

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

INNER-CITY EVANGELISM: A MODEL FOR REACHING GANGS FOR CHRIST

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

INNER-CITY EVANGELISM: A MODEL FOR REACHING GANGS FOR CHRIST

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This thesis will focus on the crimes and violence that have corrupted and invaded the world, in a life-threatening, devastating, and unprecedented way. Criminal gangs have made their presence in communities all around the world, which has resulted in mental corruption and spiritual and physical destruction. Regardless of how gang members are looked upon and viewed by society due to their daily ungodly activities, the author will address the importance of the church becoming dedicated to reach gangs with the gospel, which holds the power to transform the life of whoever hears it regardless of their past or present. The author will research this thesis project through surveys and interviews with gang members along with their family and friends. A model for reaching this group will be developed and give people the tools needed on how to reach inner-city gangs for Christ with the gospel.

ABSTRACT LENGTH: 163

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In most inner cities, it is very common to find churches on almost every corner. However, in the midst of each corner, one can also find people, places, and things that have been affected by gangs, touched by violence, or stricken by poverty. This project was designed with the intent of shining a light on the aiding efforts of the churches in the inner city to reach the unsaved and unchurched with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God has commanded all Christians to go and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone in the uttermost parts of the world. This command reveals that evangelism is not an option but a divine obligation that every child of God possesses. In regard to the location in the inner city, the trend of most churches is running away from gang members instead of seeking and looking for gang members to reach with the gospel. In the inner city, most people, including Christians, view gang members more as enemies and threats than as targets to introduce to Jesus by proclaiming to them the gospel. Alvin Reid proposed a question to readers in his book: “Is your church more aptly described as a hotel for saints, or a hospital for sinners. The body of Christ should have the same mind frame that Christ had as he walked on Earth.”¹ The Bible states “The Son of Man comes to seek and to save those who are lost.”² The lost was Jesus Christ’s target crowd, and reaching sinners was a constant thought on the mind of Christ. Luke 19:10 reveals that the purpose and reason of Christ’s coming was to seek and save those who are lost in sin, all who were lost in sin in regard to their location, occupation, gender, race, social

¹ Alvin L. Reid, *Radically Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), 20.

² Luke 19:10

status, or past history, Christ's desire was to find and save those who were lost to pardon them for their sins.

Jesus states, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you and, lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."³ Jesus himself commanded his disciples to evangelize and make disciples, and the relevance of this project is found right here in his command. In fact, evangelizing the inner city is so relevant that the last words that Christ gave to his disciples before he ascended up to heaven on a cloud to sit at the right hand of the Father was that "ye shall be witnesses unto me in both Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."⁴ The last words of Christ to his people were words about reaching sinners with the gospel. The Lord's last command should not be the church's least concern. Through the words and actions of Christ, it is obvious that the work of Christ and the work of the church is to both give the lost the opportunity to be saved from the penalty of sin and enter into a personal relationship with the Lord. Some principles geared toward inner-city evangelism and reaching gangs for Christ can help many in the inner city divorce a poisonous lifestyle and live a life that is pleasing in the sight of God.

This purpose of this thesis project to help gain insight to achieve what is needed to reach those in the inner city who have decided to join gangs with gospel. This is so they can one day become part of the family of the true and living God. This thesis will also review the literature regarding the measurement of the problems that are within the inner city. It will also observe and study the biblical and theological substance of evangelizing and reaching the inner city for Christ. There will be a focus on a model being developed as well as surveys taken from churches

³ Matthew 28:19-20

⁴ Acts 1:8

and ex-gang members. The information gathered will be used to enhance, equip, and edify pastors and leaders of churches to effectively use this model as an instrument for outreach ministry in the inner city.

The Statement of Limitations

The investigative research of this project will be limited by the particular criteria as follows: First, the churches included in this research are from the Midwest region of the United States of America. Churches are represented in the state of Indiana. Second, the ex-gang members who are included in this research are from the Midwest region of the United States of America and are from the states of Indiana and Illinois. This research is only an example and should not be considered to every church or every member of gangs in America.

Since this research is limited to only a particular region, some bias can be considered in this study due to different views. This study is limited in that all regions of the United States of America were not considered; neither were all gangs or cultures included. The investigator's research and findings could be assessed as biased as the church that he serves and region that he resides in is surveyed (Indiana).

This research project does not claim to be the cure-all solution for all churches everywhere to reach every gang in the entire universe. Different regions, cultures, communities, counties, cities, and neighborhoods have their own uniqueness and personalities, and because of this known fact, the author does not claim to put forth or possess a remedy for all. The labor that is exerted in this effort is to display some of the insights given by churches and ex-gang members and how they evangelized in the inner city, sharing the gospel, which resulted in bringing transformation to those who were lost in the pardon of their sin and living lives that consist of continuous hate and crime.

The Theoretical Basis for the Project

This project was commanded by Jesus Christ when he stated to his disciples, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you and, lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”⁵ The command in this scripture is the motivation of the body of Christ’s effort to reach the lost in the inner city. Other scriptures that ignite this divine endeavor are Mark 16:15, Luke 24:45–48, and Acts 1:8. All of these scripture passages highlight exactly what Christ has set forth and commanded all Christians to do. These scriptures should light a fire under all of God’s children to eagerly prepare to go out and spread the good news to all people, with the intention of making and growing true disciples. George Barna states, “The Great Commission is clear that we are to pursue the world rather than wait for it to pursue us.”⁶ It really seems that many churches in the inner city and beyond have this backward now of days telling word to come to church rather than the church going into the world looking for the lost. One purpose of this research is to observe the word of God along with literature as well as accumulate input from surveys so that churches and leaders in the inner city can effectively reach those who are lost and affiliated with gangs with the gospel of Christ.

The divine duty of the church carrying out the Great Commission is not the plan of man but the plan of Jesus for man. It is a plan that carries an objective far beyond just having people make audible statements of faith with only intellectual agreement. Neither is it enough just for those who are lost or affiliated with gangs to make the decision of accepting Christ. It is a plan

⁵ Matthew 28:19-20

⁶ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2005), 22.

that ultimately desires to glorify the Father, develop disciples, and build the kingdom of God.⁷ Along with introducing one to Christ, inner-city evangelism's goal is to rekindle and give a new life, a new heart, and renewed mind-set to those who have been locked out and left for dead mentally and spiritually. This model is an effort that is geared to change gang members' current condition and future positions spiritually, mentally, intellectually, socially, and financially. Like Christ, the church must make an effort to reach the total man, not just part of him, which can result in people being made whole.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”⁸ The task of the church is no different from his who is the head of the church. The church must always stay on track to reach and save those who are lost. The church must continue to seek for those who are separated from God. The word “seek” comes from the Greek word “zeteo,” which is a word that means, “to seek,” and in the context of Luke 19:10, it means to with one desires somehow to bring into a relationship with oneself.⁹ This implies that Jesus sought the lost so that those he found would ultimately have a relationship with him. The body of Christ has been commanded to go into the world to preach the gospel so that those around the world can have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. The life of Christ and the word of God display that an intimate relationship with Christ is the Father's greatest desire and also man's greatest need. The author Reid states that in every culture, among all times, the gospel answers the greatest human need.¹⁰ The apostle Paul stated, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God

⁷ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2005), 25.

⁸ Luke 19:10

⁹ Danker, Frederick William; Bauer, Walter, *A Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition.

¹⁰ Alvin L. Reid, *Radically Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), 43.

unto salvation to everyone that believeth to the Jews first and also to the Greek.”¹¹ The inspired word of God possesses the answer to man’s greatest need, which is a relationship with Jesus Christ, and presenting the gospel gives mankind that great opportunity.

Jesus serves as the church’s model for reaching the unchurched in the world. Author Reid writes about how Jesus’s life demonstrated different aspects to reach the lost. His incarnation demonstrated the very heart of God toward the ungodly. His death and resurrection demonstrated the lengths to which our Lord went to secure redemption.¹² His earthly ministry demonstrates the ardor with which he sought the lost masses. While Jesus was on earth, he was accessible to those who were down and out, which was seen with his dealings with the demon-possessed man in Gadarene, blind Bartimaeus, and the woman who had the issue of blood for twelve long years. Jesus’s ministry can be summed up and described as a ministry about reaching people. “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.”¹³ Like Christ, the church should possess a passion to reach people regardless of their background, race, social status, or culture.

Every year in inner cities all over the United States, thousands of young men and women who are part of gangs in the inner city are murdered or incarcerated for making the terrible decision of living lives that are immoral, unlawful, and opposing to why God created them. Therefore inner-city evangelism is an attempt to help one change their thinking, which is essential because one’s thoughts trigger one’s emotions, one’s emotions trigger one’s attitude, and one’s attitude determines one’s action. A corrupted mind is one of the things that makes the streets so dangerous in the inner city because many of those in gangs frequently have the thought

¹¹ Romans 1:16

¹²Ibid.

¹³ Mark 10:45

of death on their minds, whether it is about them being killed themselves or them killing someone else. Many of those who are part of gangs in the inner city do not make long-term goals because many of them do not think they will live very long lives. Toxic thoughts lead to toxic emotions, toxic emotions lead to toxic actions and toxic actions carry toxic consequences.

Therefore, this project is to help encourage and empower the body of Christ to reach and share the gospel to those who possess toxic mind-sets and lifestyles and make them disciples until they detoxify themselves. The Bible informs its readers how important it is to have proper the mind-set. The Bible says in “And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God¹⁴” The apostle Paul states, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus¹⁵.” These two verses show how vital it is to help one develop a new mind-set because if one can change their thinking, they can ultimately change their doing.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This section shows how important and relevant the topic of Inner City Evangelism: Reaching Gangs for Christ is to the ministry. The introduction emphasizes God’s commandment to the saints to evangelize, the condition of the inner city, and the ways that gangs have affected and impacted the inner city. Included in the introduction is the statement of limitations and the theoretical basis. The conclusion of the introduction will consist of a listing of scriptures, journals, literature review books, magazines, and Internet sources.

¹⁴ Romans 12:2

¹⁵ Philippians 2:5

Chapter 2: Defining and Approaching the Inner City

This chapter is geared to define and describe the inner city and its characteristics. It is to help inform readers about the inner city, what it consists of, and the issues that are presented within. This chapter also provides information of the framework and method that are used to approach those who are in the inner city with the gospel. This chapter is set to accomplish the task of gaining ideas and insights to help readers understand the inner city better, to ultimately better prepare churches with their approach to gangs in the inner city.

Chapter 3: Effects of Gang Activities

This chapter will expose and highlight how gang activity has affected and impacted the inner city in a negative way. This chapter will also show how immoral practices and behavior have touched and affected lives in ways that are destructive, damaging, and even fatal.

Chapter 4: Listening to What Gang Members Are Saying

Chapter 4 will take a look at some key insights of what those who are part of gangs think about the church, Christians, and the gospel. This chapter will help those who are a part of the body Christ gain some awareness and understanding about those they are trying to reach in the inner city

Chapter 5: Lesson Leading to Implementation of an Effective Gang Outreach Strategy

This chapter will present some suggested methods that could help and equip pastors and leaders of churches and aid them in their current efforts to reach gangs or spark some of them to do so. All that is revealed and discovered will be presented and discussed in this section. This

section also carries the purpose of presenting the plan as well as bringing all of the literature and research together.

A Review of the Literature

The completion of this project consisted of the writer investigating and reviewing various sources. The following is a look at the literature that will be involved in presenting an effective layout to gain helpful insight for inner-city evangelism and reaching gangs for Christ.

The Malignant Ideology: Exploring the Connection between Black History and Gang Violence is a book that points out how gang violence has become a vicious epidemic, and due to this epidemic, inner-city urban communities are imploding at an alarming rate.¹⁶ The author of this book believes that society has failed to acknowledge and address this epidemic in ways that are conducive to finding realistic solutions.¹⁷ The author of this book believes that the beginning of curing this epidemic is to truly understand what it is.¹⁸ Gang violence is not the cause, but it is a symptom of some disease-type problem. This disease has both affected and infected communities around the world with a malignant ideology. This book tackles how there is no way senseless murder should be common and part of normal everyday living in the inner city.¹⁹

Radical Unchurched is a book geared to help us locate those who are unchurched. This book is a powerful book for people to know not only the unchurched but also how to reach them. This book encourages God's people to reach the unsaved and equips the body of Christ to do the

¹⁶ Stephen J. Williams, *The Malignant Ideology: Exploring the Connection between Black History and Gang Violence* (2012).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Stephen J. Williams, *The Malignant Ideology: Exploring the Connection between Black History and Gang Violence* (2012).

¹⁹ Ibid.

work that Christ has commissioned them to do. This book shows the importance of planning and structure when it comes to reaching the u-church, which are vital elements in penetrating the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The author of this book strives to inform this generation on how important it is in this time to reach those who are living in this time. The author asked a very profound question: “Is your church more aptly described as a hotel for saints, or a hospital for sinners?”²⁰ This book is a true aid in helping the American church touch those who are in desperate need of being introduced and connected to Jesus Christ, who is the savior of the world.

A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community is a book that shares the great opportunity God’s people possess to share what Christ can do to release and free those who are bound and oppressed by issues in the urban community. This book also aids inner-city churches in sharing the gospel in a way that can thrive even in the midst of darkness and dilemmas in the inner city. The author encourages expanding the mission, stating that the time has come for leaders in the church to equip members in their church for evangelical work. The author says that he knows God’s grace revives his people to fulfill Christ’s commission in the inner city with those who are poverty stricken.²¹ This book also does a great job not just telling what is need to be done but how to strategically plan it. Also, this type of transformation that needs to happen in the inner city is something the church must plan and prepare to do. This author gives his opinion on how white Americans and middle-class African Americans look at evangelism in the inner city. The author ultimately highlights overcoming barriers and making sacrifices to fulfill the responsibility of equipping God’s people to proclaim the gospel clearly and accurately.

²⁰ Alvin L. Reid, *Radically Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002).

²¹ John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 1999).

*Oneness Embraced*²² is a book that will help readers see how the church possesses the answer on how to address racial, cultural, and social issues in the country and throughout different cities and communities, which have brought forth division instead of oneness. The book helps to try to bring forth unity, reconciliation, and oneness in Christianity. The author of this book strives to share the blessing and benefits of Christians working together, embracing differences, being unified, and working together toward a common goal. This book also contains both stories and history of the black church and black evangelicalism.

*Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*²³ gives its readers a glimpse inside the gang world, allowing them to see behind the scenes and inside the life of gang members, their minds, emotions, and actions. This book does not just look at the activities of gang members but also sheds light upon their mentality and psyche. This is a great book because it partially opens a door to let its readers see what attracts and draws one to thoughts and contemplation of joining a gang and going through the recruitment process. I believe that this book does a very good job to help one understand the camaraderie and loyalty that are exercised and expressed by those who are affiliated with gangs. The author drills the thought of gangs being not just a group of people coming together but a group of people who consider themselves a family, and each member of that family has certain responsibilities. Gangs around the world have grown to astronomical numbers in a multiplicity of ways, such as population, location, financial status, and power. This book helps give insight that could help a man or woman who is or was part of a gang escape the lifestyle and mind-set infatuated with destruction.

²² Evans, Tony. *Oneness Embraced*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011, 17.

²³ Sanyika Shakur. *Monster the Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*. New York, NY: Grove Press, 1993.

The book *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* is a book that does not claim to attempt to solve gang problems, but it claims to be a tool that strives to reach gang members to help them transform their lives to resemble what God had in mind. The author of this book gives great insight, pointing out that being a part of a gang can be addictive and most people who are active members have gang addiction. Most gang members are looking for love from someone or something else. In fact, many of them are themselves filled with shame, which is an emotion produced by the absence of self-love. This book helps you see how many of those who run the streets start or begin with a hopeless attitude and mentality. Look at them, as Boyle states, it is the “homies” who seem to live in the zip code of the eternally disappointing, needing no change of address.²⁴

*G-Dog and the Homeboys*²⁵ is a book on how a Catholic priest embraced his calling to the ministry of reaching young people in communities where abusiveness, poverty, single parenting, and criminal activity are not only present but common. It talks about gang violence as an epidemic in inner cities across the world—the sad thing about it is that the inner city is becoming more and more immune to that fact every day. This book points out how gang activities are moving a lot of males out of their families either by death or incarceration, and this is vital information because when the male is removed from his family, the community along with the family becomes less stable, which causes crime to increase rather than decrease. This book deals with the issues that come not only from gangs in the community but also the issues that come from attempting to reach those who are part of gangs in the community. There are

²⁴ Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (Toronto, CA: Free Press, 2010).

²⁵ Fremon, Celeste. *G-Dog and the Homeboys*. Albuquerque (NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

challenges, obstacles, and barriers that many as God's children have to face and overcome when it comes to sharing the gospel with those who are broken, abandoned, violent, and in poverty in the inner city.

The Master Plan Evangelism is an amazing book, which focuses on Christ's strategy of evangelism. This book attempts to show and share the heartbeat that the Lord has for evangelism. This book calls each reader to God's priority for his people, the priority to reach out in love to a confused and dying world with the good news of God's forgiveness and peace and hope through Jesus Christ.²⁶ In this book, Coleman deals with the overall process of evangelism, like training, commitment, what to expect, what one must overcome, and what is required to effectively evangelize.

*The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You*²⁷ is simply amazing to me. This book helps one not only see their true worth and value as a person but to also live out their purpose in life. The author of this book writes in a way that helps people see how they are a unique gift from God to the earth, unlike no one else in the world. The author encourages his reader to evolve into embracing whom God made and intended them to be, which would not only bless themselves but also bless everyone they come in contact with both directly and indirectly.

The book *The Kingdom Agenda*,²⁸ is geared to help one to set their focus, their mind-set, and their activity on building the kingdom of God. It is a book that helps you get your efforts and service aligned with edifying, expanding, and enhancing the kingdom of God. This book helps one to look no longer to themselves or to their church first but to seek first the kingdom of God

²⁶ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010).

²⁷ Ortberg, John. *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

²⁸ Evans, Tony. *The Kingdom Agenda*. (Orange, California. Sealy M. Yates, Literary Agent, 1999).

and his righteousness. The author writes to help one obtain a kingdom mind-set with who they are and in all that they do.

In *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully*, not only does John MacArthur share the importance of evangelism, but he also shares how it is a serious divine requirement that God has mandated to his people. John MacArthur stated in this book that when it comes to evangelism, no duty is more significant, and none bears a more eternally rewarding fruit. This book is wrapped around the central theme that the gospel of Christ is the true answer to the world problems and God has commanded his people to proclaim the unadulterated gospel with power, conviction, and without gimmick.

*Evangelism Handbook*²⁹ is a powerful book that draws its readers into the mind frame that the world is lost; people are dying and on the way to hell, and Christians all over the world must regain the thought that evangelism is a priority. The author shares America's condition, and then he reminds his readers of the task believers have as followers of Christ, which is to be his witnesses and to take the timeless message to a particular time and place in a timely manner.³⁰

The book *Innovate Church*³¹ is geared to help prepare the church to thrive, engage, reach, and relate to those in the next generation. This book provides innovative methods that will aid the church in efficiently and effectively sharing the gospel in this day and age. The author of this book writes to motivate.

*Risen*³² is a great book that heightens one awareness of how the resurrection enable believers to continue the mission of God. This book shows how just like God the Father sent

²⁹ Reid, A. L. *Evangelism Handbook*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009).

³⁰ Alvin Reid, *Evangelism Handbook* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009).

³¹ Falwell, Jonathan. *Innovate Church*. (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2008).

³² Mathewson, Steven, *Risen*.(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013).

Jesus to bring salvation to those who are lost, now Jesus is sending his disciples. The great commission is now able to be carried out by Christian because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church must realize that God planted and put the church here to fulfill the mission of reaching the lost with the gospel and Christ the risen savior has given them this authority.

The book *Sharing Jesus Without Fear*³³ is a book that stirs believe to tell the world about Jesus Christ regardless of what obstacle is ahead of them. This book promotes its readers that through the power of God they will be able to reach people with the gospel even they feel weak, fearful, or nervous. This book gives the great advice of telling its readers that ones success of sharing the gospel is not predicated upon someone receiving it when they witness but ones successful is predicated upon their obedience to the commission that Christ had commanded.

Journals

“*Who’s Doing Better Business, the Church or the Gang?*” This article speaks how congregations today face the challenge of claiming a mission to gangs. The author also speaks to get the church’s attention from operating under the illusion that the church is not affected by gangs. The author states how it seems as if gangs are somehow doing a better job attracting the youth and filling the loveless void that these youth desire so much to be filled.

