, it grows out of his background and research in growing churches. Towns visited the ten largest churches in the world to rank them and analyze the causes for their growth. He determined that many
organizational techniques for growth in the U.S. are
different when viewed cross-culturally. However, he
did come back with the foundational principle that
the faith of the pastor was a contributing factor for
the growth of the largest churches in the U.S. and
other countries. He noted their faith was greater,
or different then those who were not experiencing
growth. This motivated him to do a study on the
various faces or expressions of faith.

Towns came up with an original classification to
differentiate the expressions of faith (a loose
typology). There is one chapter in the book for each
classification: (1) statement of faith or doctrinal
faith, (2) saving faith, (3) justifying faith or
imputed faith, (4) living by faith, (5) indwelling
faith or deeper life faith, and (6) serving faith or
the gift of faith. This book was written for the
average Christian to cause him to grow in Christ or
serve Him more effectively. It is a textbook in a
resource packet by the same name released by Church
Growth Institute. This is the first of three books
that Towns wrote on faith. The second is a doctrinal
book entitled What the Faith is All About and the
third written with Jerry Falwell is Stepping Out on
Faith, a study of the gift of faith in church
planting. All three are published by Tyndale House,
Wheaton, Illinois.

What the Faith is All About. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale

This is a doctrinal book for laymen. It is prepared
as a text for Bible study or Sunday School with 52
chapters, one for each week of the year. Although
Towns is known for Sunday School or Church Growth, he
has taught doctrine or theology at every Bible
college, Christian college, or seminary with which he
has been associated. Because he believes correct
doctrine is the biblical basis on which to build a
church, he wanted to prepare a text for laymen.

Towns was raised in a Presbyterian church and as
a small boy memorized the Westminster catechism but
is no longer committed to a Calvinistic or Reformed
approach to theology. He is a graduate of two
Methodist schools of higher education but is not
Armenian or Wesleyan in doctrine. He classifies
himself as a dispensationalist, meaning much more
than a division of time for eschatology. He sees
dispensationalism effecting soteriology, eccle-
siology, eschatology, the areas usually influenced by Calvinism and/or Armenianism.

Towns wanted to write a complete theology and integrate the whole around evangelism, the deeper Christian life, that would produce in students a strong loyalty to the local church. Each chapter begins with an illustration to create a need, because he believes teaching is meeting needs. He then presents doctrine and ends with a practical application.

The book follows the classical approach to theology i.e., the doctrine of the Bible, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, satan, demons, salvation, sin, man, the church and the end times. Towns uses traditional theological terms such as hypostatic union, kenosis, inerrancy, dichotomy, etc., but explains and defines them in context for the lay reader.

These who think of Towns as a Sunday School or methods authority, need to see his commitment to doctrine and the deeper Christian life to get a complete view of him and his contribution.


This book contains 52 lesson plans to teach the text by the same name. It has suggestions for teaching techniques, classroom questions and ways to introduce the lesson.


This book is the Doctor of Ministry dissertation/project at Fuller Theological Seminary, with an introductory chapter written by Jerry Falwell. The book is an examination of the spiritual gift of faith as applied to church planting. See the annotation under Unpublished Works for an examination of the dissertation’s content. The book only sold one printing for 5,000 copies. The title was perhaps too vague and unrelated to the content. Towns had wanted the title, "The Role of the Spiritual Gift of Faith in Church Planting." He realized that title did not appeal to a general market, but he felt it
could have brisk sales in a narrow market slanted to Church Growth and church planting.


This is a major contribution of Towns to systematic theology. He has used it in classes at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and the taped classes (THEO 555, THEO 725, THEO 720) at LUSLLL. This surveys the 12 major areas of theology. Its strengths are: (1) readings from primary sources from different theologies for the students, (2) strong emphasis on practical application, both for Christian living and church ministry, (3) integration of evangelism and ministry into ecclesiology, (4) emphasis on Godly Christian living, (5) dealt with issues that were not covered in traditional theological texts, such as Virgin Birth, inerrancy, controversy over signs of Christ’s coming, etc. Towns wanted to write a comprehensive theology because one had not been done for approximately 40 years. He felt many study theology and lose their “soul winning zeal” so he felt a merger of academics and practical was necessary.

The book needs editing because of the typos and some poorly constructed sentences. Also, there are different places where he deals with the same topic, such as dealing with “union with Christ” both under the Holy Spirit and salvation.

*Getting a Church Started.* Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1985.

This is a manual that was written for the church planter of the Liberty Baptist Fellowship for Church Planting Inc. It contains a survey of six approaches to planting a church, but emphasizes the pioneer church planter. The chapter, "84 Steps to Plant a Church" gives the sequential things a church planter must do to begin a new church. This practical approach is the strength of the book and is reflective of the roots of success that L.B.F. has in starting churches (they claim that 90% of the churches they help finance have succeeded.)

The book is typeset with a typewriter, has several typographical mistakes, and looks like an office manual, rather than a book, thus taking away from the
continued professional contribution it might otherwise make.


A textbook written as a companion volume to NBST 697 The Gospel of John (tape series) and The Gospel of John worktext. It emphasizes a word study from the Greek text for English readers. Also, it is strong in interpretation of the themes, development of word studies and the theology of John. The book contains insights not found in other volumes. It has a strong practical emphasis found throughout the text. This is the result of Towns life-long love affair with the Gospel of John.


This is a textbook for the annual Sunday School stewardship campaign held in many churches. It contains four chapters and is used in connection with the resource packet by the same name.

The book teaches storehouse tithing, which means a church member should give 10 percent to his local church. There were 10,000 copies originally printed by Sunday School Research Institute, then the copyright was turned over to Neibauer Press, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, and they printed 10,000. In 1984, Church Growth Institute secured the copyright and has printed 30,000 copies.


This is a textbook for the annual Sunday School stewardship campaign held in many churches. It contains four chapters to be used with a resource packet by the same name. This book contains four chapters that Maxwell preached at Skyline Wesleyan Church, San Diego, California, and Towns preached at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Becoming a Leader. Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1986.

This book is used at Liberty University to train students in leadership through the Christian Service classes. It emphasizes the call and quality of the
leader, rather than principles or techniques of leadership.

Originally, four chapters of this book were included in Christian Leadership. This book was part of the curriculum of the church training series that was used in the Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist Training Union (BTU). Many credit this manual with being the core of a program that trained two generations of leaders in Southern Baptist churches.

The book is part of a resource packet by the same name for training church leaders. Towns often says that leadership training is much broader than teacher training, because leadership training prepares the total person for all leadership positions, while teacher training prepares a person in pedagogy for instructing classes.


This book began with the title "The Encyclopedia of Church Growth," but the publisher concluded that the content was not comprehensive and gave it the functional title it now has. The book contains several sections not previously published. First, a glossary of terms relating to in-culture (American) Church Growth, and second, a biographical sketch of leaders in the American Church Growth movement. The chapters deal with current issues and trends in Church Growth.

The glossary of terms (written mostly by Towns) is a good foundation but seems to be sketchy, especially omitting some terms from cross-cultural Church Growth that have relevance to in-culture Church Growth. It is hoped that these terms will appear in standard theological and secular dictionaries. The biographical sketches were well selected and seem both comprehensive in coverage of leaders, as well as complete in discussing each person.

The volume should be expanded and the editors should prepare a comprehensive volume to cover in encyclopedic form the terms, issues, persons, history and trends of Church Growth.

This is the textbook that goes with the resource packet F.R.A.N.geism, which contains the materials to organize a local church to evangelistically follow-up those who visit its services or are related to someone in the church. F.R.A.N.geism is a phrase coined by Towns that is an acrostic built on F.R.A.N.s which are friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. The focus of the follow-up program is not to generally evangelize a neighborhood but to network F.R.A.N.s, (1) first to church members, (2) then to the church, (3) and finally to Christ.

This book carries several contributions of Towns to the Church Growth movement, i.e. the law of three hearings, which means a person usually joins a church or receives Christ after attending church 3.4 times. The law of seven touches means a person usually makes a permanent decision to convert or join a church after the church contacts him seven times. Other phrases coined and defined by Towns are "receptive-responsive person," "seasons of the soul," "stairstepping," and a definition of ministry as, "communicating the Gospel to people at the point of need."

This book is written for lay use and does not have footnotes (a weakness in light of the new material introduced), a glossary of terms, or an index. Also, it should have included some of the research to give credibility to the new ideas he suggests. The book has a few typographical mistakes.

This is an outstanding practical application of Church Growth principles to local church evangelism. It would have had wider acceptance if a recognized publisher had released it, but Church Growth Institute has the ability to market and within 18 months they have printed and sold 30,000 copies.


This is the result of several years when Towns was gathering a list of the different names of Jesus. The strength of the books is the more than 700 different names, titles, references, metaphors, etc. to Jesus. Towns preached 12 messages at Muskuka Baptist Conference, Ontario, using the names of Jesus.
to emphasize the deeper Christian life. The manuscript was typed from the audio tapes of the sermons. It was included in the Bible study curriculum of Accent publishers for Adult Sunday School classes.


This book is the content by the same name that Towns has presented to over 60,000 persons in five years. It is presented in five hours on a Saturday to the Sunday School workers from one church or a group of churches.

The material involves helping teachers formulate correct attitudes about Sunday School growth, clarifying their role and re-defining their task. It deals with external barriers concerning why Sunday Schools are not growing and with internal diseases in churches that hinder growth. The traditional laws of Sunday School growth are discussed against a backdrop of a survey of contemporary types of evangelism. Practical programs of evangelism, follow-up and enlargement are presented.

The seminar incorporates the latest results of research on evangelism, plus introduces those in attendance to the terminology of Church Growth. The principles of growth advocated by Southern Baptists are merged with the enthusiasm of fundamentalism. These are reflected in the Church Growth principles of the Fuller Factor to produce an informative manuscript that blends tradition and the latest trends.

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS**


Towns was the theological editor to determine the accuracy of doctrine in the manuscript.

The book was written by Towns, Ruth Tomczak, and Harry Covert who were in the editorial department of the Old Time Gospel Hour. Their names are recognized in the manuscript. Dr. Jerry Falwell was the supervising editor of the project. At the time, Towns was editor of The Journal Champion, the newspaper of the ministry and one of the chief contributors to the political messages that Falwell preached when he founded The Moral Majority.


An examination of P-1, P-2, and P-3 Evangelism plus a study of the eight Greek words for preach in the New Testament.


An examination of the seven Church Growth typologies that made the unique contribution of the textbook, The Complete Book of Church Growth. These seven typologies were what Towns later called philosophies of ministry or philosophies of worship and are as follows: Fundamentalism, Body Life, Expositional Bible Church, Charismatic Renewal, Southern Baptist, Mainline Denominational, and the Fuller Factor. The insight in this article, even though a condensation of the textbook, represents one of the strongest contributions of Towns to Church Growth and evangelism.

This article explained one of Towns' basic assumptions for success in the ministry and the basis for Church Growth, i.e. the supernatural call of God that separates the minister from laity and becomes the foundation for ministry. Towns believes that the blessing of God on Church Growth principles apply to natural factors (seen elsewhere) and supernatural factors (seen in the call of God).


Charles Jones, Editor, asked some of America's great leaders to write a short chapter in this volume telling what book made the greatest influence on their life and why. Towns chose the book by Hannah Whitall Smith as being the book that influenced his deeper walk with Christ.

FILM & VIDEOTAPE SERIES

The Master Teacher  (Gainesville, Florida: Genesis, Inc., 1973)
16mm, 30 minutes.

Towns surveyed the use of the Master Teacher method of teaching in Sunday School and explained how to employ it.

154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing  (Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1976), Four videotapes, 55 minutes each.

These are four videotapes of Towns teaching a seminar by the same name. The seminar is directed to Sunday School teachers, officers, and pastors with the objective of applying the principles of Church Growth to Sunday School. It emphasizes evangelism, small groups, networking, application of spiritual gifts, and employment of every church member in the ministry of a local church.
The four video tapes come in a resource packet with instructions, lesson plans, advertisement layout, workbooks, and a quiz to receive credit when successfully passed.

**Two Hundred Years of the Sunday School** (Savannah, Georgia: Sunday School Research Institute, 1976), 16mm, 13 minutes.

A film produced by Bomark Films of Atlanta, Georgia, which featured five children touring the Sunday School Museum in Savannah, Georgia. Towns acted as their guide and showed them the five portraits in the Sunday School Hall of Fame and explained the history of Sunday School.

**Murder of a Gentile People** (Lynchburg, Virginia: The Old Time Gospel Hour Film Division, 1978), filmstrip.

A 15-minute documentary on the Laotian refugees who fled when the Communists took over Laos. Towns wrote the script that depicted the need of those who came to Thailand seeking freedom. He interviewed refugees in 12 refugee camps to compile the story. This film was televised over the Old Time Gospel Hour as the basis for a fund raising appeal for financial help to the refugees.

**Church Growth I, Evangelism 510** (Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty University School of LifeLong Learning Publications, 1986), 5 videotapes, 6 hours each.

These are lectures on the science of Church Growth, and represent the philosophy and practical application of Towns to growing a local church. This represents the most comprehensive survey of Church Growth in film by Towns and is recommended to those who attempt to understand Towns' philosophy of Church Growth.

**Soteriology, Theology 720** (Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty University School of LifeLong Learning Publications, 1987), 4 videotapes, 6 hours each.

These tapes represent a systematic presentation of salvation for the graduate student. Here Towns tells why he left the Calvinistic (TULIP) orientation of soteriology, yet is not an Armenian. He presents himself as a dispensationalist. As such he deals with the non-calvinistic and the non-armenian aspects of his theology.
The influence of Towns' thesis at Dallas Theological Seminary on "The Doctrine of the Heart" comes out in soteriology as he relates regeneration and conversion to both theological and psychological areas.

The unique strength of Towns in evangelism, revival, and church growth are reflected in these tapes because of the emphasis on the practical results of the atonement. Also, there is a larger area of emphasis in this course than is usually given to the doctrine of sanctification. Here he brings his influence of sociology into Christian experience by categorizing it into eight levels of intensity or expression of experience.

Survey of Christian Doctrine, Theology 555 (Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty University School of LifeLong Learning Publications, 1987), 5 videotapes, 6 hours each.

These lectures give a survey of the twelve major areas of theology. Towns uses his textbook Theology for Today, as a text and walks the learner through each doctrine.

