A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC STUDY AND CRITIQUE OF
EVANGELISTIC EQUIPPING AMONG PASTORS ALIGNED WITH
THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH MOVEMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

"A Phenomenographic Study and Critique of Evangelistic Equipping Among Pastors Aligned with the Evangelical Church Movement."

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Evangelical churches hold evangelism as a hallmark of their movement, but evangelism and conversion rates are in decline. Might this decline be the result of absent or inadequate evangelistic equipping on the part of the church? This project presents a phenomenographic analysis and critique on how congregations are being equipped for evangelism. It employs both surveys of congregational members as well as pastoral leaders. Follow-up interviews with pastoral leaders have also been used to clarify findings from the initial surveys. These interviews have been analyzed to discover the qualitatively different understandings that are evident in the data regarding the phenomenon of evangelistic equipping. These understandings are categorized, and a description of each category type is provided. The results of these findings provide a more expansive understanding of the equipping task and offer specific ways in which the task of evangelistic equipping can be expanded to serve the Evangelical church better.

DEDICATION

Who would have known that over the course of my dissertation I would have broken my ankle and required 2 surgeries, the world would face a global pandemic, my kids would both get married, a first grandchild would come along and that my father-in-law would pass away. To say the past few years have been tumultuous is an understatement. I could have never have made it through my studies without the consistent, patient, and loving support of my wife and family.

I dedicate this study to Lisa, who I would marry a thousand times over.

To Josiah and Natalie, Dani (thanks for editing) and Dan,

and of course Lincoln for being so darn cute.

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INTRODUCTION

Like most disciplines of the Christian faith, evangelism must be taught.[1] While it may be hoped that people whose lives have been changed by the Spirit of God would gladly and spontaneously go out and proclaim what they have experienced through new birth, it seldom happens quite like this. Furthermore, since the church is an evangelizing organization, it needs to be organized in ways that facilitate evangelism taking place. Indeed, Eph 4:12 reminds us that God has given evangelists for this very purpose.

So how is the church faring in its equipping the saints for evangelistic engagement? This is exactly the question that led me to my research. Even though many churches and denominations have embraced a missional theology, the Missional Church Movement (MCM) still operates with a largely unchallenged understanding of evangelism that is captive to Christendom.[2] This suggests that evangelism generally is a neglected topic in need of research. While this study concerns evangelism, it is not examining evangelism per se. My research will be restricted to exploring how churches are being equipped evangelistically. My research question is, "Within Evangelicalism, how are congregations being trained and equipped for evangelistic engagement in order to be evangelistically faithful?" I will focus my study upon how congregations are being

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[1] Although I refer to evangelism as a discipline, I recognize that it is not merely or only a discipline. I will explore this further in my theological reflection in chapter 4.

[2] William Abraham argues that a reductionistic understanding of evangelism as ". . . mere proclamation fosters the practice of disconnecting evangelism from the life of the local church." And that ". . . restricting evangelism to proclamation helps keep intact unhealthy evangelistic practices that should long ago have been abandoned." Abraham, ("A Theology of Evangelism," 28).

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equipped for evangelism. I will then provide a critique regarding the effectiveness of those equipping efforts.

My research inquiry is stimulated by my own efforts over the past thirty years to equip congregations and to equip pastors to equip congregations. I have led evangelistic equipping in a church plant in Vancouver, a traditional downtown congregation in London, Ontario, and a young suburban congregation in Burlington. I also started and led an evangelistic equipping organization, called "Equipping Evangelists," in which I sought to equip congregational evangelists in equipping their own congregations. The Equipping Evangelists had networks of pastors and evangelists in Winnipeg, Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick. After ten years, I closed this organization and joined the national team of Forge Canada, where I am giving leadership in evangelistic equipping in this missional training network.

I have often wondered why the equipping efforts of many Evangelical churches seem to be failing to bear fruit. "Where does the problem lie?" I pondered. Is it a problem of equipping means? Is the issue one of skills training or motivation? Might the issue have to do with how evangelism is understood, or perhaps with what it means for a congregation to be equipped? Furthermore, I wanted to gain a more robust understanding of evangelistic equipping to help me in my own efforts, both in understanding what hinders evangelistic equipping but also to discover what means of equipping I might be unaware of. And of course, I needed to confirm my suspicions that the failing evangelistic health of the church lay, in part, within the church itself and not simply because the Canadian culture had become hardened to the Gospel and unmoved by the good news.

My hope is that my research findings will help to advance the knowledge of evangelistic equipping within the Evangelical church so that the future of the Evangelical church will see the dwindling evangelistic flames of its identity restored. I hope that by offering a phenomenographic analysis of evangelistic equipping churches might be able to identify where they themselves stand in relationship to the analysis and then make effort to improve in their understanding and practice of the phenomenon of evangelistic equipping.

My motivation for this field of research is strongly rooted in my own experience of having come to know Jesus Christ. Having found my life so turned around by His grace, and experiencing such joy, confidence and peace, I found myself, very early in my Christian walk, pining for others to know Jesus as I knew Him. As I sought to become more effective in my own evangelistic witness, I became awkwardly aware that my experience, that desired others who did not know Jesus to come to know Him, was not the norm—at least in my evangelical church experience growing up. Those early years of desire to share my faith, and my confusion of why other Christians did not share that desire were very formative in bringing me to this research.

My hypothesis is that the Evangelical Church Movement has failed to equip its congregations adequately and effectively for evangelistic faithfulness in the Canadian, post-Christendom context. Failing evangelistic health not only affects the church numerically as new converts fail to be added, but it has the effect of gutting the church of all its missional vitality. All that the church is and does reflects its evangelistic witness. David Bosch makes the point in this way, "I have called evangelism the 'heart' of mission. If you cut the heart out of a body, that body becomes a corpse. With

evangelism cut out, mission dies; it ceases to be mission."[3] The evangelistic equipping task is key to seeing the church become healthy.

In this introductory chapter I will provide an introduction to the study by explaining why this research is important and why I chose to focus on the Evangelical church. In addition, I will provide definitions of key terms, give an overview of the chapters, and outline my research methodology, significance, and the limitations of my study.

The Importance of This Study

There is much research that demonstrates that Canada is quickly abandoning its Judeo-Christian heritage. Canadian demographic studies clearly show that the fastest-growing religious designation is that of "religious nones." Religious nones are those who, when asked about their religious affiliation, indicate that they have none. These unaffiliating numbers are growing in every age category and are rising steadily. The Pew Research Center notes the following example: "One-in-ten Canadians born between 1947 and 1966 had no religious affiliation in 1981, but one-in-five are unaffiliated as of 2011."[4] The present statistics place religious none's at 24-percent of the Canadian population,[5] and it appears that the growth of religious nones is drawing primarily from Christianity. Both Protestant and Catholic expressions of Christianity have been declining while the number of Canadians who identify with other religions is growing.[6]

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[3] Bosch, "Evangelism," 10.
[4] Pew Research Center, "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape," para. 5.
[5] Thiessen, *Sunday*, 94. This figure is based upon the 2011 Canadian census report.
[6] Pew Research Center, "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape," para. 1, 2.

Not only has society abandoned the Christendom worldview, it has also moved away from the assumptions and narrative of modernity. While Christianity is not wed to modernity, it has allowed much of its evangelistic understanding to be attached to it. John Bowen notes that the word "evangelism" was coined in the sixteenth century, and "the first reference to it (was) in the writings, not of a theologian, nor even of an evangelist, but of Francis Bacon, one of the inventors of the scientific method. That alone should be a clue to the fact that maybe 'evangelism' is due for an overhaul."[7] Unless evangelism uncouples itself from the sinking ship of modernity, it will go down with it.

A greater tragedy is that evangelism, as it is currently practiced, is increasingly hated and resisted by non-Christians. This attitude toward evangelism leaves them ipso facto closed to the good news that is being presented. Ross Douthat notes this increasingly secularized trend of attitudes toward traditional Christian belief when he writes:

> . . . the elite that displaced the WASPs (White, Anglo Saxon, Protestants) soon exceeded every other stratum of American society in its rejection of traditional Christian practice and belief. Except that *rejection* was too strong a word. After a certain interval had passed, orthodoxy was less rejected than dismissed, reflexively, as something unworthy of an educated person's intellect and interest. Religion qua religion was acceptable (the more exotic the better, of course) and "spirituality" was welcomed. But all serious people understood that the only reason to pay attention to traditional Christianity was to subject it to a withering critique . . . This dismissive attitude held sway in every institution where the meritocratic elite predominated—the great universities and law schools, the major newspapers and networks, the powerful New York foundations and the upper reaches of the federal bureaucracy.[8]

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[7] Bowen, *Evangelism for Normal People*, 13.
[8] Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 81–82. Emphasis original.

Not only are Christians' attempts to share faith dismissed, these attempts are increasingly being perceived as negative or threatening to the social order.

> For every one (self-identified) evangelical in America, between five and seven nonconservative-Protestants have been proselytized by an evangelical. But the evidence from there becomes somewhat less heartening for evangelicals . . . According to those who say an evangelical had at some time tried to convert them to their faith, only between ten and twenty percent said that it was a positive experience. About half said it was a negative experience.[9]

It is even more alarming to note that because evangelism (proselytization) is perceived as a threat to social order, several countries have restricted it.

> Official restrictions on proselytization have taken diverse forms in a number of contemporary Asian nations, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Uzbekistan, and Indonesia—ranging from outright bans on all proselytization to more specific prohibitions on the targets of adherents of the nation's majority or official religion for conversion to another faith.[10]

In collectivist cultures, evangelism's appeal to individuals and its syncretism with modernist individualism threatens the community. "For Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists in India, for whom religion is conceived of as the ancestral tradition of a community, religious freedom becomes the right to practice faith collectively without interference from proselytizing faiths. For some, therefore religious freedom means the *freedom of conversion*, for others, it means *freedom from conversion*."[11]

David Novak, Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto has written: "Proselytizing efforts seemed to violate the new atmosphere where religion in general could no longer claim to be the foundation of anything of public significance. That is why, to this very day, Jewish resistance to Christian proselytizing efforts usually

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[9] Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 181.
[10] Feener, "Official Religions," 26.
[11] Hoehler-Fatton, "Review of Proselytization Revisited," 79. Emphasis original.

takes the form of protesting that such efforts violate the spirit of democratic cultural diversity."[12]

Even some Christians feel that we should leave non-Christians alone. In a 2014 interview Pope Francis made this comment regarding how to have a joyful life, "Don't proselytize . . . The worst thing of all is religious proselytism, which paralyzes: 'I am talking with you in order to persuade you.' No. Each person dialogues, starting with his or her own identity. The church grows by attraction, not proselytizing."[13]

In the Emerging Church Movement (ECM) it is reported that

> Some emerging congregations are deliberate 'church plants,' while others with the ECM strenuously resist the very idea that they should be evangelizing others. Emerging Christians contrast their approaches to what they see as the aggressive and inauthentic evangelism methods of evangelicals and seeker megachurches, often expressing a great sense of relief that they no longer feel pressured to engage in such practices.[14]

Although some might argue that other religions and even non-Protestant, and non-evangelical church's disdain for evangelism is irrelevant to the Evangelical church's evangelistic state, it illustrates the cultural mood in which the Evangelical church now finds itself. There are now signs that this anti-evangelism attitude is beginning to dim the blaze of evangelistic fervor in the evangelical movement.[15] Pickard notes, "many people effectively give up any responsibility for the good news beyond their own privileged walls, or they transpose evangelism into other activities (e.g., social action)

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[12] Novak, "Proselytism in Judaism," 42.

[13] Bevans, "Prophetic Dialogue Approach," chapter 1, para. 10, location 756.

[14] Marti and Ganiel, *Deconstructed Church*, 135. While I recognize that the ECM is a different movement than the MCM, it borrows from the MCM theology and is sometimes confused as synonymous with the MCM at a popular level.

[15] A recent Barna report from February 5, 2019, in an article entitled, "Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong," reveals this disturbing trend of non-evangelism among Christians.

and dissipate its energy."[16] The Canadian church scene suggests that the evangelistic

equipping efforts of the church are largely being neglected. According to one study,

"65% of church leaders say that evangelism has not been a priority in their church in the

last several years" and that "55% of Canadian congregations do not equip for

evangelism."[17]

This evangelism void is not simply a failure to perform one of the activities of

the church; ". . . the church is called to be a community of the evangel and thus a

community that seeks to embody the glad tidings of God in all its life."[18] When we

cease to be evangelistic, we cease to be as God has intended in all that we do. Some may

argue that their reason for avoiding evangelism is because it is ineffective or

inappropriate. Yet, Gorman points out that "the answer to bad evangelism is not *no*

evangelism—to stop telling the story—but rather to *tell the true story truly*."[19]

In Canada, waning evangelistic zeal can also be partly blamed upon the growing,

often unchallenged, influence of secularism that seems to have swayed some Christians

that faith is a private matter.[20] Secularism is quickly becoming the largest alternative

that challenges the Christian worldview. According to Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, these

two groups will continue to increase in polarization so that there will be an ever-

diminishing middle ground between them.[21]

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[16] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 4.

[17] Alpha Canada, "Priority and Practice of Evangelism," 4.

[18] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 2.

[19] Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 133. Emphasis original.

[20] "Evangelical pastors promote evangelization, when more Canadians think religious views should stay private and religious groups should peaceably coexist. Discussing religion with others is awkward in such a climate, and so evangelicals show declining commitment to evangelism." Evangelism ". . . ranked 9th among 16 priorities, with less than half (44.2%) of all congregations considering it a very high priority. . . in actual congregational practice, it (evangelism) did not make the top of the list." Reimer and Wilkinson, *Culture of Faith*, 38, 101.

[21] Wilkins-Laflamme, "Toward Religious Polarization," 291. She further notes that, "According to the polarization framework, this middle-ground category should begin to shrink over time in contexts

These disturbing trends force the question, "What is going on in evangelical churches in Canada regarding evangelism?" How are churches being equipped? How is that equipping being perceived? And how is that equipping understood? Only after these questions can be answered is it possible to offer a critique and propose ways forward to improve those equipping efforts.

Unless churches are equipped to be evangelistically faithful in a manner relevant to the current cultural climate, and until Evangelicalism has adequately wrestled with the cultural influences that have distorted Evangelicalism's practice of evangelism, we will continue to see the church dwindle in influence and vitality.

Why Focus upon Evangelicalism?

From its inception, in the early eighteenth century,[22] the Evangelical movement has placed evangelism as a keystone value. The new birth was preached with great zeal and tireless effort both in churches and open fields. Key figures in shaping the early movement, according to Hindmarsh, ". . . might be called the four evangelists of Anglo-American evangelicalism: George Whitefield (1714–1770), John Wesley (1703–1791), Charles Wesley (1707–1788), and Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)."[23] These passionate evangelists not only expanded the movement, they also shaped it around an evangelistic identity.

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where belonging to a religion is no longer the social norm. Once religion and religious identity becomes fully separated from other social spheres, there remains no reason for an individual to identify with a religion if not actively religious her/himself."

[22] According to Bebbington, while the term "evangelical" appears before the eighteenth century, as a movement, evangelical began to emerge in the mid-eighteenth century. As he notes, "the decade beginning in 1734 witnessed in the English-speaking world a more important development than any other, before or after, in the history of Protestant Christianity: the emergence of the movement that became evangelicalism." *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, ch. 1, para 1, location 498.

[23] Hindmarsh, *Evangelicalism*, 5.

The torch of evangelistic commitment has been carried on through the centuries creating such larger-than-life evangelists as D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, C. H. Spurgeon, Billy Graham, and John Stott, to name only a few.

David Bebbington's widely accepted quadrilateral, used to define what makes someone an evangelical, argues that conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed, is a core quality within the Evangelical movement and one of its priorities.[24] He argues that "Conversions were the goal of personal effort, the collective aim of churches, the theme of Evangelical literature."[25] Evangelism was not simply an activity that evangelicals engaged—it was central to their identity. *The Evangelical Magazine* was founded in 1793 to cater to any denomination that was dedicated to spreading the Gospel.[26] This suggests that spreading the Gospel was a primary trait of evangelical life and identity.

Bebbington further notes that the centrality of evangelism has continued to be trumpeted as essential to the movement right into the late twentieth century.

> In asking "What is Evangelical?", in 1944, Max Warren, General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, gave priority to evangelism over everything else, even worship . . . John Stott, in asking Warren's question, "What is an Evangelical?", in 1977 replied that two convictions cannot be surrendered. First, he claimed, "We evangelicals are Bible people". It followed, secondly that evangelicals possessed a gospel to proclaim. The cross, conversion and the effort for its spread were all placed under that comprehensive heading.[27]

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[24] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, ch. 1, para 4, location 108. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada uses Bebbington's quadrilateral in their definition of evangelism.