“*Gangs or the Gospel: Competing for the Lives of Our Youth*” This article adds value to this project due to the fact that Tune speaks about how criminal gangs pose a growing threat in communities across the United States.³⁴ Romal Tune also states the startling news of how in

³³ Fay, William, *Share Jesus Without Fear*. ((Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 1999).

³⁴ Romal Tune, “Gangs or the Gospel: Competing for the Lives of Our Youth,” accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-romal-j-tune/gang-violence-how-the-chu_b_675327.html.

some cities that he has visited, gangs appear to be growing faster than youth ministries.³⁵ This article speaks about how the church is called to be a source of healing and hope and that this is a reality and a problem we cannot afford to ignore.³⁶

Gangs and Their Effect on the Community by Wayne Leon Learmond. This article exposes the many ways that gangs affect the community and its people. Gangs affect communities in ways beyond physical violence. Gangs also affect the community mentally, educationally, financially, and even physiologically. This article helps readers see or gain more insight into the effect or impact that gangs have on the community overall. This article provides a local focus on solving gang problem, which could ultimately lead to a national impact of gangs all over the country.

Estimating the Effects of Gang Membership on Nonviolent and Violent Delinquency: A Counterfactual Analysis by J. C. Carnes, Kevin M. Beaver, and J. Mitchell Miller. This segments helps bring awareness to not only the extent of gangs' effect on people, places, and things in the world but also in the different ways gangs affect communities in the country.

Strategies to Address Gang Crime: A Guidebook for Local Law Enforcement by Scott H. Decker. This journal produces insight—from successful and sustainable gang-prevention strategies from a collaborations of sources, such as law enforcement, schools, parent groups, community groups, as well as faith-based and youth organizations. This article also consists of models that will greatly improve safety in communities and also improve the law enforcement response to gang and criminal activities.

³⁵ Romal Tune, "Gangs or the Gospel: Competing for the Lives of Our Youth," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-romal-j-tune/gang-violence-how-the-church-is-responding_b_675327.html.

³⁶ Romal Tune, "Gangs or the Gospel: Competing for the Lives of Our Youth," accessed January 24, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-romal-j-tune/gang-violence-how-the-church-is-responding_b_675327.html.

Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Model for Problem Solving by the Bureau of Justice Assistance is a journal that is more solution focus rather than problem focus. The writers of this journal gives forth models and suggestions that was used to help identify community gang problem and some suggest steps that can be taken to help eliminate the problems that gang bring forth in communities.

Definitions of a Gang and Impacts on Public Policy by Rebecca D. Peterson. This article helps to gain knowledge of gangs by defining and identifying what a gang is and the personality of some of the different gangs. Different gangs tend to major and focus on spending most of their energy on certain activities. This article points out that some gangs seem to find their niche and discover that their strength or level of expertise might be in a certain field of criminal activity.

Scriptures

The word of God is that which birthed this project into existence. The gospel of Christ is definitely the center of this thesis. The entire Bible is a book about God and how Christ redeemed the fallen humanity to reconcile mankind with the Father. The foundation scripture for this project is Matthew 28:19–20 and Acts 1:8. Both are scriptures that give believers the marching from Christ to “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.”³⁷ Amen. “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” This project takes the position that God has commanded Christians around the world to reach the lost with the gospel.

³⁷ Matthew 28:19-20

These verses support the project of carrying out evangelism in the inner city, reaching gang members with the gospel of Christ.

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”³⁸ This passage of scripture commands Christians around the world that as they travel the world they are to preach the gospel to every creature. This scripture exposes that every man, woman, boy, and girl all have the common need of hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The focus of this scripture is not only where believers ought to go but also what believers ought to do. This passage shows how every creature everywhere will get what they need if Christians obey the command of preaching to every creature. The word *every* sticks out to the author because it includes everyone and excludes no one, which gives everyone the precious opportunity of being in a relationship with Christ.

Luke 19:10 shows both the purpose and importance of Jesus’ ministry. All that Jesus did on earth involve seeking and saving those who were lost, and like with Christ, evangelism is the task of the Christian. Jesus has a heart to reach those not in a relationship with him and it is through evangelism, proclaiming the gospel that one who is lost in sin can enter into a relationship with Christ. The job of the believer is to preach to the lost. The apostle Paul recognized this in 1 Corinthians 1:17. Paul declared that he was not sent to baptize “but to preach the gospel.” Paul knew his job. He was in tune with his commission—to preach Christ crucified.

“And he said unto them, Go ye into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”³⁹ This scripture declares that every child of God is commanded to tell every creature in the world about the good news. God has commanded the church to preach the gospel, and the

³⁸ Mark 16:15

³⁹ Mark 16:15

gospel is the news that Jesus is the Messiah, who was crucified in the place of sinners and then raised from the dead on the third day. The importance of this project is illustrated in the importance of the command to evangelize. It is not a coincidence that all four gospels end with some variation of the Great Commission and Jesus' very last earthly words were yet another charge to his disciples "to be witnesses to Me" in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.⁴⁰

"Then the Master said to the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. This scripture shows believers their duty of going to find the lost and compelling the lost to come to the house of God to hear the word of God and give their life to Jesus Christ.⁴¹ This text shows how much God wants people to be in his house because he has a desire to help, to heal, and to deliver those who are poor spiritually and lost in sin. This command from God shows how God also desires his people to be in his house rather than to be in the world. The world is dangerous and detrimental, but the house of God is a safe haven, a place of divine security and love.

"Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'⁴² This passage of scripture shows how there is plenty of work that need to be done but the laborers are few in numbers. The inner city have so many people that are in need of hearing the gospel and they can be reached if those who God had planted in the inner city would share the good news with the lost in the inner city.

⁴⁰ John MacArthur, *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 27.

⁴¹ Luke 14:23

⁴² Matthew 9:37-38

The Bible says, “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”⁴³

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”⁴⁴

God says that he will bring a savior unto the world, who will restore peace between God and creation by conquering the enemy⁴⁵, which shows how evangelism is God’s goal.

Evangelism is one telling the good news of how Jesus conquered death, hell, and the grave. Jesus states, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”⁴⁶ This scripture shows that the preaching of the gospel can help all those who are hurting, poor, and brokenhearted in the inner city. It is the gospel of Christ that helps one overcome the issues and ailments that he/she is dealing with.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, it is shown that those who belong to God are required to do four things if they want to see the revival that they truly want and desperately need. Those four things that were given to Solomon, king of Israel, were that those who are called by his name must humble themselves, pray, seek God’s face, and turn from their wicked ways. God in his response to Solomon’s prayer informed him that when these four things are done, then “will I hear from

⁴³ John 10:16

⁴⁴ Roman 10:14–15

⁴⁵ Genesis 3:15

⁴⁶ Luke 4:18

heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land.” This verse shows that the action of God’s people can determine their land experiencing healing, which is restoration, renewal, and revival.

Matthew 22:36-40 reads, Master, which is the great commandment in the law: ³⁷Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: ³⁸This is the first and great commandment: ³⁹And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. These scripture helps believers to see that every child of God is to love everybody. This scripture is one that due away with all hatred, all prejudices and all racism. The church universally or the church locally that refuses to carry out and obey the Great Commandment will ultimately be a church that will not faithfully fulfill the Great Commission.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”⁴⁷ This passage of scripture eliminates any other option outside of him that makes salvation possible to possess by mankind. Jesus Christ is not only the way but Jesus Christ is also the only way to the Father. Knowing that Christ is the only way the church should understanding how necessary it is to go to gangs in the inner city to introduce them to Christ who is the only way. For believers to neglect or shun away from sharing the gospel to those in the inner city is to in a sense leave them out to die in sin and heading to hell. Jesus is the way that is for going, Jesus is the truth that is for knowing and Jesus is the life and this is for being. Introducing the world to Jesus Christ will ultimate change where a person is going spiritually, change with a person understanding of God and His word, and also change a person being because in Christ one is a new creature.

⁴⁷ John 14:6

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING AND APPROACHING THE INNER CITY

There are various inner cities across all of the United States of America, and many different urban ministries use various methods to reach and engage those who are lost in the gospel of Christ. This chapter will both define the inner city and examine some approaches provided in the literature when it comes to reaching and engaging those who live within the inner-city community.

Defining the Inner City

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, “the inner city is the usually older, poorer, and more densely populated central section of a city¹.” Dictionary.com defines the inner city as “an older part of a city, densely populated and usually deteriorating, inhabited mainly by poor, often minority, groups².” The inner city is characterized by minimal educational opportunities, high unemployment and crime rates, broken families, and inadequate housing. In the United States, the term has the additional connotation of impoverished black and/or Hispanic neighborhoods.

Each definition or description given about the inner city somehow connects the inner city with only poverty, brokenness, devastation, and crime. Each definition given of the inner city has nothing positive to say about the inner city at all. This is a clear statement and bold evidence that shows evangelism in the inner city is definitely and absolute necessity. An example of this is when, Christ came preaching in cities and towns

¹ Merriam Webster Online. Accessed July 21, 2014.
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/inner+city?s=t>

² Dictionary Online. Accessed July 21, 2014.
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/inner+city?s=t>

full of brokenness and immorality, the church must proclaim and spread the word of God into the inner city, where much immorality is present and practiced. The inner city seems to be defined and known by its condition rather than its geographical location. John Fuder, the author of *A Heart for the City*, states that “we use to define cities as unique places, using sociological categories like population size, density, heterogeneity. ... Urban ministries influenced by social psychologist and communications theorists who define cities, roles, functions, or processes rather than places.”³

With this concept in mind, this author of this paper knows that reaching the inner city with the gospel of Christ would put the inner city in position as a whole not only to be restored but also to be redefined.

This author of this paper was born and raised in the inner city and believes that each definition stated above falls short of the full scope and picture of what the inner city truly is. Is the inner city truly nothing but a place full of poor people with broken families living in low-income housing, living where most of those residing are unemployed and violent? The inner city is not a region or area consisting of negativity only. Even though the inner city is defined as ugly, nasty, and dirty, it is filled with people who are beautiful, smart, and intelligent. Even though the inner city is viewed often as a monster, the author views it as a darling that’s in need of being redeemed, renewed, and restored.

This author of this paper looks at the inner city as home sweet home, and the truth of the matter is that home is often far from sweet. The inner city is a place where a person could see immeasurable gifts, uncommon talents, and unlimited potential that are often wasted and not utilized at all. It is true that the inner city is a place where poverty is

³ John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 1999), 21.

no stranger, homicides are common, gangs are visible, schools are struggling, and many people are living just to survive. The inner city is full of people who have lost their hope, drive, and motivation. The question is how did this really come about? How did the inner city evolve to this present condition? Was the inner city always like this? Did the inner city inherit this problem, or was this strategically done and planned by a group of people that possess high positions, prominence, and the power to make decisions that would affect people who live in the inner city.

This author of this paper asked one inner-city pastor who has lived and pastured in the inner city for over thirty-five years to define the inner city, and he responded by stating that “the inner city is the planned but illegitimate child of the supposed racial superiority, and racial hate has grown her up without the proper moral and or spiritual supervision.” He also stated that “when the inner city was planned, the design was to put people of color in one geographical area and deprive them of all that was wholesome and good, and feed them a steady diet of hatred. The saddest part of the whole diabolical scheme was to deprive them of equal educational opportunities with separate but unequal by design, therefore they could be classified ignorant by willfully withholding them from the proper education nourishment, assuring their inability to compete with the rest of American society.”

Many African Americans who live in the inner city believe that the inner city is the way that it is because it has been strategically planned and set up that way by racist Americans who hold political positions. This view from many African Americans is not some illegitimate self-defeating or self-limiting cry to justify their current condition in life or victim mentality. Victimology can be defined as nurturing an unfocused strain of

resentment rooted in a defeatist identity through which all realities are filtered rather than viewing challenges as opportunities to overcome.⁴ Many believe that the inner city is the result of a plan that was put together to confine the lives of those who reside in a physically, financially, educationally, socially, and emotionally.

The inner city has many single families where the mother is the only parent raising her children. According to News One in the African American community, 72% of black children were raised in single-parent households.⁵ With arrests there's a tipping point when instead of seeing crime going down in a community, it goes up precipitously.⁶ Sin has multiplied and destroyed families. Urban ministries today must do at home in their cities what foreign missions did abroad yesterday and for the same reasons. Evil principalities and powers have taken over many parts of cities where the church either never existed or fled for various reasons.

Many people who reside in the inner city believe whole-heartedly that the inner city was designed to be in the condition that it is in purposely. One pastor who serves in the inner city stated that the inner city was designed to be the prostitute or the street-walker to gain funds and make those who make decisions for the state wealthy. This inner-city pastor also stated that not only is the inner city the way it is by design but also many of those who are connected with those designers were trained to keep the inner city in a bad condition to continue receiving monetary gain.

⁴ Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Through the Eyes of Tony Evans* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 21.

⁵ Celeste Fremon, *G-Dog and the Homeboys: Father Greg Boyle and the Gangs of East Los Angeles* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 7.

⁶ John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 1999), 4.

Defining Evangelism

According to Alvin Reid, *evangelism* is a word that means to share the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost person⁷. Robert Coleman states in his book *The Master Plan of Evangelism* that evangelism is the conviction, grounded in the good news, that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,” which makes evangelism immensely more than a theory or a slogan.⁸ It brings it into focus as a necessity. John MacArthur quotes D. T. Niles’s definition of evangelism, saying, “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.” John the most urgent duty we as Christians have been given to do.⁹ When it comes to evangelism, every child of God must come to grips with the fact that there is no duty more significant than sharing the gospel to the world. Evangelism is the act of sharing the gospel to give those who are lost the opportunity to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Romans 1:16 reveals that the gospel is the instrument of God’s power for the salvation of sinners.

Charles Spurgeon states that soul winning is the chief business of the Christian minister; indeed, it should be the main pursuit of every believer.¹⁰ Evangelism is not an act that is motivated to get more church members; it is an act that is aimed at bringing souls to Christ. Evangelism should be carried out with a kingdom mind-set. Spurgeon states that increase of the kingdom is to be more desired than the growth of a clan.¹¹

⁷ Alvin Reid, *Evangelism Handbook* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 6.

⁸ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010), 11.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Charles Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner* (Prisbrary Publishing, 2012), 21.

¹¹ Ibid., 36.

Bible says, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you¹².” Having a kingdom mind-set in evangelism means being a people dedicated to bringing sheep to the great shepherd. Evangelism is eternally important because the gospel has the power to change one’s eternal destination. The church is evangelizing and spreading the goodness mankind only hopes for, and God’s people are commanded by God to share this hope. John MacArthur stated in his book that virtually every other spiritual exercise people do together as members of Christ’s body, they will still be able to do in heaven—praising God, enjoying fellowship with one another, savoring the richness of God’s word, and celebrating the truth together. But now is the only time we have for proclaiming the gospel to the lost and winning them over.¹³ Christians will not have the opportunity to witness and share the gospel to the lost sinner beyond right now here on earth.

When it comes to evangelism, the church cannot afford to carry out the sin of silence. Thomas Rainer in Alvin Reid’s book entitled *The Evangelism Handbook* states that “many church-going Christians will never share with an unbeliever the truth claims of the Savior.” Many pastors and other church leaders are moving evangelism to the back burner. The reason the gospel is not being spread is not because there are no lost people out in the world to share it to but there are not many Christians committed to evangelizing. Rainer also states that in one study, they found out that 53% of senior pastors had not shared the gospel even one time in the previous six-month period. It seems as if the American church as a whole is guilty of being sinfully silent when the

¹² Matthew 6:33

¹³ John MacArthur, *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 135.

word of God obviously shows Christians that they do not have the right to remain silent. Alvin Reid quoted a statement from Reggie McNeal that stated, “The North American church is suffering from severe mission amnesia. It has forgotten why it exists.”¹⁴ The church must find a renewed passion for Christ, God’s people, and sharing the gospel to the lost.

Defining Gangs

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *gang* as “a group of persons working together: a group of persons working to unlawful or antisocial ends¹⁵.” The *Webster II New Riverside Dictionary* defines *gang* as “a group of criminals or adolescent hoodlums.” James C. Howell and Scott H. Decker in their journal article defined *gang* as “a self-formed association of peers, united by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership and internal organization, who act collectively or as individuals to achieve specific purposes including the conduct of illegal activity and control of particular territory, facility, or enterprise.” Rebecca Peterson stated that a youth gang is a “self-formed association of peers bound together by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership, well-developed lines of authority, and other organizational features, who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes, which generally include the conduct of illegal activity and control over a particular territory, facility, or type of enterprise. In the book *Black Gangs in America*, the author defines *street gang* as “an organized group with a recognized leader and a less powerful under command. He also defines *street gang* as a unified group—even in times of peace—that continues to meet during war or peace.

¹⁴ Alvin Reid, *Evangelism Handbook* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 1.

¹⁵ Merriam Webster Online. Accessed July 21, 2014. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gangs>.

It is a group characterized by uniformity in dress and that participates in activities that are criminal or somehow threatening to a larger society.¹⁶

The author defines “gang” as a group of men and women, young or old, who have banded together for survival, healing, and to do whatever is necessary not to lose their newfound families even through wrong or devastating behavior. Because most gangs have turned their backs on the morals and laws of organized society, they have created their own misguided laws for survival and progress toward the so-called American dream. A family member of the author who is an ex-gang member defines *gang* as a group of people who are rocking (close-knit) with each other for the same purpose and cause, which is to make money and obtain territory, power, and a respected reputation. After giving this definition, he emphasized the importance of having a reputation that is respected in the streets.

In her book, Sanyika Shakur writes that having a reputation is the purpose of all gang members and that there are three stages of reputation that one must go through to reach the title of OG, which stands for “original gangster¹⁷.” Sanyika Shakur writes that first, you must build the reputation of your name, which deals with one as an individual. Second, one must build your name in association with your particular set so that when your name is spoken, your set is also in the same breath, for it is synonymous. Lastly, you must establish yourself as a promoter of the gang you claim to be a part of, depending of course on which side of the color bar you live in.¹⁸

¹⁶ James Howell and Scott Decker, “The Youth Gangs, Drugs, and Violence Connection,” accessed January 1999, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/93920.pdf>.

¹⁷ Sanyika Shakur. *Monster the Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*. (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1993), 284.

¹⁸ Ibid..

During an interview with the author, an ex-gang member stated that regardless of what a gang member wants, he/she does not want to face consequences that are detrimental and destructive. Being in a gang that carries out immoral acts and destructive behavior is a sin that could lead to death, and this is both present and prevalent in the inner city. In the book of Proverbs, the Bible speaks of how bad company leads to consequences that are deadly. The Bible clearly informs and directs one to avoid living a lifestyle that is evil and immoral (Proverbs 1:7–19). Can the church help gangs and gang members cease living ungodly lives and impact the lives of gangs in the inner city for them to start living lives pleasing to God and edifying to others in the world? The church has already been commanded to reach gangs in the inner city with the gospel. In the gospel according to Mark, Christ commands his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature. This includes all races, all colors, and all kinds. It is not left up to us who we reach and don't reach. We are all commissioned to preach to all creatures the word. *All* is a word that is inclusive, which lets believers know that they are called to masses.

History of Gangs and Their Religious Affiliations

In the book entitled *Black Gangs in America*, Cornelius Carroll states that both the Gangster Disciples and El Rukn Street gangs evolved out of a forty-year plague of poverty conditions in the neighborhood.¹⁹ This same reason birthed the gangs known as the West Vice Lords, Egyptians Kings, and the Blackstone Rangers. John Fuder states how poverty is not so much the absence of money as it is the absence of power.²⁰ This

¹⁹ Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 102.

²⁰ John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 1999), 526.

definition gives great information especially to those ministries who are evangelizing in the inner city, because the church should possess the mind frame of addressing this poverty problem by operating to empower the poor. Jeff Fort, the leader of the Blackstone Rangers, was so influential during his time that when he attended President Nixon's inauguration, he received nearly one million dollars of federal antipoverty funds.²¹

Many gangs designed and built themselves around religions and religious practices. The names themselves reveal how gangs look toward the Bible, Christianity, or some type of religious sect. For example, a gang from the People Nation is called the Vice Lords. The word *lord* carries the meaning of a person who has general authority over others. Another example is a gang from the Folk Nation called the Gangster Disciples. The word *disciple* is another biblical word. Here are a few more names of gangs that are prominent and active in Chicago, Illinois, or Gary, Indiana: Latin Kings, Black Stones, and the El Rukns. The word *El* is a word that Christians see in the Bible, which has a strong connection with God. *El* or *Eloah* is one of the oldest designations for divinity in the world.²² Here are some examples of the names of God that include the word *El*: Elohim, El Shaddai, and El Roi. The Hebrews borrowed the term *El* from the Canaanites, and it can refer either to the true God or to pagan gods.