A Briefing/Seminar on the Future of Sunday School and Church Growth (Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1988), 4 videotapes, 55 minutes each.

These are four videotapes of Towns teaching a seminar by the same name. The tapes are intended for pastors to lead their church boards to understand the future of Sunday School and Church Growth so they can make effective plans for the church's future.

The tapes come in a resource packet to help use the material in a teaching situation. The resource packet contains instructions, lesson plans, advertising copy, a test and workbooks.

and Stephen Towns, Church Growth III, Evangelism 550 (Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty University School of LifeLong Learning Publications, 1988), 5 videotapes, 6 hours each.

These are 12 lectures by Towns on church planting, presenting his philosophy, and practical approach to the topic. He interviews eight church planters, allowing them to tell their stories of how they began a local church. Four lectures are presented by Dr. Ken Chapman and Dr. Dennis Fields, both were at that time instructors at Liberty University.
Ecclesiology/Eschatology, Theology 725 (Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty University School of LifeLong Learning Publications, 1988), 4 videotapes, 6 hours each.

These are lectures by Towns for graduate students on the doctrine of the church and last things. In these lectures Towns explains his view on the church, hence, giving a basis for insights into his views on Christian education, Church Growth and evangelism.

The Gospel of John, NBST 597 (Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty University School of LifeLong Learning Publications, 1988), 4 videotapes, 6 hours each.

This is the third "correspondence" course that Towns has done on the Gospel of John. The first was The Deity of the Saviour, for Winnipeg Bible College, 1963. The second was John, for Genesis, Inc., a non-profit television ministry of University Baptist Church, Gainesville, Florida, 1973. This has the accompanying text written by Towns entitled, John: The Greatest Book in the Bible.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CAMPAIGNS


This resource packet contained two aspects of a Sunday School growth campaign to enlist new members, (1) instructions to organize a Sunday School for outreach, and (2) 12 lesson plans to teach about each of the 12 disciples during the campaign. Other material included in the campaign not prepared by Towns were as follows: age graded lesson plans, posters, miscellaneous flyers, age graded coloring books for children, age graded workbooks for children, and a bracelet or key chain with a charm of each disciple to be given for each week of perfect attendance.

The idea came from Towns when he was Sunday School superintendent of Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia. He led the congregation in growth from 4,200 in attendance to 6,100 through this campaign. Mr. Jim Nickolson took the idea and built a commercial organization to market the idea of The
Campaign of the Twelve, and indicated that over 7,000 churches purchased material from his organization and used the campaign.


This was a booklet given as an award in a five week Sunday School outreach campaign. This series contained three sections done by Towns: (1) a biographical sketch of each of those enshrined in the Sunday School Hall of Fame (John Wesley, Forerunner of Sunday School; Robert Raikes, Founder of Sunday School; Francis Scott Key, Statesman of Sunday School; Stephen Paxson, Spirit of Sunday School; and Dwight L. Moody, Supporter of Sunday School), (2) lesson plans for adult classes on the men enshrined, and (3) instructions to organize a Sunday School to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Sunday School and lead the congregation in recruiting new pupils into the Sunday School. Other material in the campaign not prepared by Towns included coloring books, posters, bronze commemorative coins, buttons, and miscellaneous flyers.


This is a resource packet that contains four audio tapes to instruct in administering the campaign, printed instructions, a planning calendar, lesson plans, student work sheets, transparency masters, and advertising masters.

This campaign is the practical application of Towns' view of Church Growth. It employs networking (web evangelism) whereby a person establishes a relationship, (1) to a member of the church, (2) to the church, and finally, (3) to Christ. Its profundity is in its simplicity. Every member uses his relationship to a non-member to get him to attend church. The unique contribution of the Law of Three Hearings and the Law of Seven Touches is in follow-up after a Friend Day, i.e. every attempt is made to get the prospect to attend church three times by "touching" him in follow-up seven times.

At the time of this writing, Church Growth Institute had sold Friend Day resource packets to 15,000 churches.
A resource album containing four audio tapes, instructions, lesson plans, a planning calendar, transparency masters, student work sheets, and advertisement masters. This is a campaign to follow Friend Day. It emphasizes reaching F.R.A.N.'s (i.e. friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors). The campaign is four weeks long, one Sunday to invite each person represented by the word F.R.A.N. Follow-up of visitors in this campaign uses The Law of Three Hearings and The Law of Seven Touches. It emphasizes networking evangelism. While not as popular in sales as Friend Day, most churches testify it is more effective (not in getting a crowd) but in attracting first-time visitors and getting them to return a second or third time.

This resource album contains four audio tapes, lesson plans, transparency masters, planning calendar, student work sheets, and advertising masters. This album helps the teacher instruct the book Say-It-Faith in leadership preparation. A strong focus in building faith in church leaders, with a primary thrust for their personal growth and a secondary thrust of Church Growth.

This resource packet contains lesson plans, student work sheets, a planning calendar, instructions, four audio tapes, and advertisement masters to instruct the church in a stewardship campaign. One copy of the textbook Tithing Is Christian, is in the packet. It is designed to give a local church all the resources needed for a four week stewardship campaign.

It is not designed to raise money but to teach members their responsibility to stewardship. Its strength is also its weakness. Many churches cannot use the campaign because they disagree with its basic theology, i.e. storehouse tithing, which is mandating the tithe to the local church.

Contains four audio tapes, lesson plans, student work sheets, planning calendar, advertisement suggestions, and instructions for use. It also contains one copy of the textbook, Winning the Winnable, by Elmer L. Towns.

FRANgelism is a word that Towns coined for evangelism through natural relationships. The program involves reaching Friends, Relatives, Associates and Neighbors. This packet is used by a church as an ongoing program to follow-up visitors and prospects with a view of winning them to Christ and getting them in the church. It employs the principles coined and popularized by Towns, i.e. The Law of Three Hearings, and The Law of Seven Touches.

Becoming A Leader, Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, (1986): 78.

This is a resource album that contains 12 lesson plans, student work sheets, instructions, transparency masters, advertising masters, four audio tapes, and a copy of the textbook, Becoming A Leader, by Elmer L. Towns. This provides resources for a teacher to train pupils in leadership skills. This has more of a focus on the philosophy of leadership, rather than a practical approach to leadership techniques.

and John Maxwell, God Is Able, Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, (1986): 81.

This is a resource album that contains four lesson plans, student work sheets, a planning calendar, instructions, transparency masters, advertising masters, three audio tapes and a textbook. This packet contains resources to guide a local church in a stewardship campaign with a focus on getting members to pledge to the annual budget (not capital fund raising). The emphasis is on teaching each church member the biblical position of managing his time, talents, and tithe (finances). Advertising indicates this packet does not teach storehouse tithing as does Tithing Is Christian, thus it is aimed at and sold to a different church market. The textbook God is Able, by Elmer L. Towns and John Maxwell, was written to support the campaign.
Outreach 12, Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Leadership Institute, (1986): 100.

This is a resource packet that contains 12 lesson plans, student work sheets, instructions, a planning calendar, transparency masters, advertising masters, and four audio tapes. It is used to lead a local church in an attendance outreach campaign. The 12 lessons feature one of the 12 disciples each week, applying the evangelistic work of the disciple to the church member. Whereas the earlier campaign on the 12 disciples (The Campaign of the Twelve, written by Elmer L. Towns) focused on rewards (charms given for attendance), this campaign focuses on networking evangelism. Outreach Twelve employs The Law of Three Hearings and The Law of Seven Touches to network non members into the church. The four audio tapes contain a message preached by Towns on each disciple.


This is a resource album containing 12 lesson plans, 12 student work sheets, instructions, transparency masters, advertisement masters, four audio tapes containing messages on each lesson and a textbook, The Successful Christian Life, by Elmer L. Towns. This packet is designed to be used to disciple new converts, individually or in a class setting (it has the content for teaching new converts). The Successful Christian Life is used in conjunction with F.R.A.N.gelism, which gives principles of winning and discipling new converts.

TRACTS


This was a four page leaflet that explained the laws of Sunday School growth. Later, the message was expanded, updated, and included in The Successful Sunday School and Teachers Guide.

The message gave reasons why people should attend Sunday School. It was copyrighted by Sunday School Research Institute, but several denominations and local churches were given permission to reprint and distribute the tract with their identification and address.


This tract was taken from material written by Towns in Tithing Is Christian. It was designed to be used as an insert in a mailing from a local church to members during a stewardship campaign. When Neibauer Press dropped the Tithing Is Christian material, The Church Growth Institute re-released it in a resource packet, including the tract "Why Tithe." However, Church Growth Institute never printed the tract for sale but included "slicks", a perfect copy on photographic type paper, so each local church could reprint the tract by an office copy machine or offset printing press. Over 2,000 resource packets were sold, so there was no estimate of how many had been distributed.


The message supported storehouse tithing, which is the view that says the Bible teaches that Christians should give at least 10 percent of their income to their local church.

UNPUBLISHED WORKS


While this thesis apparently had little to do in content with the development of Towns' philosophy, it made an enormous contribution to his writing strategy and style. Towns wrote the thesis and turned it in one week before graduation. Dr. C. Hodgkins, his
mentor rejected it and said it had to be completely rewritten. Towns had just successfully finished his Th.M. thesis at Dallas Theological Seminary on "The Doctrine of Cardia" (heart). At Dallas Theological Seminary, the thesis was argued deductively, Hodgkins wanted it argued inductively. For the next week, Towns went to his mentor's home from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. where they rewrote each paragraph in the thesis, arguing inductively from gathered data. Hodgkins had been a fundamentalist Methodist who turned liberal in theology. He said he was "testing the method" of Towns and trying to teach him to think differently. This process significantly changed the research process of Towns. Later in life, Towns credits his research findings to this process and has followed his thinking where the facts led him. Also, Towns has observed that no fundamentalist teacher invested personal time in him as did Hodgkins.


This analysis of the Greek term kardia in the New Testament was broadened to include all the psychological terms of an inner person found in Scripture because they all function either through or in conjunction with the New Testament heart. Towns defined heart as "the conscious function of a person's volitional, emotional, intellectual, and self awareness center of being." Later Towns incorporated his understanding of heart in his understanding of regeneration and this became foundational to his doctrine of evangelism. He sees conversion as an experience that effects a person's intellect (to know), emotions (to feel), and will (to respond), hence his view of the process of evangelism is directed by his view of a conversion experience. As a result, Towns became involved in churches that emphasized experience-oriented evangelism and experience-oriented worship.

This thesis has been quoted in other research projects and in one of the definitive works on a biblical view of the psychological function in conversion and spirituality.
This manuscript was written when Towns was emphasizing youth work in his college teaching, writing, seminar workshops and his ministry in youth camps, youth evangelistic meetings, and youth banquets.

This manuscript grew out of the success of his first two printed books on youth work, *Teaching Teens*, 1963, and *Successful Youth Work*, 1965. Towns was doing more counseling with teens and had begun research on the topic. At this time, there were not many sources on counseling teens, hence as his usual procedure, Towns began preparing a manuscript to use in his classes. However, this manuscript was never published because it was not well documented, and did not add any significant insight into counseling methodology, nor the teen experience. Some of the material on self-identity (the "Who Am I" syndrome) was later added to *Successful Biblical Youth Work*.

This was one of two volumes Towns prepared for his course at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, entitled "Counseling the Teenager." The other volume contained 28 chapters on various problems faced by teenagers. This volume was well researched and was updated yearly. Towns helped his students find the latest research to add to the topic. Using a social science research documentation, the findings were summarized yearly and added to the appropriate chapter. Someone borrowed this volume from Towns and it was lost about the same time he was directing his interest from youth work to Sunday School (circa 1969).


This was intended to be a novel based on actual events. It described the ministry of Reverend Roscoe Brewer, Youth Pastor, Kansas City, Missouri, and how he recruited, trained, and took approximately 30 high school students to Monterray, Mexico, where they built a Baptist church building. The framework for the novel is S.M.I.T.E., an actual organization that gave direction to the youth ministry of the Baptist
Bible Fellowship International (B.B.F.) and during the 70's over 100 B.B.F. church buildings were built in and around Monterray, Mexico. Fleming H. Revell Inc. had signed an agreement but turned down the finished manuscript stating the incredible events of the accomplishments of mere high school students sounded unbelievable and a novel must be believable. They suggested turning the novel into a historical report, but it was not done. The story revealed the struggle of Towns with the problem of cross-cultural communication and planting an indigenous church with foreign construction workers, foreign money, and foreign leadership.


Towns wrote the life story of his friend Holland London who was an evangelist and later in life, the President of California Graduate School of Theology. When trying to market the manuscript, Bob Benson Jr. of Impact Books, Nashville, Tennessee, told Towns that he had served on the Nazarene church trial to "defrock" London, and that they would not consider the manuscript without research that told both sides of the story. Because of the friendship of Towns to London, he dropped the project rather than embarrass and/or limit the ministry that London had if he were to rewrite the manuscript.

Children: A Good Beginning Makes a Perfect Ending, Unpublished, (1977): 75. This bound manuscript is in the personal collection of Towns.

A manuscript of eight chapters on children of the Bible. Each chapter developed the biblical story of the child, and each chapter ended with suggested practical principles for daily living. Towns intended to develop a Sunday School evangelistic campaign to run eight weeks with the title "All God's Children Grow."


This is the life story of Cecil Day, the founder and former President of Days Inn Inc., Atlanta, Georgia. Towns was motivated to research and write the book because Cecil Day grew up in the same neighborhood
and under the same conditions as Towns. When the manuscript was written, Day owned 28 corporations and was worth approximately 300 million dollars. Towns was paid for his work but the book was not published. Cecil Day died of cancer two months after the manuscript was finished.

"Freedom is Living Where No One is Trying to Kill You." Unpublished, Lynchburg, Virginia: 94. This manuscript is in the personal collection of Towns.

This was a manuscript that Towns wrote after touring the refugee villages of Thailand. Some of these stories were printed in The Journal Champion when Towns was editor. The book was to be a gift offer through The Old Time Gospel Hour but was never printed.


Towns wrote this dissertation on the role that experiences play in the process of developing a person's system of theology (doctrine). He dealt with the function of pre-suppositions, emotional influence on interpreting Scripture (both positive and negative), the spiritual (or subjective) role of illumination, and the need for objective theology to allow or give direction to understanding experiences in the Christian's life.