[25] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, ch. 1, para. 10, location 167.

[26] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, ch. 1, para. 2, location 71.

[27] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, ch. 1, para. 7, location 131–43.

My research seeks to support the hypothesis that the evangelical church in Canada is increasingly becoming ineffectively equipped for evangelism in the present cultural climate.

Part of the reason for this dwindling effectiveness is found in the initial seeds of the movement that was shaped and distorted by the culture at the time of its inception. These culturally bound influences are now beginning to show their weakness as the huge cultural shifts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries exert pressure that it can no longer endure. I will explore them in my theological reflections in Chapter 3.

Defining Key Terms

Throughout this dissertation two key terms are used consistently: evangelism and equipping. While I support my theological basis for my definitions in Chapter 3, it is necessary that how these terms are used throughout this dissertation be defined.

Evangelism

The term evangelism has many definitions and in secular circles often evokes a strong negative reaction. In this research I propose a definition of evangelism as "the faithful communication of the Gospel of the Kingdom." Evangelism is primarily concerned with communicating the faith and commending it to others in a manner that is consistent with the nature of the God whom they are commending. Evangelism starts with the nature of God. I will argue in Chapter 3 that we must understand the *evangelium dei* so that our definition and practice is informed by it.[28]

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[28] The Latin term, *evangelium dei*, means good news God or evangelistic God. It is a description of God's nature and being, not simply a description of God's activity.

Equipping

The term equipping is a catchall term that addresses all that the church does to facilitate evangelistic health. It regards the ways in which the church establishes itself as a faithful communicative entity. It considers how it trains individuals but also how it deals with systemic issues in a manner that facilitates evangelism. It is concerned with motivating as well as with educating. It will address the programmatic matters as well as organizational matters of the church.

Overview of Chapters

In addition to this introductory chapter, this dissertation will consist of five other chapters. In Chapter one I will provide a overview of published literature and its potential contribution to the project. The sources for this overview are divided into three main categories: (1) Literature that addresses issues of equipping; (2) Literature that identifies as evangelistic. Some of these sources lean upon those who are practitioners, are decidedly popularist, and have had a wide influence upon how people think about evangelism. Other writers in this category come from a more academic engagement of this topic; and (3) Literature from the Missional Church Movement that has been very influential upon the church globally.

Chapter 2 will offer theological reflection upon evangelistic equipping. It will also explore how today's understanding of evangelism was influenced by the *Sitz im Leben* of the growing modernism of its inception. This chapter will become the conversation partner that will be engaged with the research findings of my study in order to draw conclusions.

Chapter 3 will provide the results of the field research that was undertaken for this study as well as significant findings relevant to the study. I will explore the range of understanding that informs how evangelistic equipping is provided by pastors.

Chapter 4 will provide a critique of evangelistic equipping by considering present equipping efforts in light of the theology of evangelism as well as provide some suggestions regarding how evangelistic equipping can be engaged and encouraged and might inform Canadian Evangelical churches to improve their evangelistic equipping efforts.

In Chapter 5 I will offer a brief review of the project and some conclusions regarding my hope for the future of the evangelistic equipping efforts for the Canadian Evangelical Church.

Research Methodology

Beyond an overview of the literature, there is still a need to discover what is actually happening in churches and among the congregations. In order to get a better, albeit non-comprehensive, understanding of what is being done, and how equipping is being employed, my research started by engaging a small sample of both congregants and pastors in evangelical congregations in an online questionnaire. These questionnaires helped to establish an understanding of what is taking place within congregations both from the point of view of those being equipped and those who are doing the equipping.[29]

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[29] See appendices 1 and 2.

The questionnaire portion of my research received sixteen responses from pastors from five provinces and thirteen denominations.[30] There was an equal number of congregants who responded from five provinces and seven denominations.[31] This survey size allowed there to be variety and variations in the questionnaire in order to obtain a broader baseline of what is happening and how the equipping is being experienced. The participants answered questions regarding many aspects of evangelistic equipping including personal evangelism, corporate evangelism, systemic equipping, educational influences, emotional, and visceral reactions, challenges they believe are present regarding evangelism, as well as other general questions. The purpose of these surveys is to identify a general sense of what is being done to equip congregants and how it is being received. The observations gleaned from these questionnaires helped to inform the questions used in the pastoral interviews necessary for phenomenographic research.[32]

Phenomenography is an empirical research methodology used for ". . . mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them."[33] It was first developed in Sweden in 1979 and has since spread throughout the academic world. The phenomenon I am exploring is that of evangelistic equipping. By using the qualitative

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[30] The provinces were: Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. The denominations were: The Pentecostal Assembly of Canada (PAOC), Foursquare Gospel Church (FGC), Canadian Baptists of Western Canada (CBWC), Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA), The Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCC), Congregational Christian Churches in Canada (CCCC), Associated Gospel Churches of Canada (AGC), The Evangelical Free Church of Canada (EFCC), Baptist General Conference of Canada (BGCC), The Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada (EMCC), The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (CBOQ), and The Wesleyan Church of Canada (WCC).
[31] The provinces were: Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. The denominations were: PAOC, CBWC, FMCC, BGCC, EMCC, CRCNA, CBOQ, and the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches (FEBC).
[32] While other methods of collecting can be used, Malcom Tight ("Phenomenography," 324) says "the key method used for collecting data within phenomenography is the interview."
[33] Marton, "Phenomenography," 31.

research methodology of phenomenography, I was able to discover the range of

understanding in the practice of evangelistic equipping. I conducted interviews with

eleven pastors from four provinces and ten denominations.[34] Small interview numbers

are deemed satisfactory in phenomenographic research as there are only a limited

number of ways in which a phenomenon can be experienced and understood.[35]

My interviews asked open-ended questions pertaining to how the pastors have

engaged and understood the evangelistic equipping task. Their answers were followed

up by asking probing, diagnostic questions to draw out descriptions of their own

thinking and experience. The purpose of phenomenographic interviews is to explore the

lived experience of those being interviewed and gain insight into their descriptive and

conceptual meaning.[36] The interviews lasted 23–42 minutes and were videotaped. These

interviews were then transcribed verbatim and became the raw data of my research. The

collection of interviews, as a whole, is considered together rather than as individual

interviews.[37] I then analyzed the results and sought to discover the qualitatively different

understandings that are evident in the data through a process of coding, revision, and

recoding. In my analysis of this research, I looked for the underlying focus of their

efforts where there were contrasts and where there were similarities. The aim was to

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[34] The provinces were: Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The denominations were: PAOC, CBWC, CMA, FMCC, CCCC, EFCC, CRCNA, CBOQ, WCC, and FEBC.

[35] Exact numbers for phenomenographic research are dependent, in part, upon the phenomenon under consideration. Keith Trigwell ("Phenomenographic Interview," 66) says, ". . . I would say ten to fifteen would be the minimum to create a reasonable chance of finding variation in the range.". Tight ("Phenomenography," 320) suggests that four or five variants are commonly found and twenty or fewer interviews are typical. Rodney Beaulieu ("Phenomenography: Implications," 69) defines the number of interviews more qualitatively, rather than using a set quantitative number or interviews. He argues that the required number of interviews ". . . is about conducting interviews until the input draws repeated and continuous patterns and there are no more to be added by conducting more interviews."

[36] Sin, "Considerations of Quality," 313.

[37] Sin ("Considerations of Quality," 315) argues the interviews "collectively constitute the overall data where the meanings are interpreted in relation with the others."

summarize the range of qualitatively different categories and offer a description of each type.[38]

From the analysis and categories that were discovered, I used the theological section of my research findings as a conversation partner to provide a critique. My goal is to provide ways in which evangelistic equipping within evangelical churches can be improved and to consider how my findings might contribute to a better pedagogy related to training pastors for the equipping tasks within their congregations.

There are two main reasons for choosing phenomenography for my qualitative research methodology. First, as an empirical study, phenomenography gets to the root of what I am trying to discover by answering the question, "What is actually being done in the name of evangelistic equipping?" and, "How is it conceived and understood by those who are engaged in the practice?" I want to understand the range of conceptions and activities that are employed by pastors in evangelical churches to equip their congregations evangelistically. Phenomenographic research allows me to uncover the range of understanding and practices engaged.

Second, phenomenography is a methodology that has been employed in other fields which, while not identical, offer some crossover. This provides assurance that the methodology has been tried and tested as a useful method for acquiring data. The earliest phenomenographic studies were used in the realm of education and teaching. Since equipping has an educational and teaching component it is well suited for what I

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[38] Discovery categories that emerge from the data, rather than constructed categories which try to fit the data into preconceived categories.

sought to discover.[39] It has also been effectively utilized to study change management,[40] which is also a similar type of discipline consistent with this aspect of equipping.

If the Evangelical movement is going to continue to thrive and meet the evangelistic needs of this time, I believe this research is critical in better understanding how pastors can be prepared to become better equippers of the church within the post-Christendom milieu of Canada.

My Findings

The result of this research will demonstrate that, while the desire to be evangelistic remains strong, the effort has grown weak. The evangelistic focus within the Evangelical church is waning and pastors seem stymied in how it can be improved. While anecdotal evidence has suggested that congregational evangelism has dwindled, the research done in this study will show that this is not in small part because of inadequate equipping.

On the surface this may appear to be bad news but the findings also provide hope. Despair has not overtaken pastors, nor have they completely stopped trying to prepare their people and structure their organizations for evangelistic witness. However, this research does show how some of their efforts may be actually harming the evangelistic faithfulness of the church. Yet, these findings also serve to shed light on a pathway forward in navigating the evangelistic realities of this twenty-first century and beyond.

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[39] Tight ("Phenomenography," 321) observes that phenomenographic research is "an important niche research design" in higher education, "particularly for research into teaching and learning."
[40] Dunkin, "Using Phenomenography," 152.

It is hoped that the results of this research will spur other studies and encourage deeper reflection with regard to equipping congregations in strengthening their evangelistic faithful. Although this project started pre-COVID, it was soon evident that the interviews would be conducted during the shutdowns and height of the pandemic. Although there was a consistent attempt to mitigate the influence of the pandemic, it was not far from the minds of many of the people who were interviewed. It may be beneficial, moving forward, to conduct a similar study when the pandemic crisis is well in the rearview mirror. I believe that my research can contribute to a growing number of voices which are beginning to shine a light on the failing evangelistic engine of the Evangelical church. Perhaps if enough light is shone, we might be able to see more clearly a way in which it might be repaired.

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEWING AND ANALYZING
THE CURRENT STATE OF THE FIELD

This project considers the quality of evangelistic equipping taking place within

Canadian Evangelical congregations. It is worth noting at the start that my research of

this topic has yielded very few offerings in the academic writings that deal with a

theology of evangelistic equipping. Although many books written about evangelism

would purport to be equipping the church, I was unable to locate a comprehensive work

that addresses evangelistic equipping in a wholistic manner. Therefore, I will divide this

literature search into three main categories. The first are books that address the

equipping task. These will not necessarily concern evangelistic equipping, but I will

explore what principles of equipping the literature discusses and how it may be imported

into congregational, evangelistic equipping.

The second category of literature is the largest, and mainly consists of popularist

writing which concerns evangelism itself. While most of this writing focuses upon

personal evangelism, I will also engage with literature that addresses other aspects of

evangelism. I will subdivide this section into three general areas: personal evangelism,

corporate evangelism, and literature that address the theology of evangelism.

The third category of literature is the burgeoning area of the missional church. While the

writings by the Missional Church Movement focus upon a broader aspect of the *missio*

dei, rather than just the evangelistic aspect,[1] they do address the topic. Further, the huge influence that the missional church literature has had upon the church in the last few decades should not be ignored.

Furthermore, this literature survey explores three primary areas of inquiry. The first is how evangelistic equipping is to take place. This question addresses issues such as, how does the literature teach equipping? Where is the focus of the equipping efforts? Do they address it institutionally and systemically? Is the focus upon theological foundations and theory? Is their primary focus upon motivation and techniques or individual witness and corporate programs? While it may not be reasonable to assume that one book will address every aspect of congregational equipping, does the literature demonstrate a breadth of training that will serve the church well?

The second area for consideration has to do with "why" the evangelistic equipping is taking place. In what ways do the author's root their training biblically? This regards questions such as, where do the author's root their teaching? Is it a pragmatically driven focus? Is it rooted in a theology of God's evangelistic nature? Is evangelism perceived as an act of worship and therefore equipped to that end? Is the emphasis upon Christian duty? Is evangelism fear-based and guilt induced? Do the authors assume the purpose for evangelism without explicit expression?

The final area for study is what the nature and quality of these equipping efforts is. This would incorporate inquiries such as, have the authors considered and acknowledged their own cultural biases and setting? Will their teaching stand the test of time and

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[1] Bosch (*Transforming Mission,* 411–12) writes, "I perceive mission to be wider than evangelism" but goes on to quote the 1954 Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches when he writes, "Evangelism may be viewed as an essential 'dimension of the total activity of the church.'"

cultural displacement? Does their teaching make assumptions that are not disclosed? Is their understanding of Gospel sufficiently explained and does it depend upon a Christendom cultural milieu in order to be understood?

In approaching a survey of literature on evangelistic equipping these three primary areas of inquiry: how, why and what, will be the lens through which I will evaluate what the field currently has to offer.

Equipping Literature

In one way or another all books on evangelism are attempts to equip. However, these books seldom speak of the equipping task itself. There is a dearth of literature that specifically addresses a theology of equipping and as a result most books assume that equipping is merely a synonym for training, teaching, or motivating. Yet, there are books that address congregational equipping from a generic perspective and whose insights can be helpful for informing evangelistic equipping.

In *The Equipping Pastor*, R. Paul Stevens and Phill Collin approach congregational equipping from the perspective of systems theory. As Stevens and Collins point out, the insights of this approach help to understand and value such things as *holism,* which views the church as a whole unit and not merely a collection of individuals. This encourages those equipping to recognize that they are not simply training people, but they are training *a people*. Related to this is the concept of *synergy*. Synergy recognizes that by aligning the congregation to all "pull in the same direction" there will be more effectiveness than simply having individuals all pull in their own direction. However, synergy concerns not only individual alignment but also

interdependence in all the systems that make up the institutional aspects of a church.

These insights highlight the need to keep in consideration the antinomy created by the

forces of cohesion and differentiation. As Stevens and Collins quip, "the need to be *we*

and the need to be *me*."[2] Arguably, it is the failure to recognize this tension, as well as

the foundation of individualism upon which Evangelicalism was built, that has led to so

much literature focused upon individual and personal evangelism often developed with a

very impoverished ecclesiology.

In her book, *The Equipping Church*, Sue Mallory seems to get stuck in thinking

of ministry in a formal church setting. In other words, she thinks of ministry in a

programmatic sense and equipping focuses upon how to get individuals plugged into the

church programs. This seems to have the effect of diluting the equipping ministry to

volunteer management. Equipping becomes a way of getting people to help with the

institution's programs and find a place for ministry within the institutional church's

ministry portfolio. This institutional focus leads her to understand the goal of equipping

efforts in terms of success. In her own words, "The underlying and critical foundation

for everything we do in the area of equipping people must be the goal to set them up to

succeed."[3] Yet, success is an impoverished goal in contrast to faithfulness. Success is

too subjective, a moving target that always wants more and bigger. Furthermore, in

respect to evangelism, success is out of the hands of the one ministering. Evangelistic

success is God's part, whereas faithfulness is our part.

Ironically, while Mallory's book is meant to be about equipping the laity, it

asserts a top-down control. In reference to an organization that she commends in their

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[2] Stevens and Collins, *Equipping Pastor*, xix. Emphasis original.
[3] Mallory, *Equipping Church*, 165.

equipping efforts, she writes, "To keep growing into equipping leaders they used an international goal-setting purpose driven by the senior pastor, the gatekeeper or protector of the DNA . . . Without the senior pastor working from the top down to create alignment with the staff and governing boards, it is virtually impossible to change the culture."[4] With her strong (over) emphasis upon church building-centric ministry and voluntarism as well as the strong top-down leadership model, it seems that the vision of equipping is less concerned with the evangelistic ministry of the people of God outside of the building and independent of the institutional church.

Yet, these books, which speak generally about equipping congregations, while not specifically addressing evangelistic equipping, do offer help to address larger issues of equipping the corporate life of the church, drawing attention to how the culture is shaped, as well as the functional and structural subsystems of the organization. As these insights are applied to evangelistic equipping, the reader is alerted to the need to shape the congregation to *be* evangelistic and not just *do* evangelism. Equipping is not merely to accomplish a task but to form an identity. As the church is shaped and embraces its evangelistic nature and identity, evangelism will flow out of its identity.