The Vice Lords is a group influenced by the Nation of Islam in some shape or form. The Nation of Islam's militant youth groups were inspired by Elijah Muhammad's

²¹ Celeste Fremon, *G-Dog and the Homeboys: Father Greg Boyle and the Gangs of East Los Angeles* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 97.

²² Ann Spangler, *The Names of God: 52 Bible Studies for Individuals and Groups* (Zondervan, 2008), 12.

teaching to the Nation of Islam on Savior's Day in 1955. This influenced the Vice Lords, which was formed in Chicago, Illinois, in late 1957 as a gang in the Illinois State Training School for Boys in St. Charles, Illinois. The gang's conception was birthed, influenced, and inspired by a religious faith, which gave the pattern to their initial structure as a gang unit. Also the El Rukns Jeff Fort recruited and formed a gang along the Moorish religious lines, which operated under the guise of the Muslim religion.²³ Cornelius stated that Jeff Fort began to enjoy a religious status.

Approaching the Inner City

Approaching gangs in the inner city with the gospel of Jesus Christ is an effort that should be strategically and methodically done. In the journal article written by Evelyn L. Parker, this question was asked: "How should the church respond to the problem of gangs." The author answered this question by stating that the starting point must be education of the congregation about gangs and the gang culture. The church cannot accurately understand gangs and effectively reach gangs with distorted facts and stereotypic images of gang members. "Congregations must move beyond the mis-education by media and become re-educated within hospitable environments among church members across generations." In an article entitled *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Model for Problem Solving*, the author writes a section entitled "Gang Problems: What We Know Affects What We Do." This author recognizes the importance of knowledge and how valuable and powerful it is. The knowledge that the church has about gangs can not only give them a better understanding but also determine how the

²³ Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 210.

church should react and respond to reach the gangs in a way that would help them experience deliverance from their problems.

When approaching gangs, it is important to know that all gangs are not the same. In the article “Addressing Community Gang Problems,” the author points out that gangs are diverse, which means that gangs are not identical and all do not carry out the same exact activities.

Approaching Gangs in the Inner City

The Story of Tree of Life MBC “The efforts of Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church to carry out inner-city evangelism, reaching gang members” The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church is making a strategic effort to reach gangs in the inner city of Gary, Indiana, with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church knows and accepts the fact that the principle of evangelism will never change and out of that fundamental fact grows different methods. Dr. Elmer Towns from Liberty University informed the writer in one of his classes of a key principle that stuck with him from the first day he heard it, which is “methods are many, principles are few, methods will change, but principles never do.” The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church defines *evangelism* as meeting people where they are, introducing them to Christ, and then staying with them through teaching until they have matured as Christians and become disciples. The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church gives full effort at best they know how to turn in a finished product. The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church believes that all evangelism in the inner city must be militant or crusading, especially when it comes to reaching gang members, because they believe that they are engaged in warfare. Possessing the belief and knowledge that the job consists of staying with an individual until he/she is matured suggests that the

local church or the church's main campus cannot be the only place to deal with people but that there will be times when the church will be making disciples outside its four walls.

At the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church, the pastor has assigned an evangelism director on the church staff. One of the requirements along with many for serving in the position as evangelism director was that the person had to be a product of the inner city and currently living there. This is a vital aspect because to be effective in reaching the inner city, one must understand the environment. Choosing one who lives in the inner city was methodically and strategically done because the person must be sensitive to the pulse and heartbeat of the environment, along with the necessary training to equip one to effectively witness to those within the community.

The first thing that the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church did to effectively evangelize to their community within the inner city was to geographically locate the area that God has given them responsibility for. The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church believes that God has possessed and provided them with the ability to change the geographical area by the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through them. God has planted them in the city of Gary, Indiana, to bring forth change to those who are in that city, community, and environment. The senior pastor, Cato Brooks Jr. of the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church believes that a proper militant approach is one that knows and is aware of where they will engage in combat or warfare. For example, the United States military knows not only whom they are fighting but also where they are fighting, where they are, and what they are up against in a war. We know that having a war-type mentality is more than just mentally but it is also reality. Michael Fariss, the author of the

book entitled *Transforming Inner City Evangelism*, stated that “deadly warfare from Satan and his evil foes is a spiritual reality taught in scripture.”²⁴ Revelation 12:7 exposes the devil’s hatred toward God’s people and his declaration of war against those who keep the Lord’s commandments and witness for Christ.

Cato Brooks Jr. stated that “the key to winning the inner city is like a war room and you are planning a military type strategy asking yourself how you win this block because each block in your neighborhood is different from any other block.” The Tree of Life believes that this is important because those who are in the inner city need to notice how the personality of each community changes every ten to twelve blocks in the city of Gary, Indiana. It might be different in larger cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, or Detroit. It is mandatory that one gets to know the geographical area that God has planted the church in because the church has a responsibility to every facet of living in that area. Wherever God has planted or placed the church geographically, that congregation of believers is indebted to the people in that community. In Romans 1:14–15, “The apostle Paul states I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and too unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also” (New King James Version). Paul knew and accepted the fact that his debtor-ship was to all men and his responsibility as a debtor included him preparing so that he would be ready to perform his duty or pay his debt. Paul was not in debt because he had received something from them; he was in debt because he had received something for them. Like Paul, the author knows that God has given and entrusted those at his church with the gospel to

²⁴ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006), 53.

preach, teach, and reach mankind in the city and community that God has planted them in.

Michael Farris writes about a process he uses to assess a ministry's state of readiness for mobilization, called DNA. DNA is an acronym for the words *designs*, *neighborliness*, and *activism*. The second portion of the DNA analysis deals with the dynamics of neighborliness, and it consists of a chart that measures you being engaged or disengaged as a church. Farris poses the question "Are you nostalgia or a neighbor?"²⁵ A nostalgia church family lives in the memories of the past when the congregation thrives as a central part of nearby homogeneous neighborhoods. As the demographics of neighborhoods change and become low income and racially diverse, a church with nostalgia refuses to adapt and take steps to preserve divides.²⁶ A church family that refuses to adapt to the community that it is located in is a church family that refuses to be relevant and refuses to reach the community that it is in. The church family that possesses the nostalgia-type attitude is a church family who decides to both become and remain ineffective in the community it is located in.

In contrast, a church with a strong neighborhood philosophy makes mercy ministry a priority in every area of its design and takes risk to sacrificially establish long-term relationships with families living nearby. The strong neighborhood-philosophy church in the inner city is one that has a trained leadership staff, which again highlights the importance of receiving training to understand how to be effective in reaching and serving those in the inner city. One reason why the nostalgia church does not adapt is

²⁵ Ibid., 37.

²⁶ Ibid.

because of lack of training, which implies lack of knowledge. Michael Farris states that you first must establish leadership before follow-ship.²⁷ Farris also states that an untrained church is not a church that doesn't know what to do but is rather one that refuses to do. The failure is from the lack of training for the pastor and church to lead churches.²⁸ This lack of training has resulted in pastors and leaders serving in positions where they can only see the problem but elusively produce a solution.

The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church's evangelism method is not a method that tends to the symptoms of those in the community but one that deals with and tends to the causes of problems of those in the community. This approach is urgent because these problems are just like several diseases that can manifest the same symptoms while having totally different causes. Tending to symptoms can result in mistreatment, which could cause more harm and damage to those who are sick. The mission and purpose of Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church is "to serve the whole man; identify and respond to problems that arise out of predominately minority, socially, economically, and culturally deprived areas; develop and implement targeted programs that will address the problems that lead to the destruction and demise of the family and provide tenancy and homeownership opportunities." So included in the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church's inner-city evangelism effort, they have found ways to help people not only spiritually but also physically, educationally, socially, financially, and emotionally.

The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church's method of inner-city evangelism includes community development. The author and those who are part of the evangelism team are only those who possess compassion for all people and carrying out the great

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

commission. Majority of those who live in Gary, Indiana, are blacks and have encountered and experienced some type of racism and some type of physical or mental harm and abuse from gangs' criminal activities. Knowing this, each member of the evangelism team must ask themselves, "Am I able to set aside my prejudices and thoughts and forgive the group of people who has caused my family and me hate, harm, and hardship and offer living water to a hurting soul from gangs and other ethnic groups, religions, or political cultures." This is important because carnal instincts clog one's compassion and render them unfit for the Master's use.²⁹ Until there is repentance for these carnal instincts, the compassion of God cannot flow through us to touch a hurting world.³⁰

Community Development

Community development is the vehicle that the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church's ministry uses to help meet every conceivable need of the geographical area they serve—whether it be housing, counseling, job training, getting people off welfare, dealing with spousal abuse and child abuse, and everything that is done is based on what that particular geographic community needs. The church provides housing for over six hundred families and provides jobs for the unemployed. The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church has also partnered with Crossroads Bible College to help provide further education to all those in the city of Gary and its vicinity. The author of this project is one of the coordinators for the northwest region of Crossroads Bible College at Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church. Providing a solid Christian-based education is a vital part of

²⁹ John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 1999), 227.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 725.

inner-city evangelism because it allows those in the inner city to have direct access in the neighborhood to obtain their education goals and for their career dreams to become reality. The author of this project has also worked hand and hand with Tyler Falwell and Murna Gado from Liberty University to help bring the great educational opportunity experience that Liberty University provides to those in the inner city. In a matter of four months, the author voluntarily hosted two Liberty night events in the city of Gary and also participated in a college fair in East Chicago, Indiana, offering Liberty education opportunities to students in high school; and as a result, over 120 students filled out applications, and many are currently enrolled as students at Liberty University.

The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church knows that before one can truly establish leadership, one must first establish relationship as well, as people don't care how much someone know until they know how much that person care. In order to change a community, you have to know how that particular community thinks. Finding its psychological profile is vital if you are going to win a community. There is a need of knowing what motivates and stimulates the people in a community. The church needs to ask the question why are those in the community the way they are? Behavior is always the result of thinking or thought. Every time there's an action, there is a thought behind it. So if a local church is going to win their community in the inner city, they have to know the reason why people in the inner city are slamming their doors in the face of those who come to their attempting to share the gospel. The local church in the inner city also need to know why people are cruel and mean when some come to their home, and why won't those in the neighbor come to church at all. In the inner city, drug dealers do not have to knock on people's doors; those who use drugs find the drug dealers. One must realize that

before one can get someone sold on Christ, they have to get them sold on themselves first. The church leaders in the inner city must show those in the community that people matter and those at church are people of character and integrity that truly care about the needs of those in the inner city. Many people in the inner city community view strangers as a unreliable witnesses. Many of the lost in the inner city are not necessarily against God or are anti-God, but the reason why the lost are not fully acceptable to the shared words of the gospel is because they are initially anti-strangers. Those who belong to the church have to be believable before the lost can receive and believe the gospel that the church are sharing. This is not an overnight thing, but the pastor, leaders, and members of the congregation are going to have to establish in the community that they are people of both character and integrity.

CHAPTER 3

EFFECTS OF GANG ACTIVITIES

Gang activities have affected societies all around the world in an extremely negative manner. According to Greg Boyle, in the past two decades more than 25,000 Americans, most of them young men, have died as a result of gang violence.¹ Right now there are estimated to be approximately 750,000 gang members in the United States, according to the most recent Youth Gang Survey.² Gangs and the activities carried out by gang members affect those in society not only in a physical manner but also in a mental and psychological manner. According to studies done by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, 35% of children exposed to the kind of community violence that gangs typically produce exhibit symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder. Gang violence is an epidemic in the public health sense of the word and one that is largely immune to general declines in crime. For example, in Los Angeles, California, during the period from 1990 to 1994, gang activity in Los Angeles was extremely brutal. LA was then and still is the gang capital of the world, and in 1992, homicide in the area hit a record of 2,113, with 803 of those murders tied to gangs.³

Financial Effect

Gang violence and activity have also had a financial effect on communities where gangs are present. For example, stores and businesses that are located in communities with heavy drug infestation have shorter business hours, having early closing time due to the fact of nighttime

¹ Celeste Fremon, *G-Dog and the Homeboys: Father Greg Boyle and the Gangs of East Los Angeles* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 2.

² Ibid. 2.

³ Ibid. 2.

fear of gangs. Insurance premiums shoot up, and many are not even able to get insurance on their homes at all because of the gang infestation in their neighborhoods. Leon also stated that those in the community view gangs with fear, resentment, and anger. They feel imprisoned within their own homes when darkness falls. Many in the neighborhood are afraid to walk the streets in their community because the presence of gangs makes them prone to being mugged, robbed, or killed.

Drugs

Another effect that gangs have on communities is that many gangs flood neighborhoods with drugs. Leon states how drugs escalate the sense of hopelessness and despair. Drugs being used and sold in a community can cause and promote more violence, more broken homes, and more murders and robberies. In the 1970s, city gangs had turned to the big business of marketing and selling narcotics. Selling drugs is the chief source of income for many gangs.⁴ In 1988, long after the crack epidemic had devoured entire neighborhoods in cities like New York and Washington DC, there were any crack-related arrests in Chicago.⁵ The author of this project has seen many people around his neighbor, even family members, who have been affected by drugs.

Educational

Gangs have also had a negative impact on schools and the behavior of delinquents. Where gangs are present, they increase the risk of students seeing drugs and weapons on school grounds. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reports that gang presence in schools doubles the likelihood of violent acts on campus and can create an environment of fear among all the students.⁶ When a delinquent is initiated into a gang, he or she is more likely to get

⁴ Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 414.

⁵ Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 414.

⁶ Google, "A Gang's Impact on Teenagers," accessed January 15, 2014, <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/gangs-impact-teenagers-3840.html>.

involved in alcohol and drug use and other forms of violent behavior, such as truancy, theft, and selling drugs.⁷

Physiological

This pastor while growing up in the inner city has heard some of his friends and family members say how much they love being a part of a gang and how much they enjoy participating in gang activities. Gang members do not realize, nor will they acknowledge, that they suffer from a sociological disorder.⁸ Stephen Williams states that gang members are defined by ideologies that perpetuate their own self- destructions. Many gang members are dead or in jail because they decided to participate in gang-related activities. The author of this thesis project has witnessed many family members become immune to the gang-related lifestyle. Many who grew up in Gary, Indiana, have become immune to young people dying at an early age and majority of young black men being locked up in jail. To gang members, the cycle of gang violence is simply part of a normal everyday way of life.⁹ To many gang members, it is normal to sell drugs, it is ordinary to go to jail, it is typical to be in shoot-outs, it is average to hate people, and it is also normal for people to die young.

Children Effect

According to studies done by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, 35% of children exposed to the kind of community violence

⁷ Google, "A Gang's Impact on Teenagers," accessed January 15, 2014, <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/gangs-impact-teenagers-3840.html>.

⁸ Stephen J. Williams, *The Malignant Ideology: Exploring the Connection between Black History and Gang Violence* (2012), 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

that gangs typically produce exhibit symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder.¹⁰ Gang violence has been the reason for hundreds of deaths of innocent little children. In Los Angeles alone, it is estimated that 300,000 children and adolescents live in chronically violent neighborhoods, where simply walking to school potentially puts them at risk.¹¹ Gangs place innocent children in the middle of a war zone, and gangbanging has made growing up in urban communities a true challenge because young people are often the victims of gang violence.

Females in Gangs

According to the National Center for Juvenile Justice 1990 report in the year 1993, U.S. law-enforcement agencies made an estimated 570,100 arrests involving females under the age of 18.¹² With today's growth in gang population, it is safe to say that female involvement has increased significantly since the early 1990s. A female is treated as any other gang member, and there are several ways for a female to join a gang, such as being jumped in, blessed in or sex/tricked. Jumped in is when several gang members fight a new recruit. Blessed in is to have knowledge or be brought in through a family member. Sex or tricked in is when new members have sex with several male gang members. This is the less respected way to join the gang (with respect to both male and female gang members).¹³

¹⁰ Celeste Fremon, *G-Dog and the Homeboys: Father Greg Boyle and the Gangs of East Los Angeles* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 2.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 2.

¹² Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 364.

¹³ *Ibid*, 372.

Gary, Indiana

The author of this project hometown, is Gary, Indiana, and Gary, is a city where violence is far from uncommon, and gang activity is prevalent. Many individuals and families who live in Gary, Indiana, have felt some type of wrath that has resulted from some type of gang-related act. Gary, Indiana, is considered as one of the most dangerous places to live in the United States of America by some people. Gary, Indiana, has a strong history and reputation for gang violence, gang activities, drugs, and committed crimes. Gary, Indiana, is a city that has been labeled as the murder capital of the world multiple times. With all of this disturbing news that consists of life-taking and life-damaging actions, the author of this project began to question how to best reach these criminal-minded organizations with the gospel to build the kingdom of God and to bring transformation to the lives of those who are lost without Christ, for those members of gangs who find no hope of making it in life while living away from their ungodly lifestyles.

The author of this thesis project is aware of the impact that gangs and gang activities have had on all the lives in the inner city. The author of this project has been at the bedside of family members who have been shot 13 times, 9 times, or 1 time. He has also sat in court with family members, friends, and loved ones who were facing sentences that carried serving times of 115 years, 70 years, 20 years, 5 years, and even one who was facing a life sentence in prison. The author of this project has buried over 30 friends and classmates due to gang violence, shot down and killed in cold blood. He has also felt the negative effects of lost friends and loves one to both the cemetery and the penitentiary. The author this project has also witnessed firsthand how drugs and other gang-related activities have paralyzed, drained, broke apart, and destroyed thousands of people in the inner city, but these experiences along with the command of God motivate the author to do inner-city evangelism and make an exertive effort of reaching gangs for Christ.

This pastor has a heart filled with passion and a strong desire to reach those who are lost and who are part of gangs in the inner city. Growing up in the inner city, the writer, through life experiences, knows firsthand the effects it has not only on the city but on the mind-set of the people who live in the inner city. Gary, Indiana, is home sweet home for the author of this project, but if the truth be told, home has oftentimes been far from sweet, because many times gangs and drug-related events have brought forth bitter news and sour times in the city of Gary.

Gary, Indiana, has been the murder capital of the world numerous times in the 1900s as well as the early years of 2000.¹⁴ The murder capital title is given to the city with a population of at least 1,000 or more and that has the most murders per number of residents. In the year 1993, Gary, Indiana, was the murder capital of the United States of America, having 89.1 murders per 100,000 residents. Gary was again the murder capital in 1995, having 83.3 murderers per 100,000 residents. In 1996, again as the murder capital, Gary, Indiana had 89.6 murders per 100,000 residents. In 1997, still the murder capital, Gary, Indiana had 84.1 per 100,000 residents. In 1998, as the murder capital, Gary, Indiana had 68.9 murders per 100,000 residents. In 1999, as the murder capital, Gary, Indiana, had 68.6 murders per 100,000 residents. In the year 2000, as the murder capital, Gary, Indiana, had 65.2 murders per 100,000 residents. In 2001, as the murder capital, Gary, Indiana, had 79.4 murders per 100,000 residents. In the year 2002, as the murder capital, Gary, Indiana, had 57.7 murders per 100,000 residents. In the year 2003, as the murder capital, Gary, Indiana, had 58.0 murders per 100,000 residents; and in the year 2005, Gary, Indiana, as the murder capital had 58.0 murders per 100,000 residents¹⁵.

¹⁴ Google, "Crime in Gary, Indiana." <http://www.city-data.com/crime/crime-Gary-Indiana.html>. Accessed January 15, 2014.

¹⁵ Ibid.