Towns worked towards and accepted a doctorate based on what he felt was a growing academic reputation of California Graduate School of Theology, Glendale, California. He felt with continued growth that accreditation was likely and that the Ph.D. he received from California Graduate School of Theology would become as recognized as the Th.M. he received from Dallas Theological Seminary. (Dallas Theological Seminary was unaccredited when he graduated in 1958 but later received regional accreditation, hence giving respect to the Th.M.) Towns worked for 10 years with California Graduate School of Theology, teaching there each summer on a part-time basis. Toward the end of his time with the school, he saw a decline in academic standards and the school gave up its pursuit of accreditation. Towns dropped reference to the doctorate in his resume, academic credentials, or any other place. However, the decline of the school does not take away from the contribution of his dissertation.

An examination of the spiritual gift of faith and its contribution to Church Growth. Three definitions of the gift of faith were given: (1) Instrumental, which viewed faith as an instrument in the work of God (the historical view), (2) Insight, which viewed faith as the ability to vision what God wanted done (the contemporary view), and (3) Interventional, the view that faith could miraculously intervene in ordinary ministry and accomplish supernatural results. The churches of the Liberty Baptist Fellowship for Church Planting, Inc. were surveyed to determine the statistics of growth and the attitudes of the church planter toward the role of faith in the establishment and growth of his church. A correlation was drawn on the church planter's faith and the numerical success of his church (not the cause and effect relationship). Each church planter was asked to rank his faith on a scale of one to ten. It was found that those with the largest D.G.R. (Decadal Growth Rate) generally had the highest assessment of personal faith, and those with the smallest growth or those who left their church generally had the lowest assessment of growth.

Also, a biblical and historical study was conducted on the spiritual gift of faith. Finally, conclusions and applications were made on how one could develop his faith for ministry in general and Church Growth in particular.

This dissertation was published as Stepping Out On Faith, by Jerry Falwell and Elmer L. Towns, Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1985. Falwell wrote the introductory chapter on his view of faith. The contract called for Towns to have his name printed first because he wanted the bibliographic recognition, but the publisher put Falwell's name first for sales purposes. However, the book did not sell well.

WORKBOOKS

Workbooks are included only when they (1) are given a title, (2) contain at least 24 pages, and (3) are
copyrighted. Workshop and seminar outlines are not included because they are not copyrighted; they are considered work sheets for seminars, classes, or workshops.


This is the student workbook for a seminar by the same title. It is designed to teach the scientific principles of Church Growth to laymen. It is a four hour seminar taught to Sunday School teachers and pastors, usually Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. There are blanks for students to fill-in as a learning activity, supported by answers communicated by lecture and overhead transparencies. Over 60,000 attended the seminar between 1984-1988.


This is a student workbook for a seminar for Sunday School teachers covering the topics: how to motivate, prepare lessons, laws of teaching, communication, etc. It is a four hour seminar taught 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Only 2,000 copies were printed. Towns wanted to teach Church Growth, which he felt others could not do, and leave teacher preparation to others who could do it.


This is the outline for a one day seminar that Towns taught to pastors, denomination executives, and church board members. It contained highly technical material on Church Growth, especially the research Towns had done on Church Growth. A charge of $100 per person was made and the seminar was held in Five Star Hotels. Towns felt the sophisticated environment, the large fee and technical support elevated Sunday School and Church Growth to a higher "state of the art" and motivated the participants to initiate the principles he communicated.
These are the notes and outline that Towns uses in teaching doctoral level classes (D.Min. courses at four seminaries) and the intensive module for laymen on leadership. The material is in book manuscript form, but contains outlines with each chapter for class participation and/or lecture outlines.

WORKTEXTS FOR LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LIFELONG LEARNING


A companion volume to the videotape series: Church Growth I, EVAN 510. This worktext, as the others in this section, amounted to a book-length manuscript that students could follow as they viewed on television this graduate level accredited course. Each worktext included an introduction, objectives, outlines for each of the 24-30 lectures, tests, reviews, and course evaluations. There is a close parallel between the video-tape lectures and the worktext.


A companion volume to the videotape series Soteriology, THEO 720.


A companion volume to the videotape series Survey of Christian Doctrine, THEO 555.


A companion volume to the videotape series Ecclesiology/Eschatology, THEO 725.

A workbook/worktext designed to be an amplified outline of the videotape series The Gospel of John, NBST 697.
CHAPTER FOUR
LETTERS OF ASSESSMENT

This author wrote to 28 authorities to assess their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the contributions of Elmer Towns. These educators were chosen because they were recognized as authorities in Christian education and Church Growth. Fifteen authorities chose to respond. The idea of using recognized authorities was suggested by Dr. Ray Anderson and the Dissertation Tutorial Committee, August, 1987. Since those who were surveyed represented no systematic or comprehensive population, there is no attempt to draw any scientific conclusions for this survey. It simply represents a survey of opinions from leading authorities in Christian education and Church Growth.

A personal letter was sent to each authority in December, 1987, asking them to respond with a personal letter to answer these four questions:

1. What has been your relationship/connection with Elmer L. Towns?
2. What are the strengths of his contributions to the church in general and your discipline in particular?
3. What are the weaknesses of his contributions?
4. Will he have any continuing influence, if so, what is it?

After the letters were received an attempt was made
to classify and rank their responses (see appendix C for letters of response). Again, this is not done for a scientific conclusion, but to give meaning to their diverse responses.

It was determined that they observed twelve general positive responses, categorized from question number two, asking for their assessment of his strength. There were four general negative responses that categorized question number three, asking for their response to his weaknesses. Then two responses were noted to see how they viewed his contributions in Christian education and Church Growth. Finally, three responses were categorized to determine: (1) those who had no knowledge of his contributions, (2) those who knew about his contributions, but had not read his works, and (3) those who said they knew nothing negative in his contributions.

The letters were read to determine an assessment of the opinion each made. The responses were classified into three categories:

1. Casual opinion
2. Average opinion
3. Strong opinion

The opinions were classified to determine two things. The depth of conviction that was made about the contribution of Towns and the assessment that the writers attempted to make about each strength or weakness.
Several gave single opinions that were not noted by the other writers. These single opinions were not placed in a category for ranking, but noted separately in the section "other observations."

OPINION OF STRENGTHS

1. A Contribution in Broad Areas: Some felt one of his strengths was his breadth and contribution of several fields/areas. Larry Haag of Liberty University noted, "He treats a diversity of topics including Church Growth, youth ministry, and theology in an informative and quite practical manner." The biographical sketch will note a diversity of ministry experiences in a variety of places where Towns has worked. This suggests his experience mandated his wide interests and motivated him to a broad writing schedule.

2. The Ability to Communicate: Those who mentioned this as a strength gave strong opinion to this area. Don Campbell, Dallas Theological Seminary observed "his excellent abilities in the areas of educational administration and classroom teaching." Bill Sullivan, Church of the Nazarene added this opinion, "He is concise, he is clear, he comes from a foundation of scholarship and experience and blends all these factors into a powerful communicative impact. As a writer he is not only clear and
to the point, but has the knack for knowing what to write about."

3. **Practical.** When it comes to applying his message to his readers or listeners, it is obvious from the biographical sketch that Towns has a burning desire to do the work of God, whether preaching, teaching, administering, or writing. In his chosen discipline of Christian education and Church Growth, he is not merely a research scholar. He usually was involved in evangelism or Church Growth before/after his research into the topic. Kent Hunter, President of North American Society of Church Growth included the terms "projects" and "programs" in describing the practical contribution of Towns.

4. **Scholarly Research.** This area was observed by Larry Haag, Liberty University, who observed, "The thoroughness with which he presents well researched and documented information in a clearly outlined and readable format makes his books a logical choice of classroom use." C. Peter Wagner, Fuller Theological Seminary noted, "I believe Elmer's two great strengths are his tireless ability to do strenuous field research and then his ability to communicate his findings through writing and speaking."

5. **Role Modeling of Churches.** In constructing a chart (SEE Appendix D) for assessing the strengths of opinion of Towns' contributions, this column was added. This factor
was mentioned by two sources, first because Towns has written seven books that describe or analyze local churches. He is best known for *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes them Grow*. A second source is the description of Towns' contribution to the role-modeling of the church in the biographical article on him in *Church Growth: The State of the Art*. However, none of those who were surveyed mentioned this area explicitly. Perhaps this contribution is not perceived as a strength by Church Growth authorities, but perhaps it is an opinion of strength among pastors and laymen who work directly with local churches.

6. **Ability to Motivate.** The ability to motivate with the result of one's research is perceived as a strength by these responders. Kent Hunter noted, "His contribution to the church in general involves stimulation of ideas and imagination that light fires in the heart and lives of church leaders to help them consider strategies and programs that otherwise may not ever have been considered." However, in this strength a weakness is ever threatening. We can question research that is tied to motivation because the researcher may misread data in an attempt to get results that produces an effect.

7. **Emphasis on the Large Church and Growing Churches.** This seems to be a perception at the pastoral or lay level
because only one authority commented in this area. When observing the continuing influence of Towns, Bill Sullivan noted, "the practices that he set in motion of tracking the largest and the fastest growing churches will continue."

8. **Innovative and Pioneering Research.** This area does not deal with research method or the discipline one gives to a research project, but the desire to pioneer new fields or do research in an innovative topic. Wagner mentioned that when the Lord was leading him to research Church Growth principles in the USA, "I looked around to see who knew anything about it. Elmer Towns surfaced to the top of the list."

Charles Sell, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, mentioned Towns' research "in sociology of the church, something he was into before others." Campbell observes Towns, "was one of the early writers on Church Growth... and growing Sunday Schools... he laid a foundation on which others have built."

9. **Strengthening the Evangelistic Aim of the Church and Sunday School.** Kent Hunter noted this as a continuing influence of Towns, "Elmer can and I believe will have a powerful voice among not only independent Baptist, but also other independent churches that need to hear that prophetic challenge to go beyond themselves and touch the lives of unchurched people with the Gospel of Jesus"
In many of the responses, the contributions of motivation, evangelism and practical aspects of Church Growth are interwoven into one observation. This makes it hard to categorize, but does lead the reader to the general conclusion that he strengthened the evangelistic aspect of the church in both practical and theoretical ways.

10. Christian Education. Seven of the respondents mentioned Towns' association with several Christian schools and publications. They noted his devotion to furthering not only his education but that of Christianity in general. Towns feels that Christian education is the church’s obligation as a means of carrying out the Great Commission i.e., to "Teach all nations."

11. Church Growth. At least half of the men who responded to the letter mentioned Towns’ activities in promoting the Church Growth movement in North America. C. Peter Wagner provided the definitive statement in a personal interview with this writer. He claimed that "Elmer Towns was writing about Church Growth before anyone else. He was the founder of the movement in North America." (See the chart of Responses in Appendix D for the strength of responses concerning Town’s involvement in the Church Growth movement.)

12. Contribution to Fundamentalism. The authorities were mostly aware of his ecclesiastical move from evangelicalism
to fundamentalism (Sell), that he is a voice for fundamentalism (Kent Hunter) and that he seems to be moderating that position in reaching out to mainline churches, Pentecostal communities and to Evangelicalism (Sullivan). In mentioning Towns' continuing influence, George Hunter pointed out his "most obvious contribution is with and for the Independent Baptist."

13. General Positive Opinions. The above items were mentioned in the outline because they were observed by more than one authority. This section features those opinions that were mentioned by only one authority.

While alluded to under the area of practical, Ted Yamamori mentions Towns' ability to "popularize" church growth. Charles Sell mentioned his contribution in church sociology and his influence in establishing the Department of Christian Education at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

Bill Sullivan mentioned the Church Growth Seminars that Towns has held around the United States 1987-88. Sullivan had attended one and commented on its effectiveness.

OPINION OF WEAKNESSES

1. Limited Influence by Association to Fundamentalists. This was a theme voiced by several authorities. While a strength of Towns was his influence on fundamentalism and
his general evangelistic influence (perhaps a dominate characteristic of fundamentalism), it was observed he should have not limited his influence so narrowly. Sell noted in the past tense that he, "no doubt had an influence among the mainline evangelicals when he was at Trinity." Sell then continued, "he left to continue a relationship with the fundamentalists... his writings reflected a fundamentalist viewpoint." Sell then identifies himself as an evangelical and concludes, "The strengths and weaknesses (of Towns) that I could see would be the strengths and weaknesses of the fundamentalist movement."

Ken Gangel now a professor of Christian Education at Dallas Theological Seminary served with Towns at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He notes, "He has linked himself rather thoroughly with the Bible Baptist movement... which represents the fundamentalist wing of evangelicalism. Within that framework, where I perceive Christian education tends to be somewhat weak." (sic)

Kent Hunter also sees this as a weakness, but notes Towns is mellowing from the hard stance of fundamentalism.

In the area of Church Growth, Elmer provides a interesting witness to those who are somewhat distanced from the Independent Baptist world. His zeal and energy have been mellowed and in that sense have provided an interesting balance to an outsider's perception of Jerry Falwell, who only recently is showing that same kind of sensitivity. Elmer's openness and acceptance of others has a flower of encouragement for those of us in the Church Growth movement.
2. **Limited His Influence by Subject Matter.** Some felt a weakness was his limited area of study. Haag, who has been a missionary to Brazil and teaches Cross-cultural missions, wants Towns' study of Church Growth expanded. "Dr. Towns should extend his Church Growth publications to include more information concerning what is happening outside the borders of the United States."

3. **Too Broad in Subject Matter and Research.** On the other side of Haag's charge of narrowness, is the opinion of several authorities that Towns has been too broad in interest and research. Kent Hunter observes, "Because of the zeal that drives him so rapidly through projects, there is a hint of shallowness." Later in his letter Hunter adds, "Often times he has been all over the waterfront dabbling in so many areas that he has softened his effectiveness."

Yamamori reinforces this opinion, "While Elmer Towns has written widely, it would have been good if he could have concentrated on fewer subjects and dealt with them in more depth."

4. **Honorary Doctorate.** Gangel noted that Towns limited his effectiveness by receiving a honorary doctorate. He wrote, "I have also thought for a long time (and mentioned with some frequency to him) that Elmer Towns puts some limits on the effectiveness of his ministry by accepting a honorary doctorate before or instead of earning a legitimate doctorate."
OBSERVATIONS REGARDING RESPONSES

The fifteen responses were varied in their length, form and content. First, most of them elaborated on strengths and mentioned few weaknesses. This is probably because even though they are recognized authorities, they are also his friends or fellow workers.