It is the church's evangelistic identity that these books on equipping fail to acknowledge. Some, like Mallory, see the identity being primarily centered around the equipping task itself, making it intrinsically self-focused.[5] The task of equipping then becomes the end rather than the means to something greater. Others rightly see that the

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[4] Mallory, *Equipping Church*, 65.

[5] Mallory, *Equipping Church*, 116. Regarding equipping, Mallory writes, "the process is never complete. The principles described in these pages will not work as a rigid program or structure imposed on a congregation. Equipping is an ongoing congregational adventure in ministry . . . it is a journey to be enjoyed, not a destination at which to rest." This implies the church's purpose is to equip its own people.

purpose of equipping is to be enabled for mission but fail to acknowledge the essential

evangelistic nature of the mission and reduce evangelism to a sub-set of missional

activity rather than the heart of the mission. These two books were helpful in drawing

attention to the role of leadership in the equipping efforts. Specifically, the particular

attention that must be paid to change management when re-shaping an existing

organization.

Other books, such as Alan J. Roxburgh's, *Structured for Mission,* address the

task of equipping but are focused upon a particular aspect, such as the role of leaders in

equipping by changing the dominant story around which the church has been structured

as well as the rituals which embed that story into the institution.[6] In a similar vein,

Samuel R. Chand's book, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code* encouraged leaders to

change the church culture.[7] These books encourage leaders to develop congregational

practices that will help to shape the congregation and form habits consistent with the

mission of the church. They often stress the need for leaders to discern what God is

saying to the church and to cooperate with the moving of the Spirit. Rather than reacting

to circumstances leaders need to ask, "What might God be saying or doing?" The role of

leadership is to help the people of God resist deforming practices and pressures that

secular society exerts. Often listed are such things as consumerism, individualism, and

materialism to name a few.[8]

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[6] Roxburgh (*Structured for Mission*, 36–37) writes, "The challenge facing the Eurotribal denominations . . . Is to understand how and why their once-persuasive legitimating narratives are being questioned . . . understanding how to address changes in legitimating narratives is a vital key to getting at how churches reimagine themselves."

[7] Chand (*Cracking Your Church's Culture*, 2, 14) writes, "Culture—not vision or strategy—is the most powerful factor in any organization . . . Only with deep reflection, accurate information, and courage can we take the necessary steps of change."

[8] Root (*Pastor in a Secular Age,* 17) argues that "A new expressive individualism now dawned, which asserted that your *own* ordinary life was your highest good—you needed to attend to *your own*

Leadership's main role is to help the congregation transition, to help the church

culture to change to become more reflective of the kingdom of God. They address issues

of change management for example, the need for discontinuous change in order that a

new identity is formed. This new identity must be rooted in the story of Scripture itself

and people must see themselves as part of this larger story. Often, to embrace this

greater story, a new vocabulary needs to be offered to the church. A new "language" and

new metaphors helps in the disruption that is needed to break out of old, restrictive

church paradigms. One such paradigm is the notion that church is ". . . a voluntary

association of free individuals who join out of need and stay out of personal choice as

long as needs are met."[9] These stories can become rooted in the community through

rituals that continually point people to the formative story.[10] Identity informs how

people make decisions. By changing their identity, their decisions are re-shaped,

forming new habits. Therefore, helping people to see their primary identity as a

missionary rather than a consumer will change what they do in their day to day lives.

Some equipping books, which address larger issues such as structure and culture

change, lean heavily upon change management literature to support their writing.[11]

Change management books encourage those who are leading change to focus on what is

working. For example, Chip and Dan Heath, in *Switch: How to Change Things When

Change Is Hard,* argue that change is about the incremental change of details, rather

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flourishing first . . . The 1980s would be called the "me decade," for not only had the hippie countercultural zealots become yuppies . . . enjoying the excesses of consumer society, but also because human flourishing in ordinary life became an enclosed individual project."

[9] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 169.

[10] Roxburgh, *Structured for Mission,* 37.

[11] For example, Samuel R. Chand references business leaders such as, Patrick Lencioni, John P. Kotter, and Linda Hudson as well as refers to business publications as *Harvard Business Review*, *Executive Leadership*, and *Fast Company* throughout his book. See Chand, *Cracking*, 2, 6, 114, 125–27, 130, 141.

than large, often paralyzing, sweeping change. The rationale for changes needs to be clearly understood to remove ambiguity since "clarity dissolves resistance."[12] Change management books also point out that communication must address people at an emotional level. Change seldom happens through knowledge alone, leaders must speak to people's feelings, and the feelings that need to be appealed to must be positive rather than negative fear based. This is perhaps why the use of story and testimony is encouraged in church settings.

In summary, this sample of literature encourages us to pay attention to both the corporate and systemic needs of equipping as well as the needs of the individuals. Equipping addresses both intellectual reasons, as well as emotional resistance. Equipping efforts must consider activity as well as identity and special attention must be paid to subversive forces which offer alternative, deforming ways of being that will thwart equipping efforts.

Evangelism Literature

The body of literature that addresses evangelism is both broad as well as deep,[13] and is in a continuous state of flux. It is constantly striving to address the quickly changing cultural landscape, particularly in the Western world as it moves away from a Judeo-Christian worldview and embraces secularism. Therefore, this category will be further subdivided between the largest body of literature which addresses personal evangelism,

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[12] Heath and Heath, *Switch*, 72.

[13] David Barrett estimates that 3,725 books on evangelism, written in English, appeared between 1850–1989. This number only continued to grow (*Evangelize,* 37).

a smaller body of literature which addresses corporate evangelism, and an even smaller
sub-group which addresses a theology of evangelism.

Personal Evangelism Literature

For the purpose of this section this survey is arranged to deal with literature from
roughly the middle of the twentieth century (post WWII to the late 60s), then the later
part of the twentieth century (70s to late 90s) and then a section that completes this
segment of the survey up to the present day. I have included this range of literature since
it is still part of the living memory of the contemporary church and continues to play a
role in informing how evangelism is understood.

One of the assumptions that many writers leave unarticulated or unsupported is
the reason for evangelism. Earlier in the 1960's, George W. Peters described the purpose
of evangelism in this way, "Evangelism never leaves a man (sic) neutral; it compels him
to take a position for or against Christ. It definitely aims at conversion to Christ . . ."[14] In
another place he writes, "Evangelism means first and foremost to explain the Gospel to
others and persuade them to accept the precious gift of God by believing in Jesus
Christ."[15] Once conversion is the aim and persuasion is the means, it opens the door for
manipulation and compulsion and, sadly, this has been the history of some evangelistic
efforts. Leroy Walker argues that since "the laws of psychology are just as much God's
laws . . . we are under obligation (to utilize them) . . . to help him hear the prompting of
God to do the things he knows he ought to do."[16]

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[14] Peters, *Saturation Evangelism*, 20.
[15] Peters, *Saturation Evangelism*, 31.
[16] Walker, "How to Extend Invitation," 48.

This earlier conception of evangelism is also described using terms that give the impression that evangelism is meant to be aggressive and intrusive. The same writer argues that, "The church must cease to live to herself. She must become an outgoing, *aggressive* body of living witnesses. Mission must be converted into *militant* missions . . . The orders are to march into the world and possess it for the Lord."[17]

Thus, in earlier versions of evangelism training the driving motive was often engaging in evangelism as an act of duty. Evangelism is something Christians do out of obligation. If a church desires to see people come to Christ, "It can! There is but one stipulation. Pay the price in time and obedience to God's Word."[18] Evangelism required a price be paid. Some of the early programs of evangelism expected hours of volunteer commitment each day. Most often these hours are spent in door-to-door evangelism and cold calls.[19] Unfortunately, this image of evangelism is not completely absent from the minds of some evangelical congregations. While advocating for personal witness and evangelism "confrontation,"[20] most of the efforts were coordinated in support of the local church's programs.

While there is much that can and should be critiqued about the older evangelism practice, the andragogy had some strengths. The training was usually all done in a group setting and then people were immediately sent out to practice what they had learned.

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[17] Peters, *Saturation Evangelism*, 89. Emphasis added.

[18] Peters, *Saturation Evangelism*, 104.

[19] In Pratt and Ferguson, *Year of Evangelism,* which has twenty-six "how to" chapters on evangelism, a suggested program for an evangelistic mission is provided: "Sunday—morning and evening preaching services along with 'The 'One Great Day of Witnessing' Visitation.' Monday and Tuesday—Evening preaching service, and continuation of visitation. Wednesday—Communion service, and continuation of visitation. Thursday and Friday: Evening preaching service and continuation of visitation. Sunday—Morning dedication service for all who have made commitments, and evening service of total enlistment of all members." See Pratt and Ferguson, *Year of Evangelism*, 54. This kind of time and commitment of church members was not uncommon.

[20] This term was used several times throughout Peters, *Saturation Evangelism*, 30, 41, 147.

They were sent in groups or in twos so that they had support, encouragement, and accountability. The training regarding how to present the Gospel was simplified and concise and often accompanied with a simple tract to keep it on point. In a culture that was still entrenched in a Christendom mindset, this particular presentation and style of program would bear genuine fruit.

By the later part of the century a shift could be seen in the evangelism literature. If the 50's and 60's stressed the *activity* of evangelism, the 70's and 80's began to stress the *attitude* associated with evangelism. Books began to emerge whose titles reflected this less aggressive evangelistic focus. Joe Aldrich's books, *Lifestyle Evangelism* and *Gentle Persuasion,* reflect a softer form of bearing witness. Other titles such as Arthur McPhee's *Friendship Evangelism* and Rebecca Manley Pippert's hugely successful book, *Out of the Saltshaker,* recognized that the militant attitude of the past was distorting the message of the good news. McPhee offered his critique in this way, "They (Christians) have gone forth not with an announcement but a threat, not with an invitation but a demand, not with a friendly persuasion but with verbal coercion. 'Repent now!' their bumper stickers demand. 'It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment.' 'Heaven or hell? Choose ye this day.' And their verbal witness is just about as sharp."[21]

There was also a shift from stressing the obligation and duty of evangelism toward an emphasis upon the privilege of sharing the good news about Jesus. Their focus moved away from the teeth-clenching, guilt induced, obligation of proclaiming the good news towards a relaxed, relational, conversation. As such the way the gospel

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[21] McPhee, *Friendship Evangelism*, 22.

message was presented was less condemning of other's sin before a holy God and his will for their life and more directed towards the felt needs of the individual and how God could meet their needs.[22]

The literature, while talking about the importance of the church, did move evangelism a step further from being connected with the church. The church-wide evangelism campaigns in which everyone participated were replaced by individual efforts to evangelize within their circle of influence. While the militaristic approach to corporate witness was lessened, so too was the sense of working together. This loss of communal witness bearing, though unintentional, was a victim of the move towards individual witnessing. They rightly saw the need to move beyond simply inviting people to come to the church, to the church going to the secular contexts where people lived and played. However, in their argument for going they came across disparagingly towards the church as an institution and by default its institutional witness.[23]

The earlier twentieth century was concerned with winning towns, cities, and the nation to Christ as a whole church activity and by the latter part of the twentieth century the focus had shifted toward winning individuals personally as a way of living. This shift even left some in reaction against mass evangelism, to declare that God "has chosen one-on-one mass distribution as his method to distribute his grace."[24]

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[22] McPhee (*Friendships Evangelism*, 18) suggest 4 types of felt needs that the Gospel offers freedom from: guilt, loneliness, meaninglessness, and death.

[23] McPhee (*Friendships Evangelism*, 33) writes, "This invading rather than inviting, this go rather than come mentality means that Christians who are serious about Jesus' *Commission cannot be satisfied with reaching out to a lost world institutionally*. That can never be sufficient." Emphasis added. I am not arguing that he is against corporate witness but merely that it gives the impression that corporate witness is inferior and not worthy of investment.

[24] Peel and Larimore, *Going Public,* 19.

Another contrast between the earlier literature and the later twentieth century was the former focus upon external technique and methods. The latter part dealt more with the inward motives and attitudes of those evangelizing. They sought to bring congruence between the life of the witness and the message they sought to bring. In her acclaimed book, *Out of the Saltshaker*, Rebecca Pippert explains the purpose of her book in this way, "This book is about getting our message and our style together . . . I believe that much of evangelism is ineffective because we depend too much upon technique and strategy . . . I am convinced that we must look at Jesus, and the quality of life he calls us to, as a model for what to believe and how to reach others."[25] There was an evolution in evangelism beginning to take place that began to understand evangelism as more than an activity in which we choose to take part in at certain times. Now evangelism was understood as encompassing the whole life of the believer. This personal, lifestyle form of evangelism has continued to be promoted in books such as: *Evangelism for Normal People* by John Bowen, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittleberg, and *Going Public with Your Faith*, by William Peel and Walt Larimore, to name only a few.

As the twentieth century was rolling into the twenty-first century it also became more widely accepted to understand evangelism as something that wasn't merely a point in time decision but a process. "The journey of faith consists of a multitude of small, incremental decisions (many mini-decisions) regarding spiritual realities."[26] No doubt this shift was, in part, due to the quickly secularizing and increasingly multi-cultural changes taking place in society. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, it was

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[25] Pippert, *Out of The Saltshaker*, 11, 13.
[26] Peel and Larimore, *Going Public*, 14.

assumed that there was a general Christian knowledge to which Christians could appeal. However, as the influence of Christendom began to wane and the Christian story become more foreign and increasingly questioned, the evangelism process required Christians to bear witness to things that could previously be assumed.[27]

The literature of the early 2000's tried to provide a corrective to what they felt were the earlier generation's distortions of evangelistic witness. In the earlier part of the 1900's, for example, a resource put out by the Board of Evangelism and Social Service by the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec said that there were "three rules to follow" in effective evangelism. The third rule of effective evangelism was "press for a decision."[28] This "press for a decision" has been the source of negative experiences from those on the receiving end. Peel and Larimore comment, "Pushing for a response is a declaration that we can't or won't trust God, to do what is his work, and his alone, namely salvation."[29] Much of the later writing on evangelism sought to correct perceived excesses of the earlier generations as Peel and Larimore illustrate.

As culture has continued to change and move further away from its Judeo-Christian heritage towards an ever-increasing secular nation, it has also moved from modernist assumptions to post-modern ones. The modern era saw an increasing confidence in rationalism, the scientific method, and technology. With these three tools they felt they could master the world. Postmodernism has rejected such optimism. The present COVID crisis has only further highlighted the growing suspicion and lack of trust in science and human reasoning. This suspicion of modernist assumptions can also

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[27] For example, the Bible as God's Word, the historical existence of Jesus, the "common sense" of the Christian worldview, to name only a few.

[28] Allaby, *Outline Studies in Witnessing*, 1.

[29] Peel and Larimore, *Going Public*, 97.

be seen as the culture questions things such as universal absolutes, historical accuracy, and even meaningful reality.[30] Similarly, culture has become increasingly multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and socially fragmented, with much of the literature on evangelism in the twenty-first century being written in response to these changing cultural dynamics. More books are being written about reaching out to people of specific cultures and not only national cultures, but microcultures.[31] The changing cultural dynamics challenge how the gospel is presented as it is recognized that the traditional presentation, that seeks to appeal to a guilt-based culture of the West, is becoming not simply ineffective but offensive to those who come from a shame-based culture.[32] There are also many other cultural issues addressed such as: individualism and collectivism, power, hierarchies, role relationship, humor, how emotions are expressed, as well as many other considerations.[33] Although these sensitivities are needed and those bearing witness for Christ need to be aware, it can leave people feeling overwhelmed and intimidated. The need to adopt the "right" presentation to each particular person in response to their cultural background can be crippling in its effect upon those who seek to share their faith.

It seems that the place of the church in evangelism has always been a bit of a conundrum. In the early literature it was clear that the church became an evangelism

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[30] Butler (*Postmodernism*, 48) argues that the rejection of meta-narratives by post-modernist thought, "heralded a pluralist age, in which, as we shall see, even the arguments of scientists and historians are to be seen as no more than quasi narratives which compete with all the others for acceptance. They have no unique or reliable fit to the world, no certain correspondence with reality. They are just another form of fiction."

[31] One example of books written to reach microcultures is Watkins, *Gospel Remix.*

[32] Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, points out that there are not only shame and guilt-based culture but also defilement cultures.