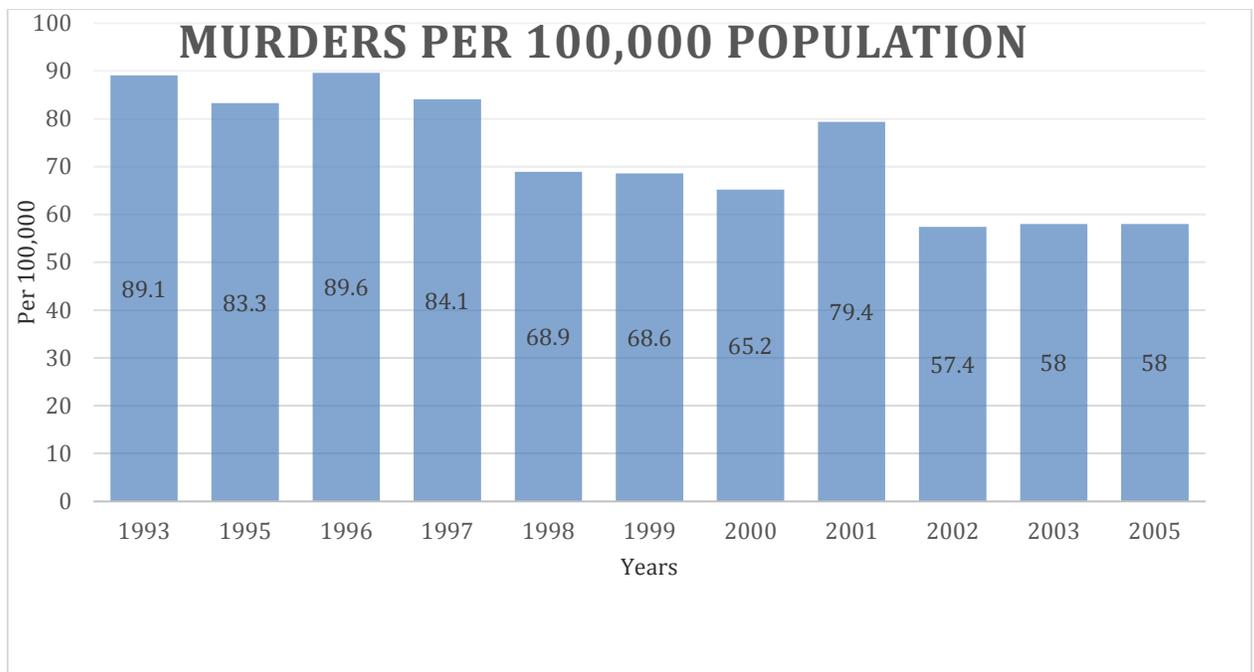


Figure 1

History's statistics have displayed and revealed that gang violence and crimes have impacted and made their mark on the city of Gary in a way that has destroyed, devastated, and diminished the community. Therefore, the author and the senior pastor at the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church have reached out in an effort to reach out to gang members in the city of Gary with the word of God. The author has made a commitment to help restore what has been destroyed, rejuvenate what has been devastated, and redevelop what has been diminished in this life of crime.

The writer of this thesis project believes that the answer to the problem that lies in the inner city can only be found in the word of God! In the Old Testament, the Bible says in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray seek my face and turn from there wicked ways then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal there land." This verse is a verse where God gave Solomon the prescription that

would allow God's people to experience revival, renewal, and restoration of their lives and their land.

The author of this thesis project believes that there is a great possibility that the inner city is in the condition that it is in, not because of what the ungodly people are doing, but because of what God's people are and are not doing. When the church fails to act in concert with God's prescribed agenda, then God often chooses to postpone his active involvement until his people are prepared to respond.¹⁶ The truth is that God does much of what he does predicated on what the church is or is not doing.¹⁷ The people of God who live in the inner cities must become devoted to God and committed to evangelism. This thesis project also believes that the more pastors and churches become trained and equipped to reach out gangs in the inner city for Christ, the more of an impact the church can and will have on the inner city and on the lives of the people that live within.

From all of the horrific crimes and immorality that are carried out in inner cities around the world, this writer believes that a model for evangelizing to the inner city with the effort of reaching gangs for Christ is very much relevant and needed. The inner city is an area that needs to be reached and saturated with the power of the gospel. The author believes that these are major issues that affect the lives of the people who live in the inner city on a daily basis and are issues that the church needs to come to grips with biblically. The author seeks to help provide some awareness of how vital it is for God's people to strategically and purposely reach gangs, groups of men and women who invested their lives in behaviors that bring disaster not only to themselves but also to those who live in the inner city and beyond.

¹⁶ Tony Evans, *Onewess Embraced: Through the Eyes of Tony Evans* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17

Who Joins a Gang and Why

Street-gang members often hail from broken homes or homes without a strong male authority figure. The reasons for joining are varied and many times are not understood by the gang member himself/herself. Many street-gang members come from broken homes where love is absent and a strong authority figure is not around. More often than not, they are underachievers with poor self-image and low self-esteem.¹⁸ The primary age range of street-gang members is from twelve to twenty-two, but the average as a whole is around fifteen or sixteen.¹⁹ Cornelius Carroll, the author of the book *Black Gangs in America*, states that the most common reasons usually include several of the following:

Identity or recognition: This allows the gang member to achieve a level or status he feels impossible to acquire outside the gang culture. Most gang members visualize themselves as warriors or soldiers, protecting their neighborhood from what they perceive to be a hostile outside world. Protection: Many members join because they live in a gang's area and are therefore subject to violence from rival gangs. Joining a gang guarantees support in case of attack or retaliation for an act of violence. Fellowship: To the majority of gang members, the gang is a substitute for a family cohesiveness that is lacking in the gang members' home environments. Many older brothers and relatives belong to or have belonged to a gang. Intimidation: Some members are forced into joining by their peer groups(s). Intimidation ranges from extorting lunch money to beatings. If a particularly violent war is in progress, then the

¹⁸ Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 27.

¹⁹ Ibid, 27.

recruitment tactics used by the gang can be extremely violent—even to the point of murdering one person to cause others to conform.²⁰

Challenges

Training is a true need to effectively reach gangs in the inner city. A starting point for a church to be in the position to effectively reach gangs is found in training. A starting point must be the education of congregations about the gang culture. The church and its leaders must be willing to learn and become trained because there are true challenges that exist in the ministry of reaching gang members with the gospel. Congregations today face the challenge of claiming a mission to those involved in gangs. Churches are affected by gangs, gangs affect church members, and the church must cease movement that results in separation from them.

Poverty

John A. Vieths in the journal article entitled “Evangelizing Our Inner Cities” states that the features that are present challenges in the inner city are the following:²¹ Poverty, Crime and violence, Broken families, Itinerant life, Poor education and Racism.

Poverty presenting a challenge is a constant distraction to inner-city missionaries. Many homes in the inner city do not have adequate heat in the winter or cool air in the summer. Poverty also affects the way many families eat, sleep, and dress. Many kids are sent to school with dirty and soiled uniforms and growling stomachs because the parent did not have enough money to wash their clothes or buy any food. Vieths states that even though problem is a challenge, that does not mean that in every case physical needs have to be satisfied before a person is willing to listen to the gospel, but those who still do not know God and trust him as

²⁰ Ibid, 26.

²¹ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006), 21.

their provider may not be able to give their full attention to what the evangelist has to give to their souls instead of to their bodies.²²

The church should not sit back and believe that the poverty issue that resides in the inner city is a job only for the government to handle, because based on past efforts, it might be an issue the government cannot handle without the church's aid. John Fuder states that he found out that the money targeted for inner-city communities does not remain in those communities. The poor are targeted for services; the money itself goes to the professional service providers. The economic benefits from the institutions operating in the community (hospitals, banks, schools, businesses, government services, and even the church) were going outside the community to the suburbs and prosperous neighborhoods that were "home base" to the institutions and service providers.²³

Crime and Violence

Evangelizing in the inner city can put you in the position of being in the midst of hurt, harm, and even danger. For those who are evangelizing in the inner city, they must make up their mind that they are entering an area that involves risk to preach the gospel. Because of the fear it produces, crime and violence has perhaps been the major obstacle preventing the middle-class Christians from evangelizing to inner cities more aggressively.²⁴ The risk factor is vital because it can let evangelists in on some of the dos and don'ts in the neighborhood they are witnessing in. Vieths states that dead missionaries are not very effective.²⁵ Crime and violence is a threat to

²² Ibid, 21.

²³ John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 1999), 12.

²⁴ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006), 86

²⁵ Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 26.

those in the inner city every day. Everyday someone in the inner city fights, shots, gets shot at, is threatened, or is hurt due to violence and crime. Even though these activities are common, those in the inner city have not grown calloused to all the crime and violence.

Gang violence occurs for several different reasons, revenge to kill a rival gang, protecting themselves when attacked or threatened, robbing someone, or even proving themselves as honorable members. Some murders and violence consist of one gang member killing another gang member due to disloyalty.²⁶ When asked why gangs are so violent, the usual response covers such areas as revenge for a wrongdoing or territorial encroachment by a rival, which cannot be accepted because it can result in a gang losing money, power, and respect.²⁷ Some of the most frequent battlegrounds or places of attack are at events like a funeral of a rivalry gang member, weddings, baptisms, parties, and other special events or occasions.

Broken Families

Broken families are common in the inner city. Most of those whom this author grew up with came from broken homes, where the father is absent from the home or their grandparents had to raise them. Some families break up for many reasons. Some mothers may determine that there is imminent danger for her family in her neighborhood.²⁸ Families are also broken up due to the father being incarcerated and or the momma being strung out on drugs. Also domestic violence has broken up families and caused husbands and wives to divorce and separate from one party refusing to continue in a relationship that is so healthy. Oftentimes in a broken family,

²⁶ Ibid, 27.

²⁷ Ibid, 26.

²⁸ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006), 130.

the children are affected heavily, leaving them facing emotional problems, social problems, and with a void from not experiencing the love and example of a happy, godly home.

Racism

Racism is truly a challenge in the inner city. Most African Americans have been victims of some type of racism in their lifetimes. For example, the author of this thesis project is 31 years old. By the age of 21, he was mistreated by white police officers just because they were racists and did not like black males. One officer falsely accused him of carrying out a particular act and handcuffed him and commanded that the author put his nose on the hot hood of his car while the engine was running on a summer night. The author's nose was burning, and it was irritated because of this cruel act of hate and prejudice. The officer then took the author to booking, where he was fingerprinted, given a mug shot, and was told by the police to take a charge and plead guilty to an act that the author knew nothing about. The police while booking him asked the author what his street name was and what gang he belonged to. The police assumed that since he was a young black male from the city of Gary, Indiana, that he was automatically part of a gang. Racism is still present today even in the inner city. Even though the case was dropped due to false charges, the author was still affected by the hateful act of racism that was expressed toward him and his friend on several occasions.

Racism can be an obstacle while evangelizing. If a racist remark slips out even about something that is not derogatory, much hard work for the sake of the gospel can be destroyed.²⁹ Some people in neighborhoods would not receive anything some evangelist said just because their skin is a certain color. Some whites wonder why some blacks cannot get over what was

²⁹ Ibid., 134.

done in the past and get on with their lives.³⁰ Many of those who state this do not understand the pain, struggles, and death racism caused and promoted. Fariss states a powerful statement of how the devil's proven strategy of using racial prejudice to destroy the credibility of the gospel has become subtle but is just as spiritually destructive in the inner city as past injustices.³¹ Racism is a sin, and this must be understood by all of God's people. The Great Commission expresses and vividly displays how evangelism is a commission that includes diversity. Segregation practices of evangelicals and insensitive policies of conservative politicians during our country history drove African-Americans away from the authority and values of God's word. Tom Skinner made this point at Urbana 70: "Understand that for those of us who live in the black community, it was not the evangelical who came and taught us our worth and dignity as black men. It was not the Bible-believing fundamentalist who stood up and told us that black was beautiful."³² Believers will be responsible for all those who turned away from the precious gospel of Jesus the Christ because evangelicals offered it corrupted and distorted by racism, oppression and silent neglect. It was not the evangelical who preached to that men should stand on their own two feet and be men, be proud that black was beautiful and that God could work his life out through the redeemed blackness. "Rather it took Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown and the Brothers to declare to us our dignity. God will not be without a witness."³³

Racism has caused heavy and costly consequences and for the church to continue it would cause the church and the inner city to suffer even more. Believers will be responsible for all those who turned away from the precious gospel of Jesus the Christ because evangelicals

³⁰ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006), 60.

³¹ *Ibid*, 61.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ *Ibid*, 143.

offered it corrupted and distorted by racism, oppression and silent neglect. The author dreads the thought of being the reason why someone refuse the gospel and became uninterested in Christ because he decided to exercise racism and hate to his neighbor rather than mercy and love.

Politics

Gangs have truly affected the inner city in ways that are negative and catastrophic and also have the potential to continue to negatively impact the inner city in the future. One of the true issues is again the poverty that is present in the inner city, and this issue undoubtedly needs to be met. The question from many is has the government done anything to help solve some of the issues that are currently present in the inner city? Cornelius Carroll provides information concerning some of the past U.S. Presidents' involvement with gangs and some of them are the following:

Richard Nixon: Jeff Fort, leader of the Blackstone Rangers, was invited to the late Richard Nixon's inauguration.³⁴

Bill Clinton: After twice as many teenagers reported the presence of guns being on school property in the years 1995 and 1989, along with the 25% increase of students being victimized by violent crimes by the U.S government, President Clinton called this type of violent activity unacceptable. President Clinton urged Congress during his State of the Union address on February 4, 1997, to fight this by passing anti-gang and youth violence initiatives. "Gangs—and the guns, drugs and violence that go with them—must be stopped from ever reaching the schoolhouse door."³⁵

³⁴ Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 20.

³⁵ Ibid, 20.

George W. Bush and Laura Bush, his wife, led an anti-gang initiative with 150 million dollars. George Bush stated, “Because one of the deepest values of our country is compassion, we must never turn away from any citizen who feels isolated from the opportunities of America. Our government will continue to support faith-based and community groups that bring hope to harsh places.” George Bush in his speech pointed out and made extreme emphasizes on how he was focusing on giving young people, especially young men in the inner cities of the United States, better options than apathy or gangs in jail. George Bush proposed a three-year initiative that would help organizations keep young people out of gangs and show young men an ideal of manhood that respects women and rejects violence. Taking on gang life will be one part of a broader outreach to at-risk youth, which involves parents and pastors, coaches, and community leaders in programs ranging from literacy to sports.³⁶

Gangs have beyond doubt affected and changed the way people live in many different parts of the world. To the presidents in the past, it is obvious that with gangs and the way gang activities have impacted U.S. streets, communities, neighborhoods, schools, and children, a helping hand and a gang-prevention thrust are truly needed. The government clearly sees the need to fix this gang problem, and the church must clearly see the need to fix the gang problem present and causing problems in the lives of people within the community. If the church will go out and evangelize, it would allow the government providing programs to work smoother because the main need of every gang member is a relationship with Christ.

³⁶ Ibid, 21.

CHAPTER 4

LISTENING TO WHAT GANG MEMBERS ARE SAYING

This pastor believes that one of the best ways to know how to reach someone is by hearing from those who are in need of help. The author of this thesis project interviewed former gang members to gain insight and valuable information that could help the church become more effective in reaching gang members for Christ with the gospel. Insight from former gang members can help the church get a clearer and better understanding about those they need to reach. The author sat down and interviewed five ex-gang members who agreed to give him information and insight that would allow those in the church to see how gang members look at Christ and the church and how many gang members view life as members of a gang. For the sake of the safety of the participants, the author did not provide the participants' government names. The interviewed participants are from the two cities of Gary, Indiana, and Chicago, Illinois, which are also the cities where they were involved in gang activities.

The author of this thesis project wanted to hear from the mouths of those who have operated behind the wheel of gang life because they have seen, experienced, and felt firsthand what it feels like to live lives in a gang. Pastor Cato Brooks, the senior pastor of the Tree of Life, stated in an inner-city evangelism workshop that if you want to win your community, then ask them, and they answer. In order to effectively reach a community and lead them to change, you must know how a community thinks and also what a community needs. Knowing how a community thinks and what the community needs will help you know what motivates and stimulates the people in a community. The evangelist can ask the question "Why are those in gangs and some who are in the inner city like the way they are?" Pastor Brooks also states that finding the psychological profile of a community is vital if you are going to win a community.

Just like people, neighborhoods have different personalities about them. Know your community's personality is vital because you do not want to send certain people to a place where their personalities will clash and not complement each other.

For example, this pastor along with other pastors and leaders of Tree of Life Church walked through neighborhoods with surveys, going door-to-door, to find out the individual needs and concerns of those who lives within the neighborhood of the inner city community. The survey is also designed to discover what that the community wish to see the church as a whole do for or in the community in a helping manner. Through past experience leadership at the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church has discovered that the community themselves will actually tell the church how to win them. If the church wants to know how to win the community they are located in all they have to do is ask them, and the community will tell them.. The data received from the surveys help the church become cognizant and aware of what they should find when they go back out to that particular area within that community. The data that's retrieved from the survey questions helps the church get into the mind of those who live inside the community, which then reveals some valuable info that the church can use to better serve those they will be ministering to.

One of the goals of giving a survey is to get into the minds of the people that lives inside the community, which then reveals some valuable information that the church can use to better serve those they will minister to. For example data gain from the survey could help gain information about the psyche of those who live within the community which could help the church find out what makes those within the community live, respond, and view the church the way they do as a community. Another goal of giving a survey is not only for the church to see the community's mind-set but to also allow the community to see they type of heart that the

church possesses. The purpose of the survey is not only to get the church to know more about the community but to also get the community to know more about the church. The survey aids in the relationship-building process. The survey in part, serves as an icebreaker that promotes dialogue between the church and the unreached community. This shows the community that the church possesses compassion and really does care about what is going on in the lives of the people in the community. For the most part, churches have avoided gangs and ignored this inner-city problem. Many of those who lived in the inner city ten years ago have moved out of the inner city to the suburbs, where they feel more comfortable and safe. This avoidance and ignoring has caused two problems for the church and the community. For one it has caused an entire group of people to be without the gospel, and for two it has resulted in the church being detached from the community as a whole.

Many people in the inner city have been hurt, lied to, and stolen from, and their level of trust in people of the world and in the street is slim to none. Knowing this, the church must realize that sometimes before you can get someone sold on Christ, you first have to get them sold on you. Which means the church must show the community that it consists of people of character and people that will do what they say no matter the circumstances. The church leaders in the inner city must show the people in the community that those in the community matter to the church and the church is different from the world.

The church should be seen and known as having people of character and integrity. When the church goes out to the community, to some people the church will be like strangers to them, and many people in the inner-city community view strangers as unreliable witnesses. So when church people go out and witness in the community, they must understand that those they are witnessing to are not necessarily against God or are anti-God but they are not fully accepting of

the words you are telling them because initially they are anti-you. The leaders of the church have to be believable so that those in the world can receive and believe the gospel that they are saying. This is not an overnight thing, but the pastor, leaders, and members of the congregation are going to have to establish in the community that they are people that possess character and integrity, who came to share the gospel, which has the power to save, deliver, and change their lives.

Those ex-gang members that the author interviewed all state that churches as a whole in the inner city for some reason or another have seemed to be avoiding contact with gang members. Those in gangs need to be offered Christ just like every other lost person in the world, and the church must realize that if they do not reach gangs with the gospel, gangs will continue to go unreached. The church is the inner city's only hope of knowing who Christ truly is. The ex-gang members voice how gang members are dying daily and at the same time growing daily, which means that many have died in the pardon of their sins and many more are heading in that same direction if the church continues to sit back.

Those who are joining gangs are constantly in the presence of gang members and oftentimes are being recruited. To some it seems easier to join gangs than it is to join churches simply because gangs often do not wait for someone to come to where they are—gangs come to where the people are at. Today it seems like the church is more in the inviting business—for example, asking the world to come to church instead of going into the world to get them and bring them to church. The church must do the same thing that many gangs are doing. The church must be present in their community; they must saturate the community with the gospel of deliverance in the midst of gangs saturating the community with a life of destruction. The church is a reflection of the light of Christ, and when its people proclaim the gospel, it offers gang members and potential gang members a path out of darkness. The reason why many gang

members are still gang members in the inner city is not because they have rejected the gospel but because they have never had a chance to respond to the gospel due to Christians' silence.

Ex-gang members have revealed that not only do gang members need to hear the gospel of Christ but also there are some gang members who want to hear about Christ. Some things that the world wants to have, the church is not able to give simply because some things that the world wants, it does not need. For example, in Acts 3, Peter and John came in contact with a lame beggar, and Peter told him, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth get up and walk." Peter and John were in the position to give this lame man what he was in need of rather than what he wanted. The world does not know exactly what it needs because it is blinded by its wants, self-will, and selfish desires. According to the interview with the ex-gang members, most gang members join gangs because gangs offer them the opportunity to obtain this want that they are in desperate pursuit of.