A second observation was unexpected. Some of the authorities confessed they had not read, or were not familiar with the contributions of Towns. This is in contrast to C. Peter Wagner who has probably read every or most books on the topic of Church Growth and its related fields. It would be assumed that an authority would be familiar with the personalities, writings and influences in his field, whether he agreed or not with the conclusions of the source.

A third observation deals with the noted absence of references to Christian education and/or Sunday School by some responders. Perhaps this is because they became acquainted with Towns after he left the field of Christian education.

Most of the observations were broad and/or general. This fourth observation perhaps gives insight to Towns' contribution. One of the criticisms was that he spread himself out too thin, so it is only natural to expect a response that observed broad influence.
A fifth observation deals with the positive and negative opinions of his fundamentalist affiliation. If this issue were pushed farther, it would be noted that of all the Church Growth authorities, Towns has done more with theology than most others. He has written a popular theology book and a comprehensive textbook for seminary classes. This theological grounding would obviously carry over into Church Growth, so that his position would be recognized.

A sixth observation deals with his connection with large churches. Towns has written a number of articles and books on the super church (mega church, meta church, multi-congregational church), but little was said in the responses by the authorities. Over the years, Towns has felt somewhat defensive because he is so strongly identified with the large church that some have thought he was negative to the small church. Apparently Towns is not correct in his assessment. Church Growth authorities do not identify him only with large churches, but with Church Growth in general.

The last observation deals with scope. No one authority mentions all the strengths and weakness of Towns. As a matter-of-fact they usually mention only one or two in each category. This implies he is not perceived completely by authorities for his total contribution. Therefore, this study has performed a service in gathering a comprehensive
understanding of the positive and negative contributions of authorities in Church Growth.
AUTHOR'S ASSESSMENT

The following is this author's summary and evaluations of the strengths of Elmer Towns and is written at the suggestion of the Tutorial Committee. They felt that a summary by the author of this project should follow the letters from authorities in Church Growth.

1. A focal point for Church Growth in North America. Towns has taken the initiative to give direction, motivation, and substance to Church Growth in North America. Dr. C. Peter Wagner said in a personal interview, "When I got into the Church Growth movement, I began looking for sources and information on what was happening in North America. Elmer L. Towns was the name that kept coming up in my study. Towns was the pioneer in Church Growth in North America and gave it attention before others." Towns gave focus to Church Growth by his listing of the largest Sunday Schools, articles on the fastest growing Sunday Schools, and other charts related to external growth, i.e., growth of Sunday School attendance, Sunday School enrollment, church membership, Church Growth, and growth of finances. Also, Towns gave focus with his constant use of illustrations of growing churches and Sunday Schools.

2. The defender of the large Sunday School/church. In the late 1960's many people thought that large was not good, and that small was biblical. When it was unpopular to
advocate large churches, Towns came out and listed them, wrote about them, and defended their existence. He wrote an article on why churches should be large, giving reasons for their growth and size. In the late 1960's, Towns predicted that the 1970's would be the decade of the large church. He saw explosion of the number and influence of large churches. From his study of dissertations in the area of sociology he noted that there was a movement in America towards synergistic growth, and this movement usually began in the business community, moved to the government, then to education, and finally affected the religious community. Towns indicated that synergistic growth was evident in the shopping center, then in the bureaucratic departments of government, followed by the large sprawling universities, and finally would manifest itself in the super church. More than numbers, it included multiple ministries, multiple ministers, and multiple places of ministry. According to Towns' first listing of large Sunday Schools, there were only 97 churches in America in 1968 that averaged over 1,000 in attendance. Towns indicated that in the late 1960's he knew about all of the large churches, had visited most of their campuses, and was acquainted with their pastors. Today the number is so large, he cannot keep up with them, and is constantly discovering new large churches coming into prominence.
3. A focus on the role of the Sunday School teacher.

Towns indicates that the Sunday School teacher is a shepherd, not just a Christian teacher following the job description of public school teachers with a biblical curriculum. Towns has used the phrase, "the Sunday School teacher is the extension of pastoral ministry into the life of the Sunday School class. Everything the pastor is to the larger flock, the Sunday School teacher is to the Sunday School flock." Towns has influenced America to move back to the original conception of Sunday School teaching. Originally, a Sunday School teacher was more than a teacher, he was a coach, big brother, protector and spiritual guide. During the 1950's the Sunday School movement began drifting toward a content orientation. The clique was often heard, "When is a school not a school, when it is a Sunday School." Towns felt Sunday School leaders reacted to this criticism and pushed the movement towards academics. Towns feels because of the strong academic orientation, it began to decrease in attendance. (However, this is not the only reason for decrease.) He felt that by emphasizing a shepherding model, he could influence it to return to the original foundation. In several of his books, speaking engagements, and articles he used illustrations, arguments, and biblical reasons why the Sunday School teacher should see himself in the role model of a shepherd.
4. **Focus on the laws of Sunday School growth.** The laws of Sunday School growth are well known and often repeated in Southern Baptist circles. Towns learned these laws while attending First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, studying under Dr. W.A. Criswell, Pastor. These laws are not original with Towns, but he has taught them as his basic strategy for ministry and growth. He has popularized these laws outside of Southern Baptist circles. One of the first tracts he wrote emphasized the laws, and over the years he has rewritten these laws and repeated them in seminars, articles, and messages. The laws emphasize Sunday School classes of approximately one teacher for every ten pupils as an overall average. Towns sees that a number of Sunday School classes will strengthen the church. He sees them fit into modern Church Growth strategy in several ways; (1) the use of gifted laymen (teachers and administrators) in ministry, (2) the employment of the cell and celebration (small Sunday School class and larger worship experience), (3) growth by addition of cells (Sunday School classes).

5. **Redefining the Sunday School.** One of the major contributions of Towns is his constant refining, redefining, and calling attention to the role of the Sunday School. He has popularized the definition, "Sunday School is the reaching, teaching, winning, and maturing arm of the church." Originally, the American Sunday School union used
the fourfold outline to describe Sunday School as (1) reaching, (2) teaching, (3) winning, and (4) training. Towns changed the emphasis on training (which was institutional) to maturing (which emphasizes the individual). In attempting to keep a broad focus on Sunday School and helping churches from becoming lopsided in their view, Towns has focused on the fourfold definition of Sunday School. He notes that when a Sunday School becomes too evangelistic (the reaching or winning arm) they usually suffer in attendance because there is a lack of stability in teaching and maturity. The opposite is also true.

6. A high level of motivation and communication. The author was not aware of this strength because he was not on the receiving end of Towns' ministry, not being a pastor or a church worker. However, in talking with others this seems to be one of his strengths, his ability to communicate what he knows. This is perhaps because of his deep conviction, total life commitment, and ability to prepare himself before he speaks. The ability to motivate is not usually tied to gimmicks or external appeals, rather it is tied to his ability to communicate a message. Therefore, motivation and communication go hand-in-hand.

7. His broad appeal is based on a commitment to the Great Commission. The letters from authorities in Church Growth emphasized that one of his strengths was his broad
background, but others also pointed this out as one of his weaknesses. No matter which perspective is taken, Towns always comes back to the Great Commission in theory and practice whether he is talking about the Sunday School, evangelism, or the Church. Even though he has detested the label "Mr. Sunday School" he always returns to the Sunday School. Whether he was writing a continuing article for five years in Christian Life called, "Sunday School of the Month," or publishing a list of "the 100 Largest Sunday Schools," or presenting a seminar on "A 154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing," he always came back to local church evangelism as reflected in the Great Commission. This is evidenced in his F.R.A.N.gelism program of outreach through the Sunday School. His attendance campaigns such as Friend Day, Outreach '82, and F.R.A.N.tastic Days, also are an outreach through the Sunday School. Even though he is broad in his churchmanship, he always returned to the Great Commission as his heartbeat for evangelism.

8. Attention on the role of leadership in Church Growth.

One of the first persons to focus attention on the role of leadership in Church Growth was Towns. He gained national prominence from a fundamentalist background, specifically the Independent Baptist churches. These churches are characterized as "Pastor led" churches. Often, the pastors are criticized for being dictatorial, charismatic (in a
sociological sense), or manipulative. Whatever, it is a fact that the pastors of the independent churches are strong leaders. Coming from this background, Towns saw that leadership affected growth in churches and emphasized this fact in his writing. But, because of his background, earlier his contribution was at times criticized or ignored. However, that is now not the case. Within the last 20 years there has been a growing recognition of the role of pastoral leadership in growing churches.

In Towns' defense, he has always felt that the pastor should never be the dictator, should never sign church checks, nor become involved in handling the church's finances. He has defined leadership as influence, and a pastor can influence a finance committee, or influence the Sunday School teachers. To Towns, leadership is never control, and those who control churches, usually keep attendance below 100. He has pointed out that as the church grows larger, the pastor must learn to adapt his role or influence. Towns also defines leadership as plural, meaning leadership involves two people, the leader and the led, the shepherd and the sheep.

In examining leadership, Towns coined the phrase, "Hot poker" to describe how a pastor learns pastoral leadership. He indicated that the poker becomes hot when placed in the fire, so a man gains leadership aspirations and ability by the influence of great leaders. Towns has
quoted Dr. Beacham Vick, Pastor of Temple Baptist Church, Detroit, "Great pastors build great churches, average pastors maintain average churches, and poor pastors hurt churches."

9. **A prolific pen.** Towns can be characterized as a disciplined, hard worker. Not only does he love to write, he has disciplined himself so that it has become a habit of life. The vast amount of material that has been written by him is evidence of this fact. He has indicated that every time he studies for a new class and teaches it, he takes time afterwards to write it out into an article, book, or has it printed in some form. Many of the books that he has written first were extended class notes that were handed out to his students. As they critiqued his lectures, interacted with his ideas, and gave him feedback, his material became better.

10. **Theological foundation for Church Growth.** Towns was a theology major at Dallas Theological Seminary and never departed too far from those roots. He has written a laymen's theology book, *What the Faith is All About*, a 52 chapter textbook for laymen to be used in Sunday School or adult education classes. Some Bible institutes use it as a textbook. Also, he has written a theology text for seminary classes, *Theology for Today*, a 1,000 page textbook that is used in the introduction of theology. The process of systematizing ideas carries over into Church Growth.
There he tries to systematize methods, principles, and techniques of evangelism, Church Growth, and ministry. Towns is not a deductive theologian, i.e. arguing from creed to cause. Rather, he is an inductive theologian, gathering data, analyzing data, arranging it into principles, testing it and finally establishing principles. This inductive approach to systematic theology is the foundation by which he does research into Sunday School and Church Growth.

11. Stepping from theory to practical application in the Church. Towns has never been one who has satisfied with staying in the area of theory. Even though his books are filled with footnotes, including documents from dissertations, original research or practical notations, Towns always wants to move beyond theory to application. His work in the practical is very evident in the books he has written for Sunday School teachers, laymen, and pastors. Also, his Sunday School campaigns, Sunday School curriculum, and leadership training curriculum all demonstrate his commitment to make Church Growth practical.

12. Church Exposure. Towns is known for writing about churches in his books, articles and in other sources. But this pre-supposes a certain commitment on his part to travel to churches to experience them firsthand. His journalistic experience is reflected in reportorial work that motivated him to visit churches firsthand before
writing about them. This helped him to write with feeling and insight, rather than just stating the facts and conclusions. In his travels to churches, he spoke in 76 of the 100 largest churches in America. In traveling abroad, he has spoken in nine of the ten largest churches in the world. Towns is quick to indicate that he did not speak there because he is a great preacher, rather, he spoke there because he was a friend of those pastors, having traveled there to study their churches and write about their results.

13. Influence on Church Planting. Early in his writing about great churches, Towns realized that many of them were planted by the pastors he was interviewing. Therefore, his study of the large church gave him motivation to study church planting. Out of this came several books. The notorious title, Getting a Church Started in the Face of Insurmountable Odds with Limited Resources and Unlikely Circumstances, was a title that he describes with a chuckle. While visiting in a Christian bookstore he noticed many of the books on Christian themes had cute titles. He wanted to give this book a substantive title that not only was unforgettable, but really became the thesis, i.e. that explained the function of the book. Then Towns indicates, "People cannot forget that they can not remember the long title of this book." His other book, Getting a Church Started, is one of the books that
Dr. C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary recommends to students in his church planting seminar. In addition to this, Towns helped to found Liberty Baptist Fellowship for Church Planting, Inc., a church planting organization that grew out of the Liberty schools. Since they organized this church planting agency, over 450 Liberty graduates have gone out to plant Baptist churches.

14. Dedicated Christian. The final reason for the strength of Towns is his dedication to Jesus Christ. It is the motivation for all he is and does. He often quotes the reason that focuses on the faithfulness of God in accomplishing anything in his life, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," (I Thess. 5:24). This is the fact that gives interpretation to all he does.
CHAPTER FIVE - A
SUMMARY - THE RESPONSE OF ELMER L. TOWNS

I have read the biography and chronological presentation and feel it adequately reflects the facts and interpretation of my life and generally reflects the content that is found in my writings. I will attempt to answer the five questions that you have asked.

1. What progress of thoughts do you see in the content of your writings? I see that very early several Church Growth concepts were clear in my mind. First, I had a very clear understanding of the Sunday School as the reaching, teaching, winning, and maturing arm of the church. I have never changed that opinion. Also, I saw that the growth of the church was by adding small Sunday School classes, which today is called in Church Growth terminology, growth by cells. When I first began working in Sunday school, I was broad-based in my approach giving seminars, writing articles, and teaching workshops in the areas of methods of teaching, administration, children's work, youth work, and was concerned about psychology, motivation, and the broad base of educational philosophy. Over a period of years, I sharpened the focus of my attention and energies toward the Sunday School as the "reaching arm" and "winning arm" of the church. This does not mean that I am no longer concerned about the total
Sunday School program. It is just that I cannot keep up with every facet of Sunday School, so I have focused on the outreach of the Sunday School that is an expression of Church Growth. This is another way of saying that I have become more concerned about evangelism as expressed in numerical growth, biological growth, and transfer growth than about nurture. However, I do not minimize nurture because internal growth is foundational for all numerical growth.