[33] George C. Hunter III's book, *Celtic Way of Evangelism*, was written with a more collectivist perspective. He argues for helping people gain a sense of belonging before appealing to them to believe. He advocates that faith is more easily caught than taught.

center. As one pastor observed, "My theory is that it is the business of the preacher to fill the pulpit and the business of the people to fill the pews."[34] The development of the seeker church phenomenon continued to keep this form of church-based evangelism alive and helped to spur on the growth of mega-churches. These 'seeker churches' tried to bring evangelism back to the corporate life of the church. These churches largely use a programmatic strategy by starting with the "seeker service" which gears its message, music, and program towards a non-Christian audience. The method is similar to a weekly evangelistic campaign, but time has shown that it has reduced evangelism to simply becoming an act of inviting people to church. Tragically, out of the need to offer more incentive to attract non-Christians to attend, some churches have become more like circuses and game shows where people's motives for attending are mixed at best or merely self-serving.[35]

However, with the development of missional theology, the emphasis is beginning to swing away from an attractional model of church towards a missional model of being sent into neighbourhoods. We will explore more of the Missional Church Movement's perspective on evangelism in the final section of this literature survey.

The majority of popular writing around personal evangelism focuses upon the practice of the evangelistic task, but very few address how people should be trained. One exception is *The Master Plan of Evangelism.* In it, Robert Coleman advocates that

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[34] McConnell, "Lay Visitation Evangelism," 47.
[35] Two such churches that have offered cars as prizes for attending church are Triumph Church in Detroit, Michigan (Siacon, "Triumph Church gives away groceries, scholarships, cars to folks in need") and Destiny Church in Columbia, Maryland (Zauzmer, "One way to get people to Church on Sunday: Give away free cars.") While the motives of the church may be right, it is questionable if the motives of all who attend are.

the process of training is most effective when evangelism is modeled, rather than simply

taught in a lecture format. He comments, "People are looking for demonstration not

explanation."[36] While in principle this is ideal, practically it is untenable unless

evangelism is reduced to an act. Evangelism includes activity but it is not merely an

activity. As with much of the literature on evangelism, it is the assumptions behind the

content that tend to lead the reader in ways that are not Biblically grounded. Evangelism

has as much to do with one's inner disposition as it does with one's outer activity. Acts

1:8 does not say that "you will *do* my witnessing" but that "you will *be* my witnesses."

A person's evangelistic witness is formed not simply in the doing of evangelistic acts

but also in the often-hidden spiritual disciplines that others don't see. Modeling is

necessary, and should be considered in equipping congregations, but it is not enough.

However, Coleman makes a very valid point that needs to be heeded.

<div align="center">Corporate Evangelism Literature</div>

The rise of the church growth movement[37] and the subsequent Seeker Church movement

created a new type of evangelism writing that considered how the gathered church can

be used to evangelize. Using the gathered church for evangelism wasn't new but the

earlier literature leaned heavily upon "pulpit ministry" as the main means for

evangelism.[38] The later literature saw the church as a type of "Walmart" for spiritual

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[36] Coleman, *Master Plan*, 80.

[37] While I mention the Church Growth Movement I do not delve into their writing as I would agree with William Abraham (*Logic of Evangelism*, 3*)* who concludes, ". . . it is worth mentioning here that church growth theorists are themselves thoroughly ambivalent about whether or not their work makes a contribution to the subject of evangelism." The writing assumes the prevailing popular notions of evangelism and does not challenge those assumptions.

[38] Gordon Pratt Baker and Edward Ferguson explain how, "At least once a year . . . every church should observe a week of intensive evangelism" (*Year of Evangelism*, 52). This intensive evangelism boils down to every member being encouraged to pledge to bring a non-Christian friend to special evening

needs. Churches created departments associated with the outreach and evangelism needs they sought to address. These programs were developed as bridges into the community and resources for church members to avail themselves of in order to reach out to friends and neighbours. These programs are all intended to communicate the love of God to people in need. One example is the Los Angeles International church, also known as the Dream Center, which boasts a food bank, free clothing store, an addictions center, a home for unwed mothers, a twenty-four-hour medical clinic, and outreaches to drug addicts, homeless youth, pimps, and prostitutes. All this plus 46 services held each week in over 10 different languages. In total they have two hundred ministries that seek to reach out, many housed in their 400,000 square foot facility.[39]

It appears that the purpose of many of the books written about a specific church's evangelistic ministry and impact are meant to inspire. In fact, Robert Lewis writes, "Whether people know it or not, what many lack is simply the creative idea to get them started."[40] Many have been encouraged by these books[41] which certainly provide ideas and motivation that is needed to help equip. However, it can also be argued that many have felt overwhelmed by these examples. Churches that have attempted to mimic the success of other congregations have often found that the model fails to work in their context. The end result can sometimes leave leaders feeling as if they are unable to be successful in evangelism.

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services, as well as door-to-door visitation in the surrounding neighbourhood which encourages people to come to special evening services to hear a Gospel message by an evangelist. The centrality of the preached message was assumed and getting people to hear it was the priority around which they organized their efforts.

[39] Barnett, *Church That Never Sleeps*, xv–xvi.

[40] Lewis, Robert, *Church of Irresistible Influence*, 105.

[41] This opinion is based upon the number of 5-star reviews and the number of sales, translations and reprints these books generate.

While many books take this wide swath approach to evangelism, some specialize in certain aspects of church ministry offering ways in which that particular area can become more specifically evangelistic. John Wimber advocated the central place of signs and wonders, suggesting that such power encounters against dark forces can open the door for evangelistic work.[42] Sally Morgenthaler urges the church to invite unbelievers into the presence of God through Worship evangelism.[43] Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler urge a more central apologetic vision,[44] and others argue for prayer evangelism[45] or Christian Education as evangelism.[46] There seems to be no shortage of ways in which evangelism can be exercised within the church. Yet, others will argue that these efforts only reinforce the church's inward focus and a "come to" evangelism strategy. When authors speak about preparing the church for evangelism, they most often have in mind the gathered church service rather than a vision of the people of God as they are scattered into the community, wherever they might happen to be.

Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary,[47] by Lee Strobel, *Deep and Wide,*[48] by Andy Stanley, and Erwin Raphael McManus's, *An Unstoppable Force*,[49] are examples of books that are written to convince church leaders of the need for change and to gain a greater appreciation for the changes that have taken place in society that necessitates these changes, if it desires to be effective in reaching lost people. These writers emphasize a change that is not simply cosmetic, that merely addresses how we

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[42] Wimber, *Power Evangelism.*
[43] Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism.*
[44] Zacharias and Geisler, *Is Your Church Ready?*
[45] Silvoso, *Prayer Evangelism.*
[46] Everist, ed., *Christian Education as Evangelism.*
[47] Strobel, *Inside the Mind of Unchurches Harry and Mary.*
[48] Stanley, *Deep and Wide.*
[49] McManus, *Unstoppable Force.*

do ministry, but a radical re-ordering of the church's self-conception. We began to see writers using missiological principles for understanding the North American mission field. We read of churches creating "target audiences" full of "unchurched Harrys or Marys" and "Saddleback Sams."[50] While evangelism is posited as the goal, one could not help but get the impression that evangelism was simply a means to the true goal which was local church growth because growth equals success. This blurring of the purpose for evangelism betrays the shallowness of evangelism and the need for a robust evangelistic theology.

Unfortunately, literature that is addressed toward congregational, corporate evangelism seldom includes a chapter on the theology of evangelism. In fact, most of the literature addresses issues regarding strategies, models, and processes. In other words, it is pragmatically driven. "What works?" is the question that continually drives many evangelism endeavors. Where there was theological reflection, it was often trite and addressed as matter of fact. If scripture was cited there was no careful, exegetical explanation. Often it was simply provided as proof texts to give superficial credibility to what the author believed everyone already assumed. This is not to say that there was not any theological reflection present, but rather that most of that reflection was left as implicit.[51]

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[50] Unchurched Harry and Mary were fictitious names given as a composite of the typical non-Christian that Willowcreek Community Church was trying to reach. Saddleback Sam was Saddleback Church's version of the same thing.

[51] There are some notable exceptions. Michael Green's *Evangelism Through the Local Church* begins with a chapter which reflects on the meaning, purpose, and reason for evangelism. Chan's *Evangelism in a Skeptical World* also begins with a chapter on the theology of evangelism.

In a similar fashion as other evangelism literature, the means of equipping are often not addressed.[52] The literature tells what should be done, from their perspective, but seldom tells how to move the organization. Michael Green provides a bit of an exception by dedicating a long section at the end of his book which includes several very practical chapters. These chapters address more of the specifics of how to implement specific types of evangelistic endeavors such as city-wide evangelistic missions, sports ministry, social justice, and inquiry groups for seekers.[53] The lack of guidance to prepare leaders to transition their churches for the evangelistic undertakings, which they have inspired, becomes a glaring failing in much of the literature as it provides a destination without directions on how to get there.

Some literature addresses the cultural changes that have taken place in society. Some authors address the sociological shifts from modernity to post-modernity, the embrace of secularism and the abandonment, for better or worse, of Christendom. Other authors address the implications of urbanization, multi-culturalism, and other global and national changes that affect both personal and corporate evangelistic efforts. In this way, this literature attempts to stimulate new ways of envisioning evangelism in the quickly changing social context. This type of literature can give wonderful insight into how society arrived at its present state and what the church (or individuals) can do to reach out. However, the speed at which change is coming makes them less useful as new

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[52] Although many of the evangelistic ministries are simply dangled out as bait without adequate instruction of how they may be integrated into the life of the church, there is one exception to this observation. There is an abundance of books that address how a church can transition to having seeker services. Ed Dobson, *Starting a Seeker Sensitive Service*, and Lee Strobel's *Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary* provide two such examples. George Hunter (*How to Reach Secular People*, 154–71) comes close to offering an equipping strategy but ultimately if proves to be just another method in how to start an effective seeker service.

[53] Green, *Evangelism Through the Local Church*, 411–551.

changes have outstripped the usefulness of their advice. This type of literature also

appears to subscribe to a philosophy of equipping that suggests that having the

information is sufficient. All too often providing more information is crippling rather

than freeing. Equipping cannot be simply assumed to be a transference of information.

As the saying goes, "Knowing how and being able are two different things." The errant

assumption that giving information, ideas, or examples will somehow result in people

knowing how to take that information and contextualize it and apply it, is naïve.

Theology of Evangelism Literature

It seems apparent that the zeal for evangelistic activity is often not adequately supported

by theological depth and reflection. Pickard notes the lack of interface between these

two disciplines in this way:

> Certainly, in the modern period of the Christian tradition we can observe, at a
> general level, an uneasy dialogue between evangelists and theologians—
> particularly those who belong to the field of systematics or dogmatic theology.
> They have not proved to be very compatible partners, the relationship having
> more the character of a stormy courtship ending in separation rather than a well-
> established marriage.[54]

The apparent lack of theological rigor has led to many disparaging comments towards

evangelists themselves.[55] Yet, this is not to suggest that theological reflection has not

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[54] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 7. Pickard is not the only one to note this disparity. William Abraham in *The Logic of Evangelism* spends the first ten pages of the book noting the "rift" between Evangelism and theology and the scant amount of literature available.

[55] Josh Moody ("Seven Ways," 33–34) condescendingly writes, ". . . evangelists need to be careful; most heresy in the Christian church historically has come from well-meaning evangelistic efforts to reach people by shifting important theological concepts to make them more acceptable in ways that have unforeseen effects. As a rule of thumb, if you are primarily an evangelist, my strong counsel to you is this: read theology, but don't try to write it. More bunk has been written by brilliant evangelists who should have stayed with doing evangelism than I have time to mention."

been addressed. I will now move into the third sub-category of this section which considers theological literature regarding evangelism.

Bryan Stone bluntly summarizes the challenge of thinking theologically about evangelism with regard to the implications for the church:

> For the gospel to which evangelism invites persons is by the standards of the Enlightenment, incredible; according to the logic of the market, it is cost-ineffective; measured by modern liberal notions of the social, it is uncivil; by the standards of an aesthetics formed by the capitalist discipline of desire, it is repulsive; and by the chaplaincy standards of Christendom, it may prove to be neither useful or helpful.[56]

Perhaps this onerous observation explains why so few have taken up the task of theological refection regarding evangelism.[57]

The first challenge in developing a theology of evangelism, and then working out the equipping implications, is the determination of what evangelism is. One of the earliest attempts at a theology of evangelism of a scholarly nature was done by Julian Hartt. He offered what he described as a "biblical theology only in the rarefied sense."[58] He opens with the nature of God. He argues that God is a revealing God and then considers Jesus the Son who witnessed to the Kingdom of God in word, deed, character,

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[56] Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 20.

[57] To this Abraham adds seven observations why he believes the theological task in relationship to evangelism has been neglected. The first observation ". . . lies in the fact that Christianity has been a part of the fabric of the West for so long that it has been assumed that Christians do not really need to evangelize." (*Logic of Evangelism*, 4). Secondly, he notes that ". . . the best intellectual efforts of the Christian community are channeled into fields that either elbow out or inhibit serious engagement with the topic of evangelism." (*Logic of Evangelism*, 5). Thirdly, "Within academic theology and religious studies the crucial issues clearly lie elsewhere." (*Logic of Evangelism*, 5). Fourthly, since what counts as scholarship expects ". . . that the conversation will be conducted with partners who are already well established as substantial figures in the history of discussion and debate. Clearly this will be very difficult in the initial pursuit of evangelism." (*Logic of Evangelism*, 7). Fifth. Abraham argues that "We do not know what precisely to define as evangelism, and therefore we are at a loss as to know what to designate as a contribution to a discussion about it." (*Logic of Evangelism*, 7). Sixth, is the "crucial factor fostering the climate of disinterest and antipathy is the fact that evangelism has been linked almost exclusively with a particular cluster of schools within modern Christianity, namely with fundamentalism and evangelicalism." (*Logic of Evangelism*, 8). Lastly, he argues that all these reasons ". . . [are] not helped by the current image of the evangelist in contemporary society."

[58] Hartt, *Toward A Theology*, 12.

and by resurrection. In this same way he addresses issues such as the nature of love, the need of humanity, the coming of the end as they relate to and support the need of evangelism, and the nature of the evangelistic calling of the church. What he fails to do adequately and plainly is define evangelism. As such he does not fully challenge the theological assumptions that evangelism has traditionally been dependent upon.

By and large those who hold to this traditional sense of evangelism have derived their understanding from word studies.[59] Sam Chan offers a chapter on the theology of evangelism and describes his starting point in this way, "we will start by exploring a theology of evangelism. We will do this by surveying how the Bible describes evangelism and then applying this to our contemporary setting."[60] While word studies may contribute to our understanding of what is involved in evangelism, it is a stretch to equate etymological work with a theology.

For some, the definition has the end in view regarding evangelism. They understand evangelism as ". . . any activity in which a person or an organization is trying to convert another person or group."[61] This conversion is understood as encompassing what a person thinks, how they behave, and their identification with the church. This way of understanding evangelism views conversion through bounded set assumptions,[62] while others, who would lean towards a centered set, view evangelism

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[59] Abraham (*Logic of Evangelism*, 92) notes that emphasis upon proclamation finds its roots in the sixteenth-century Reformer's emphasis on the proclamation of the word and the subsequent derivation of "a vision of evangelism from word studies in Scriptures" is a key feature of the reformation tradition.

[60] Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, 14.

[61] Thiessen, *Ethics of Evangelism*, 10.

[62] Bounded set thinking with regard to Christian faith, envisions some people as in and others as out as if there is a boundary that separates who is in the faith and who is outside of it. In this way of thinking evangelism is concerned with people crossing the line or making a decision or saying a prayer. Centered set thinking is less about in and out but considers in what direction people are facing and travelling. Are people moving towards faith in Jesus or away. Evangelism is then a continual process of helping people to turn towards God and progress towards Him in their lives.

less from what is viewed as the end goal and more from a continual process of change in orientation.

William Abraham argues that "Over against those who construe evangelism as the proclamation of the Gospel and against those who construe it as church growth . . . we should construe evangelism as primary initiation into the Kingdom of God."[63] For Williams, the obvious starting point for understanding evangelism ". . . must begin with eschatology."[64] This definition of evangelism obviously raises implications for exactly what the evangel is. Is the good news primarily about the reign of God's Kingdom that one can enter or a personal offer of forgiveness that one can receive? How one understands the Gospel that is to be made known has implications for how our witness should be borne and how the church should be equipped. Unlike Thiessen, who views evangelism as that activity with the end result of conversion in view, Abraham maintains that it is the content of the message that qualifies an activity as evangelistic quite apart from the end result.[65] Furthermore, contra Thiessen, he would argue that "conversion is but one dimension of a complex process."[66] Furthermore, he maintains that evangelism does not end at conversion but continues to initiate people into the Kingdom of God. By reducing evangelism to one of its metaphors, conversion, the evangelistic task is reduced to less than what it should entail.