Acts chapter 3 verse 6 shows that in a time of need, God sent two preachers to bring deliverance to a lame beggar. The preacher's job was to connect this lame beggar with Christ, the one who sent them into his life. This man's only opportunity of getting out of his painful and pitiful position and experience salvation and spiritual and physical healing was for someone to go and introduce him to Christ. The ex-gang members expressed that gang members' only hope is for the people of God to go out to where they are, proclaiming the gospel and introducing them to Christ. Just like the lame beggar in Acts 3, every gang member who accepts Christ will also experience spiritual healing and God's salvation. The author heard a pastor say a quote: "They will not come. They must be brought. They will not seek, but they must be sought. They will not teach. They must be taught. But if every soul will save a soul, then every soul will be saved!"

The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church knows that before one can truly establish leadership, one must first establish a relationship as well, as people do not care how much a person know until they know how much that person care. In order to change a community, one need to know what that community thinks. The church or someone in the church need to know what motivates and stimulates the people in a community. Why are they like they are? Finding its psychological profile is vital if you are going to win a community. Behavior is always the result of thinking or thought. Every time there is an action, there is a thought behind it. So if someone is going to win the community in the inner city, then they have to know why they are knocking on the doors of the people, why they are slamming their doors in your face, why people are cruel and so mean, and why will they not come to church at all. In the inner city, drug dealers do not have to knock on people's doors; those who use drugs find them. One must realize that before they can get one sold on Christ, they sometimes might have to get them sold on themselves.

The church leaders in the inner city must show those in the community that people matter and the church members people of character and integrity. Many people in the inner-city community view strangers as unreliable witnesses. They are not necessarily against God or are anti-God, but they are not fully accepting of the words someone is telling them because initially they are anti-that person. The one who is witnessing or evangelizing have to be believable for those in the inner city to receive and believe the gospel that are saying and the Christ they are offering. This is not an overnight thing, but the pastor, leaders, and members of the congregation are going to have to establish in the community that they are people of both character and integrity.

For the most part, to many it seems as if the church as a whole has avoided gangs and ignored or played blind to this gang problem in the inner city. Many of those who lived in the inner city ten years ago have moved out to the suburbs, where they feel more comfortable and safe. Many who live in the inner city feel that the only solution to help them handle this problem is to run away and get as far away as possible from the inner city. It's easy to step around or away from hurting people, but it takes time, commitment, and dedicated work to reach out and help those who are down and out and defeated. The avoiding and ignoring method has caused problems for the church and the community. For one, it has caused an entire group of people to be without the gospel, and it has also resulted in the church being detached from the community as a whole. When people distance themselves from the disadvantaged, they distance themselves from the approval of God and the source of his blessing.³⁷ We must demonstrate compassion toward those who are lost and hurt in the inner city, just as God demonstrated compassion and love toward us when we were lost in the world.

John Fuder, the author of *A Heart for the City*, gives four principles that are drawn from the ninth and tenth chapters of the gospel according to Matthew, which will lead one to an appropriate repentance, to a godly response.³⁸ The first principle is to go where the need is. In Matthew 9:35, the Bible tells how Jesus went through all the towns and villages “teaching and healing.” This verse implies that Jesus came in close contact with them. Jesus did not avoid them. He was not afraid to get up close to see the needs that they had. Verse 36 of chapter 9 reveals that Jesus had compassion, and compassion is heartfelt response to pain and despair. Compassion is about connecting. It is about becoming one with the real needs of someone to

³⁷ John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publications 1999), 20.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

meet those needs. The second principle is that compassion is a response rather than a reaction.³⁹ Not only does the church must have sympathy, but when doing inner-city evangelism, it must also possess compassion. Sympathy is simply to feel sorry, but compassion in a biblical sense acts on sorrow. It is a word that is consistent with action. Compassion is also all about connecting with the helpless condition of a hurting world.⁴⁰

Compassion is a very important ingredient when it comes to inner-city evangelism. God has never been satisfied with a gospel that reaches only the safe, the clean, and the whole.⁴¹ When one lacks compassion, one ultimately lacks what it takes to reach people in their problems with a helping hand, which would result in their deliverance. Compassion gives one more than just sight; compassion gives insight. It allows one, in a sense, to get under the person's skin whom one has the compassion for, to help get a better view and understanding of what he/she is dealing with and what he/she needs. When people lack compassion, it can cause them to see the people as the problem rather than seeing the problems in the people.

The Bible says, "And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction."⁴² When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd." The Bible lets us know that Jesus possesses compassion to help those who are in need. John Fuder gives four principles, which are the following:

³⁹ Ibid. 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21

⁴¹ Ibid., 13

⁴² Matthew 9:35–36

The first principle is to go where the need is. In Matthew 9:35, the Bible informs us that Jesus “went through all the towns and villages, teaching and healing.” Jesus was in close contact with the multitudes. Jesus going to the multitudes put him in position to connect with the real and true needs of the people. Jesus did not attempt to help them from a distance; he rubbed elbows and shoulders in close proximity with the people to see and meet their needs. The church like Christ must also go out of the church building and go to where the needy are and learn how a true connection is established.

The second principle is that compassion is a response rather than a reaction. John Fuder states that the biblical concept of compassion is not to be confused with our modern-day notion of sympathy.⁴³ Sympathy merely feels sorry, but biblical compassion always acts on that sorrow.⁴⁴ Compassion does more than provide a feeling for you; it also provides an action to help you overcome the issue you are up against. Compassion is not a reaction; it is a response.⁴⁵ Evangelism is God’s commanded message to his children, responding to the lost, giving the gospel to those who are in the position of being spiritually beaten and on their way to hell. As God’s people get close enough to see the real needs of people, Christ will commission our hearts to respond by doing something to meet those needs.⁴⁶ Biblical compassion is an active response to real needs.⁴⁷

The third principle is to recognize that biblical compassion is a commitment, not a convenience. Fuder points out how in the tenth chapter of the gospel of Matthew Jesus warned

⁴³ Fuder, *A Heart for the City*, 28

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 28

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 28

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

disciples that some people would ignore them and others would work against them. Ministry is hard work, and for God's people to be committed, they must be dedicated to reaching hurting people even in the midst of tough and challenging circumstances. Inner-city evangelism can be tough and dangerous, but many hurting people are stuck and dying in dangerous places and the only options are to go get them or watch them die.

The fourth principle is that compassion takes people all the way to Christ. Matthew 9:35 states that Jesus felt compassion for the people, also healed the people, and then he preached to them the gospel of the kingdom of God. Fuder states that the most compassionate thing a believer can ever do is to reconnect a lost soul to the eternal God.⁴⁸ The greatest and most important thing that we can ever offer to the world is not money, not jobs, and not food. The greatest the church can ever offer to the world is Jesus Christ. The people of God can go out into the world and fill a person's stomach and meet their other physical and emotional needs, but only Jesus Christ can take a hurting life and make it whole.⁴⁹

The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church being right in the heart and midst of a city where violence and gangs are prevalent, a lot of members of this church have relatives or grew up with some who are part or in some way affiliated with gangs. Recognizing that many already have established relationships with gang members, we can see that we are already given much opportunity to have direct access to those in gangs. Giving tracts is the least effective method of inner-city evangelism. Those who live in the inner city will read you long before they will read a tract. Until they get to know you, you are the only tract they will read. You have to become a physical tract to them because the most effective method now is not a piece of paper but

⁴⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 29.

yourself. Again methods change, not principles, and methods are to be geared toward reaching one's certain community.

Breaking Away from the Gang

Shakur states that he grew tired and disgusted with the insatiable appetite for destruction he had while being in a gang.⁵⁰ Shakur also states that it took him three years to get out of the gang he was a part of, which was the Crips. Interestingly stated by Shakur was that getting out of a gang was much like getting in or becoming part of a gang in the sense of building one's name and deeds in conjunction with what one believes in. A man or woman leaving a gang is not doing a simple task. Many fail in trying to make this break from the gang life. Some attempt to make the change to civilian life through working, going to school or church, or moving out of the neighborhood. But many find themselves drawn back in by the strong gravitational pull of the safe familiarity of the sex and the hood.⁵¹ Gang members who have successfully left a gang need constant support in this process. In his book, Shakur admitted that it was hard for him to truly substantiate his break because the opposition was quite strong and he had no support whatsoever.⁵²

Breaking away from being in a gang can be tough for various reasons. For example, you have to walk away from something that you have invested in, been familiar with, and supported thoroughly. Breaking away from a gang can come with financial, social, and safety challenges. The author works with ex-gang members, helping them with their transition coming to Christ from leaving gangs. One concern was that enemies from rival gangs still possessed hate and seek

⁵⁰ Sanyika Shakur, *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1993), 289.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 295.

to destroy them. Shakur states that when he broke away from the Crips, he knew that his enemies of old would never believe that he had actually stopped gangbanging, so they would not cease to destroy him. Breaking away from a gang also makes some gang members feel a sense of disloyalty.⁵³ Loyalty is very important to gang members. The matter of loyalty is nonnegotiable in the mind of gang members. Gangs have no room and zero-tolerance policy for disloyalty. Shakur states that one of the challenges of breaking away from his former gang was the sense of letting down, disappointing, and perhaps even betraying those he stood by for many years.

In the city of Gary, this pastor has witnessed gang members working with him to help ex-gang members become successful in their transition to a new life in Christ. While this pastor teaches and preaches the word, helping an ex-gang member grow in discipleship, gang members still need to make sure that that ex-gang member no longer participates in gang activities. The gang members do not allow the ex-gang member to sell drugs, use drugs, or gangbang with them, and they do this to help and support the ex-gang member's decision of leaving the gang and coming to Christ. Shakur states that in the transition from being a Crip to being a Christian, "surprisingly, the gang community accepted my break and some even began to support my efforts."⁵⁴

One must realize that leaving a gang is not betraying the gang that he/she used to belong to. Actually refusing to leave a gang is the true act of betrayal. Shakur said, "To continue banging would be a betrayal first of my children, who now depend on me for guidance, morals, and strength." Shakur also states that "the second betrayal is that of all those who have been killed in our past, who fought so hard for our freedom only to have us follow in their wake with

⁵³ Ibid., 295.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 297.

massive destruction, rolling back most of the community unity they had constructed.”⁵⁵ Shakur said to break from the gang set, you have to draw on your well of strength, “sum up the courage to step out of myself, my set, my learned ways and take an objective look at what was going on in the world around me.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid., 305.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 306.

CHAPTER 5

LESSONS LEADING TO IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EFFECTIVE GANG OUTREACH

Again many of those who are in the inner city are broken, confused, depressed, angry, and just beat spiritually, mentally, physically, and financially. The truth of the matter is that task of evangelizing in the inner city is far from easy and to some at times can seem intimidating. Inner-city evangelism is definitely serious business and God's children must take it seriously. The pastors and leaders of churches in the inner city have the serious responsibility of training people, and they have to evangelize and reach those in the city where they reside. John MacArthur states the following: "If it is true the evangelism is the primary task of believers, and if it is true that a pastor's primary task to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry, then it follows that teaching a congregation how to evangelize is one of a pastor's biggest priorities."¹

Training is not an option, but it is an absolute priority for the church to reach gangs effectively while evangelizing. There are so many practices, principles, and procedures that one can apply when equipping saints to evangelize and reach the lost. Training is an investment into the development of those the pastor is preparing for the ministry of evangelism. Training involves ministry development, and Tony Evans defines ministry as any activity in which the needs of people are met by Christians in accordance with the scripture.² When evangelizing in the inner city, it is vital to recognize the unique needs that are present in urban area because again ministry is to the needs it shoots as a specific target.

¹ John MacArthur, *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 121.

² Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Through the Eyes of Tony Evans* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 207.

This author of this thesis project as the senior executive pastor of the Tree of Life makes it mandatory that every leader goes through training. Training is not the exact same thing as teaching. This pastor gives a distinction between the two with the following: One teach to know but one train to do. One teaches to know of but one trains to know how. Teaching goal is instructive, but training goal is productivity. When someone teach, someone it is to teach them of the operation but when someone gets trained they are trained how to operate. Teaching is the process that puts something in someone, and training is the process to help that person apply that particular teaching is to help someone get it, but training is to help someone live it.

Training to evangelize is to prepare the congregation to execute and carry out the plans, procedure, programs, and practices shared and taught from the pastor or leader. The church must train all people in the congregation in soul winning and in discipleship because this is a mandate from Christ to all of the children of God.

When Jesus was preparing the disciples for the mission of soul winning, the disciples were men who were willing to learn become trained. Robert Coleman states that “none of the disciples had academic degrees in the arts and philosophies of their day, and like their master, their formal education likely consisted only of synagogue schools. Most of them were raised in the poor section of the country around Galilee.”³ One might wonder how Jesus could ever use them when these men were impulsive, temperamental, easily offended, and had all the prejudices of their environment. The state qualities of the disciples’ characters might make one feel that this might not be the ideal group one would expect to go out into the world and be Christ’s witnesses and win the world on Christ behalf. These men might have been considered as the unlearned by the world, which is seen in the book of Acts 4:13. These men, with the exception of Judas

³ Coleman, Robert. *The Master Plan Evangelism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2010), 22.

Iscariot, were men who were willing to be taught, led, and used by God. Jesus deliberately concentrated his life on training and preparing his disciples to reach the world, which shows his purpose and plan for evangelism.

Equipping

The book of Ephesians 4:11–12 highlights Jesus commitment to using gifted people to equip his workers. Jesus demonstrated in his earthly ministry a transformative leadership development process when he taught, showed, observed, and mentored his disciples before pulling them up into leadership roles as his replacement and representatives.⁴ Luke 10 records how Jesus follows this equipping strategy when giving his disciples a community evangelism assignment.⁵ He also joyfully praises his father in this passage for having the vision to equip these improbable workers to fulfill great evangelistic purposes. Likewise, effective inner-city ministry requires a vision for equipping men. Seeing inner-city men as potential evangelistic leaders and designing ministries to equip them through transformative leadership development can make inner-city ministry successful.⁶ Equipping and providing training for leaders and those in the congregation investing in making an evangelistic thrust in the inner city.

Knowing about Gangs

The writer of this thesis project believes that just like many churches, Bible colleges and seminaries teach, train, and prepare their students, and members of the congregation reach people of different faith, beliefs, culture, and races with the gospel. The same should be done to reach those who are gang affiliated. There is plenty of training that is invested in missionaries to go

⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

overseas and reach those across the world, but there is not much training to reach those gang members across the street. What is needed in countries around the world is the same thing that is needed throughout the streets of the inner city with this the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sin has multiplied and destroyed families. Urban ministries today must do at home in our cities what foreign missions did abroad yesterday and for the same reasons. Evil principalities and powers have taken over many parts of cities where the church either never existed or fled from engaging for various reasons.⁷ In apologetics, it is key for one to learn what the Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, and Hindus believe, but there is nothing in the schooling that prepared the author to know what gangs believe, and the author knew that this devastating epidemic was waiting for him back home.

Apologetics is about defending the faith, and gang members have that same type of mentality for what they believe. Many gang members get so deep and committed to their gang that it becomes their god, and they will do anything to anybody to defend it—even die for it.⁸ Gang culture feels as if it is some type of religious sect of its own. Gangs have their own rituals, languages, and prayers. These prayers often are said before members go into battle against rivals or chanted before wounded members die. A prayer used by one gang is as follows: "When I die and go to rest, lay two shotguns across my chest; tell my vice lord brothers that I did my best."⁹ The gangs operate religiously, and those who do not Christ are headed to hell, and it is the church who introduced them to Jesus Christ, the savior of the world.

⁷ John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 1999), 3.

⁸ Cornelius Carroll, *Black Gangs in America* (Nashville, TN: Lowbar Publishing Company, 2011), 23.

⁹ *Ibid*, 23.

This false sense of true spirituality puts gangs in the same category with other false religious sects. Just like Jehovah's Witnesses who go door to door attempting to recruit and gain followers that would believe in what they believe and become a part of their religious affiliation, gangs' methods are similar. The author have come up with the conclusion that the more you know and understand what gang members believe and practice, the better one can understand the gang culture that equips one to carry out effective cross-cultural evangelism.

Identifying Gangs

When training someone to reach gangs for Christ, The author of this thesis project believes that it is important to be able spot or recognize a gang member when one see one. Gangs wear various types of apparel, fashion, and colors that coincide with their particular gang affiliation. In the Midwest region of the United States of America, particularly in Gary, Indiana, the major gangs that make up most gang population are the Vice Lords, the Gangster Disciples, the Latin Kings, and the Black Stones. Each gang has their own symbols, hand signs, colors, practices, and beliefs. Certain colors, hand gestures, jargon, neighborhood, or symbols made are used to identify what sect, clique, or group that they belong to.

One object or clothing accessories that gang members wear are bandannas. The bandanna is also known as a moco rag, and many gang members wear them wrapped around their foreheads, around their necks, and also hanging from their jeans. Cornelius Carroll states that a bandanna is usually folded lengthwise, two inches wide, and gang members wear it to intimidate others as well as to identify themselves as gang members.¹⁰ Gang members can also be recognized by the way they wear their hats. Some gang members cock their hat to a certain side to let others know what gang they belong to. Gang signs are ways that gang members

¹⁰ Ibid., 49.

communicate their gang affiliation to one another and or challenge those from an opposing gang. To make gang signals or signs, gang members use their hands or fingers to form letters or to make numbers. Cornelius states that law enforces and correctional officers should be aware of these signals because they may give an indication of gang affiliation and pending gang violence.¹¹ The author of this thesis project believes that those who are reaching gangs for Christ should know these different identifiers as well as whom one is approaching. The following is a list of identifiers of how gang members appear: attitudes, hats, trench coats, bandannas, shirts/t-shirts, hand signals, tattoos, etc. items that would help one recognize or identify membership and affiliation with a gang. But no one should make the mistake of putting everybody who has one of these items to be automatically a member in a gang.

Know Your Neighbor

Not only do the church want those in their congregation to know of or know about their neighbors in the inner city because just knowing about your neighbors is not enough because inner-city evangelism requires those in the church to know them, and this is done by building a relationship. Establishing a relationship with those in the inner city is a necessity because relationship is essential for effective leadership. The church must go out in the inner city and introduce themselves to those in the inner city, letting them know who they are and how we are here in the community to discover the needs, issues, and concerns of those people in the inner city. The purpose of this is to build a trusting relationship, which is vital because of past hurt, experience, and bad church experiences; many of those who are hurt or wounded in some shape or form hesitate to trust anyone. The lost necessarily do not trust what the church is saying, which is the gospel, but the lost at the time might not trust the person or the people who is saying it. Those who are lost in the inner city will not necessarily reject the gospel when the church

¹¹ Ibid., 52.

witness to them, but what they are doing is actually rejecting the person because it is hard for some to trust a stranger when those who claimed to love them betrayed them, lie repeatedly, and hurt them deeply.

Building a relationship is not only to help the gang members to trust Christians, but it is also to help the Christians in many ways. There are a lot of Christians who view gang members as monsters. The author interview pastors and leaders of different church throughout the city of Gary, Indiana, and discovered that most church congregations do not currently have a program in place at their church that is geared toward reaching gangs for Christ with the gospel in the inner city. Every pastor admitted surveyed stated that they believe that gangs have impacted the City of Gary, Indiana, in a negative way, but only 30% claim to have some type of program in place that is geared to reach gangs for Christ. Only one of the churches that claimed to have a program in place to reach the lost have done something in the last 5 years to prepare his congregation for inner-city evangelism. From the pastoral survey, the author discovered that many pastors have no clue on how to address this subject to reaching gangs effectively in the inner city.

It is sad, but many members of churches view gang members more as threat that they need to avoid rather than a lost soul that they need to go find to offer them Christ Jesus. One pastor that participated in the survey stated that many of those who are a part of their church are honestly intimidated when it comes to the idea of reaching out to gangs for Christ. Training and getting to know gang members can help members of God's children become less intimidated and more motivated to reach gang members with the gospel for Christ. Training helps the church grasp a better understanding, and it also builds one's confidence to carrying it divine commission.