Very early I wanted to write in every aspect of Christian education. I wanted to write in the area of children's work, hence I wrote a book called *Team Teach With Success*. Also, I wanted to write in the area of youth so I wrote *Successful Youth Work* and *Teaching Teens*. Also, I wanted to write in the area of adults, so I wrote *Successful Ministry to the Young Adult*. However, with time my focus became more on evangelism and Church Growth.

When I was first converted, I was committed to the reformed position of Calvinism as expressed in the five points of TULIP (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints). As I emphasized evangelism, my theology shifted or my theology changed and this brought about the emphasis on evangelism. This involved a shift from amillennialism to pre-millennialism. This involved a shift from covenant theology (the covenant of works and the
covenant of grace) to dispensationalism (recognizing generally, although not specifically, the seven generally accepted points of dispensationalism). This shift in theology was never just a theoretical shift in my thinking; it effected denominational alliance and practical Christian service. I see two sources that brought about this change in my life. First, the southern roots of revivalism and evangelism were impacting my theology. By this I mean my original introduction to Christianity involved a commitment to soul-winning, revivalism, the deeper Christian life. My commitment was to a person - Jesus Christ, and this resulted in an emotional expression of Christianity. I did not find this expression in covenant theology, nor did I find it in Calvinism. This strong emotional commitment to Christianity effected my interpretation of Scripture. At the time I did not recognize the impact it had on my theology, but now as I look back over the past 30 years, I see the influence of my conversion experience on all of my Christian experiences.

There was a second source that directed my move to towards Church Growth. As my theology became clearer in its dispensational orientation, I changed my church relationship. I became a Baptist pastor and was immersed in water to join a local church. I see baptism by immersion as a New Testament mandate, not an Old Testament covenantal relationship. Hence, my change in church
allegiance came out of my theology, but also I see it as an outgrowth of the Great Commission. The Great Commission stands as the hinge between the Old and New Testament. No longer do I look at an Old Testament theology as the mandate; rather I see my mandate as the Great Commission to go make disciples, baptize people, and teach them (as expressed in Sunday School). Hence, as my perspective of dispensationalism (and with it baptism and the Great Commission) clarified, so my commitment to evangelism and Church Growth deepened. At the same time, I was moving away from writing and doing youth ministry, moving toward Church Growth and evangelism, perhaps because I was getting too old to be a youth worker. I think this progression is evidenced in my books and articles.

2. What are you emphasizing now that you did not previously emphasize? As mentioned above, I have a stronger emphasis on evangelism and Church Growth than I had previously. Also, I think that a Baptist position produced stronger local church commitment than does my former theological persuasions. Obviously, I am very committed to the local church, more so than I was when I went through an interdenominational Bible college, and an interdenominational seminary. I think that my commitment to the local church and Church Growth came more from my evangelistic commitment than from the schools I attended. As a matter-of-fact, I am a graduate of two Methodist
institutions. The Methodist experience heightened my commitment to evangelism and to the deeper Christian life but not necessarily intensified my commitment to the local church.

Some people perceive me as shifting in my views on separation, i.e., my views on cooperation with non-Baptist churches. One observer suggested that I am moving away from the narrow position of fundamentalism. This is not fact; this is perceptual. I have always gone to non-Baptist churches for Sunday School and pastors' conventions. As an illustration, long before I came to work at Liberty University, I was speaking at Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Wesleyan type groups for Sunday School and Church Growth conferences. After I came to Liberty University, which is perceived as an ecclesiastical separatist institution, I continued to speak for groups that were non-fundamentalist in persuasion. This included evangelical and mainline denomination groups. As a matter-of-fact, a history of my speaking engagements will indicate that I have always had a very broad ministry. The problem is perception. People have thought that I was narrow as the Independent Baptist persuasion with which I identify, but this has never been true. I am committed to the Independent Baptist position, however I am not anti-Charismatic, anti-Pentecostal, nor anti-Wesleyan. I am committed to my beliefs, but a strong commitment to Christ
keeps me from being intolerant or in opposition to others who believe differently about doctrines that are not essential to the fundamental nature of Christianity. I have called this "the Doctrine of Blessability." I believe God blesses those of different persuasions, not because of their accuracy of Scriptural interpretation or a legalistic view of the Christian life, but God blesses a person because of his love for Jesus Christ and his faith in Him.

3. What are you no longer saying that once was important to you? There are certain methods that I no longer emphasize because I believe that they are no longer effective. I believe methods change but principles do not change. (Principles are eternal and are found in Scripture; a method is an adaptation of an eternal principle to culture.) I am no longer emphasizing the bus ministry, vacation Bible school effectiveness, door-to-door visitation, Sunday School contests, and the Sunday afternoon youth meeting. These are all methods that are no longer effective. However, I still believe that they all have some place in the church ministry, but they are no longer as effective as they used to be. I use the phrase "anointed methods." God has methods that He uses to reach particular groups of people in certain cultural conditions. The effectiveness of these methods are described as "hot" or "anointed." As conditions change and the people change, certain methods lose their effectiveness. They "cool" down
in public perception. God has to evolve new methods to become effective to meet new needs.

At one time I used to say that saturation evangelism was the way to get evangelism done. I interpreted saturation evangelism as, "using every available means, to reach every available person, at every available time." I agree with Jerry Falwell who says, "saturation evangelism does not work as effectively as it used to." Many of the methods tied to media have become too expensive for the local church. That is, it is too expensive to take a full page advertisement in the newspaper, to use television, or to use mass media to saturate your community with the Gospel. Hence, I do not talk about saturation evangelism as a viable method for the 90's.

Also, I do not talk about the bus ministry as an effective tool for the 90's. Whereas one or two buses can give a congregation sensitivity to the poor and an outreach to certain children that might not otherwise be reached with the Gospel, I think that evangelism can be more effective through other methods, rather than just using the busing technique.

I once said that every church should be on radio, and perhaps television if possible. However, I realize this is no longer an effective method of reaching a community as it was in the past. As a matter-of-fact, as America is becoming more relational, rather than confrontational, I
believe that using networking evangelism (web evangelism) is the most effective way to reach lost people for Jesus Christ through the average American church.

4. What are the key events that became turning points in your life? Obviously, the key event that turned around my whole life is my conversion to Jesus Christ on 25 July 1950. The power of my conversion has given impetus to me for the past 38 years. Nothing of influence can be compared to that event.

With that event comes my engagement and marriage to Ruth Jean Forbes. I believe that God brought a woman to my life who has spiritual gifts, who has ministered to me, and has supported me in my ministry. She has what I basically needed in the way of spiritual gifts, and her major ministry has been to her husband and her children. Without her support and companionship, I could not have begun to do any of the things that I have done. At no point do I consider her a detriment in my desire to serve the Lord. If anything, she is a challenge and a spur to do more for God in a better way.

Columbia Bible College had a two-fold effect on my life. First, their emphasis on the deeper Christian life supported my desire to know Jesus Christ and to make Him known. A desire for the deeper Christian life could make a person a mystic, if he did not have a common sense approach to life. There is a sense in which all Christians are
mystics, in that they ask a person, Jesus Christ, into their lives. One does not become a mystic in an emotional sense, i.e., looking for a relationship to God apart from one’s senses and the Word of God, but a Biblical mystic in that the person communes with Jesus Christ through the Word of God. The second contribution of Columbia Bible College was to teach me the English Bible. They had a deep commitment to study the Bible for itself, not from commentaries or other sources. Several teachers motivated me to master the English Bible.

The one year training at Northwestern College, Minneapolis, Minnesota, also changed my life. They taught me the world of books, teaching me to read the great Christian masterpieces. The Bible courses were refreshingly different from Columbia Bible College because they introduced me to the great world of commentaries and evangelical resources. Here I was exposed to dispensationalism which became a foundation for a change in my theology from a covenant reformed orientation, holding a Calvinistic five-point view of salvation to a dispensationalist. This laid a foundation for a change from being a Presbyterian minister to becoming a Baptist minister.

Dallas Seminary made a great impact on me. First, I learned systematic theology at Dallas. Also, I perfected my study of Greek and Hebrew. And third, I learned how to
write papers. We were given assignments to write exegetical studies of passages from the original text. Most of the assignments that I wrote were 30 to 40 pages in length. Hence, this discipline prepared me for a writing ministry of the future.

While at Dallas I attended Southern Methodist University to verify by a higher graduate degree, my undergraduate degree that was unaccredited. I enrolled in the Master of Arts in the School of Education. This broadened my perspective of the liberal arts. I had come through a Bible college and a Christian liberal arts college, but I had never faced the reality of a world of knowledge without indoctrination. This process taught me to think inductively. To write a thesis at Southern Methodist University I had to write inductively as opposed to the deductive approach I had used at Dallas Seminary. To change one's strategy was a life broadening event. It taught me to look at facts and follow them to an automatic conclusion, wherever they would lead. The inductive approach had a great influence on my orientation to theology and the science of Church Growth. I believe that theology, the queen of sciences, should be based on the inductive approach of gathering data.

Another event that changed my life was teaching at Mid-West Bible College. Because I was an Associate Professor of Christian Education, I attended the National
Sunday School Association Convention in Columbus, Ohio, 1959. That convention opened up the whole world of the Sunday School movement in the North. I had been trained in the Southern Baptist Sunday School movement in Dallas, Texas. However, I heard Henrietta Mears, Clarence Benson, and other great evangelical leaders. The following year I was asked to be secretary of the St. Louis Sunday School Committee that hosted the National Sunday School Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. As a young 25 year old college professor, I was exposed to and worked with the leaders of the evangelical Christian education world. This obviously effected my perspective and strategy of reaching America. The convention we held in St. Louis was the largest that the N.S.S.A. had held to that time.

The next event that changed my point-of-view was becoming president of Winnipeg Bible College, Winnipeg, Canada. This was the second oldest college in Canada, but was in serious financial trouble. When I went to the college, they had a very small budget, three or four teachers, but yet a rich heritage. As a young 28 year old college president, I was able to accomplish three or four things. First, we got the college accredited with the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges. Second, we were able to secure a $100,000 foundation gift to completely eliminate the college's debt. Third, we were able to secure a $50,000 foundational gift to underwrite the Chair
of Greek for five years. We laid the foundation for the beginning of a theological seminary. As a young man I found that hard work, dedication, and the commitment of many people could turn an old institution around. My view of fund raising changed in Winnipeg, Canada. Prior to this, I had felt that the "faith mission" approach was what should be done. This was the approach I learned at Columbia Bible College; I felt the college should only pray about money, not ask for money. Finally out of desperation I gave up that approach. I began an aggressive fund raising campaign that included an aggressive prayer campaign. God evidently blessed and the school turned around in recruitment, fund raising, and acquisition of buildings. When I saw that God blessed active recruitment and financing, I would not go back to the other perspective of just praying about money. As I work for Jerry Falwell, I hear many people complain about the constant way he asks for money. Because of my deep commitment in Canada, I feel that what he is doing can be led of the Spirit, just as much as others such as George Mueller, who did not ask for money.

Teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School added two or three dimensions to my life. First, I had not been a disciplined writer before this time. I had only written a few things. At Trinity I saw faculty that were committed to research and writing. They were challenging the thought
of men and making an influence for God. I determined to be as aggressive as any other faculty member at the school. I made a commitment that anything that I studied, I should write down and try to get published. As a result, I wrote a number of journal articles, telling my secretary this was for "influence." Also, I wrote a number of popular articles, telling my secretary this was for money. Because money was a problem, I drove myself to write Sunday School lessons, popular articles, and books, and my motives were not always absolutely pure. Sometimes I needed the money because "the baby needed shoes." But I feel that I did not become a word hack. I did not sell my soul just to write for the sake of writing. I wrote in my field and in my discipline. I wrote things that would advance the cause of Christ. I tried to work hard and spend many evenings in my study to produce three or four articles an evening. I learned how to market articles. But always, my commitment was to the cause of Christ.

At Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, I was surrounded by some of the best known leaders in the evangelical world. These people challenged me to excellence. I felt I was never worthy to be with them, but was always grateful for the opportunity to serve in the same school with them.

5. Who are the key persons who have influenced your thinking and writing? There are several people who have
influenced my thinking. First, I would point out that Mr. William Hatch, Professor of Bible, Columbia Bible College, conditioned my study of the Bible. I still hold him up as a role model, being among the best Bible teachers I have ever known. If I could teach like him, I would be happy. He always took the class from Bible facts to interpretation to application.

The second person is Dr. Edward Simpson, my advisor and Professor of Bible, Northwestern College, Minneapolis, Minnesota. During my senior semester, he walked us through a theological foundation of dispensationalism. The day-by-day interaction with Dr. Simpson, plus the other seniors changed me from being a reformed Calvinist with a very narrow view of salvation to a dispensationalist.

The third person who changed my life was Dr. W.A. Criswell, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas. I began attending this church as a licensed Presbyterian ministerial student. I had already served as pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia. Under the ministry of Dr. W.A. Criswell, I changed my view on baptism from sprinkling to immersion. His view of the baptism of the Spirit, i.e. that the Holy Spirit places us positionally into the body of Christ, became the basis for changing my view on water baptism. I was baptized in water because it fulfilled the symbol of my being baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. I got my vision of a large
church from this experience. Attending Dr. Criswell’s large church with its warm evangelistic fervor, yet the dignity of worship and the majesty of God planted within me a role model of what a church should be. I have never gotten away from the fact that the perfect church would be something like First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas.

Dr. Robert Walker, Editor, Christian Life made a profound impression upon my life. For 12 years I was the Sunday School editor of Christian Life. He taught me how to write in the active tense and to communicate through the written word. For several years Robert Walker took my manuscripts, edited them, and gave them back to me. He took time to show me why the things that I wrote were not effective. My writing was too much like term papers. He showed me how to make my writing effective. Walker had been a newspaper editor and he taught me to write in the world of journalism. This was not the role of an instructor, but the role of a coach. His practical instruction gave me a perspective of writing. Rather than crushing my desire, he ignited my appetite to write better.