Although having a similar understanding of the Gospel as entry into the reign of God, contra William's perspective, Bryan Stone situates evangelism as an aspect of

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[63] Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 13.
[64] Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 17.
[65] Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 59. He writes, "What makes proclamation evangelism is not the act of proclamation *per se* but the message being proclaimed: the coming rule of God." Emphasis original.
[66] Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 84.

ecclesiology. Evangelism is understood as part of the church's very nature, and not reduced to certain types of activities. He writes: "The most evangelistic thing the church can do today is to be the church . . . it is the very shape and character of the church as the Spirit's 'new creation' that is the witness to God's reign in the world so both the source and aim of Christian evangelism."[67] Evangelism is conceived as a practice of the church that is seen in every part of its life.

If the witness of the church is an ontological concern, the evangelistic equipping task cannot be compartmentalized as simply a thing the church does. The evangelistic impulse must course through the church like blood through the body. This is the conclusion that Pickard draws when he writes, "What I am sure of is that the church is called to be a community of the evangel and thus a community that seeks to embody the glad tidings of God in all of its life."[68] He sees evangelism as a doxological practice.[69] He contends for the idea that the character of the church is that it is "a community for the praise of God."[70] However, he argues that at the heart of good evangelism lies good communication[71] and therefore "the main concern becomes the *improvement* of communication."[72] This helps to narrow the focus of this church-wide equipping task to the main area of concern. Drawing on Lakeland, he goes on to note that, ". . . 'success' and 'effectiveness' in evangelism is 'measured by conformity to the divine intent' . . . On this account the character of the Christian God and the nature of the ecclesial community that worships this God provide the broader horizon and critical perspective

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[67] Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 15.
[68] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 2.
[69] This theme is also picked up by Teasdale (*Evangelism for Non-evangelists*, 98) when he writes, "Evangelism is not only invitational; it is doxological."
[70] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 5.
[71] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 18.
[72] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 21. Emphasis original.

for the many acts of communication that make up the evangelistic practices of the church."[73] In short, evangelism cannot simply be reduced to a certain type of act. The whole life of the church is to engage this evangelistic calling. The church is to conform to the evangelistic nature of the God whose life animates it. In this line of reasoning, the starting point would not be eschatology or ecclesiology but rather theology proper, which would then inform the doxological nature of evangelism.[74]

While the texts that address the theology of evangelism do not specifically address the equipping task, the implications of their theology certainly do. If evangelism is another task of the church, and the focus is on the activity of the church, then equipping the church would become much like we see it today, programs, ministries, activities, outreaches. However, if evangelism is part of the very nature of God, then the equipping task becomes one which is more comprehensive. To equip the church is to shape it to reflect the evangelistic nature of God. In this scenario the activities become second order concerns. The doing of evangelism is the requisite fruit of the church's evangelistic being as it conforms to reflect God.

While Stone understands evangelism as participation in the church,[75] and Abraham through the process of initiation,[76] and Thiessen by the result produced,[77] David Bosch offers yet another alternative. For Bosch evangelism takes place when there is ". . . a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel."[78] Evangelism

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[73] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 32.
[74] These theological themes will be picked up in chapter 4 of my dissertation. The purpose for pointing them out here is to indicate the equipping implications that correlate to these different starting points.
[75] In Stone's own words, ". . . the church does not really have an evangelistic strategy. The church *is* the evangelistic strategy." Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 15.
[76] Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 13.
[77] Thiessen, *Ethics of Evangelism*, 10.
[78] Bosch, "Evangelism," 17.

in this view is not merely the presentation of information, but a confrontation with an offer that challenges someone to be enlisted for the mission of God. Accordingly, "Evangelism that stops at calling people to accept Christ is incomplete and truncated."[79] Similar to Thiessen, the end is in view, but not on the response of the hearer, which is outside of the evangelist's power, but rather the extending of a call to surrender to those listening by the evangelist. Unless this call is given, evangelism has not taken place. Brueggemann would agree with Bosch on this point but expands upon what a response to that call looks like. He writes, "Evangelism is the invitation and summons to resituate our talk and our walk according to the reality of this God, a reality not easily self-evident in our society."[80]

It is quickly apparent that no one theology of evangelism rules the day. At this point it is not necessary to come to a conclusion regarding the findings and arguments offered. This topic will be picked up again in chapter 2 of this dissertation where I will offer my own theological reflection.

Missional Theology and Teaching Literature

The quickly growing field of Missional Theology has arguably been one of the most influential fields of theology in the church in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Included within the missional framework is the evangelistic role of the church, but just how evangelism fits within the missional framework is a matter yet to be resolved. Given the movement's significance and influence, it is wise to grapple with how this movement understands the evangelistic calling of the church.

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[79] Bosch, "Evangelism," 15.
[80] Brueggemann, "Evangelism and Discipleship," 233.

This literature includes both popularist and academic writing of all kinds. It is fair to say that the literature can be divided into three general approaches to how evangelism is dealt with. First, many simply adopt the traditional understanding of evangelism that is the byproduct of Christendom's influence. The second approach is to define the evangelistic nature of the mission without using the term "evangelism" or its cognates. While they may give the term a nod in passing references, it is generally left out as a term which contributes to the missional church conversation, as it is hopelessly entangled by the individualism and pragmatism of modernity. The third approach provides attempts at meaningfully understanding the evangelistic nature of the *missio dei* and attempts to think through the implication of this for both the missional church and the nature of evangelism.

The first perspective is represented by Michael Frost. Frost has written extensively at a popular level and has had a large influence in promoting the Missional Church Movement. His thinking on missional ecclesiology is nuanced, but his thinking about evangelism is not. He seems to leave the more truncated understanding of evangelism as proclamation unchallenged. He also seems to flip flop between bifurcating evangelism and social justice on one page, and then advocating for their unity on another. [81] He argues for a missional theology that promotes the reign of the

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[81] In Frost, *Road to Missional*, there are several places where he equates evangelism simply with verbal proclamation. In one place while arguing for both social justice and evangelism he goes on to say, "We are called to alert people to the reign of God through Christ . . . that both demonstrate (Justice, love, reconciliation) and announce (heralding, worship evangelism) that reign" (29–30). Again, he writes, "Since the core project of the mission of the church is alerting people to the reign of God in Christ, it can be done with lips (evangelism, personal witness, worship) and the hands (serving, healing, caring) . . . " (35–36). These seem to indicate that he advocates an evangelism that is equated with simply some form of verbal proclamation. He affirms this conclusion when he writes, "the term evangelism describes a verbal announcement" (44). Yet, as he goes on to advocate for a definition by Bosch in which he contradicts himself by arguing that "evangelism involves both word and deed" (46). But then a few pages later he uses Bosch's definition for evangelism and coopts it as a definition for mission commenting, "This gels so nicely with what we saw earlier in Bosch's definition of mission as the alerting of people to the reign of

Kingdom of God but then seems to default to an evangelism of personal salvation. By doing this he appears to define the missional task in ways that other theologians define the evangelistic task.[82] In short, it seems that his focus on missional ecclesiology has left evangelism uninfluenced in any significant way by the missional theology he espouses.

That being said, Frost offers some principles for equipping churches towards this missional orientation that are profitable to help equip the church in evangelistic engagement. Largely, this involves a reorientation of the church's organizational system around the implications of missional theology. This reorientation includes such things as incarnational ministry that is engaged in close proximity to those the church is called to reach and a cruciform nature of sacrificial service and love. Frost's work is representative of several missional writers who have correctly seen the evangelistic implications of God's mission but have failed to allow the missional implication to impact their understanding of evangelism.[83]

The second perspective of seemingly writing off the term "evangelism" as unredeemable is illustrated through Roxburgh and Boren's book, *Introducing the Missional Church.* It is surprising that a book that offers an introduction to the missional church hardly gives a nod towards the evangelistic nature of the missional church in terms that clearly identify that evangelistic nature. In fact, it seems that the authors would prefer to steer clear of using evangelistic language altogether, as they caricature

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God through Christ by both announcement and demonstration. If evangelism is the announcement piece" (55). He continues to convolute the role of evangelism within the missional church so as to demonstrate that he has not fully worked out the missional church's theological implications for evangelism. For Frost's view on these things see, Frost, *Road to Missional,* 41–62.

[82] Bosch's definition for evangelism is misappropriated as a definition of mission as "the alerting of people to the reign of God through Christ by both announcement and demonstration." Frost, *Road to Missional*, 55.

[83] I will explore this implication in chapter 4.

evangelism by its worst forms which include a distorted understanding of salvation that is "reductionistic" and is "limited to private, individualistic conversations . . ."[84] They paint evangelism systems as attractional strategies that are "designed to get people to come to church."[85] And while encouraging people to get to know their neighbour, they admonished them from going ". . . out with their Bible up their sleeve, waiting for an opportunity to proselytize."[86] This reinforces the impression that personal evangelism is aggressive. While they rightfully condemn these evangelistic caricatures, they do not offer an evangelistic corrective. Their silence gives the impression that this is how evangelism works and there are no other alternatives.

This is not to say that Roxburgh and Boren do not speak about the evangelistic nature of the missional church but they simply avoid using that type of language and have instead opted for terms such as sign, witness, and foretaste. They do encourage speaking about Jesus but by removing this from the language of evangelism and replacing it with the language of mission it seems to conflate these two terms and subsumes evangelism into the missional church without acknowledging it as such.

Admittedly, the term "evangelism" often leaves a sour taste in people's mouths and by avoiding the term they have an opportunity to re-imagine what evangelistic engagement might be like without having to deconstruct the baggage that the term carries. This being said, much of the equipping strategy of this approach can be carried over to form a church evangelistically as much as it does missionally. They encourage a focus upon changing the church's culture, focusing upon such things as rhythms,

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[84] Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 32.
[85] Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 49.
[86] Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 187.

practices, habits and values before addressing issues of structures, roles, organization, and programs.[87] This change happens all while implementing a process for listening to the Spirit through the congregation, discerning where he is at work and experimenting with missional texts.

The third approach of attempting to rethink the evangelistic implications of missional ecclesiology is seen in writers such as Darrell L. Guder in *The Continuing Conversion of the Church.* He offers insightful observations regarding how missional theology impacts evangelism. Guder concludes that "If evangelization is the heart of mission, then evangelization must be the heart of ministry."[88] He believes that evangelism should be a central organizing principle of the church's missional activity. Every dimension of the church's existence should testify to the Gospel.[89] However, the evangel that shapes the church's evangelistic engagement is in need of rescue from the reductionistic gospel of personal salvation which he argues fatally harms the church's evangelistic efforts.[90] Therefore, effective evangelistic equipping must address this reductionism. In fact, this need to develop a theology of evangelistic ministry should be a foundational task of equipping efforts. Furthermore, evangelistic witness loses its effectiveness apart from encountering the Christ who is proclaimed through public worship. True worship serves the evangelistic mission and is not merely its own end.[91] It

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[87] Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 193.

[88] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 150.

[89] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 137.

[90] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 151.

[91] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 153. Hastings echoes this sentiment when he writes, "It is the church intoxicated with God, actively participating in the life of God, the church in worship, that is the missional church. The church of Acts 2 was just such a church. Evangelism was effective through the church at worship." Hastings, *Missional God*, 116.

requires that our evangelistic means and message must complement one another.[92]

Every aspect of the church must be consistent with the evangel and this shaping and

conforming is an aspect of evangelistic equipping. Guder argues that the evangelist is

essential to the church's missional equipping and that "congregations today urgently

need to be ministered to by evangelist-pastors."[93] Furthermore, "Seminaries should be

preparing evangelists to be sent into the churches, so that they might become

evangelizing communities."[94]

It is not only reductionism that must be addressed, Hastings adds that we need to

stop perpetuating a dichotomy between evangelism and social justice, as if evangelism

could be pursued apart from the care of the whole person.[95] And to Guder's point of

getting the gospel right, Hasting would add that prior to this we must get "the God of the

gospel right."[96] According to Hastings, the means for equipping the church and

reshaping it is through the formative power of spiritual practices both communally and

individually.[97]

Conclusion

This literature survey has sought to explore three primary areas of inquiry regarding

evangelistic equipping. The first concern was how evangelistic equipping was taking

place. Although there has been much written on evangelism, both from a popularist

perspective as well as a more academic treatment, it is evident that there is a yawning

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[92] "Our theology of evangelistic ministry must be rooted in a biblical theology of mission and, above all, dominated and shaped by the gospel it seeks to proclaim." Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 48.
[93] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 163.
[94] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 163
[95] Hastings, *Missional God*, 106.
[96] Hastings, *Missional God*, 107
[97] Hastings, *Missional God*, 135.

gap in the literature concerning the evangelistic equipping task. While there has been literature written about equipping generally, there has not been an attempt to apply the equipping principles to the field of evangelism. It is also evident that there is a lack of consensus regarding how evangelism should be understood theologically. This theological confusion affects the equipping task and must be addressed in order to properly understand how the church is to be equipped in its evangelistic mission. By and large the underlying question driving evangelism training is "what works" and though the literature offers some good attempts at answering this particular question, there is very little reflection on if the "what works" question is the right one.

The second area of inquiry sought to understand the "why" of evangelistic equipping. How did those writing anchor their understanding of equipping within the Biblical text? Once more we saw that there was a variety of answers given to this question. As was demonstrated, some authors understood evangelism to be rooted in ecclesiology, others eschatology, and some lean toward a broader biblical theology. There was also a wider perspective in what evangelism is and what should motivate churches and individuals who desire to engage it. This broad understanding only serves to confuse the task of equipping and makes it difficult to know where those doing the equipping should aim their efforts.

The final consideration asked the question of effectiveness of these efforts. Most of the evaluative critique appeals back to the pragmatism of evangelistic technique. But the literature does not do very much self-reflection in considering their equipping efforts. It seldom reflects upon biases and has failed to address the cultural imports of Christendom in shaping the present understanding of evangelism. Even those writers

who are more missiologically sensitive seldom question or challenge the status quo with regard to evangelistic understanding. This is not only disappointing but tragic since Canadian society has long departed from the Judeo-Christian worldview which shaped much of Evangelicalism's understanding and practice.

It is the goal of this project to help move the evangelistic equipping task forward by ascertaining what is being done to equip the church, how it is being embraced by the church, and then to offer a critique that will help Evangelical churches become more adequately equipped for evangelistic faithfulness in the ever-changing cultural landscape of the twenty-first century. In the next chapter we will consider how the Evangelical church's understanding of evangelism has been hindered by cultural encumbrances that began at its inception. These burdens will be challenged with a reconsideration of the nature of evangelism and a model from which the church might draw its evangelistic vision and inform its practice.

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The question that this dissertation wrestles with is how congregations are being

equipped for evangelistic engagement, therefore, it is important to understand just what

is meant theologically by "evangelism" and "equipping." It follows, then, that we must

grapple with what evangelism is before we can explore how to engage in equipping.

I will begin by exploring how Evangelicalism has arrived at its present

understanding of evangelism. I will demonstrate that the Evangelical understanding of

evangelism has been shaped by Christendom, the Enlightenment and the emergence of

Modernity that developed during the formative years of the Evangelical movement

during the eighteenth century.[1] This is not a critique, *per se*, of the wisdom of those

early leaders to conform evangelism to its culture in order to gain influence and appeal

to those they were trying to reach.[2] It is to acknowledge that the shaping influences of

evangelism have waned and that which once made evangelism effective now acts as a

weight, holding it down to a past time leaving its practice largely antiquated, ineffective,

and less than faithful to the God it seeks to serve. The diminished influence of

Christendom has only served to highlight the inconsideration of some approaches to

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[1] Hindmarsh (*Spirit of Early Evangelicalism*, 4*)* notes that "Evangelical spiritual concerns overlapped significantly at several points with eighteenth-century culture . . . this new expression of Christianity arose in the midst of those consequential changes in society that we now routinely acknowledge with capital letters: Modernity, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution."