Being Seen

After training, the church should go out throughout the neighborhood, introducing themselves to the community and asking those in the community questions such as “Are there anything you would like to see us do as a church in the community, or is there anything that we as a church can help you or the community with? The often-said quote “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” is short but powerful because knowing someone genuinely care makes you more accepting to hear what they have to say. Being in the community makes you become of a part of them rather than separated from them. Being in the community presence also makes you appear more as a neighbor rather than a visitor or a stranger. The world will know that we as Christians, by our love, expressing love throughout the community, gives a reflection of the connection the church has with Christ. Being seen and displaying love to thy neighbors as one love themselves set up a platform to tell the greatest love story in the world: God so love the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Being Heard

After being trained and equipped and after establishing a relationship within the community, you now can saturate the community with the gospel of Christ. The church can see members of a team who are trained to go door to door, block to block, and neighbor to neighbor to proclaim the gospel. The local churches can also partner up with one another; for example, five churches on the east side, north side, south side, and west side, and all go to the park that is near the vicinity of the particular church region and carry out a simultaneous citywide revival with the purpose of reclaiming the city for Christ striving to win lost souls. The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church has also utilized what is called block parties in communities within

the inner city and also started indigenous house churches. The purpose is to plant the gospel seed throughout the inner city and help some respond to the gospel with belief in Christ Jesus.

Once the church gets in the position of being heard, they are then able inform gang members with life-changing information. Reaching and teaching gang members is vital because without it, they will continue to be in same condition and position. When the church reach gang members who are able to help them come into a state of awareness with the gospel, and understanding of how ignorant, degrading, and destructive it can be to dedicate one's life to a cancerous lifestyle. One key to the physiological gang dilemma is showing the urban gang members how ignorant senseless and indiscriminate acts of violence are before it's too late.¹² When it comes to reaching gangs for Christ, the church must realize that helping them divorce this old lifestyle and mind frame is a work that involved getting inside the hearts and minds of these gang members.

Refusing to Shut Up

Nowadays it seems as if the church has become silent in the areas of praying, praising and proclaiming. The church as a whole in this day and age seems as if the majority have decided to shut up for some reason or another. The words shut when used together are two words that mean to close your mouth, be quiet or remain silent. The words shut up is a request for silence or a command to suspend the usage for any type of communication or audible expression. The church must realize that it cannot afford to be silent because becoming or remaining silent when it comes to spreading the good news can cost someone to lose their soul.

Effective evangelism is link to one having a strong prayer life. Every witness should realize that God's children cannot afford to do anything for God without first spending time with

¹² Stephen J. Williams, *The Malignant Ideology: Exploring the Connection between Black History and Gang Violence* (2012), 90.

God. The author was told coming into the ministry that a minister is not fit to stand in public for God if they have not spent any time in private with God. When it comes to doing God's work to build God's kingdom, God's children must realize that private intervention is that which precedes public interaction. Public interaction without private intervention can actually make someone become a more of a poisonous interference because if one has not spent any time with God they are more subject to tell people what they think rather than what God has said.

A moment of silence has become more of a movement of silence. Many Christians are guilty of committing the sin of silence. Silence has become an epidemic in the body of Christ as if we have responded to Christ's command to go with no and when the church ever responds to Christ's command to go with a no what it does is hold back the only hope that fallen man have with receiving eternal life. When the church holds back the gospel of Jesus Christ what the church is actually doing is leaving the world to hear only the ways that are devilish rather than the ways of deliverance. The church that shut up is the church that is making an investment to shut down, because the church that refuses to evangelize is the church that will soon fossilize.

The Author's Story

The author of this thesis project went into the gang-infested neighborhoods connected with those who he already had a relationship with. He went into the neighborhood spending time with them, getting to know them even more, loving them, and telling them who Christ is and all that he has done in his life. Many of those in gangs in Gary, Indiana, played basketball with the author; hence, the author used the relationship he already established with his former teammates who ended up joining gangs. The author of this thesis project views them not as monsters but as friends who were in need of help and especially in need of having Christ in their lives. Therefore, the author began to deliberately go around more often reconnecting with his childhood friends,

reminiscing about the fun times we had growing up in the neighborhood traveling the country playing ball and all the good times with had throughout school. Seeing that The author of this thesis project changed his life from living worldly, his childhood friends asked what happened and made him change his life around. The author of this thesis project used that opportunity to let them know what Jesus had done for him and how accepting Christ was the best decision that have ever happened to him. This response about Christ was a response that opened the door to reach many gang members with the gospel of Christ.

Being in his old neighborhood, the author not only has seen how many needed to hear the gospel but also has discovered how many people are ready to hear and respond to the gospel. The author of this thesis project discovered that what his friend needed was just for somebody to tell them how to be saved. The reason many people aren't Christians is that no one has told them how to be saved. Many gang members were anxious to hear the gospel; many needed something that will give them hope in the midst hopelessness. Every day, many gang members are around an atmosphere-filled violence, crime, and pitiful eyesore, such as abandoned buildings and boarded up homes that are filled with drug addicts. The author of this thesis project felt that he was in debt to the gang members because they had a desire to be set free from a gangster lifestyle and mind frame, and God had entrusted him with the gospel that could deliver them from it.

Spiritual Needs

The author of this thesis project started playing basketball with them again like the old times and also played video games, and afterward, he had Bible study and prayer meeting with them in their neighborhood. The author of this thesis project knew that inner-city evangelism requires a long-term commitment when it comes to disciple individuals especially one who have serious issues and obstacles in their life. The Bible studies took place weekly at the author of this

thesis project auntie house located in the neighborhood that he grew up in. It was vital to come to them instead asking them to come to the church; in fact, Christ's instruction to the disciple to go in to the world. The author of this thesis project preached to the lost and then taught those who accepted Christ as their personal savior. The author of this thesis project also personally made disciples of some teaching them the ways of Christ, praying with them and helping them overcome their personal battles.

Many gang members began to grow closer to the author and shared the secret struggles that they hesitated to tell and fellow gang member because they was afraid to look weak or mar the image they portrayed. The author of this project ended up going to court and talking to the lawyer for those gang members that were fighting cases in the judicial system. The author of this project also wrote letters to judges informing them of those who had been spending time with in the word of God and seeking counsel to live a life void of negativity. The author of this thesis project also added a church services at church entitled W.O.W, which stood for Worship on Wednesday, that was geared for those who ages was between 18 and 35 years. In the first 6 months of this service, several gang members gave their life to Christ and were baptized.

Physical Needs

The author of this thesis project discovered that when you are witnessing to gang members and asking them to come to Christ, a gang member is not just walking away from a group that he or she used to belong to but also walking away from means of income, for some even a roof over their head and ways to keep food on their table. The tree of life knows that in the inner-city poverty, employment, and housing are serious issues to many living in the community. Therefore, the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church offers low income and section 8 housing to help those with financial issues provide a place to live for his family away

from the old gang atmosphere. Money is a serious issue to those who are leaving gangs when one no longer have money in their pocket especially when someone was used to making thousands of dollars a week. The Tree of Life also has partners up with different agencies to help citizen in the community with job readiness and career development to prepare individuals for the workforce.

Educational Needs

Many of those who used to be a part of gangs drop out school and did not receive their high school diploma. Cornelius Carroll stated that in most cases, gang members are high school dropouts or expelled students.¹³ Knowing this, the author of this thesis project works with young adults from the ages of 17–24 years at a local agency to help young men and women to get their GED or high school diploma. The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church implemented a youth build program in the past to help those who had dropped out of high school for one reason or another to help them obtain either their diploma or certifications in the construction field. This program offers young people the opportunity not only to become educated but also to make a step toward starting a career in the construction field. This program also involve job placement, which promotes each participant to become totally drug free and job ready. Each successful participate in the program will graduate out of the program with their diploma, a construction certification, a job, and a possible scholarship if they get accepted into college.

The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church also has partnership with Crossroads Bible College to provide education to those who live in the inner city and beyond. The college is located right in the heart of the inner city and offers easy access to those who live within the inner city. The Bible College is a vital aspect to reaching the inner city because there are a lot of people who live within the inner city who always had the desire to go off to college to receive post education. The author of this thesis project goes through the city recruiting, promoting, and

¹³ Carroll, *Black Gangs in America*, 22.

encouraging those throughout the city to go to college and invest in their futures and careers. The Bible College's mission is to educate and help build those in the urban community, equipping people with a Christian education and win the lost around the world with the gospel.

Financial Needs

The author of this thesis project realized quickly that one the greatest need for those who are apart of gangs are financial needs. The Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church has ministry that is geared towards preparing, equipping and helping individuals for a career. The program is one that is consisted of helping individuals become drug free, and job ready and this is done through both training and counseling. Counseling is often needed because when many of the ex-gang members exit out of a gang they simultaneously exit out of the life of selling drugs which provided a lot of money in some cases. The author of project have found it very difficult for an ex-gang members that made a lot of money selling drugs to work a job paying on 7 to 10 dollars an hour. The issue with these former gang members is more mental because they are used to being viewed as being well off financially and when one is viewed that way it came with a certain level of respect from both their peers and women. While being trained and counseling the goal is to help changed the mentality and mind frame of the individual helping one become more confident in themselves by finding a job/career and earning a honest living.

Moving Past Our Past

Regardless of the past, the church must get in the position to obey and carry Christ's command and strategy of reaching the world with the gospel. No longer can the church remain stagnant and silent when it comes to reaching gangs for Christ in the inner city. Fariss has observed that in the past, the church has allowed eight things to take place that the body cannot continue to happen, which are the following: let fear immobilize them, fail to evangelize the

inner city, emphasize program rather than relationship-based evangelism, abandon provision of children in public schools, Not making evangelical biblical training available in the inner city, not immobilizing African American for world missions, most churches remaining racially divided and many evangelical leaders leave out justice and mercy from the purpose of God.¹⁴

Model to Mobilize Workers

The bible states how the harvest is plenty but the laborers are few which is a statement that shows that need of more workers. The church must realize that in order to be successful in carrying out the work of God they ultimately need the presence, protection and provision of God. The following is a strategy is to help a church line up with the heartbeat of Jesus to build structure in the effort of reaching the lost: Expand members' prayer lives to include inner city neighbors. In obedience to Jesus' command in Luke 10:2 mobilize members to specifically ask the Lord to thrust out laborers for His harvest in the inner city. Encourage them to pray through Psalms 96 and boldly entreat the Lord to keep the church family on the cutting edge of His spiritual harvest there. Lead the church in intercession to tear down strongholds of injustice, immorality and neglect, which exist inside and outside of its doors. Have members stop and pray whenever the media reports on inner city issues. Emphasize the need to pray that God saves and sends out men from the inner city. Engage the congregation in spiritual battle against the forces of evil. Identify neighborhoods by names when calling on members to pray. Find ways to creatively encourage members to pray consistently and intelligently for inner city harvests. Ask members to include requests for the inner city on their personal, daily prayer lists. Financially support urban missionaries who solicit prayer for the lost there. Publish names of public housing

¹⁴ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006). 214

and other low-income neighborhoods and encourage members to visit them to learn how to pray specifically. Include prayers for the churches, government agencies and businesses in these communities.¹⁵

This first step is one that causes the church to spend time with God in prayer about those who are in the inner city. Prayer is something that is not ultimately geared to get God to do something for them but prayer is that which put believers in position for God to lay His agenda on their heart. This first step involves constant prayer and it puts believers in position to receive the agenda that God has on reaching those who are in the inner city. This step truly highlights and point out how vitally important it is for believers in Christ to have a strong prayer life. The inner city as a whole truly needs a touch from heaven and prayer is that spiritual tool that calls upon the aid of God to reach a city that definitely need God to bring forth divine deliverance in the life of the people

The second step that is involved in the church building structure in the effort of immobilizing workers to work toward reaching the lost in the inner city is the following: Revamp Strategic planning to include urban families. To help induce the body of Christ to reach the inner city leadership should include strategic planning that make mercy driven outreach a core value in the church. To accomplish this aim leaders must first embrace this core value and reflect it in their mission and vision statement.¹⁶ This endeavor also gives churches opportunities to strategically elevate the role of evangelist whom the Lord would use to edify laborers as He thrust them into His harvest. Below is the model of a chart that can be used by leaders to carry

¹⁵ Ibid, 166.

¹⁶ Ibid, 167.

out the strategic plan after making ministry to inner city families a core value in the local church.¹⁷

The chart below is one that can not only revamp the church strategic planning to now include urban families but it also revamp the church's strategic planning to include God's plans which have always included reaching the inner city and members of gangs with the gospel.

Added Core Value: Mercy-Driven Ministry with the Poor

Added Core Value: Mercy-Driven Ministry with the Poor										
	Personal		Family		Church		Business		School	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Mission										
Vision										
Objectives										
Goals										
Accountability										
Challenges										
Action Steps										

Figure 2.

The third step to helping the church to immobilize workers to reach the inner city with the gospel is to “Rearrange schedules to proclaim the Lord's salvation day after day.” To make relationship evangelism possible, congregation must streamline personal and church schedules to free up time for cultivating friendships.¹⁸ Rearranging the schedule is a step that can keep

¹⁷ Ibid, 167.

evangelism as a priority and not an addendum. Rearranging the schedule will also help the body of Christ to stay discipline to evangelizing and discipleship that can keep the church from getting distracted. Scheduling to proclaim the Lord's salvation day after day involves proclaiming the gospel as a part of the church calendar and everyday operations. Christians must prayerfully organize their schedules and seek accountability to join the Lord's inner city harvest.¹⁹

Rearranging the schedule to proclaim the Lord's salvation day after day is the church taking time to make time to ensure that God word is being shared with families in the inner city. Time management is a strategic component of effective relational evangelism.²⁰

The fourth step when it comes to building structure to immobilize workers to share the gospel with families in the inner city is it: Equip members with relational evangelism skills that transfer to inner city outreach: The author Michael Farris states that since these skills are caught rather than taught, church leaders should implement discipleship-based training to equip and mentor members in relational evangelism.²¹ Equipping members with relational evangelism skills helps members to learn how to connect with families in the inner city. The discipleship based training takes each person through the following four equipping stages which are the following below: Stage 1: Follow-up. Leaders show and teach members how to share their faith as they follow up new contacts from church services, outreach events, programs and church ministries. This discipleship training becomes an early step for equipping new believers. Churches maintain databases to monitor new contact follow-up. Stage 2 Friendship Evangelism:

¹⁸ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006). 168

¹⁹ Ibid, 168.

²⁰ Ibid, 170.

²¹ Ibid, 170.

Friendship evangelism is geared to help equip members to reach the people in their circle of influence. This will help build the kingdom of God because members of the body of Christ will learn how to increase the number of unsaved friends in that are in these circles by establishing and building new relationship networks with them. Stage 3 Cell group Evangelism Leaders also use Touch ministries strategies to equip small groups to facilitate relationship evangelism. Stage 4: Multiplication: Members equip others through these four stages of discipleship-based relational evangelism.

These four stages are put in place to prepare members to be in the best position with being successful and effective in the area of relationship-based evangelism.

The fifth step to immobilizing workers to evangelize is to: Invest in the church body life that praises the Lord before unbelievers, declaring among them that He reigns.²² This step allows the unbelievers to not only hear about the different lifestyle that comes along with accepting Christ as your personal Savior and Lord but it also allows the unbelievers to see firsthand the difference between a worldly lifestyle and having new relationship with Christ Jesus. The author discovered that many of young people in the inner city do not desire to do different because they have not got the opportunity to see any outside of the neighborhood and city that they reside in. The church can come to the neighborhood and have midweek services to help reach those who do not have to opportunity to leave the neighborhood where they live.

Step six when it comes to immobilizing the body of Christ to reach the inner city with the gospel is to “judge programs based on their support of relationships.”²³ Leader must apply

²² Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006). 171

²³ Ibid, 171.

standards based on true mercy when evaluating the effectiveness of an outreach program.²⁴

Churches can serve the poor due many different outreach programs to help reach each need of each individual. Most churches serve the poor through outreach programs in their own facilities like soup kitchens, food drives homeless shelters, substance abuse meetings, clothes closets, tutoring, youth outreaches and sports teams.²⁵ At the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist Church it is vitally important to reaching families in the inner city in ways that are spiritual, physically, educationally and financially.

The seventh step and final step to immobilizing the church to reach those who are in the inner city is to: Empower Inner City Leaders. Churches that want to attract and draw inner city neighbors must make investments in men and women from the inner city. The church must pour into people that understand firsthand what the people in the inner city are dealing with and what they need to overcome in life. Since inner city programs require skilled workers who recruit and serve residents, churches and non-profits should hire and train residents from these communities to serve in their own neighborhoods.²⁶ In doing so, they provide an effective means for developing more relationship for church outreach. Investing in the people is actually investing in the community, and when you make an investment in the community the return on the investment could lead to better people and also a better community.

A Look Above or a Look to God (Up Reach)

The first step or the first thing that must happen in evangelizing the inner city community is to geographically locate the area that God has given the church responsibility for. The pastor

²⁴ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006). 171

²⁵ *Ibid*, 171.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 171.

should go to God in prayer along with the church leaders and congregation and ask God reveal to their mind the geographical area, which God has given the church the authority and ability to change. Through prayer God will let the pastor know the area and the vicinity that the church are assigned and equipped to bring for a change in. In the book of Acts chapter one verse eight the bible says:

2nd Step Once the pastor and the leadership of the church get the geographical that God has assigned them to reach in the inner city they should let the entire membership know. Every member of the church should know the area that God had made the church as a whole=responsible for to reach with the gospel and bring forth a change and transformation The church should be informed and not be left ignorant of their God given assignment. In the book of Habbakuh chapter two verse four the bible says:

A Look Within or a Look to Congregation (In Reach)

The 3rd Step is Training because the body of church must not only know what to do but they must also know how to do it. The people of God must be taught and trained because it is vital that they not only learn of but also learn how. Training prepares disciples for personal involvement making practical what have been taught to them. Those who are in the church must first become a disciple themselves which would make the gospel not only practical but also personal to those within the congregation. Knowing that each church member will come in contact with someone who is connected or affiliated with a gang in some manner should be trained to effective reach those individuals.

4th Step is Equipping the Congregation. This step involves providing the church with a strategy and method on how the church will carry out its plan to evangelize in the inner city. It is

vital that for the member of the church to know the plan and also to become equipped with the tools that would enable them to implement that plan.

A Look Out or a look to the Community (Out Reach)

The 5th Step Is to make Contact this will allow the community a chance to get to know church and also the church to a chance to know more about the community. This step involves introducing or reintroducing the church to the community telling the community about the church and asking the community question to in return gain more information about who they are as a whole and how do they think within the community. It is very important to have or gain an understanding of the environment that you minister in. This step can help a church find a psychological profile of the community they are in and also the needs they have.

6th Step Establishing a Relationship. Establishing a relationship is very important because before for you can have effective leadership you must first have an established relationship. The church will be ineffective in reaching people in the inner city just by giving them a track because people will read the person giving them the track way before they will read the track. Until the church establishes a relationship with the community they church will be the only track that they will read. The church must reach those in the community in a way that would encourage them to become engaged with the church and interested in hearing what the church have to say. There is saying that goes “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” The church must win those in the community to them before they can win community to Christ. Many of those in the inner city has been lied to, mistreated, and mislead by people that they love dearly and that is one reason why the church must establish a genuine relationship because many people are reluctant to hear anything from a stranger. People are not necessarily anti Jesus but they might be against hearing Christ from someone who

doesn't know me, who can't relate to my struggle, and not interested in caring for my needs. The church establishing a relationship with the community helps is a step that will help the community interested in a establishing a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Step 7 (Meeting the Needs Community development)

Community development is a vehicle that can help the church meet every conceivable need of the geographical are that they serve. Community development can provide housing, counseling, job training, and programs for battered women, abused children, and services to help get people off of welfare. When it comes to inner city evangelism everything the church do is based on what the church see their geographical community needs are. The church will see the needs of the community by spending time and being in the community. Spending time in the community will help the church to see what

Step 8 Stick with discipleship (Staying with them)

The entire scope of inner city evangelism is meeting the people where they are, introducing them Christ, and then staying with them through teaching, make them a disciple and not leaving them on their own until they are mature. Once the church reach one with the gospel within the inner city the church must have something to help them become grounded in the word of God. The church must realize that those who are leaving gangs and coming to Christ that many of their issues are present with that person. The mindset, addictions, and problems that many gang members have are still detrimental to them even after they have initially accepted Christ. In inner city evangelism the Church must be willing to stick with each individual to help them become transformed by the renewing of their mind.

Step 9 Following Up –

Following up is vital because even after time after being out of a gang or out of a worldly lifestyle in the inner city many time ones past life tries to catch back up with them. For example one of the problem that often can up at the Tree of Life Missionary Baptist church was that former drug dealer who use to make a lot of money every week found it very difficult to adjust their living to operating off low income or even no income. This issue has caused many to struggle with selling drugs again to provide for their family financially. Following up with those the church has reached with the gospel can help one who is struggling to not only overcome temptation but also provide that need that they have. Following up provides encouragement, motivation and support to one another.