Dr. Jerry Falwell has impacted my life as much as any man. His vision for the work of God is greater than any I have ever seen. On so many occasions, whether raising money or recruiting students, his vision of what can be done is greater than mine. I have seen him stretch my faith, as we planned together for Sunday School goals or
for projects at Liberty University. I have seen the ministry grow from less than $1,000,000 a year to over $100,000,000 a year. I have seen his vision grow from a desire for a television studio, until it materialized into a television network. Falwell has taught me two things, first faith and second vision. I would be quick to confess that I do not have great faith and just as quick to confess I do not have great vision. However, it is greater than what it was when I first met Falwell.
CHAPTER FIVE - B

AUTHOR’S CONCLUSION

The study of the life and written contributions of Elmer L. Towns has proven interesting and hopefully, beneficial. Just as the reader will gain insight into Towns for this project, it has also given Towns insight about himself that he did not have. By way of example, at the beginning of the interviews, he said that he had been connected with one periodical, Christian Life. As research unfolded the facts, he had been associated with eight publications i.e., had his name identified on the masthead. After this project was begun and before it was finished, a ninth one was added, Christianity Today. Beginning January 1988, his name is listed as Consulting Editor.

Two observations are given why Towns did not realize this information. First, Christian Life magazine gave him the most recognition and became the platform where he was most influential. He noted that on several occasions he was introduced as an editor of Christian Life, yet the school where he taught was not mentioned. But there is several reasons why Towns forgot about the others. He is a pioneer who always looks to the next task. The only history that seems to intrigue him is the history of the church. He wants to use that knowledge to help others.

When this paper was begun, Towns thought he knew all
the projects that he had been involved with. But that was not the case. Books, articles, and written contributions kept popping up. Each time he would say, "Oh my goodness, I forgot about that." He does not have a written list of all his writings. He was more interested in writing them, than keeping records of all of them.

However, most of his works were in one place (approximately seventy five percent). They were in his scrapbook that was kept by his secretaries or wife. Each time someone ran across an article written by Towns, it was clipped out and placed in a file marked "scrapbook." At the end of a year (or two) it was bound into a hardback volume. However, many articles did not get in the scrapbook. Many times he did not get a copy of the magazine where the articles were published. Some were lost. Others were borrowed from the scrapbooks and never got returned.

Towns would write one or two articles in an evening and mail them off to magazines. He claims to have received as many rejection slips as he had articles printed, with having mailed off some articles at least fourteen times. When they were accepted, he got a check (usually five to twenty dollars). Many of these articles he never saw in print. They usually appeared in Sunday School publications and smaller denominational publishing houses. Since they are not included in a periodical index, there is no way to
find them. Also, Towns wrote several articles, and by using a mailing list of denominational Sunday School or Church Growth leaders, sent them a copy of the articles with an explanation that the article would be printed free in their publication. He used the Sunday School Research Institute and Church Growth Institute for the project. The article "Evangelism in the Eighties" was reprinted in twenty one different publications and "The Nine Futures of Sunday School" was reprinted in seven publications. All of these variables in the publishing strategy of Towns make it impossible to find and list every article he has written.

This project not only dealt with the success of Towns, but also his failure. He says he remembers more of his failures than successes. Whether there are more failures than successes depends on how the projects are measured. However, a true pioneer is a risk-taker, and always wants to try new things. He never lets failure daunt him. When he began a Sunday School museum in Savannah, Georgia, and could not get tourists to visit his building, he invited pastors from around America to come to Savannah for a Sunday School seminar held in the museum. Thirty four people paid $18 registration each to attend. Then he took the seminar on the road to churches and motels. He attempted to keep the Sunday School Museum open, but after losing $27,000 in twenty seven months, he shut it down. Out of failure came new ministries and the
success of his Sunday School seminars.

Towns also attempted to launch a weekly newspaper column for the rural weekly newspapers. He mailed regularly copies of an article "I Believe," to 157 weekly newspapers in Georgia. Other states were added but this project was also dropped for lack of support. Towns also considers the low sales number of certain books a failure. Even though he considers writing a book an accomplishment, any lack of receptivity is always disappointing.

Two things that can be characterized of Towns, it is his determined attitude and hard work. He does not claim to be a great writer, a good proof reader, or even a gifted writer. He claims to be a disciplined writer. He says, "A book is the fruit of a disciplined life." When asked why he wrote so much, so often, he gave the following as answers: First, he claimed that his writing grew out of his commitment to Christ. As a young Christian he remembered staying up late at night wasting time. When he got saved, he committed himself to give as much time to God as he used to waste. He has never been reluctant to give up sleep or television entertainment to serve God by writing.

A second reason for his hard work in writing is a basic principle he often repeats, "I'd rather be influential than famous." Growing out of his deeper life background, he always struggled with legitimate self respect and sinful self desire. Writing was one way to be
influential and not be present to receive the applause or commendation of others. However writing was also a way to influence people. Towns remembers driving past a city of 10,000 people, thinking if he wrote something that 10,000 people could read, he could influence the whole town. If he preached in a church in the town, he would influence very few of the population's 10,000. Every time he writes an article or book, he sees that town of 10,000 in his mind.

There is another reason why he writes so much; it has to do with his commitment to daily accomplishment. He often tells beginning writers, if you can write a letter a day, you can write a 365 page book a year. Towns makes use of time to write: he could be called a compulsive writer. In the waiting room of an airport, he will write two pages while waiting to board a plane, then write several more pages on the plane. He will then write a page or two in the motel while waiting to be picked up for a meeting where he will speak; finally he will finish a few pages before bed. He has learned to write a chapter of a book in a day where other people think they have no time for creative work.

Money is a fourth reason why he wrote so voluminously. Two of the colleges where he taught were "living by faith" institutions, and when the money did not come in, he was not paid. In one instance he worked for the U.S. Post Office in St. Louis. However he figured, why work eight
hours for money, doing what someone else can do? Why not do what no one else can do? So in time of plenty, he remembered the give goal shift, so he forced himself to write. The author of this project remembers his father going to his office to write Sunday School lessons all day. He would come out approximately every hour with work for his wife to type. The children were promised that when he finished we would go to Disneyland and spend the $420.00 he made on that project. His children always realized the fruit of his writing labor. On summer vacations, during those long boring car rides, Mother would drive, Dad would sit in the front seat and write articles about Christmas or Thanksgiving. He explained that was the time of the year when magazines bought those stories.

However the bottom line was ministry. Towns wrote because it was his ministry for Christ. Since he wanted to be a complete minister, he spoke, counseled, studied, and taught. Everything he learned about he wrote down. Because he wanted a big ministry, he intended to have a big writing career.

When asked if he was a workaholic, he said that if a workaholic is married to his work, or is compulsive and cannot help himself; then no he was not a workaholic because he was married to Christ not his work and he was not compulsive, but could do anything Christ wanted him to do. He said that he has a higher motive than work.
The authorities noted the broad contribution of Towns as both a strength and weakness. He never intended to be an expert in Sunday School or Church Growth. Rather, he loved Sunday School because of its influence on him as a child, and he wanted to help others experience the same growth, training, and experiences. As a pastor he worked diligently in Sunday School, and when he became a Bible college/ seminary professor, he tried to teach and motivate his students to that same love of Sunday School. It was only a natural step to write articles about Sunday School, the use of curriculum, and to lecture at conventions. Even today when he is called "Mr. Sunday School," he is extremely uncomfortable with that distinction and has tried constantly to keep people from using it in reference to him. He feels his contribution is much broader than Sunday School. It would include his writings on the Christian school movement, his influence on the Christian college and seminary movement, his writings in theology and Bible, and speaking at deeper life conferences.

The same can be said for Church Growth, he never intended to become an author in the area. Because of his love for evangelism, he loved to see its effect i.e., growing churches. He was always troubled when there was no Church Growth and tried to understand why. That heightened his love for Church Growth. Also, he was associated with First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and First
Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas. These institutions gave him a subconscious love for large churches and their influence on their city and their members. His love for growing churches and his natural inclinations toward journalism caused him to write about them.

Towns sees his spiritual gift (serving) as teaching and exhortation. He does not see himself as an evangelist and has preached only two or three evangelistic crusades in his ministry. These he classifies as less than successful. However, there have been times in his ministry when he testifies to an unusual outpouring of the Holy Spirit in evangelistic results. He remembers a youth convention in Springfield, Missouri, where the invitation continued for approximately one hour after his sermon. Teenagers continued to come to the alter for salvation and rededication. He remembers approximately 150 conversions in that evening. He says these times were evidently from God and not from his preaching (which he classifies as teaching). Towns sees his ability as exhortation and teaching in seminars, conventions, and in higher education.

Towns can be described as a "churchman." He loves the church and is committed to its health. He loves to preach and teach in both small and large churches. He has always been faithful in attendance for Sunday School, worship (A.M. and P.M.) plus Wednesday night prayer meeting. He has written practical articles and books to
help the church be more effective, and has written articles, books, and Sunday School curriculum to help the church in its maturity.

Robert Walker, Editor of *Christian Life* once criticized Towns for his dissertation on local churches. He said that Towns made a church sound like a person with life and breath or that he thought it had the power of intellect, emotion, and will. Walker did not like the way Towns frequently interchanged the "pastor" and the "church" in his writing style. Later, Walker came to realize it was Towns' strength. The church that Towns wrote about was life, and pastors who read his stories got excited about that life.

Even when Towns helped co-found Liberty University with Jerry Falwell, he wrote that a "Christian college is the extension of a local church at the collegiate level." College life, excellence, and service should reflect the same as found in a church. Since Towns felt that the church ought to be in a constant state of service, he felt the college should be exciting. He used this phrase to describe the new college, "Academic excellence and action-oriented."

Being a churchman forced Towns to be broad in interest, writing and service. Yet, a church is like a body, it grows. So, he is interested in Church Growth. A body reproduces itself, so he is interested in Sunday
School and evangelism. And since the human agent of reproduction is the pastor, Towns has spent his life in higher education training young people for the ministry. Because he loves the head of the Church, Jesus Christ, and serves Him in the Church, Towns can be called a churchman.
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LIST OF AUTHORITIES

*Dr. Joe Aldrich
**Dr. Winn Arn
***Dr. Warren Benson
**Dr. Lee Bruckner
   Dr. Donald Campbell
   Dr. Kenneth Gangel
   Dr. Eddie Gibbs
***Rev. Larry Gilbert
***Dr. Arthur Glasser
   Dr. Larry Haag
***Dr. Howard Hendricks
   Dr. Kent Hunter
*Dr. George Hunter, III
***Dr. Kenneth Kantzer

**Dr. Bill Matheny
*Dr. Donald McGavran
**Rev. Vernon Olson
**Dr. Bryan Richardson
*Dr. Lyle Schalier
**Dr. Frank Schmitt
   Dr. Charles Sell
**Dr. Timothy Starr
   Dr. Bill Sullivan
   Dr. John Vaughan
   Dr. C. Peter Wagner
   Dr. John Walvoord
***Dr. Ted Ward
   Dr. Tetsunao Yamamori

*Suggested by Fuller that we contact

** Did not respond
APPENDIX B
December 7, 1987

Dear

I need your help in completing my doctoral dissertation project for the Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary. Your help would also be a contribution to the academic discipline of Christian education and Church Growth/Evangelism. My topic is an annotated bibliography of the writings and contributions of Elmer L. Towns. My committee has suggested I contact you for a contribution to be included in my dissertation project. This is due to the fact that you are considered a leading authority in your discipline and your opinion would, perhaps, reflect authoritative insight on my topic.

Would you write a letter to me answering the following questions?

1. What has been your relationship/connection with Elmer L. Towns?
2. What are the strengths of his contributions to the church in general and your discipline in particular?
3. What are the weaknesses of his contributions?
4. Will he have any continuing influence, if so, what is it?

Elmer Towns is my father and I chose this topic because of my admiration for him, but also; he is a compulsive writer and has written so much on a vast number of subjects that I felt I was better capable of locating and cataloging his works. However, I am well aware of the problem of influence, both consciously and unconsciously, of nepotism. In discussing this problem with my committee, they suggested I write to a number of authorities, such as yourself and include their opinions in my dissertation.

Please direct your response to:

Mr. Stephen Sam Towns, Assistant Professor
Liberty University/School of LifeLong Learning
P.O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, Virginia 24506-1803

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Mr. Stephen S. Towns
APPENDIX C
December 17, 1987

Steven S. Towns
Liberty University
PO Box 11803
Lynchburg, VA 24506-1803

Dear Steve,

Thanks for your note with its questions concerning your father and his impact on his generation. Certainly his name is one that is recognized across the Christian community for his involvement in Christian Education and church growth. As you suggest, he has been a prolific writer and, I'm certain, has impacted the lives of many people.

I have never met your father, and so I really have no relationship with him. Certainly he has made a significant contribution to the educational mission of the local church. Not knowing him or the magnitude of his writings, it is difficult for me to evaluate the strengths or weaknesses of his contributions.

Certainly his influence will continue for a time. Undoubtedly, he will live on through some of his more definitive works.

Blessings on you and your study.

Joe C. Aldrich
December 21, 1987

Mr. Stephen S. Towns, Assistant Professor
Liberty University/School of Lifelong Learning
P.O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, Virginia 24506

Dear Stephen:

Your father Elmer Towns entered the Seminary as a student the year I became registrar and assistant professor of Bible. At that time I was teaching first-year students only. The courses included hermeneutics in the fall semester and Bible exposition (Genesis-Ruth) the second semester. I recall your father who was in both courses as a conscientious student with a zest for life and a drive to succeed in whatever ministry he felt led to undertake.

After graduation from Seminary with a ThM degree in May 1958, my contacts with Elmer Towns were quite limited. Chiefly, I followed his career through the books he published in the field of Christian education and church growth. He was one of the early writers on the subject of church growth and by his careful, analytical studies of growing Sunday schools and churches, he laid a foundation on which others have built. My more recent contacts with Elmer Towns have enlightened me concerning his excellent abilities in the areas of educational administration and classroom teaching.

I hold Elmer Towns in high esteem and consider him one of the outstanding graduates of Dallas Theological Seminary.

Cordially yours,

Donald K. Campbell
President

DKC:em
December 16, 1987

Mr. Stephen S. Towns  
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary  
Box 20000  
Lynchburg, VA  24506-8001

Dear Stephen:

Merry Christmas to you, to your Dad and the whole family. I'm happy to spend a few minutes assisting in your research project and will try to make my remarks as helpful as possible.