[2] Dueksen and Dyrness, with regard to the church, assert that, ". . . its expression of God's work is always and everywhere interpreted through a reverse hermeneutic—a reading of the gospel through the lens of one's own culture. In this way the church from its inception, and throughout its history, has always made sense of its mission and God's work in the world via its cultural context" (*Seeking Church*, 59).

evangelism. The migration of different ethnicities to North America has encouraged a growing cultural intelligence that has made us aware of how Westernized our Gospel presentations have been.[3]

Often evangelism has been touted as *the* mark of true, serious, and committed Christians, leaving many people feeling guilty and inadequate in their faith.[4] To some, the change in culture has convinced them that the church needs to double down on their efforts to revive past evangelistic measures. Some argue that evangelism is in trouble,[5] and that the church itself is in crisis. The bleak future for the Western church due to the crisis in evangelism is illustrated by the conclusion that missiologist Allan Walker painted when he wrote that "the Western world is now the toughest mission field on earth."[6] Conversion growth in churches is becoming increasingly rare,[7] while those churches that are growing seem to be expanding due to transfer growth.

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[3] Jackson Wu points out that many of our "gospel presentations suffer *cultural* syncretism". Wu, "Contextualizing," 3.

[4] In the IVP podcast, *The Disrupters: Faith Changing Culture,* Nancy Wang Yuen, host, with John Ward, guest, in the podcast called "Leaving Evangelicalism" November 7, 2022, the following exchange takes place, *Interviewer:* The immediate call to evangelize (as a new Christian), that was not comfortable . . . Church was all about bringing others into the fold . . . I remember going to a person who was sitting by himself and going up to him, and he was perhaps an international student I think, and he looked at us and he was so happy to see us and once we mentioned Jesus his face was crestfallen, and I remember thinking this this is interesting, something that was good news to me is bad news to him or the way that we're doing it and just thinking about what it is to relay a message and it is confrontational so then there's this yes lets feel good with each other and be one in our mission but your supposed to feel uncomfortable in just this act of trying to convince others and perhaps not always in a natural good way . . . But it definitely was about making them like us, it wasn't about respecting them where they are and having a dialogue. I had one friend who's just like, "can I just have friendship without evangelism." *Guest:* I did all of that . . . These folks would go, walk right up to people and I think one of the things that you presented with is this idea that if you're not willing to do that then you're ashamed of Christ. Similarly, Teasdale (*Evangelism for Non-evangelists*, 100) remarks that "A major reason Christians are uncomfortable with evangelism is the heavy weight they feel it places on them as individuals."

[5] Moyer, "The Church: Evangelism in Crisis" (blog), April 25, 2016.

[6] Walker, *Standing Up To Preach*, 18.

[7] Canadian research suggests that only 10–15% of people in the pews are new to faith in the last five years. Alpha, "Priority and Practice of Evangelism," 30.

My concern is not just that the past way of understanding evangelism is ineffective, as this would fall prey to the very pragmatism that has been adopted by Evangelicalism concerning evangelism. Rather, it is my contention that Evangelicalism needs to continue to wrestle theologically with what is meant biblically by "evangelism." This consideration, which will be the second part of this chapter, will seek to expand on the work of others even while offering a different theological starting point for understanding of evangelism so that the aim of the equipping effort is deeply rooted in a rich theological understanding of the task.

The last section of this chapter will then address what the New Testament means by the term "equip." The term "equip" has by and large become reduced to a synonym for "teach." The New Testament provides insight into a much more robust meaning of this term and a more complex application than is often assumed. I will address the breadth of this term by exploring both the objects of these equipping efforts and the implicit underlying outcomes.

However, before we can understand the terms "evangelism" and "equip" we must first clarify what is meant by the word "Gospel."

What is the Gospel?

The Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, translated as "good news" or "gospel" was used by the early Christians as a challenge to the imperial gospel of Rome.[8] The word occurs 72

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[8] Wallace (*Gospel of God*, 122) argues that Virgils' *Aeneid,* which strengthened Roman ideology was influential in the apostle Paul's writing of the letter to the Romans as he "reinterprets Jewish beliefs, and he redirects misplaced Roman values that were propagated from the heart of the empire."

times in the New Testament. David Watson summarizes the five major aspects of the New Testament teaching in this way: [9]

1. It is the gospel of the Kingdom. The good news is that God reigns and has sovereignty over all of his creation (Matt 4:23; 9:35);

2. It is the gospel of God in two senses. First, the good news is about God. This includes who God is and what he has done for his creation. Secondly, the good new is from God. The gospel is his initiative and is revealed to humanity by him (Gal 1:6–12; 1 Cor 2:9–11; 2 Cor 11:4; 2 Pet 3:16);

3. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ in two senses. First, it is the good news that Jesus brought into the world. Secondly, it is the good news which Jesus lived out and embodied in the world (Mark 1:1; John 14:9; 2 Cor 4:4, 9:13, 10:14);

4. The gospel must be personally appropriated. Apart from a subjective appropriation of the gospel, the good news merely remains as objective information (Mark 8:35, 10:29; Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 9:23);

5. The gospel is for all people and requires that those who know it make it known to those who do not (Rom 10:12–13, 15:19; 1 Cor 9:14, 18; 2 Cor 10:14, 11:7; Gal 2:2).

In response to the question, "What is the gospel?" it is right to say that it is the invitation of God to come under the rule of his good and loving reign which he made possible through the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus. This message of the gospel is that which the church is to make known, even while it may not announce

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[9] Watson, *I Believe in Evangelism*, 33–34.

all the gospel all at once. And yet, this answer only answers the question with regard to the content of the gospel message.

Another way in which the question can be answered is with respect to what type of message the gospel is. The gospel can be misrepresented by how it is presented. The sharing of the gospel driven by technique resulted in a distilled propositional presentation. Somehow the Evangelical church managed to take the dynamic nature of the Gospel and make it static. It became a four spiritual laws-three steps to peace with God-two things you should know-one-size-fits-all formula. Perhaps in the certainty of Modernism this type of breakdown was helpful, but in the aquarian age[10] of Post-modernism it has become stale. The gospel is not merely propositions, it is first a story—God's story.[11] And it is a story in which we who have believed are are caught up in and a part of.

The breadth of this gospel story has been written about in the Bible itself by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. As Scot McKnight rightly notes, "It may seem patently obvious, but it's not to most: they (the early Christians) called these books "the Gospels" because they are the gospel."[12] It is clearly the case that the gospel story we communicate is not only the story of salvation (i.e., the death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection) but it includes the whole life of Jesus and the story he came to fulfill, which is the Old Testament story and the coming of the anticipated Messiah.

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[10] The association of astrological symbols with specific epochs is sometimes associated with post-modern thought. The present age is the age of Aquarius and is thought to be a time of great change and transition.

[11] As Teasdale points out (*Evangelism for Non-evangelists*, 33) "evangelism trades in stories more than in propositions."

[12] McKnight, *King Jesus Gospel*, 96.

Through his obedience and faithfulness to God, Jesus did not merely copy the

history of Israel but realized it afresh in his own life. Everything that Jesus did and said

represented not only Israel's past but also what Israel would become in the future

through God's mighty consummating works. In every strand of the biblical witness, the

account of who Jesus is and what he does is patterned expicity or implicitly around the

life, the suffering, and especially the mission of the Jewish people.[13] While the story of

the Gospel centers on Jesus, it can be proclaimed through the pages of the Old

Testament as well as the New. The Gospel is not just a New Testament commodity.

Furthermore, because the gospel is a story for all people, the communication of

the gospel requires that those who share its message do so in a way that is relevant to the

hearer otherwise the gospel can appear as if the nature of the "good news" is stripped

from its telling. As Lesslie Newbigin reminds us, with regard to sharing the gospel,

there is no "pure gospel unadulterated by any culural accretions . . . Rather, it is a search

for a careful and powerful way of putting the story for this generation."[14] Al Roxburgh

picks up that contexualizing of the gospel when he writes, "The mission strategy for

each congregation must, increasingly, be shaped by the values, needs, and style of its

context. In pluralistic cultures there are a wide variety of values which can change from

neighborhood to neighborhood."[15] And it is because "The gospel announces a shared

reality in which people are called to participate,"[16] we who seek to share its message

should do so not simply as information to think about, but experientially in a tactile

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[13] Brownson et al., *StormFront*, ch 1, para. 55, location 381.
[14] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 4.
[15] Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 65.
[16] Brownson et al., *StormFront*, ch. 2, para. 47, location 687.

encounter with the reality of the Gospel so that the message is experienced through us who communicate it.

How the Remnant of Christendom and the Emergence of the Enlightenment Shaped Evangelism

The predominant understanding of evangelism within Evangelicalism was shaped by Enlightenment thinking. Christendom had long shaped and influenced Western culture and thinking, and while the rise of Enlightenment thinking sowed the seeds of the demise of Christendom, it would not bear fruit until the twentieth century. As Jehu Hanciles notes, "The Western missionary enterprise was marked by the dye of Christendom in its fundamental assumption, operational strategy and long-term objectives."[17] While the foundations may have been beginning to crack, it was still dominant in the culture of North America and ruled the social and religious imaginary of that time.

Christendom placed Christianity as the unofficial religion of the state. It introduced a new commodity into the church: worldly power. This favoured position soon began to bring corrupting influences into the life and witness of the church. As powerholders the church began to become entitled. By presuming their right to promulgate from the center of power, they did not think it necessary to ". . . develop sufficient rationale for their claims."[18] The influence of the Christian religion permeated every aspect of public life. Its dominance created a feeling of superiority and reeked of a

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[17] Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 96.
[18] Hall, *End of Christendom*, 2.

smug triumphalism. These attitudes were passed on and embedded into the new evangelistic understanding that would be birthed during the Enlightenment.[19]

By the twentieth century the church slowly awakened to the fact that it had drifted to the margins of society.[20] No longer in the cherished center, we have found that a humbler and more contrite, less preachy and more listening posture is needed if we want to have a voice at society's table of spiritual ecumenism. We are no longer able to set the agenda regarding what is and is not spiritual, what is and is not moral, and how society should be run.[21] The uninformed, often negative characterizations of other religions or non-religions by Christians that were once touted were now being stripped of their mischaracterizations as new immigrants became integrated into the social fabric. This integration process proved that Muslims, Hindus, communists, and atheists are nice people after all.

Power, privilege, cultural snobbery, entitlement, and a sense of superiority had seeped into the church's ethos. While the Enlightenment brought changes in how evangelism was conducted and what it was meant to achieve, these corrupting imported attitudes of Christendom were largely left unchallenged.

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[19] Lee Beach (*Church in Exile*, 16) comments on the dominance of Christianity when he writes that, "In most of the Western world the Christian religion helped to form the overall ethos of the country and held a certain pride of place in many public gatherings and celebrations." Similarly, Brueggemann (*Deep Memory*, 1) notes that, "There was a time . . . when a Christian preacher could count on the shared premises of the listening community, reflective of a large theological consensus."

[20] Even while I use the term "margins" as descriptive of the church's experience, I recognize that Roxburgh (*Liminality*, 12) argues that a centre-periphery paradigm is not a helpful perspective. He writes, "The church's minority experience is not, therefore, that of periphery to center but a more generalized, pervasive embeddedness in a complexity and fragmentation that renders center-margin language obsolete."

[21] Dempsey (*Faith Outside the Walls*, 22) summarizes in this way, "The church that once played a very distinct role in the community no longer has such a role. The church has become one choice among many."

I use the term "Enlightenment" in a broad sense to encapsulate more nuanced sociological terms such as Modernity, and the Scientific Revolution that were all in their infancy as they wrestled to respond to the explosive growth of knowledge that was breaking out in the late seventeenth century. As Hindmarsh notes, it was a time of ". . . momentous transition from ancient to modern in science, law and art."[22] And as the church in Canada now finds itself once more living in a time of momentous transition,[23] it needs to readjust and reorient itself to the new cultural forms that are reshaping society.

Perhaps one of the most crippling distortions, which the enlightenment foisted upon the infant Evangelical movement, is what Jacques Ellul terms *technique*.[24] Ellul notes that "The philosophy of the eighteenth century did indeed favor technical applications. It was naturalistic and sought not only to know but also to exploit nature. It was utilitarian and pragmatic."[25] It seems that the unspoken, but assumed, rationale for most evangelism models seems to be pragmatism. The unquestioned agenda of evangelism seems to be "what works?" According to Ellul, the undergirding philosophy guiding science ". . . was bound up with material results. What cannot be seen cannot be judged . . . technique had the enormous superiority of manifesting itself in a concrete way and of leaving its tracks for all to read."[26] The penchant for tracking numbers

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[22] Hindmarsh, *Evangelicalism,* p. 6.

[23] This transition has been labeled by some as a shift from modernity to post-modernity and now some suggest metamodernity.

[24] For Ellul the term "technique" is not simply about technology, machines or procedures. It is a sweeping term that he defines as "the totality of methods rationally arrived at having absolute efficiency . . . in every field of human activity." Ellul, *Technological Society*, xxv.

[25] Ellul, *Technological Society*, 46.

[26] Ellul, *Technological Society*, 46. The influence of technique as Ellul defines it is evident in Peters when he argues that evangelism should be ". . . submitted to rigorous scientific evaluation and tests to measure the actual results and accomplishments of the efforts and sacrifices invested" (*Saturation Evangelism*, 180).

perhaps explains why the early evangelists began counting and recording crowds and conversions, as well as meticulously tracking personal devotional practices. They wanted to show the practicality and efficiency of their techniques. Very rarely does it seem that evangelism models are driven by theological faithfulness. Even despite the helpful theological offerings provided by Green and Abraham, as well as some others,[27] theological reflection addressing evangelism seems not to have trickled down and influenced practitioners. Much that is passed on simply parrots what has already been said but most disturbingly, seems to have failed in countering the pragmatism which continues to drive much of contemporary evangelistic efforts. As Stephen Pickard has noted, "One thing absent from the wealth of material on evangelism is a well-developed contemporary theology of evangelism that might inform the church's practice of it."[28] This theological void has caused Hall to challenge the church in this way, "To put it quite clearly, for North American Christians who are serious about re-forming the church so that it may become a more faithful bearer of gospel in our social context, there is no alternative to a disciplined, prolonged, and above all critical work of theology."[29]

The predominance of "technique thinking" that continues to drive evangelism by seeking what works has overridden theological considerations, as noted by Ellul, "Because everything which is technique is necessarily used as soon as it is available, without distinction of good or evil."[30] Sadly, Ellul's critique of technique cuts at the

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[27] Notably, Watson, *I Believe in Evangelism* and Hartt, *Toward a Theology of Evangelism* are two other offerings which attempt to buck the trend of pragmatism.

[28] Pickard, "Evangelism and the Character," 141.

[29] Hall, *End of Christendom*, 44.

[30] Ellul, *Technological Society*, 99. In my more cynical moments, I cannot help but wonder if the pragmatic end that drives some evangelistic efforts has less to do with people being reached, but rather how much money can be raised. Often in evangelistic fund raising, appeals are made to prospective givers on the basis of how many "decisions" will be made, sometimes leaving the impression that giving a

heart of many evangelistic methods when he writes, "The second obvious characteristic of the technical phenomenon is artificiality. Technique is opposed to nature. Art, artifice, artificial: technique as art is the creation of an artificial system. This is not a matter of opinion. The means man [sic] has at his disposal as a function of technique are artificial means."[31] Might some of our evangelistic strategies and methods we relied on have pushed aside our reliance upon the Holy Spirit in discerning the evangelistic efforts of our own context in favour of well packaged programs and prescriptive methods, so that evangelism appears as merely a human activity?

What complicates this pragmatic approach to evangelism training is that there are so many different assumptions as to the goal of evangelism and almost exclusively, the person who is being witnessed to is directly related to that goal. Did they make a decision? Did they pray a prayer of commitment? Did they sign a commitment card? Are they attending church regularly? Have they been baptized? All of these quantifying questions assume a goal of evangelism that is measured in relationship to the "object" of evangelism. These questions fail to consider the broader dynamics of evangelism that go beyond the person on the receiving end. As evangelism has continued to cater to individualism, using technique, it has slowly deformed the spiritual life of those Christians bearing witness, as well as those being evangelized, and has resulted in an misshapen Christian Spirituality. We will explore how this is the case later in the dissertation. We are now beginning to see the fruit of these distortions in much of the North American Church. Although writing in the mid twentieth century, Ellul warned

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certain dollar amount will equate to a soul being saved. This results in less financial investment in long term and slowly developing progressive strategies for evangelism, that are harder to quantify.

[31] Ellul, *Technological Society*, 79.

that when technique has engulfed civilization, "It disassociated the sociological forms, destroys the moral framework, desacralizes men and things, explodes social and religious taboos and reduces the body social to a collection of individuals. The most recent sociological studies . . . hold that technique is the destroyer of social groups, of communities (whatever their kind), and of human relations."[32] It appears that the individualistic, technique-driven approach to finding "what works" in evangelism no longer serves the church well as it seems to alienate both those who evangelize and those being evangelized.