Step 10 (Launching Them Out)

Step 10 is a step that will now allow those who were won to Christ to become winner for Christ. This is vital in the inner city because the way the church wins the community is by using community people. Those who from and live in the inner city have a vested interested in the people, the church, and the city. Those from the community are in tune with the community needs and once they become a disciple, trained, equipped, and psychologically suit to win that certain area they are prepared to reach those who are in the inner city, in gangs, and other destructive lifestyle with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

The author of this thesis project is passionate about reaching gangs for Christ. The author has seen how gangs have destroyed the life of his family, friends, and loved ones right in front of his eyes. Consider this statistics in the United States: an average of 1,452 black babies die by abortion every day.²⁷ One-third of black men between the ages of 19 and 29 years are in the legal

²⁷ Michael Fariss, *Transforming Inner City Evangelism: For When You Care* (Norfolk, Virginia: Urban Discovery Ministries, 2006). 171

system's jail, prison, or probation services, and also 50% of the two million people in America's prison are black. Because of this statistics and the commission of Christ, the author preaches the gospel not only in churches throughout the community but also in the neighborhood and goes to different schools in the Northwest Indiana region, speaking to teenagers about the importance of living a gang-free and drug-free life. The author tells them the blessing of joining the family of God over the family of gangs. One of the made-up phrases that the author use when preaching or speaking is "Don't choose Vice Lords over Christ Lord, don't choose G.D. over G.O.D., don't choose the Latin kings over the King of Kings, don't choose the Black Stones over him who is the Chief Corner Stone, and don't choose the Crips and Bloods over Christ who went on Calvary's cross and shed his blood. Today the church must present the gospel to gangs to give them the opportunity to choose Jesus!"

Christ commanded the church to go, and the word go is two-thirds of the word God; go is also two-sixth of the word gospel and two-eighths of the words good news and Golgotha. The author has seen how you cannot spell the words God, gospel, good news, or Golgotha without first spelling the word go. The church must go in obedience to God command and proclaim the gospel, which is good news about what Christ did on Golgotha to redeem fallen humanity. This command of God should not be talking lightly, but we should take the gospel to the world across the seas to those in different countries, across the country to those of all races, and across the streets in the inner city because all of humanity has one thing in common: they are all in need of a relationship with Jesus, and that is what Christ commissioned his church to carry out and faithfully fulfill the Great Commission.

God has given the church the divine permission to reach those who are in the world to have the opportunity to be saved and delivered from sin. The church nowadays should learn from the past and avoid repeating anything that will keep the church from reaching more of the world with the gospel in the effort of building the kingdom of God by being faithful to the Great Commission. Over the last few decades many young boys and girls have died premature deaths due to the fact that they join a gang when they could of join the church and an intimated relationship with Christ. Gangs have sabotaged the streets of the inner city and have vexed those in the inner city community but the question is not will gang stop committing these criminal acts but the question is will the church start reaching these gang members with the gospel. Christ is man's only hope, and God's people are Christ chosen vessels to present the only message that offers salvation to mankind which is again is the gospel.

The author of this project has seen and experienced firsthand the power of God working in the lives of those who was affiliated with gangs. Many of days this pastor has went in gang infested neighborhoods to talk and minister to gang members offering them an alternative lifestyle that consists of leaving gang s to live for Christ. Knowing that there are struggles that can come along with growing up in the inner city, this author prays that this project will result in motivated the people of God to give an even greater effort in reaching the lost with the gospel in the inner city and ultimately around the world. Inner city evangelism doesn't deviated from the principle of evangelism but it is an added method. Evangelism in the inner city could bring hope to the hopeless, help to the helpless, peace to the peace less and joy to the joyless. The church in the inner city that evangelize effectively striving to reach gangs for Christ will not only build a strong evangelistic ministry but that church would also touch people lives and bring people to a intimate relationship for Christ.

This pastor realizes that the “Great Commission” is the capstone of Jesus teaching. The teaching of Christ was about bringing salvation in the life those who are lost in sin. Seeing thousands of young people unsaved in the inner city this pastor go throughout the city chasing down gang member and other sinner because he has a desire for them to be saved by accepting Christ as their savior and Lord. It is vital that the God’s children pick up the agenda of the Lord and preach the gospel to every creature. The church is under orders, the body of Christ has been giving a command of taking the gospel to the uttermost part of the world and they must refuse to let anything keep them from fulfilling this command.

In the inner city of Gary, Indiana it seems as if the young black men are dying off more and more daily. The author of this project who teaches and coaches at a middle how found himself hearing the breath taking news of hearing one of his former players or students shot down and killed from gang violence. Preaching and teaching students and athletes about the blessing of belonging to Jesus and the danger of belonging to gangs are information that is included in this pastor curriculum and coaching techniques. Growing up going to school and playing sports in the inner city this author knows that when school is over and when games are over trouble seems to be waiting for you right out the school door and gym door. It is vital to offer Christ to students in school because these students are at risk and the consequences that comes with choosing gangs can be not only life altering but also life ending. The gospel is the only true hope and help that kept this author away from going with his teammate and friends to joining a gang. Gangs seems to offer two things only and that is jail and death and these two things are often blinded by the fact that one could get a lot of money, fame, and respect from joining a gang. The bible states what good will it be for someone to gain the whole world but

lose their soul and this scripture helps one see that what gangs offers is that which leads to one losing his or her soul.

Can members of the body of Christ ignore the suffering of the neighbors of the inner city and still be in good standings? Can the church magnify the Lord of the harvest while disregarding the neighbors who live in the inner city? Do nonbelievers take better care and show more mercy on those in need more than those who belong to the body of Christ? Does the church walk past more lost people than they walk after more lost people with the intent to reach for Christ? These questions should be answered but it should also raise awareness to the universal church because the body of Christ should be exemplary of Christ and Christ purpose, love, compassion and mission was both obvious and clearly unquestionable. Gangs need Christ and God has sent His people with the gospel, which is a divine effort to supply each gang member need.

The author of this thesis project hopes that inner city evangelism is a subject will become an added curriculum in bible colleges and seminaries around the world. This pastor hearts cries out that those who are lost will be saved and those who are involved in gangs will walk away from that affiliation to a relationship with Christ. The church has the antidote that could bring forth the needed cure in the inner city. The inner city has been suffering for a very long time, but a change could take place if the church would enhance their continue effort in carrying out the “Great Commission.” Jesus said Go and the more the church go, the more the world can hear the gospel, and more the world hear the gospel, the more the world could know that Jesus Christ is true and living Savior of the world. Evangelizing is the telling the story of Jesus and the finish works of the cross and it this story that will help lives be changed eternally in the inner city and around the world.

APPENDIX A

Ex-Gang Member Survey

(Circle your response and provide explanation on lines provided):

1. Do you believe that gangs have impacted the City of Gary, Indiana, in a negative way?

- a. Yes (please answer #2)
- b. No (skip to question #3)

2. Do you feel that you have played a role in the negative impact that gangs have had in Gary?

If so, explain.

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. At what age did you join and become active in a gang?

4. Have you or any members of your family ever been affected by gang related activity? If so, explain.

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. How do think churches can reach gangs?

6. How do gangs view the church?

7. What prevents gang members from attending church?

8. Do you think many gang members are looking for a way out that leads to a better lifestyle?

- a. Yes
- b. No

9. Being an ex-gang member, how do you feel you are being viewed by pastors and members in the congregation?

10. What do you feel is being done by churches in inner cities to reach gang and ex-gang members?

11. Do you believe that the church as a whole has shunned away and avoided to reach gangs for Christ with the Gospel instead of seeking to win them to Christ? If so, explain.

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. At what age did you decide to leave the gang?

13. What made you leave the gang you were once active in?

14. Why do some ex-gang members go back to the streets after they have accepted Christ and joined the church?

15. How has your life changed since you gave your life to Christ and became an active member of the church?

16. Have you tried to reach out to other gang members and teach them about Christ and invite them to church with you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. Any additional comments:

APPENDIX B

Pastoral Survey

(Circle the correct response, or fill in the blank):

1. Do you believe that gangs have impacted the City of Gary, Indiana, in a negative way?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. Have you or any members of your congregation ever been affected by gang related activity?
If so, explain.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. _____

4. Do you currently have a program in place at your church that is geared toward reaching gangs for Christ with the Gospel in the inner city?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. How does your church as a whole view the idea of reaching out to gangs for Christ? As a threat or as a witnessing opportunity?

6. How is your church helping gang member to know Jesus?

7. Do you believe that reaching gang members is a part of the Great Commission? If so, do you think that this area of the Great Commission is often ignored?

a. Yes

b. No

8. What have you done in the last 5 years to train and prepare those in your congregation for inner-city evangelism?

9. What type of plans or projects do you have planned in the near future to reach gangs for Christ in the inner city?

10. Do you believe that the church as a whole has shunned away or avoided to reach gangs for Christ with the Gospel instead of seeking them to win them to Christ?

a. Yes

b. No

11. Any additional comments:

APPENDIX C

The interviews or conversations between the author and the ex-gang members went as follows:

Interview 1

Author: Why do people choose to be in gangs?

Interviewee 1: Because of the upbringing, it starts in the household. It is a love that is missing, and it is also a love that feel and seems like the street giving. For example, I lacked a father in my life, a man who could have provided fatherly guidance. I also had financial problems, and gangs provided me a way to make money and make it fast. Gangs also provided me strength, and many join for this reason because they do not want to get ran over.

Author: Why are gangs the place one chooses to run to out of every other organization in the world?

Interviewee 1: Because it is like a brotherhood. There is organization in gangs, and gangs make people feel like they are free from the rules in the world. Gangs can make you feel like you inherited a part of power because of the large number. Gangs also make you feel loved you desire and the desire you always want. Many who go to gangs feel as if they were misguided at home, and many feel that gangs guide them the right way. For example, gangs provide you with a job or a way to make money. Also, when you are a part of a gang, people respect you. Some feel tough; it is an ego thing and some like it when people get scared of them.

Author: What made you choose to be a part gang, and at what age did you start being involved with gangs?

Interviewee 1: How was I introduced, um, I was introduced by friends I went to school with and also older guys within the community and neighborhood I grew up in. What caught my eye and

attention was the respect and love I have seen my friends are getting in the neighborhood, and it was something that I wanted to get as well.

Author: Why is it so hard to walk away from a gang?

Interviewee 1: Exactly it did not feel like a gang but it felt more like me just having brothers and I was now a part of the family. People called us gangs, but we called each other brothers. There was no restriction between us. We have seen ourselves as brothers from different mothers and daddies. It is hard to walk away from bonds when it feels like family. The Bible says that it is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. For years, I had surrounded myself with people that grew closer to me than my actual family, and we understood each other.

Author: Why would you choose gang life over living for God?

Interviewee 1: I grew up in a church family. My grandfather was a pastor but he passed away when I was 8 years old, but my grandmother still took me to church every Sunday. When I entered into high school, I started playing both side of the fence. Playing both sides of the fence exposed me to things that I dreamed of. I did not have the finer things in life, and gangs gave me the opportunity to get some of those things quickly. I tried it, and it was good to me. I felt good to have money for the first time, a lot of girls, and fun all through the night and fell in love with the rush.

Author: How do gangs view the church?

Interviewee 1: Through my personal eyes, gangs viewed the church as a good thing. Some gangs viewed the church as a way out the street, which is vital because deep inside, everybody wants a way out. Because after years, it wears you down, and it takes a toll on your mind and body; it also takes a toll on your family like your grandmother and mother. You see that there is no light at the end of the tunnel, but the church keep that light lit, the church shine a light and

make you feel like there is a way to something better. The fast life things come to fast, and then you feel tired and you wonder if there is anything good and the church could offer that is best, and that is relationship with Christ.

Author: What keeps them going to church?

Interviewee 1: A lot of people do not want to go to church and are still doing bad things at the same time. They say I do not want to be a hypocrite. You must realize that a lot of gang members have that type of anger in them. They are mad at the world; they asked questions like why do not I know my daddy, why is my mother on drugs, and why was I was born in poverty? The church can help you find peace, God, and put you at ease with those questions and issues. As long as you go to him, I am cool, as long as I got HIM. I cannot help nobody leave gangs if I never experience and understand gangs.

Author: How do you think churches can reach gangs?

Interviewee 1: Well these are a few steps they should consider.

1. The church can reach gangs if they get involved and if they reach out to them.
2. The church can reach gangs if they take the time to learn who they really are and not stereotype them. For instance, one misnomer is that all gang members are evil people and all gangs do not prey on the weak and the innocent.
3. The church can reach gangs I feel if they go to where they are at in their neighborhood instead of just invited them to church. The church can go to where they are in darkness and give them light at the end of the tunnel.
4. The church can reach gangs if they realize that instead of just talking to them, they want to be showed something. The streets want to see something. The church has to stop be timid and become more aggressive. The church must be willing to show them

the way out along with telling them way out. The church must get their attention. The church has to show them that they really care because many gang members think the church do not care how they are living and struggling and what conditions that they are currently in. They have a far from simple life they do not want no talking because only talk does not help them from what they dealing with. The church cannot be afraid of going to the rough streets.

5. The church must be willing to feed them. The church can just go to the hood and just ask who is hungry and let them know that God loves them and God's people care about them. This is important because a lot of gang members think and believe that God do not love them and one reason why is because I am going through this and that. You need to show up and say God loves you. You need to pop up and ask them if they are hungry and if they need a couple of dollars in their pocket.

Author: Why does one go back to gangs in the streets after they join the church?

Interviewee 1: Because they still have this other family, and it is hard for them to get the other gang member to come because they ask what the church has to do for them. Another reason that they go back to the streets after joining church is because they are still broke, they still have not got anything, they still hurting financially, and it is hard to get used to having no money when you used to have a pocket full. Another reason why gang members go back to the streets is because you can feel as if the people in the streets have a better bond then those in the church. When you are in gangs, you feel that they are really there for each other. Your fellow partners in a gang keep constant communication and constant concern for their well-being. Fellow gang members are not afraid to talking their problem on themselves. They do not hold back; they let you know what they are dealing with. This is what those in the street talk with each other about.

They create a bond and that a bond that is hard to break. Another reason is because gang members believe that too much love destroys because it will blind you and cloud your judgment, and you can die behind that. Love will do what the heart tells you to do, and that type of love can get you killed. Another reason is that sometimes they feel that they need an outlet.

Author: Is it certain that the church needs to be trained to be effective in reaching gangs for Christ?

Interviewee 1: Yes, I believe the church needs training. They need to know how to come with real genuine love. The church must have a true love for your people, human beings, and those who are a part of gangs are human beings. The church must come to grips with trying to understand how it feels to have to survive and figure out a way to feed your family and have a nice place for them to sleep. If they do not have money, be willing to work with them help to them find a job. After they become job ready, direct them and point them in the right direction; lead them to a place where they can receive help. Reach them with the gospel, and teach and help them to realize that you do not need a gun.

Author: What types of effects have gangs had on the community, and do gangs enjoy the community being in the current condition?

Interviewee 1: The type of effect that gangs had on the community is a real bad one, and gangs do not the condition the community is currently in. Gangs want it better, and if someone can lead them to better and can help them out, they are all for it. Gangs want better and gangs feel stuck, and they are looking for a better way.

The summary of the first interviewer was a person who had faced charges with over a hundred years in prison. He grew up not knowing who his father was. He has never seen his father's face. His mother became addicted to drugs at a very early age in his life, which caused

his mom to rarely be at home and for his grandparents to raise him. His grandfather was a well-known and respected pastor in the city that he lived in, a man of God who passed away when he was 7 years old. Being raised by a widowed grandmother in the inner city where gangs and violence are common and accessible, this young man was swept off his feet looking for a love that his mother and father did not give him at the time. Joining a gang at the age of 14 years, the young man fell in love with his newfound family, but after 13 years of gangbanging, he realized that this life was not the life God destined for him, and he decided to make a decision to live for Christ. He stated, "Now I go through my old neighborhood and tell all those I hung out with about Jesus Christ. I want them to know who Jesus is." He admitted that it is a struggle sometimes staying on the straight and narrow because its real out here, and it is not easy to get employment worth having. It is hard going from thousands of dollar to minimum wages, and I am just being honest that this is a true struggle that many ex-gang members deal with and many future ex-members will deal with. If I can say anything to those in gangs, I would say that the love that you are looking for and the love that you desire can only be found in Christ Jesus. Being a part of God's family and being a recipient of God's love is the only reason I am still alive and have a true purpose to live. It was just a blessing that I had ministers in my family to reach out to me constantly with the gospel, helping me through my daily struggles and helping me to see that I was blind to. They came and visited me when I was shot in the hospital, they helped me with my lawyer when I was on trial, but most important, they reminded me that Jesus loved me and died for my sins. He desires for me to have a better, life, a life of abundance. Remember, know what trust is because through it, you will know that he truly is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Interview 2

Author: Why do people choose to be in gangs?

Interviewee 2: Because they think that it is another family for them and they probably did not receive good love at the crib so they look for a family atmosphere. Many also want to be down with the gang and the neighborhood they grew up in. They choose gangs because they want to be accepted with the crowd.

Author: Why is the gang the place to run to?

Interviewee 2: They offer them love, and that makes them feel loved. Sometimes the gangs reach out to them, and sometimes one will reach out to the gangs.

Author: What makes a gang so attractive?

Interviewee 2: What make gangs so attractive are the benefits. Money, love, a place to live, power, security because many think since I have with this crowd, nobody will mess with me.

Author: What made you ever want to be a part of one?

Interviewee 2: What made me want to be a part of a gang was watching my older brother in a gang and I wanted to follow my older brother and my brother's friends' footsteps.

Author: At what age did you become a part of a gang?

Interviewee 2: I was 5 years old when I became member of a gang, and it was introduced to me in Gary, Indiana.

Author: How do gangs view the church?

Interviewee 2: Gangs look at the church as a positive thing. Some gang members are looking for another family, and they view the church as a way out.

Author: What makes gang members look for a way out of gangs?

Interviewee 2: They become tired, tired of the behavior and lifestyle that they are constantly living, like drinking and killing.

Author: What keeps a gang member from coming to church? Still active in what they are doing, having one foot in and one foot out. Partying hard on Saturday and then too tired to get up to go to church on Sunday.

Author: How do you think churches can reach gangs effectively?

Interviewee 2: By introducing them to Christ, talking to them and giving them something to do beside the street, helping them find jobs, and helping some get back in school.

Author: Why do gang members go back to the street after they join the church?

Interviewee 2: Reason number 1 is because when one joins the church and leaves the streets, they stop carrying out criminal activity and find themselves eventually dealing with financial problems. Another reason is because those people who still got love for the ones in the streets and be away can cause you to miss those you still love.

Author: Do feel that the people in the street have better bond in those in church?

Interviewee 2: No, because people in the streets will take you out if they feel you have done something wrong to them or to their set, but those in the church will forgive you. The church will pray for you even when you do something wrong to another member in the church, but those who are a part of a gang will kill you. The church will pray for you.

Author: Is it certain training the church needs to reach gangs for Christ.

Interviewee 2: Yes, training is needed even in the areas of just talking to them. The church needs to train to know how to give them a better view in life then what they are used to because some gang members only know the streets and are looking for a way out.

Author: What type of effect has gangs had on the community?

Interviewee 2: The younger youth are looking up to gangs because of cars, money, and lifestyle. The community is in a bad condition. Gangs are destroying the community from killings, drug dealing, prostitution, and crime period.

Author: Do you think you can help improve the condition of the community?

Interviewee 2: Yes, having a reputation from the streets could help me reach more people on the streets and help them change. A lot of them will look at how different my life is, which could give them hope to overcome what someone is dealing with currently, which would be more than likely something similar to that you have done in your past. I believe that when folks see me on the streets, it will help one see that there is a God because a lot them will say that this nigga changed.

Author: Do you think churches are doing something to reach gangs?

Interviewee 2: Yea, but I think that they can do a lot more. For example, giving the community something constructive to do. Reach out to different parts of the city and all different churches and come together and do some type of recreational program for the kids because the kids have nothing to do. I believe that there is a lot of reaching out the church needs to do because those who are a part of gangs need the same thing we all need, and that is a relationship with Jesus.

Author: What age did you decide to leave the lifestyle alone?

Interviewee: I was 27 years old.

Author: What made you leave that gang-related lifestyle?

Interviewee 2: I got introduced to Christ by you.

Author: Have your life changed dramatically, and in what way has your life changed living for Christ instead of gangs?