1. Elmer Towns and I have an interesting relationship. In 1960-61, we both chaired the respective Christian Education Departments of Midwest Bible College in St. Louis and Kansas City Bible College. At the end of that year the schools merged but any conflict in the Department was avoided since Elmer was called to Winnipeg. Nine years later, he was at Trinity and I began teaching one day a week in the '69-70 school year and then moved up to found the School of Christian Education in the Fall of 1970. Again, Elmer had been Department Chairman but this time, perhaps sensing a somewhat imminent move again, requested that I and not he direct the new School. Though our philosophies are at times worlds apart, we worked harmoniously together that year and the next year.

2. I think the strengths of Elmer's contributions specifically relate to a definitive wing of evangelicalism, or more properly, fundamentalism. That was not true until he left Trinity. But since that time he has linked himself rather thoroughly with the Bible Baptist movement and then with Liberty University which, though somewhat different, still represents the fundamentalist wing of evangelicalism. Within that framework, where I perceive that Christian education tends to be somewhat weak, he has properly rendered an inestimable service which could not be afforded by those of us more in the mainline. Within the framework of that group of churches, he provided significant service regarding Sunday school ministry, church growth and teaching process.
Mr. Stephen S. Towns  
December 16, 1987  
page two

3. I'm not sure I would want to use the word "weakness" but rather "limitation." I suspect that quite knowingly he carried out the aforementioned link with a specific branch of the body of Christ and thereby tied his credibility to those people. Again, I am quite confident Elmer has said many things of value to those churches which could not have come from me or others outside the realm. I have also thought for a long time (and mentioned with some frequency to him) that Elmer Towns puts some limits on the effectiveness of his ministry by accepting an honorary doctorate before or instead of earning a legitimate doctorate. He is certainly not the first nor the last to do this, but I dislike it in every case.

4. By modern day standards Elmer Towns is still a young man. I have every confidence that his influence at Liberty University and among its constituents will continue and that his influence within the field of Christian education will go on long after his death (assuming the Lord has not yet come) through his books and other writings.

Sam, I have attempted to be as candid and honest as I can in these pages. Please keep in mind that I have not spent any time with your Dad since 1973. It is quite possible therefore that my comments and observations are by this time, outdated.

Every blessing in your work and ministry,

Warmly in Christ,

Kenneth O. Gangel, Ph.D.  
Professor and Chairman  
Department of Christian Education

Handwritten at bottom of letter: (Merry Christmas!)
December 11, 1987

Mr. Stephen Towns  
Liberty University/School of Lifelong Learning  
Box 11803  
Lynchburg, VA 24506-1803

Dear Stephen:

Thank you so much for your letter of December 7th inviting me to comment on your father’s contribution to the whole area of Christian education and Church Growth/Evangelism. Regrettably, I am not able to be of a great deal of help as I have only been here in the States for the past three years, during which time I have only met your father fleetingly on three occasions, each in connection with the American Society for Church Growth. Furthermore, I have to confess that the only book I have so far read of your father’s has been the one that he edited with John Vaughan and David Seifert, “The Complete Book of Church Growth.” I hope you won’t interpret my lack of response as indicating any lack of appreciation for the contribution of your father, it simply reflects my own ignorance.

I do hope that you get other more helpful responses. I believe that Dr. Peter Wagner would be of most help as far as Fuller faculty is concerned as he has had many contacts with your father over the years.

With the warmest Christian greetings,

Yours sincerely,

Eddie Gibbs  
Assistant Professor of Church Growth

EF/rg
January 6, 1987 (sic)

Mr. Stephen Sam Towns, Assistant Professor
Liberty University School of Life Long (sic) Learning
P.O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, VA 24506-1803

Dear Mr. Towns:

It is a delight for me to respond to your recent letter requesting information for the Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary. I personally have been acquainted with the writings of Dr. Elmer L. Towns for more than fifteen years.

Since July 1, 1981, it has been my privilege to be associated with the School of Religion at Liberty University of which Dr. Towns is Dean. During these years, I have taught in both the undergraduate and graduate schools under his leadership.

Dr. Towns is a writer of many talents. The variety of materials he has published is impressive. He treats a diversity of topics including church growth, youth ministry, and theology in an informative and quite practical manner.

Dr. Towns' work in the areas of church growth and leadership training has been most beneficial to my own teaching ministry in the area of missions and cross-cultural studies at Liberty. The thoroughness with which he presents well researched and documented information in a clearly outlined and readable format makes his books a logical choice for classroom use.

The following suggestion is not offered as a criticism or weakness in light of the numbers and variety of books from the pen of Dr. Towns. It would be helpful, however, to all of us who teach in the area of missions and cross-cultural studies if Dr. Towns would extend his church growth publications to include more information concerning what is happening outside the borders of the United States.

In my opinion, Dr. Towns will have a continuing influence in Christian Education simply on the basis of what he has
already placed in print. As he continues to revise and
update his material as facts and figures change, we who read
him and teach from his writings can only be benefited. No
doubt, additional books of equal value and practical useful-
ness will continue to flow from the prolific pen of Dr. Elmer
Towns. I personally hope they do. We all in Christian
Education and Ministry need the help he is so generously
providing.

Sincerely in the Harvest,

Dr. Larry E. Haag
Liberty University School of Religion

LEH/skc
December 16, 1987

Mr. Stephen S. Towns
Liberty University
School of Lifelong Learning
P.O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, VA 24506-1803

Dear Mr. Towns:

I regret I cannot help you much in regard to an appraisal of your dad's lifetime (to date) writings in church growth and related literatures - for the reason that I have not yet worked through his literature systematically. All of my impressions are positive, but they are impressions only.

Since I read more widely (church growth, evangelism, mission, communication, management and organization development) than deeply - there are important works, even classics, in each of those disciplines that I have not yet read. My reading agenda keeps me alive and aggressive, and also humble.

I do register one considered impression: that your dad's most obvious contribution is with and for the independent baptist contribution - and the significance of his work, especially for that tradition, is likely to be considerable.

Yours in The Faith,

George G. Hunter, III
Dean, E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism

GGH/pr
Dear Stephen:

Thank you for your letter of December 7, 1987. What an interesting project!

Your questions and their corresponding answers follow:

1. What has been your relationship/connection with Elmer L. Towns?

   Elmer and I have been acquaintances and friend (sic) for the last three years, as he has become involved in the Church Growth Movement and especially the North American Society for Church Growth.

2. What are the strengths of his contributions to the church in general and your discipline in particular?

   Elmer has many strengths, primarily his commitment to Jesus Christ and the expansion of God's kingdom. In that sense he has made a subtle and implied contribution of his leadership which models a zeal for hard work from the Lord and sense of urgency that the Gospel get out to others. His contribution to the church in general includes a stimulation of ideas and imagination that lights fires in the hearts and lives of church leaders to help them to consider strategies and programs that otherwise may not even have been considered. In that sense, Elmer stretches the horizon of those who meet him and those who read his works. In the area of Church Growth, Elmer provides an interesting witness to those who are somewhat distanced from the independent Baptist world. His zeal and energy have been mellowed and in that sense have provided an interesting balance, to an outsider's perception, of Jerry Falwell, who only
recently is showing that same kind of sensitivity. Elmer's openness and acceptance of others has a flavor of encouragement for those of use in the Church Growth movement.

3. What are the weaknesses of his contributions?

Sometimes, because of the zeal that drives him so rapidly through projects, there are hints of shallowness. Also, sometimes the success of using his ideas is a little overstated. Occasionally he gets too program oriented and is not concerned enough about the attitudinal, conceptual work that needs shaping among people. These weaknesses are far outweighed by his tremendous strengths.

4. Will he have any continuing influence, if so, what is it?

Yes, I believe he will, especially if he begins to focus his energies and his life. He is a man of tremendous energies, but we all need focus and direction. Often times he has been all over the waterfront dappling (sic) in so many areas that has softened his effectiveness. However, I believe that he is moving toward focus and as he does, I believe the major contribution he will make to Evangelicals in American is a strong Church Growth voice coming from an independent source. In these days there are many independent churches that are popping up around the evangelicalism. However, a lot of these are onclaves (sic) of sanctuary for those who are burned out on mainline denominations. That is fine, but the tone tends toward being inward rather than also including an outreach ministry. Elmer can and I believe will have a powerful voice among not only independent Baptist, but also other independent churches that need to hear that prophetical challenge to go beyond themselves and touch the lives of unchurched people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God's blessings on your work. I hope this helps.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Kent R. Hunter
President

God's blessings on your work. I hope this helps.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Kent R. Hunter
President
January 5, 1988

Mr. Stephen S. Towns
Liberty University
P. O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, Virginia 24506-1803

Dear Stephen:

Just a quick reply to your kind letter of December 7. What you are planning to do sounds excellent to me. I agree that for the Doctor of Ministry Degree the work that you plan to do is excellent. Your father, Dr. Elmer Towns, has had a noted career and is being greatly used by the Lord in awaking the church to its need for growth.

However, in view of the illness of my wife and the pressure of other duties, I must ask to be excused from writing the answers to the four questions which you proposed. Any careful answer of those questions would require much more time than I can devote to it. Futhermore, I am sure that you will get many other leaders who can answer those questions and that your bibliography will be a great contribution to the cause of effective evangelism in the United States and around the world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Donald McGavran

DM:bak
December 7, 1987

Dr. Lyle Schaller
Yokefellow Institute
920 Earlham
Richmond, Indiana 47374

Dear Dr. Schaller:

(Letter sent back with handwritten message at end.)
I'm sorry, but I simply am not that well acquainted with Dr. Towns' work or influence. LS
December 18, 1987

Mr. Steven Towns
Assistant Professor
Liberty University/School of Life-Long Learning
P.O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, Virginia 24506-1803

Dear Mr. Towns:

Thank you for your inquiry about my reflections on the ministry of Elmer Towns, your father. I think it's a great compliment to him that you would undertake to do what you are doing. I wish you well in this.

I knew your dad when I was at Dallas Seminary. My wife studied Christian Education under him at Dallas Bible College. It was a very positive experience for her. I've always greatly appreciated your father's love for our Lord and his enthusiasm for ministry.

When I came to Trinity I was the replacement faculty member for the position your father vacated. From time to time we have been in touch with one another at our National Association of Professors of Christian Education.

One of the first contributions that I think of your father making is in the publication of the youth book. His book on youth came out when there were very few good writings by evangelicals in this area. It was church-centered and had some very fine principles. I do not know about the number of books sold or its influence, but I do know that at the time it was book (sic) with a lot of promise considering the context.

Your father no doubt had quite an influence among the mainline evangelicals when he was here at Trinity. He certainly helped to shape this department. When he left to continue a relationship with the fundamentalists that he established through his research on the larger Sunday schools, I sort of lost touch with him. I, of course, was aware of him through his writings that reflected the fundamentalist viewpoint.
Certainly his greatest contributions were in the area of evangelism through the Sunday school. You will have no problem discovering his influence in this area of church growth.

It is difficult for me to evaluate either his strengths or weaknesses since Elmer has tended to operate outside the circles in which I travel. So any judgment there would be from my particular philosophical and theological view. The weaknesses and strengths that I would see would be the strengths and weaknesses of the fundamentalist movement in general.

Wishing God's best on you in your ministry there and your work.

Heartily in Him,

Charles M. Sell
Professor of Christian Education

CMS:kap

(Handwritten on the bottom of letter: I appreciate, too, his words in sociology of the church - something he was into before others.)
December 28, 1987

Steven Sam Towns, Assist. Prof.
Liberty University/School of Lifelong Learning
P.O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, VA 24506-1803

Dear Steve:

I am happy to respond to your request for information in regard to your Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary. I am glad for your dissertation project and believe it will be a significant contribution to Church Growth literature. I wish you success in your project.

My association with your father goes back to the late 50's and early 60's. I heard him speak first at the Rocky Mountain Sunday School Association convention held at Calvary Temple in Denver, Colorado. I was tremendously impressed with him on every occasion that I heard him speak. Following one of the meetings, I was invited along with a few others to a social gathering at the home of one of the pastors of Calvary Temple. It was during that time that I first had opportunity to visit with him informally, and of course you are able to determine a great deal more about a person in a social situation like that than you can simply from his speaking. I was impressed with that setting and came to have tremendous respect for Dr. Towns. I have not had much personal contact with Dr. Towns, across the years, except to read the writings that have appeared from time to time in magazines and in books. I have been influenced by his writings and particularly by a footnote in one of his books regarding the reason that churches grow. Out of the thousands of pages I read in church growth literature, that single statement stands out as one of most important statements that I read.

In the last three or four year (sic) our association has increased through the North American Society for Church Growth. I have attended all of the meetings of that association, and I believe he has attended all, except possibly the first one. At those meetings I have had opportunity to visit with him personally. So I suppose the
simplest answer to the first question is that I have been a casual acquaintance and an admirer of the ministry and writings of your father.

I think that his strengths which are apparent to me are in three primary areas. Number one, he is an excellent communicator. This is true both in his public speaking and in his writings. He is enthusiastic, he is concise, he is clear, he comes from a foundation of scholarship and experience and blends all of these factors into a powerful communicative impact. As a writer he is not only clear and to the point, but he has a knack for knowing what to write about. He has that unique ability to choose a subject in which people are interested.

A second strength which I believe he has is his ability to analyze data and experience and interpret it. His insights into religious practices in America has (sic) enabled him to help many ministers, as well as lay people, understand what makes churches grow. Recently, when I heard him speak at one of the seminars that he was conducting across the country I was impressed with his ability to analyze the thinking in America today and relate it to the church’s role and understanding of it’s (sic) role in today's society.

A third ability which I think is quite remarkable is his adaptability. I see this most dramatically in his ability to move from the Sunday School circuit into the Church Growth fellowship. I think it is also seen in his ability to work in a seminary, like Trinity and then to move to Liberty. I see it also reflected in his ability to work with a wide variety of constituencies across America. Adaptability and flexibility is a rare quality, particularly in a leader like your father.

In terms of weaknesses I really do not care to even attempt to enumerate any weaknesses because I really don’t see any. As an admirer of Elmer Towns I have not given any thought to what his weaknesses might be. I do come from a different theological tradition than he comes from and so I suppose that there might be some differences there, but those are marginal.

Your final question concerns any continuing influence that he may have. I think that the practices that he has set in motion of tracking the progress of the largest and the fastest growing churches will continue. I think that he has
focused the attention of most churches in America on the fact that large churches in America are on the increase and as long as that is true there is going to be a great deal of interest in knowing what the progress of those churches is.