This failure can, in part, be traced to how evangelism is defined. The number of definitions of evangelism which are available range from the simplistic, one word, anonymous definition: "overflow,"[33] to the wordy and loaded definition found in the *Evangelism and Church Growth Encyclopedia*: "Communicating the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit to unconverted persons at their point of need with the intent of effecting conversions to bring them to repent of their sin and put their trust in God through Jesus Christ, accept Him as their Savior and serve Him as their Lord in the fellowship of His Church."[34]

The definitions themselves betray the bias from which many perceive evangelism. What is the place of the Kingdom of God? How does evangelistic activity shape the individual who shares? Does evangelism only communicate to unconverted persons, or does it speak to spiritual powers and corrupt institutions? Is there not a

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[32] Ellul, *Technological Society*, 126. A cursory analysis of contemporary culture in the mid twenty-first century would suggest the Ellul was correct in his observations.

[33] Michael Green. "What is Evangelism? And why Bother," APPL 542: The Evangelistic Mission of the Church (class lecture, Regent College, In Person, September 11, 1991).

[34] Towns, ed. *Evangelism and Church Growth*, 205.

continuing conversion within the church and hence a need to share the Gospel among Christians? The list could go on, but the point is clear: most definitions are unable to sustain a multivalent description of evangelism. Is such a definition even possible, and would it be so broad as to be effectively useless?

With evangelism reduced to an—often verbal—activity directed to affect the unsaved, evangelistic engagement focused on what was effective, as quantified numerically, in achieving its goal. Once evangelism became a matter of "what works," it became common practice to reflect very little upon whether the means of evangelism were consistent with its end. By this I mean that manipulation, both social, psychological or at times even physical were not beyond the scope of how to get people "saved."

In *Soul-Winning Made Easy*, written in 1959, C. S. Lovett advocates for the use of psychological techniques as an advantage in helping "subjects" become believers.[35] Under the title "How to Press for the Decision" Lovett offers this instruction:

> Lay your hand firmly on the subject's shoulder (or arm) and with a semi-commanding tone of voice, say to him;
>
> "*Bow your head with me.*"
>
> *Do not look at him when you say this,* but bow your head first. Out of the corner of your eye you will see him hesitate at first. Then, as his resistance crumbles, his head will come down. Your hand on his shoulder will feel the relaxation and

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[35] Lovett, *Soul Winning Made Easy*, 50. On page 63 Lovett writes, "God has given us a unique tool in psychology and it plays an important part in soul-winning today . . . The soul-winner particularly enjoys a wonderful advantage in using the power of psychological insight." The use of psychological techniques was advocated more often than one might think. Leroy H. Walker, in talking about training lay workers, writes, "it is well to remind them that the laws of psychology are just as much God's laws as are any others . . . We are under obligation to use the best approach we know to help him hear the prompting of God to do the thing he know he ought to do" ("How to Extend Invitation," 48). Similarly, Gordon Pratt Baker ("How to Give an Altar Call," 73) writes, "Thus, there must be psychological progression throughout the order of service. Hymns, scripture, special music, prayers, the message—all must point toward individual decision".

you will know when his *heart* yields. Bowing your head first, causes terrific psychological pressure.[36]

Such obvious psychologically coercive manipulation might help people get decisions, but it bears little resemblance to the nature of God and contradicts the spirit of evangelism so much so that the means is contradicting the message.[37]

A part of the legacy of Christendom's and the enlightenment's influence upon some forms of evangelism has been to create methods of manipulation that appeal to the individual. The goal of this tactic is to have people say a prayer for personal salvation without reference to the Kingdom of God or membership within the church. This type of evangelism is exercised from an assumed place of power with an anemic theological foundation, resulting in a presentation dependent upon marketing and salesmanship, while only giving a nod to the role and leading of the Spirit.[38] It is the assumption of evangelism having manipulative intent that has turned Christians away from engaging in evangelism at all, they will not do it to people they love. Furthermore, they are hesitant to allow their evangelistically zealous friends to meet their non-Christian friends because they might subject their friends to this type of coercion in the name of evangelism. Although not all Christians understand evangelism in this way, such characterization still exists in many people's minds. The inattention to evangelism has left it status quo in many churches and old paradigm thinking is left unchallenged.

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[36] Lovett, *Soul Winning Made Easy,* 50. Emphasis original.

[37] Bosch (*Transforming Mission,* 414) references the (British) *Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism* as saying, "What we are and do is no less important in this respect than what we say."

[38] This unfortunate association of evangelism with salesmanship has been picked up by secular businesses so that a job search for "evangelist" on LinkedIn results in the majority of jobs having to do with becoming a salesman.

A Theology of Evangelism

Some evangelical scholars have correctly critiqued the theological deficiency of the old paradigm of evangelism that was birthed in modernity during the era of Christendom.[39] Yet, this old paradigm still threatens to weaken the evangelistic faithfulness of the Evangelical Church. It also serves to cripple its effectiveness because of the long reach of the old paradigm's influence still largely unchallenged with regard to evangelism, that is entwined within the Evangelical church. Darrell Guder acknowledges this deficiency when he comments that "The same kind of theological depth does not surround the twentieth century usage of the second new term in the vocabulary of modern Christianity, "evangelism" or "evangelization."[40] By re-examining evangelism, mindful of the assumptions that still shackle the theology of present day understanding, we discover evangelism to be faithful communication of God's good news, rooted in the evangelistic nature of God. We can then reorient evangelism's goal to be the communication of the knowledge of God, of which conversion is the fruit.

It is my hope that a reorienting of evangelism, uncoupled from modernist/Christendom assumptions, will provide a way for evangelistic faithfulness to flourish within the Evangelical church. This reorientation, in turn, would bear much conversion fruit as it remains faithful to communicating the Gospel of the Kingdom and disseminating the knowledge of God.

Perhaps some may wonder why it is necessary to decouple evangelism from the modernist/Christendom version (MC-evangelism). As MC-evangelism continues to be

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[39] Abraham (*Logic of Evangelism*, 8–9) notes the decline in theological reflection over the generations from the brilliant minds of Wesley and Edwards to the pragmatism of the Enlightenment reflected in Finney, Moody, Sunday, and Graham.

[40] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 23.

ineffective in reaching others and may even be turning people further from the Christian faith, it will continue to result in a decrease of engagement in evangelism and a greater focus upon what is traditionally called social justice. Hasting expresses this concern when he notes that "Pursuit of solidarity and social justice, often justified within an incarnational rubric, will without the energizing of the Spirit lead to a de-emphasis on evangelism, and a false equating of political liberation with the Kingdom of God."[41] As the church continues to engage social justice issues, incarnational witness, and the importance of presence, it appears that the central place of evangelism in respect to the *missio dei* is being neglected. I believe this is, in part, due to an inadequate theology of evangelism, tainted by the very MC-evangelism assumptions shaped by the enlightenment and mentioned above. If a renewed understanding of evangelism is not firmly re-embedded within Evangelicalism, reforming how it is understood and practiced, it is foreseeable that Evangelicalism will wander down the same path as liberal theology in the early twentieth century.

Quite beside the noted deficiencies of MC-evangelism it is simply being abandoned. As Pickard notes, ". . . many people effectively give up any responsibility for the good news beyond their own privileged walls, or they transpose evangelism into other activities (e.g., social action) and dissipate its energy."[42] The Canadian church scene suggests that there are actually very few people who engage in evangelism.[43] As

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[41] Hastings, *Missional God*, 14.

[42] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 4

[43] According to a 2021 study by Alpha Canada and the Flourishing Congregations Institute, "65% of paid or voluntary church leaders say their congregations or parishes have not prioritized evangelism over the last several years." Furthermore, "31% of church leaders say it is wrong to share their Christian beliefs with someone of a different religion or no religion with the hopes that they will one day identify as Christian." Alpha and Flourishing Congregations Institute, *Priority and Practice*, 18. Furthermore, in *Culture of Faith* Reimer and Wilkinson note, "Evangelical pastors promote evangelization, when more Canadians think religious views should stay private and religious groups

previously mentioned in the introduction, in the Emerging Church Movement (ECM) it is reported that,

> Some emerging congregations are deliberate "church plants," while others with the ECM strenuously resist the very idea that they should be evangelizing others. Emerging Christians contrast their approaches to what they see as the aggressive and inauthentic evangelism methods of evangelicals and seeker megachurches, often expressing a great sense of relief that they no longer feel pressured to engage in such practices.[44]

This quote serves to illustrate how MC-evangelism is being abandoned and leaving a void in its wake. Pickard observes that this void is not simply a failure to perform one of the activities of the church, ". . . the church is called to be a community of the evangel and thus a community that seeks to embody the glad tidings of God in all its life."[45] When we cease to be evangelistic we cease to be as God has intended in all that we do. As I have already noted, Gorman points out that ". . . the answer to bad evangelism is not *no* evangelism—to stop telling the story—but rather to *tell the true story truly*."[46] Although attempts to reimagine how the story should be truly told have been offered, they often betray MC-evangelism assumptions which continue to go unchallenged and further entrench these suppositions within evangelicalism.

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should peaceably coexist. Discussing religion with others is awkward in such a climate, and so evangelicals show declining commitment to evangelism." Evangelism ". . . ranked nineth among 16 priorities, with less than half (44.2%) of all congregations considering it a very high priority . . . in actual congregational practice, it (evangelism) did not make the top of the list." Reimer and Wilkinson, *Culture of Faith*, 38, 101.

[44] Marti and Ganiel, *Deconstructed Church*, 135.

[45] Pickard, *Liberating*, 2.

[46] Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 133.

Many have called attention to this theologically weak evangelistic model[47] and have offered correctives. Pickard suggests "praise-centered evangelism."[48] Wright creatively calls for a "cross-centered mission" as he tries to navigate how evangelism and mission work together.[49] While I agree with much of what they have written, my struggle is with the assumption that evangelism's starting point is an anthropocentric task. These starting points seem to revolve around the evangelistic activity of humans to or for other humans, for the sake of God and the Gospel. Bosch argues that "The dominant characteristics of the contemporary world are its thoroughgoing secular nature and its radical anthropocentricity."[50] This is the on-going influence of the Enlightenment, that helped to shape modernity, whose grip the church is still wrestling to get out from under. It seems that the appropriate starting point of evangelism should be rooted in theology proper. Just as Bosch notes that, "Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God,"[51] so too am I arguing that Evangelism is similarly derived form God's nature. Certainly, evangelism has human tasks associated with it, but again, to rely so heavily upon the human task, rather than the person of God, represents a flawed starting point. God is the one who calls and saves. He is the one who sent his son to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10).

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[47] Many have expressed their disappointment, if not disdain, for evangelism and evangelists, because of their poor theological reflection upon their task. Pickard suggests that theologians and evangelists have had an uneasy relationship stating, "Often the theologian is frightened that the interchange will result in loss of academic and scholarly reputation. For their part the evangelists may feel that the academic labors of theologians yield little of value for the practical and urgent task of communicating the gospel." Pickard, *Liberating*, 12. In his book, *When Tolerance is no Virtue*, S.D. Graeme says "evangelists are the heretics of our age." (45).

[48] Pickard, *Liberating*, 82–98.

[49] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 314.

[50] Bosch, *Believing in the Future*, 2.

[51] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

For his part, Jeffery L. Tribble argues that "the goal of evangelism is conversion."[52] While I would argue that we pray for conversion fruit, it is not the goal of evangelism, as evangelism is in and of itself incapable of converting. This is especially true when we recognize that conversion is outside of the church's ability and ultimately only something God can do.

Stone gets closer when he argues that evangelism is a constitutive practice of the church.[53] I would wholeheartedly agree, and yet he grounds the practice in ecclesiology without referring ecclesiology to its theological moorings. This was the classic understanding of mission; the mission was rooted in ecclesiology. It was only as the missional church movement recognized that it was not that the church of God had a mission in the world, but that the God of mission had a church in the world, that they began to rediscover the *missio dei.*

I agree with Frost when he writes, "There seems to be a desperate need for a new more missional understanding of evangelism that doesn't turn us into foot soldiers or religious telemarketers."[54] As long as there is an anthropocentric starting point the church will undoubtedly drift towards asking "what works," soon leading to a search for techniques of modern technology as "Technology is the handmaiden of an anthropocentric church."[55]

Uncoupling evangelism from the MC-evangelism definition will require a fresh consideration of the nature of evangelism. Prior to the church the communication of gospel was used for proclaiming the news of victory in battles or the death of an enemy.

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[52] Miller McLemore eds., *Practical Theology*, 323.
[53] Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 23.
[54] Frost, *Road to Missional*, 43.
[55] Guder, *Missional Church*, 198.

It was also used in private correspondence to tell such glad tidings as the birth of a son

or an upcoming wedding.[56] Over time it became closely associated as a word to describe

the reign of Caesar and the governance of Rome. David R. Wallace describes the Roman

propaganda machine promoting this gospel in this way:

> As Augustus methodically eliminated elements that hindered the organizational stability of the state, he also restored a new order of traditional Roman virtue—*fides, pietas, religio, disciplina, constantia, gravitas*—by directly influencing the official messages of the empire in literature, art, architecture, coins, inscriptions, etc. Such imperial endorsement is prominently found in Virgils' epic, the *Aeneid,* which promotes the imitation of Roman virtue and pronounces a prophetic gospel of salvation inaugurated through a divine son.[57]

This political propagandization which served as the backdrop of the early

Christian church's appropriation of the term to serve the kingdom of God has lost much

of its influence in how we communicate the Gospel today. By and large the evangelical

understanding of "evangelism," a word that does not appear in the Bible,[58] has been

defined by the etymology of words associated with it.[59] Yet, even when looked at

etymologically, the meaning is not so clear cut. Bosch, referencing Richard Cook says,

"The biblical concept of *euangelizesthai* refers to more than the English word 'preach'

does. Richard Cook suggests that . . . the Greek word *euangelizesthai* should not be

rendered 'preach the Gospel' but 'embody the Gospel in their midst.'"[60] Guder,

commenting on the vagueness of this word makes this comment,

> Whereas mission has become a central theme of theology, evangelism has continued to be an ambiguous term. Secular dictionaries tend to define it as

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[56] Baumgärtel, "εὐαγγέλιον, εὐαγγέλιϛομαι, κ.τ.λ.," 707–37.

[57] Wallace, *The Gospel of God*, 4.

[58] Bowen notes that the word "evangelism" was coined in the sixteenth century and "the first reference to it in the writings . . . of Francis Bacon, one of the inventors of the scientific method. That alone should be a clue to the fact that maybe 'evangelism' is due for an overhaul." Bowen, *Evangelism for Normal People*, 13.

[59] Towns, ed. *A Practical Encyclopedia*, lists sixteen different New Testament words which describe evangelism.

[60] Bosch, "Evangelism," 13.

"announcing or preaching good news, and/or . . . winning or converting people."
At the same time, virtually all Christian resource works, using biblical
scholarship, emphasize that the root meaning of "evangelize" is gospel
communication in the form of preaching, bringing, telling, proclaiming,
announcing and declaring.[61]

As one attempts to understand the nature of this activity, it becomes evident that
the primary purpose of evangelism is to communicate.[62] The evangelistic challenge for
the church will be to have our communication rise above the deluge of information
inundating people every day. Pickard argues that "good communication lies at the heart
of good evangelism . . . Accordingly, the main concern becomes an improvement of
communication."[63] This notion that evangelism is about communication is so clearly
recognizable that many definitions of evangelism use the word "communication" in
their descriptions.[64]

This being noted, we can now move beyond the attempts to bifurcate evangelism
as word and social action as deed.[65] As has been noted, "all language is communication,
but very little communication is language."[66] Embracing evangelism as communication
helps to reconcile what many have understood as true and yet have sought to carefully
differentiate. For instance, Bosch notes: "This does not suggest that evangelism consists
of verbal witness only. It consists in word *and* deed, proclamation *and* presence,
explanation *and* example. The verbal witness indeed remains indispensable, not least

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[61] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 23.

[62] I am indebted to Stephen K. Pickard's book, *Liberating Evangelism*. Although he does not define evangelism as communication, it is throughout his book.

[63] Pickard, *Liberating*, 18–21.

[64] Goheen (*Light to the Nations*, 215) writes "Evangelism is a verbal communication . . . " and Nessan (*Beyond Maintenance*, 118) similarly notes "Evangelism . . . has to do with oral communication."

[65] Hastings attributes this dualistic type of thinking to Greek philosophy. He writes, "The legacy of Greek philosophy persists in Western education and thought, and the Enlightenment perpetuated that dichotomization. This has profoundly affected mission in evangelical history, with its tendency to pursue evangelism outside the context of care for whole person and outside of the pursuit of social justice of communities and nations." Hastings, *Missional God*, 106.