Interviewee 2: Yes, my life is very different! I still struggle sometimes, but my thinking is different. I know how to invite gang members to church and to different spots in the neighborhood to tell them about Christ and teach them about Christ. I think we should never give up on gang members. Many really want to do better but they do not know how, and many do not have God in their life, which means that we have to go out and introduce them to Christ so that they can know Jesus for themselves. They do not feel the love from godly people. They do not feel the love from those at church. What makes the struggle so hard for gang members become faithful servants of Christ is the financial replacement, and most like to sleep with multiple living; also, some like smoking weed and drinking and also barbecuing niggas. Many gang members are addicted to killing, especially those who are younger and around the age of 18 to 21 years. Some people at church are scared, saying that I am not going to holler at them young bucks because they are nervous and afraid. So instead of going out to witness to those who are a part of gangs, they allow their fear to keep them from saying something. He believes people in the church are saying. I am good, and that is good enough.

Most gang members think church is about money, they believe that the church is out to get money, so instead of viewing the church as God's house; they think the church is about getting that dough. That is why so many pull out of the church because they have this thought that it is all about money, for example, taking two or three offerings turned them off, and with this in mind, they think the pastor is out for the money, believing that the pastor want that dough.

Author: Can I ask you one more question?

Interviewee 2: Yes

Author: Have gangs affected you or any member in your family?

Interviewee 2: Yes! Yes! Yes! My brothers were killed, shot and murdered in cold blood. I have lost over forty something friends from being shot and killed. Seen many of my family members' brainwashed thinking that this gang life is a normal way of life and it has their best interest. I have been incarnated several times, shot at more times than I can remember. I have over one hundred friends locked up in jail and more than I can count in my mind that are strung out on drugs. Someone even kick the door down at my mother house and held her and my younger siblings at gun point and rob her for the money I had stash at her home this gang life is not nothing to play with; it will kill you and mess up your mind. But a relationship with Christ has changed the way I think. Christ have saved me. He thought me to love one another instead of riding around hating people. Having Christ in my life have help me to be a better father, husband, man, and it also help me to see a better reason of what life really or truly is. If help me to see the purpose of which I was created, and I was created not for the world but for the use of God to let everyone know who he is

The summary of the second interview is about a person who introduce to the gang life at the age of 5 years. Being a part of this lifestyle at a very early age expose to see things in life that he grew to love even though it was destructive to him. Growing up in the inner city, he found himself by the age of 12 years selling drugs, making thousands of dollars, carrying guns to school, and sleeping with older women. This person has faced multiple charges in his life, which when added up all together, he has faced over 300 years prison time. He grew up in a broken family being raised by his mom, and he looked up to his older brother who was murdered. When his brother was killed, his life turned for the worse. He states that he became a ticking time bomb, and all he wanted was to find the one who did this to his brother. Living the gang life has caused so much heartache and pain and it is pain that he finds himself feeling just about every

day. After 22 years of being an affiliated member of a gang, this young man decided to give his life to the Lord Jesus Christ and live for him. This young man also announced his calling to the ministry and now preaches the gospel at a Baptist church in the inner city. He states that the one thing that he wants to share after this interview is that the church must realize that those who are in gangs need to hear what we have. The gospel only has the power to deliver them from a life that destroying them daily. Jesus Christ is man's only hope and it our job to introduce to that hope.

Interview 3

Author: Why do people choose to be in gangs?

Interviewee 3: People choose to be in gangs because they are looking for love because they are not getting it at home. Most people choose to be in gangs because they are no father figures and most mothers are either gone a lot, too busy for their children or strung out on drugs. So the result of these different circumstances is that they end up looking for love in all the wrong places.

Author: Why are gangs a place that people run to and what makes them so attractive?

Interviewee 3: One reason is people run to gangs is because they see a family type orientation in gangs. The family model makes itself attractive to them; it is the so-called love that gangs promote that draws and attracts people to run to gangs. Gangs also gives one the opportunity to be a part of something see when you drop out of school that leaves you without the ability to join basketball or baseball teams. Also, the glamour that is in gangs makes them attractive. For example, your friends got on new gym shoes, new clothes, some of you call the fine things in life, and it is the gangs that offer you a way to get those things.

Author: What made you ever want to be a part of a gang and live your life in the streets?

Interviewee 3: Financial gain. I was broke. I wanted money and being in a gang allowed me ways to get it.

Author: How do the gangs view the church?

Interviewee 3: A lot of them are afraid of church because of what they do outside the church.

They know what they are doing is wrong, and they are afraid to come to church because they are afraid of how they are going to be perceived in the street by be a church member or going to church often. Thoughts go through you head like, can I give up this money, this gold on my neck, will the people on the street view me as soft or a punk because I go to church? Some are even scared to go ask God for forgiveness because they are not totally ready to give up that lifestyle and give their live totality to God.

Author: What makes them look for a way out?

Interviewee 3: Because sometimes there becomes a point in your life when you are tired of all the wrong doings, the dirt, and your surroundings. Your environment dictates how you are going to feed your kids. Yea, I want God but my baby needs milk. Yea, I want God, but who is going to pay my rent. Yea, I want God but my son needs school shoes. I need all these things and I have no job, I am not educated so what can I do? I am stuck.

Author: What keeps them going to church?

Interviewee 3: What keeps one going to church is by looking for a better opportunity for you as well as your family, spouse, and kids. See one way the gangs keep growing is by way of family line some are inherited into this gang lifestyle. Somebody have to break that chain, that trend, or it will continue to affect your family and children, which means that your sons are doing what

dad is doing and this cycle can continue to go on, and on, and on, and on. To keep going to church coming from that lifestyle is not easy because when things get tough lights cut off.

Author: How do you think churches can reach gangs effectively?

Interviewee 3: Go to the streets! The church must go to the church repeatedly, continuously stay out there amongst them. You have to take the church to the street. Go to them because they not coming to you it is the church job is to go the streets to reach souls to win souls to Christ.

Author: Why do some go back to the streets after they join church and profess to come to Christ?

Interviewee 3: Because being in church and coming to Christ you have now cleaned yourself up but that does not make up for the money you were making and need. You feel good while you are in church but the reality is that when reality hit you once, you leave out of the church, and you go home with no dinner on the table and no money in your pocket. This cause a dilemma to set in over and over the question that goes through your head on how are you going to deal with this.

Author: Do you think churches are currently reaching the gangs in the streets?

Interviewee 3: No! Not at all!

Author: How do you think the church view gangs?

Interviewee 3: I think church people are afraid of the streets not because they are scared of them but it could be because majority of those in church in the inner city are from the streets, and they know what you have to do out there to survive. But on the other hand, there are some who are afraid to get their hands dirty; their past is in the street but they must realize that they have to go back to the people, places, and things they had to leave and not avoid them because they need what you have which is the gospel.

Author: Do you think training is necessary in churches to effectively reach gangs for Christ?

Interviewee 3: I think you have to train your ministry to be strong. It is just like in everything else you do; you have to have a leader to go out there in the congregation to show that it has to be done and train them to do it. Training is truly a must and is needed to get reach gangs effectively.

Author: Have you or anybody you know been affected by gang violence or gang activity?

Interviewee 3: Gangs have affected everybody in the city of Gary in some type of way, because you cannot leave your house at night, you know someone on drugs, or you know someone who has been killed in the last six months on your job, in your school, or even in your church

Author: What did the church do for you in your life personally?

Interviewee 3: I was raised in the church, so everything I did growing up I used God as guiding point to bring me out of it. I made mistakes, but if you have God as your foundation, you can stray away, but sooner or later, God will bring you back home or provided you with opportunity that will lead to you finding your way back to him. The church introduced me to Christ, and now I am saved. My mom, grandma, and dad prayed for me while I was in the streets. Those who do not know God need to be introduced to God and our job, as Christians is to take the word of God the gospel to nonbelievers. Too many of us are not taking the gospel to the world, and people are suffering for it. It seems as if we are satisfied with us just being saved.

The summary of the third interview is about 21-year-old male who was introduced to gangs and this way of by his older brother. This young man is in a broken home, where his father sold drugs and used drugs and ended going to prison and moving out the state, which left him to be raised by a single mother. His mother was a heavy drug addict also, and her condition made her unfit by the state to raise him as a child, so his grandmother took legal custody on him.

Growing up with no father figure and mother not around as a young boy, he was always angry and somehow always found a way to get in some type of trouble. By the age of 11 years, he found him being introduce to gang activities unknowingly just being with and around his older brothers and started liking what he was doing. He ended up stealing money from his grandmother all the time because he wanted things but had no money. He ended up dropping out of school in the ninth grade, hanging with friends and fellow gang member who made their living by selling drugs and robbing people. At the age of 17 years, he was shot 14 times in the alley and left for dead, but by the grace of God, his life was spared, and he is now living his life dedicated to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. This man is currently preparing to enroll in Bible college because even though he wants to become an engineer, he feels that his ultimate desire and calling is to be a pastor, preaching and teaching the word of God and leading all God's children.

Interview 4

Author: Why do people choose to be in gangs?

Interviewee 4: Some people feel that it is cool, that he gang will have their back and that they can be a part of something that is bigger.

Author: Why did you join a gang and at what age?

Interviewee 4: I taught that it was cool and I seen that some of my homeboys was in it. I taught it was cool to be able to cock my hat to the side I like the way that look as well as the colors. I also seen and like the loyalty. Like if you in trouble you know that your brothers will come and help you because if one fight we all fight or if one shoot we all shoot. At the age of 14 my mom allowed me to leave out the house and go beyond the street and that is where I was introduced

and join the gang. My mom kept me sheltered because my neighborhood was so dangerous, and I see why she did not let me leave because it was when I was 14 years old I when I got in trouble and my life would have been different if I would not have got clique up with the wrong people.

Author: Why is it so hard to leave gangs?

Interviewee 3: You put so much work in and it just so hard to walk away from it. It is so hard to leave gangs because people will not look at you the same. You become used to doing so much bad and putting so much work in, in the streets it become hard to leave it. It hard to leave also because you know so much information and if you leave some of the members my think that you are a snitch and if so that mean that people can come after your family. It is a certain image you do want to get rid of but it is hard because you do not want to disrespect the gang you leaving because it could cause you to lose your life.

Author: Why would do someone choose living for gangs rather than living for God?

Interviewee 3: I grew up in church and I was church boy. I went to all the church events as a child. I was not allowed to listen to rap music, but once I got around my friends, I starting hearing rap music and started liking it. Gangs were cool and it was something on earth I could exactly see, but I still prayed to God. I could have been in jail for 6 years, but God did not allow me to get charged. During this time, I stilled listened to gospel music. I was not ashamed of the Lord, and now I am not ashamed of God and if you are let me see how far you make it in life, nowhere. Now my thinking is different, I can care less about being in a gang because that life could get me dead or in jail.

Author: How do gangs view the church?

Interviewee 4: They respect the church but some do not respect the church at all. Some who are a part of a gang will clown you for going to church. But they clowning you should not stop you

because it is more important on how you are seen in God's eyes. Gang members laugh at me for going to church, but I told them that I will catch up them later when I get out of church.

Gangs view the church as a place for the weak and not the strong. They even quote a saying that if you scared go to church, and even worse that will say shoot up anybody but the preacher.

Many of them think that the church is a place full of hypocrites a place where church folds stare at you and only talk about you. Many of them feel unwelcome and uncomfortable that is why many of them do not go.

Author: What keeps gang member at church?

Interviewee 4: The word! Delivering the word in a way that those who are in gangs can relate to and help them to learn how to do good, having them to question why do I do what I do.

Author: How the church can better reach gangs?

Interviewee 4: I feel having programs that is geared toward reaching out to gangs. Having set down talks between former gang members and current gang members and having the older ex-gang members mentor them, and having the ex-gang members who were in gang to share their story with those who are in gangs now. The old gangs could show them what they went through, and this could help someone to see some things they could miss out on and experience a much better life.

Author: Do you think the church needs training to reach gangs for Christ?

Interviewee 4: Yes, most definitely. The church needs to train about how to approach them. The church should not come approaching gang members too strong just throwing words at them, but the church should ease in to and ease the word to them little by little in a way that they can receive not forcing down their throat. Forcing it on you is what made me not want to go to

church sometimes. Also, never talk bad about them but instead step by step help them get what they need, giving them a new outlook on church and seeing Christ.

Author: What type effective have gangs had on the inner-city community?

Interviewee 4: Gangs have had a bad effect on the community some people are scared to come out the house and parents are even afraid to allow the kids to go play outside. Parents do not want their children exposed to that detrimental lifestyle. Gangs have made the community a dangerous place to be. Gangs use to help build up the community but now it is tearing down. They used to want people to get jobs nowadays they want more and more people on crack to make money, which makes the black community even worse. Blacks are killing blacks, and this hateful action has even caused the Klu Klux Klan to thank the black folks for doing their desire job for them.

The summary of the fourth interviewer is that he is a man they grew up in the inner city of Chicago where gangs and violence infested in his neighborhood and school. This young man grew up in a broken home where his father was not around and his mother raised him until she become addictive to drugs. Because of his mother's addiction, this man ended up going to a foster home and was adopted into a new family. Being in this position at an early age, this young man found himself unwanted, and it isolate him to spend time alone and allow anger to build up progressively on the inside in his heart. At the age of 14 years, he joined a gang because he liked the family atmosphere, and he enjoyed fighting because he said that fighting was a way that helped him release his anger. This man was shot several times and grazed once in the ear running for his life. He also faced up to 6 years in prison and he drop out of his school with a tenth-grade education. He now has moved from Chicago, which gave him a chance to leave his old gang and an opportunity to divorce that old lifestyle and have a fresh start in life. This young man

professed Christ as his personal savior and lord and is currently employed and in school working on his high school diploma equivalency.

Interview 5

Author: Why do people join gangs?

Interviewee 5: People join gangs because of love and support, especially if they are not getting those at home. They join gangs to belong to something. Another reason is if I live in an area where the gang is present. Where I live, there is a great chance that I am going to be affiliated by default. This is what happens with a lot of innocent people because oftentimes, you get plugged into that gang group just because you from a certain neighborhood or you live on a certain block.

Author: Why is gang the place of choice?

Interviewee 5: First of all, it is the look of gangs that makes gangs the place of choice. Second is because you want something that is going to protect you no matter what. The gang is going to handle your urban issues that other organization will not. For instance, the street gang will always have some type of employment, for example, robbing, selling drugs, selling guns, prostitution, stealing cars, or even being security for someone or some groups who are in need of protection. Gangs always have a hustle, and you cannot find that in every organization. I cannot go to the NAACP, and they kick me down with something to help me pay my bills and put clothes on my back and food in my mouth, but the gang will always have some to give you to make money or make a living. Also, it is sad to me because you do not even see this sense of security in the church. Gangs are also the place of choice because it is generational. You can be birth into a gang, and if it is a part of my family and a part of my culture, it feels only natural, so now if I do anything else besides gangbang, I am out of the culture. Gangs can be generation

curses, which goes into that whole sense of community. A lot the gangs started as community organization tired of the white men coming to their community doing certain things, and they build community within each other on biblical codes, standing up for what is right, but many gangs have become corruptive and are acting the total opposite of their initial purpose.

Author: What made you want to be a part one?

Interviewee 5: I was a part of a gang by default. Being a ball player, they cuff me and took me under their wings. Also, my friends were a part of gangs, and I hung with my friend so it tied me in by default.

Author: What makes gangs so attractive?

Interviewee 5: Power and respect is that what makes gangs so attractive. I cannot say money because there are a lot of broke gang members, and they do not mind being broke because they belong and since they belong wont nobody mess with them and that is a form of power.

Author: How do gangs view the church?

Interviewee 5: A lot of them respect the church if the church presents itself as a place of respect. Some look at the church as phony place because they claim to love us but they do not have nobody reach out to them and talk to them from the church. Some gang members view the church as if are they serious so they come ask for pray, they ask that you pray that nothing jump off and that they will all be peaceful and safe. One gang member in particular said pray for me because I want to go get that man, and if I get him, I am going to go to jail so pray that I make the decision.

Author: What keeps gang member going to church continuously?

Interviewee 5: Giving them an alternative mentally, a mind-set showing that they can get love true love that is disconnect from a destructive lifestyle. Love is what keeps them coming back.

Author: How do you think churches to reach gangs?

Interviewee 5: Get guys who were gang members, former members who are familiar with them and what they are dealing with to reach them with the gospel of Christ. The churches also need to approach them with open dialogue not just talking but also listening. The third thing is show them the truth, embrace them with love. This can open them up to be receptive to what you have to say and who you are about to offer them Christ. The fourth key is do not preach down to them preach up to them!

Author: Why do you think gang members go back to the streets after joining the church?

Interviewee 5: Because we do not disciple them! Listen to this E gangs actually discipline its members. They school them, they teach them, and they even take you on trips. In gangs, sometimes you have to get high, you have to do dirt, you have to do what you taught, you have to put what you learned into action so the church must realize that when you join the church, the gang is still in him mentally. If the church does not give them any help, then those gang members will more than likely find their way back to where they came from. Joining the church is not a completed task. The job is to help that soul grow, and the church must realize that. The person just joining church is not the church goal.

Author: Do you believe that certain training in church is needed to be effective in reaching gangs for Christ?

Interviewee 5: Yes, the church needs to be train on how to approach and how to reach those who are a part of gangs. The church needs to realize that evangelism in different places and towns need different training because they have different strongholds and issues. Reaching gangs

for Chris is mission work, and a lot of gangs involve in witchcraft, taking oaths, initiations, murder, drugs, their minds are clogged with erroneous literature that is studied. Just look at what gangs bring forth, some members get beat in, jumped in, and these are the signs that show that the church members have to be trained. Training is vital the church needs to know how to speak to them. The church even should go through intense training on how to take rejection. Gangs members are going to have questions and they can get you catch up on everyday issues, because the enemy is showing them one thing and you have to be able to show them Christ love.

Author: What types of effect have gangs had on the community?

Interviewee 5: Negative! Look at just a few crimes, drugs, high volumes of illegal activities; gang members are even stealing from each other. They are out late at night hanging in parks the sense of security heightens which make kids have no way to play because they are having gangs meeting on the playgrounds.

The summary of the fifth interviewer is that he was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. He grew up in a broken home because his mom and dad went through a divorce when he was 11 years old. The divorce caused him and his mother to move to a house where there were five other divorce women. His mom in the 1980s decided to live for Christ, and she became very active in the church. Then his mother remarried and man who was a missionary from West Africa. This moved truly affected him, hoping that his mother got back together with his father. This new marriage caused him to react in rebellion. He started hanging out with gangs, selling weed, and all he cared about was playing basketball. Basketball was his outlet to somehow get away from all the anger and depression that was built up inside of him but he realized that playing did not get rid of his anger and depression. At the age of 13 years, he moved with his father because he never could adapt living with his mother and stepfather, but he still was a B honor roll student.

At his father, he had no rules and did what he wanted, when he wanted, whenever he wanted because his father was never home due to working and partying all night. His house became the high school hang out for drinking, smoking, and sexing. He ended up going off to Grambling State University, and the summer after his freshman year, his life took an even drastic change. He was arrested.

Summary

The author wanted to talk with those who exactly been affiliated with gang and exactly carried out gang activities because no one knows what gangs are truly like more than actually gang members themselves. The experience they had opened doors that one's assumption will always fall short or the actuality of being a part of a gang. Again this ex-gang members past history let them in on feelings, emotions, experiences, and bonds that only can be shared expressed and understood by someone who have truly been in and a part of the gang related lifestyle. Those who have not been around or a part of the gang lifestyle and environment and is looking from the outside in can only guess what gang life is about and truly is, but even guessing at its best could be nothing but an diluted feel or look compared the real thing. The author knows that one who lives the lifestyle of a gangster is one who understands what they need to be deliverance out of what gang members are entangled with.

These interviews give Christians the opportunity to gain insight about what gangs do and how they feel and view certain that are related to the body of Christ. The insights given from these ex-gang members can help inform, enhance, and equipped God's people for inner-city evangelism reaching gangs for Christ. Getting informed is key because it helps the church

become informed and aware of not only what needs to be done but also how to better do or effective do what needs to be done, for instance, when the question why do people join gangs.

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January 16, 2013

Eric Boone Sr.

IRB Approval 1436.011613: Inner-City Evangelism: A Model for Reaching Gangs for Christ

Dear Eric,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval e-mail.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, PsyD

Professor, IRB Chair

Counseling

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