Of course, his books will perpetuate his influence for some time to come. I suspect that there are still a number of books yet to be written that may have even greater influence than the ones he has written in the past. Only time will tell that.

Most important of all, I believe, will be his involvement in the North American Society for Church Growth. When he becomes president of that organization a year from now, I believe that he will set a new pattern and a new direction for the organization. My guess is that he will give the organization a lift and a burst of enthusiasm that it needs, and because I think that church growth is on the cutting edge of what is happening in American religion right now, I believe that that (sic) will perpetuate his influence for many years to come. So his continuing influence will be not only his writings and some of the projects that he put in place, but I believe also will be his leadership in the church growth movement in America.

Steve, I hope this helps you some. As you can see I’m an admirer of Elmer Towns and have only good to say about him, and in that regard I may not be the most scholarly critic, but surely someone else can supply that type of data if it is needed.

Again, I wish you success in your project and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a blessed holiday season. May God’s rich and constant mercy be yours throughout 1988.

Sincerely,

BILL M. SULLIVAN

BMS/fjd
February 8, 1988

Stephen S. Towns
LIBERTY SEMINARY
P.O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, VA 24506

Dear Stephen (Sam):

THANK YOU for the opportunity to be a contributor in your research for your D.Min. at Fuller Seminary. I am especially grateful to be able to share a few words about how your father has multiplied his influence and ministry through my own.

My first contact with your father's ministry was through his book, The 10 Largest Sunday Schools while I was serving as pastor of University Baptist Church in Iowa City, Iowa. Our average attendance was less than 100 in worship each week when I went there as pastor serving the community of the University of Iowa in 1969. We were a mission church that had been without a pastor half of its ten year history. Your dad's book was a powerful encouragement to an already aggressive vision for growth in a community where less than 5% of the church population was practicing evangelical. As a highly mobile university community, nearly a third of our congregation moved every year. We began an evangelistic bus ministry and increased attendance to nearly 200 during peak periods. Soon, all of my Sunday school and bus workers knew the name Elmer Towns.

After serving the congregation for nearly four years (more than any former pastor), I accepted a call to a large Memphis, Tennessee church in a rapid racially changing community. This was no place for wimps. The congregation had experienced two splits within the previous five years—one charismatic and one of Bible church doctrinal background. During my first year at Trinity attendance averaged near the 750 mark. While reading the Alabama Baptist state paper I saw where the religious education association had invited you (sic) father to be their annual speaker. That motivated me to make the half-a-day drive from Memphis with my Sunday school director and Church Training director for the meeting. The meeting was smaller than I expected, less than a hundred, but it allowed my small group to spend quality time with your dad. During that meeting I asked him to speak at a Friday
night Sunday school leader banquet, then my bus ministry meeting the next morning, and conclude with Sunday school and the morning worship service where nearly 1,000 would be in attendance. He mentioned that he normally did not spend that much time at one church but agreed to come.

That Sunday morning, while traveling to the airport, he invited me to attend his writers workshop at University Baptist Church in Gainesville, Florida (Carl George was pastor) intended for one person from each of the larger churches in the U.S. Prior to that conference, I had published two articles in Southern Baptist publications. We were asked to bring three proposed article topics with us to the write-to-publish workshop. Unknown to your father, I had written down ten proposed articles and three book ideas.

During the workshop I wrote my article, "Imagine...1,613 Church Buses", with all intentions of submitting it to Christian Life. You (sic) dad suggested two or three other minor publications but steered me from Christian Life since he already planned to publish another seminar participants article. After returning home to Memphis, I submitted the article to Jan Franzen, Executive Editor of Christian Life. As it turned out, after the editorial committee (which your dad was a member of) met for its regular meeting, the decision was made to publish my article. This was my first published article outside my own denomination. During the next months I wrote several other articles for Christian Life, Christianity Today, and several other publications. I will always be in your father's debt for his help and the encouragement of Christian Life's editorial staff. We were both surprised with how the Christian Life episode turned out.

Sometime about 1977 your dad asked me to organize a Sunday school growth conference for him in Memphis for the four state area. Again, on the way to the airport he asked me a question that would change my life. In the front seat of my car he asked if I would like to write a book with him. He actually had a revision of his Successful Sunday School book in mind. When I mailed him several lengthy chapters he thought it best for us to pursue a new book together. During one of his visits through Memphis, we met over my dining room table and outlined the book. That book became The Complete Book of Church Growth and was also my first book. We later brought in David Seifert. Your father asked me to serve as editor of the book and I shall always be grateful for the learning experience that provided. The book, The World's 20 Largest Churches, (sic) was birthed out of one of my chapters in The Complete Book - the chapter on "The Fuller Factor." Your father is my mentor in U.S. church growth and Peter
Wagner has become my functional mentor in world church growth. I will always owe that credit of gratitude publicly to both of these men. It is a gift that can only be repaid by doing well what I do while thanking these two men who have allowed me to stand on their shoulders.

THE STRENGTHS OF HIS CONTRIBUTIONS: Elmer Towns' greatest contribution is his ability to communicate bold vision and challenge for the church to act in faith on the possibilities and mandate of the Great Commission in this generation. The medium he has used most effectively is the stories (case studies) of pastors and people who have built great churches.

His ministry, in written form, will endure through his books, rather than his years with Christian Life. However, he has probably impacted eternity more through the information, motivation, challenge, and encouragement he has given pastors and other church leaders through the systematic listing of the largest and fastest growing churches in Christian Life and elsewhere. Currently, I feel that the seminars he conducts are having an equivalent impact through the strengthening of churches on a broad scale.

He has laid a good foundation upon which I and others have built. I have tried to extend what he has done for large churches in North America to large churches internationally. Without the models and solid foundation he laid with U.S. churches, information about international church growth would have been much more difficult to obtain - not impossible, but definitely more difficult. The World's 20 Largest Churches cost me personally approximately $6,000 to gather and confirm data.

WEAKNESSES OF HIS CONTRIBUTIONS: I will leave these with God to assess. When I wrote The World's 20 Largest Churches I was asked if I told warts and all. My reply then, and even now, is that the critics will take care of that. My commission from God is to identify the barriers these churches and their leaders have had to overcome in a very human way while also identifying those ways they have chosen to cooperate with God in the growth process. That willingness to "cooperate with God" allows them to grow and to become one among many models for others as they get a glimpse of God's solutions to overcoming growth barriers.

One criticism that has been directed against him is the omission on churches from some of his listings and estimation of information on other churches. My response to this is that I know in most instances he has tried to secure the best available information while being severely limited
in some instances with churches that have chosen to withhold information—sometimes for good reasons. This is a tough dilemma. This has been a strength of your father and I working together as a team in several projects as we have been able to compensate for many of these gaps in accurate date together. Some people will share with him more freely and others (sic) will share with me. In the end, all readers have benefited from the broader picture.

Elmer Towns is a credit to the Kingdom for his willingness to "cooperate with God" in writing living illustrations of bold faith in action. The mere trail of other books that have modeled after his—Eugene Skelton's, 10 Fastest Growing Southern (sic) Baptist Sunday Schools (1974), Lee Lebsack's 10 At the Top: How 10 of America's Largest Assemblies of God Churches Grew (1974), and my own, The World's 20 Largest Churches (1984)—attest to his significance.

WILL HE HAVE ANY CONTINUING INFLUENCE? Absolutely!! Sam, I strongly encourage you to become your father's biographer. Get a book into print about his life and ministry—while he is still ministering. Your ministry will become a significant contribution to the continuing influence of his ministry. We have never met, but I am grateful for you. We share much in common since we have benefited both from the strengths and weaknesses of your father's willingness to multiply himself through us. There are times when we have been his greatest joy and I'm sure times when we have been a disappointment to him. I consider myself a Towns by adoption. I shall forever be grateful for my friendship with your father. He is a unique gift to God's churches for our time—the best of times to encourage the growth of God's churches.

GRATEFUL FOR GOD'S GOODNESS,

John N. Vaughan, D.Min.
January 6, 1988

Mr. Stephen Sam Towns
School of LifeLong Learning
Liberty University
P. O. Box 11803
Lynchburg, Virginia 24506-1803

Dear Sam,

I'm sorry for the delay in answering your letter, but December was dedicated to writing my book on How to Have a Healing Ministry Without Making Your Church Sick. But now it's done! Let me answer your question.

1. I first knew Elmer through his writings. Back in the early 1970s I felt God was leading me to begin to apply church growth principles to the USA, so I looked around to see who knew anything about it. Elmer Towns surfaced to the top of the list. At that time he was the greatest help to me. I acknowledge this in the unrevised first edition of Your Church Can Grow, p. 18 of the Introduction. By the time the 1984 revision came out, the Introduction was different because times had changed.

I can't remember now when we first met personally (sic), but it was sometime before I wrote Your Church Can Grow, because I refer to a personal conversation with him on p. 67 (first edition). Since then our paths have crossed often, aided greatly by Carl George coming on my staff in 1978. Carl is a great admirer of Elmer. Our two closest associations have been in the D.Min. program and in the North American Society for Church Growth.

My strongest attraction to Elmer came with the publication of The Complete Book of Church Growth. I was flattered when he invited me to contribute a chapter. Then I was impressed with the chapter on the "Fuller Factor," because I did not know until then how he viewed our work—particularly since the name Fuller is not highly respected in independent Baptist circles. Then I was overjoyed when Elmer decided to merge what he was doing with the mainstream Church Growth Movement. This was like the L.A. Lakers getting Kareem Abdul Jabbar!
2. I believe Elmer's two great strengths are his tireless ability to do strenuous field research and then his ability to communicate his findings through writing and speaking. What he has produced by way of information on American churches has greatly advanced the Church Growth Movement.

3. I don't think Elmer has any weaknesses. There are areas where others in the field are stronger than he is and areas where he is stronger than others. Like all of us, he works within limitations, and that's why we need each other.

4. As the Lord gives Elmer health and energy, he will continue to be one of the top ranked leaders in the Church Growth Movement.

I feel that your work on your father is very appropriate. Now is the best time to do it, because he is at the top of his ministry, and you have free access to him. Just be sure you paint the picture as it is, including the defeats as well as the victories.

Warmly,

C. Peter Wagner
December 29, 1987

Mr. Stephen S. Towns
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
Box 20000
Lynchburg, VA 24506-8001

Dear Mr. Towns:

This will acknowledge your letter of December 7. While Elmer Towns, your father, is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and I have had some contact with him, especially at Liberty University, I am really not in a position to evaluate his strengths and weaknesses or his continued influence. Undoubtedly he is doing much for the work of Christ, but my opinion would not be based on sufficient evidence to help you in your studies.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

John F. Walvoord
Chancellor

JFW:llm
January 12, 1988

Mr. Stephen S. Towns
Liberty University
Box 20000
Lynchburg, VA 24506

Dear Stephen:

Thank you for your letter of December 7, 1987. I think it is most interesting that you are doing your dissertation research on your father.

I will try to help with the questions you have asked as best I can.

1. I first became acquainted with Elmer Towns when I contributed a chapter to his book, The Complete Book of Church Growth. It was not until 1987 that I actually met him but I had known him for many years by his reputation.

2. I feel that his strength in our area of church growth has been the popularizing of the essentials of church growth and making this information available to a wider audience.

3. While Elmer Towns has written widely, it would have been good if he could have concentrated on fewer students and dealt with them in more depth.

4. I am sure if one traces systematically his writings, he most definitely had a continuing influence. Because of his numerous writings, he has touched many people who otherwise may have been ignorant of the areas he addresses.

I hope that this helps you in your work.

Best wishes as you finish your degree.

Sincerely,

Ted Yamamori
Chief Executive Officer
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**STRENGTHS:**
- Broad
- Communicates
- Practical
- Scholarly Models
- Motivates
- Emphasizes
- Innovates
- Evangelism
- Church Growth
- Fundamentalism

**WEAKNESSES:**
- Limited
- Narrow Focus
- Subject Matter
- Honorary Doc.

**GENERAL:**
- Unknown
- Not Read
- Nothing Negative

1 = Casual Opinion, 2 = Average Opinion, 3 = Strong Opinion
RATE OF RESPONSE

STRENGTHS:
#1 Broad area of Effectiveness
#2 Ability to Communicate
#4 Scholarly Research
#6 Ability to Motivate
#8 Innovative/Pioneering
#11 Church Growth Emphasis

WEAKNESSES:
#1 Limited to Fundamentalism
#2 Narrow Focus
#3 Subject Matter Too Broad
#4 Honorary Doctorate

GENERAL:
#1 Subject Unknown
#2 Have not Read
#3 Nothing Negative

1 = Casual Opinion, 2 = Average Opinion, 3 = Strong Opinion

233
Stephen Richard (Sam) Towns  
101 Sandbridge Court  
Lynchburg, Virginia 24502  
(804) 237-0830

Date/Place of Birth: May 8, 1956, Dallas, Texas  
Social Security number: 229-85-8268  
Wife: Amy (Freeberg)  
Parents: Elmer L. & Ruth Jean (Forbes) Towns

Educational Background

SCHOOL
Bible Baptist High School  
Savannah, Georgia  
1974  High School Diploma

Baptist University of America  
Decatur, Georgia  
1978  B.A. in Theology

Longwood College  
Farmville, Virginia  
1979  M.S. Supervision

Dallas Theological Seminary  
Dallas, Texas  
1980  M.A.B.S.- Bible

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary  
Lynchburg, Virginia  
1981  M.A. - School Admin.

Pensacola Christian College  
Pensacola, Florida  
1985  Additional Ed.D. Studies

Work Experience

1985 - Present  Assistant Professor of Religion, Liberty  
University, Lynchburg, Virginia

1983 - 1985  Assistant Professor of Religion,  
Arlington, Texas

1982 - 1983  College/Career Pastor & 5th Grade School  
Teacher, Berean Baptist Church, Salem,  
Virginia

1980 - 1982  5th Grade School Teacher, Big Valley  
Grace Christian School, Modesto,  
California
Memberships

The Association of Christian Schools International (A.C.S.I.)

The Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (C.A.E.L.)

Phi Delta Kappa

Educational Study Tours

1971 - Old Testament Studies - Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Cyprus

1972 - English Revivalism - England

1979 - New Testament Studies - Israel and Jordan