[66] Pickard, *Liberating*, 19.

because our deeds and conduct are ambiguous; they need elucidation."[67] Similarly,

Brueggemann provides several non-verbal key practices associated with evangelistic

communication which include: curing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and

casting out demons.[68] Newbigin rightly saw that "action for justice and peace in the

world is not something which is secondary, marginal to the central task of evangelism. It

belongs to the heart of the matter."[69]

     Although Abraham would argue that by construing ". . . evangelism as a primary

initiation into the Kingdom of God"[70] it also reconciles the bifurcation of words and

deeds, it seems to position evangelism outside the broader purposes found in the biblical

text which are other than initiating.[71] By restricting evangelism to initiation, it cannot

explain the on-going role that evangelism holds in the Christian community. If Gospel

proclamation is an evangelistic act, what is the role of evangelism in the communion

meal where the Gospel is proclaimed among those already initiated? And how does

evangelism as initiation make sense of Rev 14:6 where an angel is proclaiming the

eternal gospel to those saved on earth? Evangelism surely has a formative roll in the

continuing conversion of the people of God. Furthermore, how does initiating take place

except by communicating? Where evangelism is understood as communicative it allows

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[67] Bosch, "Evangelism," 11.

[68] Brueggeman, *Evangelism and Discipleship*, 228.

[69] Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, 137.

[70] Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 13.

[71] I do not deny that evangelism has an initiating aspect even as others would admit. Teasdale acknowledges this aspect of evangelism when he writes, "The disciples will meet people as they go about their lives, invite them to participate in the community of faith, and *initiate them* as new disciples within that community." Emphasis added). Yet, Teasdale does not restrict evangelism to this initiative aspect as evidenced when he writes, "Evangelism is not only invitational; it is doxological" See Teasdale, *Evangelism for Non-evangelists*, 98.

for the initiative aspects of evangelism but does not limit its purpose to this initial feature of it's role.

If we understand evangelism as communication, we then are able to reconcile how the communion meal can be an enacted proclamation of the Gospel (1 Cor 11:26), how the Thessalonians' embodiment of the Gospel allowed it to ring out from them (1 Thess 1:7–8), and how Paul can claim that people heard the message of Christ through the silent announcement of nature (Rom 10:18–19). This understanding of evangelism may also be why the New Testament uses so many words to describe the activity.[72] There was no single word in the Greek language of that time that carried the breadth and range of meaning and usage that is found in the modern word "communication."

It must be acknowledged however, that not all communication addressing the topic of the Gospel is necessarily evangelistic. Not all communication is used for the same purposes. In her book, *Graceful Evangelism¸* Frances Adeney helps us to understand the nature of evangelistic communication through the work of social theorist Jürgen Habermas who speaks of two realms of society: the systems and the lifeworld. She writes:

> In political and economic systems, communication is geared to amassing money and power. So when we hear a sales pitch, we know that the sales person is styling our interaction with the goal of making a sale. Money controls communication. Likewise in political speeches, the goal is to get the audience to accept one's views so that one can proceed with decision based on power granted by the people . . . In the lifeworld, communication has a different function. In social settings, families, communities, churches, and cultural events, communication is geared to understanding. We talk with the goal of getting our thoughts communicated clearly so that they can be understood. We listen,

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[72] While not a complete list, the *Evangelism and Church Growth* Encyclopedia (207) lists some of the words that are used in the Bible describing evangelism: *matureo* (witnessing), *laleo* (talking), *dianoiga* (explaining), *didasko* (teaching), *dialegomai* (reasoning), *suzeto* (discussing), *katangello* (preaching), *kerusso* (announcing), and *gnoriso* (declaring). Although there are others that do acknowledge evangelism's persuasive edge like *sumbibazo* (proving) and *peitho* (persuading), they are clearly a secondary emphasis and should not dominate the core metaphor of evangelistic understanding.

believing that the person communicating with us is speaking truthfully and sincerely and that he or she will behave morally in our interaction. The goals in talking and in listening in the systems or the lifeworld are quite different.[73]

In one study on evangelistic communication styles, which identifies three styles of communication, two of the styles would fall in the systems communication realm, while the third would fall in the lifeworld realm.[74] In the study, the researcher identified that the churches with the highest net growth were those with pastors utilizing the lifeworld realm of communication. Among those people involved in witnessing encounters, it was discovered that of those who converted, seventy percent were communicated to using the lifeworld realm of communication, while the individuals most likely to convert and then drop-out (75 percent) were those who felt that the conversation had been a manipulative monologue of the systems realm.[75]

It would seem that effective communication cannot simply be concerned with its content but must also be concerned with its means. When considering evangelism as communication it must be the type of evangelism that reflects two things: the nature of the Gospel we share, and the evangelistic communication of the God we seek to imitate in our evangelistic endeavours. In their book *Stormfront*, the authors convey how consumerist culture has warped the communication of the Gospel and made it "deceptively seductive." They explain:

> Why then do we regard the notion that the church exists to meet needs as somehow deceptive? It is not because we believe that God doesn't care whether we are unhealthy and unhappy, stressed out and without meaning in our lives. The problem rather lies in where our culture locates health, happiness, and meaning: namely, in the realm of private feelings and values rather than in the

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[73] Adeney, *Graceful Evangelism*, 161–62.

[74] The three forms of evangelistic communication were identified as: the information transmission model, a one-way conversational model which seemed more like a teacher teaching a lesson, the manipulative monologue model, similar to a salesperson selling a product, and the non-manipulative dialogue model, which felt like a friend discussing a matter of mutual interest.

[75] Yeakley, "Communication Stances," 40.

shared mission in which God's people participate. When Christians accept a consumerist culture's definition at face value, they look to the church primarily to provide them with the means to improve their private lives, enhance their self-esteem, give them a sense of purpose.[76]

When the communication of the Gospel reflects our cultural values rather than those of the nature of the Gospel itself, in how it is expressed, even if it gets "results" in people coming to church or making a decision, it is less than faithful to the good news that Jesus came to make known.

Once we understand evangelism as communication, we can understand how it is a necessary part of God's nature as a social being. Pickard notes that philosopher and theologian Alistair McFayden in stressing the social nature of humanity, "focused on the importance of communication as a fundamental feature of human life."[77] This should be the case if we were made in God's image. Furthermore, "every act, every pause, every movement in living and social systems is also a message; silence is communication; short of death it is impossible for an organism or a person not to communicate."[78] God is always communicating and all of God's communication is evangelistic.[79] As such, the flawed impulse of evangelistic effectiveness should be replaced by that of evangelistic faithfulness as it seeks to imitate the evangelistic nature of God.

Jonathan Edwards reached the conclusion that "the great and universal end of God's creating the world was to communicate Himself. God is a communicating being."[80] According to Schweitzer's analysis of Jonathan Edwards's writings, Edwards

> . . . employed the concept of divine communication to solve a theological problem that fascinated him throughout his career: why did a self-sufficient God

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[76] Brownson et al., *StormFront*, ch. 1, para. 16, location 180.
[77] Pickard, *Liberating*, 19.
[78] Wilden, *System and Structure*, 124.
[79] I will pick up this theme later in the chapter 2.
[80] Schafer, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 332.

create? The answer is "God is a communicating being"; he created the world to "communicate himself" to intelligent beings . . . In Edwards' communicative perspective, it was not that some formal knowledge of the Deity was the by-product of the Clockmaker's world machine; it was rather that the universe was designed expressly to be the vehicle of God's personal communication to men [sic] and angels. Thus, every aspect of reality—nature and history as well as Scripture—was infused with revelatory content and intended for joyful human appropriation."[81]

The genius of the Missional Church Movement was its theological starting point: the realization that mission is not simply an activity of God, but that God in his nature is a missional being. Once this realization came into view, it began to influence how mission was understood. The fatal flaw of Enlightenment's influence upon the church's understanding of mission was its anthropocentric starting point.[82] It is this same root that must be extracted if we are to correct our evangelistic understanding and revive its practice.

When God is the starting point, when asking what God's relationship is with evangelism, I would argue that, just as God is missional, God in his nature is evangelistic. Just as Bosch can argue against a concept of mission that ". . . continues to belong to the *adiaphora,* not to the essence of the church. It remains a contingent activity,"[83] so too can this be claimed regarding evangelism. Just as he can argue that ". . . mission refers to a permanent and intrinsic dimension of the church's life,"[84] this too can be claimed of evangelism. "At its heart, the church is called to be the community of the evangel bearing the glad tidings of God in the world. Therefore, evangelism is not

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[81] Schweitzer, *God is a Communicative Being*, 12–13.

[82] Hiebert (*Missiological Implications*, 21–22) writes, "positivism with its notion of progress gave rise to theologies that equated the Kingdom of God with the utopia being created by science and Christian morality, a utopia that will wipe out famine, oppression, and war and will restore the world to a pristine society. In so doing, the center of theology moved from God and his activities to humans and their efforts.

[83] Bosch, *Believing in the Future*, 31.

[84] Bosch, *Believing in the Future*, 32.

just another ism for the church to take on board."[85] Evangelism is rooted in the nature of God. Just as God is missional, so too is He evangelistic. The *missio dei* is fundamentally *evangelium dei.*[86] When we understand that God is evangelistic by nature, it is easy to see evangelism as faithful communication.

It is necessary at this point to delineate the subtle but important distinction between mission and evangelism. When asserting that God is missional and acknowledging this attribute of God's nature, it is not merely an observation about God having a mission, rather it is to acknowledge the type of God we observe in Scripture. Missional means "sending."[87] As has been observed by Bosch, Guder and other missiologists God the Father has sent the Son, the Father and Son sent the Spirit, and the Father, Son and Spirit send the church.[88] This missional impulse is further evident as the church sends God's word into the world. This is the appropriate evangelistic response of the church to the *missio dei.*

Evangelism mirrors the communicative attribute of God. It is through this evangelistic urge that the efficacy of the word of God begins to evoke change in God's creation. Since the word of God is efficacious (Ps 33:6; Isa 55:11; Heb 1:3, 11:3), since it effects change through its communication, evangelism becomes the handmaid of God's mission in the world.

All that God does is communicative of the good news and reflective of his being. Because God is love, all that God communicates reflects that love. Even when it is news

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[85] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 3.

[86] Bosch (*Transforming Mission*, 412) argues that "Authentic evangelism is imbedded in the total mission of the church."

[87] Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 31. Bosch (*Transforming Mission*, 412) writes, "Mission is the church sent into the world, to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal, to liberate."

[88] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390. See also, Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

of his judgement upon sin, when He communicates in tones which are set to minor keys, or when He creates on a backdrop which is stark and imposing, it still communicates the good news of God and his Kingdom. In Erickson's systematic theology, he rightfully lists the moral qualities of God under the title of "The Goodness of God." God's goodness is evident in his moral purity of holiness, righteousness and justice as well as in his grace, benevolence, mercy and persistence.[89] As such, all of God's communication is good news, yet, as some may be quick to point out, not all of God's communication is necessarily *the* good news. While it is true that not all of God's communication would be considered the Gospel, as that is narrowly understood, the Gospel itself is contingent upon God's goodness. As such, all of his communication, which reveals God's moral goodness, is a type of evangelism inasmuch as it reveals good news about the nature of God. This good news declares the type of God, because of the attributes associated with his goodness and love, who has provided a way to save humanity and bring his Kingdom on earth just as it is in heaven.

Therefore, it stands to reason that since conversion is a process, evangelism is needed throughout the process. Evangelism in not only the verbal declaration of Christ's death, and the associated implications of that. Evangelism involves praying to discern where God is at work in His evangelistic mission. It involves making friendships and living a life that invokes admiration. It involves raising curiosity in others around the person of Jesus, the presence of the kingdom and the role of the church in society. It involves answering questions and declaring what God has done in Jesus. As well as challenging others to follow in the way of Christ and to transform their lives to live out

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[89] Erickson, *Christian Theology,* Volume 1:283.

the Gospel. Evangelism is engaged whenever there are non-Christians present to observe our lives, hear our conversation or become acquainted with us in friendship. As John Bowen has argued, the Gospel makes sense of the whole of our life.[90]

Some may find themselves questioning how this can be so. No doubt thinking that if everything is evangelistic, nothing is evangelistic. James K. A. Smith argues against this notion in a similar argument that he makes with regard to the ever-present sacramental work of the Spirit. Quoting Aristotle Papanikolaou he writes, "Aristotle Papanikolaou makes a helpful distinction in terms of *degrees*: 'Although all of creation is sacramental, not all of creation is sacramental to the same degree.'"[91] While the whole of our lives are to be evangelistic, they are not all evangelistic to the same degree. But it is evangelistic because we are created in God's image and all that he does bears the evangelistic nature of his character.

Once it is understood that evangelism is not simply a human task carried out on God's behalf, or that it starts with humans at all, but that it is grounded in the character of God himself, then we begin to reclaim evangelism as a reflection of God's very nature. Evangelism ceases to be primarily about effectiveness in getting others saved, but instead focuses upon faithfulness in imitating the evangelistic nature of the God we serve. This nuance will allow a deeper theological consideration regarding how evangelism is understood.

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[90] Bowen (*Unfolding Gospel*, 29) argues that "once we grasp this gospel of Jesus, it makes sense of everything else: what it means to be a Christian, what it means to be church, what it means to live in God's world."

[91] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 148. Emphasis original.

To say that God is an evangelistic being is not new. Andrew Kirk has written that "God himself is the supreme evangelist."[92] It is exactly because of God's evangelistic nature that we can understand the whole of God's mission as evangelistic.[93] A mission which is not evangelistic ceases to be the *missio dei*. Bosch, referencing Löffler, makes the point in this way, "It is, however, impossible to dissociate it (evangelism) from the church's wider mission. Evangelism is integral to mission, 'sufficiently distinct and yet not separate from mission.'"[94] In a similar fashion Guder writes, "If evangelization is the heart of mission, then evangelization must be the heart of ministry."[95] Naturally the truncated MC-evangelism falls short of how God's evangelistic nature is to be reflected.

We see evidence of the evangelistic nature of the mission in Jesus' declaration regarding his purpose for being sent to the earth when he says, "In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth" (John 18:37b). Yet, we see the evangelistic activity of Jesus "testifying" with more than words, and it seems that He did not testify solely to get decisions from people to follow Him. Here we find the first clue regarding the true goal of evangelism. Furthermore, Pickard notes that in the person of Jesus ". . . God is logos—language. Language is not merely instrumental, a means to another end. Language is a medium of God's presence . . ."[96] This suggests that God is not merely a subject of our conversation but that He, Himself communes within our communicating. Communicating is not merely passing on abstract concepts, it is

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[92] Kirk, *What is Mission*, 64.
[93] Teasdale (*Evangelism for Non-evangelists*, 99) is surely right when he writes, "evangelism is more like an ethic, a core idea that informs and animates every other practice of the church."
[94] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 412.
[95] Guder, *Continuing Conversion*, 150.
[96] Pickard, "Evangelism and the Character," 148.

mediating God's very self to others because God is a communicative, evangelistic being. Our communication of the good news serves as a type of sacrament. "A sacrament is defined as an external sign of an inward grace, which is the theological way of saying that such rites reveal the presence of God in an immediate way."[97] When we communicate about God, using the "external sign" or symbols of words, and even while we imitate his communicative/evangelistic nature, we are making known God's self through our communication process.

In a similar way we find that the sending of the Spirit was also for this same evangelistic purpose. Jesus states, "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me" (John 15:26). The Spirit testifying is reflective of the evangelistic nature of God. Is it any wonder that the missional impulse of the Spirit sending the church is manifest in the evangelistic impulse of bearing witness? "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God . . ." (John 3:34). The reason for the sending and reception of the Spirit was precisely to make his church a witnessing community. This is why when the Spirit comes we are not told that He would help us to *do* witnessing, but that we would *be* witnesses (Acts 1:8). The evangelistic impulse starts with our identity, not our activity. In short, the whole of the missional or sending enterprise is demonstrably evangelistically rooted, because it concerns the communication of God: his character, his works, his Kingdom, his truth.

It is, therefore, reasonable to understand the Trinity as a being who is self-communicating within his relationality. As a social being God is part of a social system,

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[97] Peace, *Noticing God*, 126.

which is also called a communicative system. Young Bin Moon even suggests that God

is a communicative system of his own kind.[98] As such it is not surprising that a

Trinitarian structure underlies divine communication. "Verbal communication from God

ultimately means communication originating with God the Father, spoken in the context

of the Son as the Word of God, conveyed by the Spirit of God, and interpreted in our

hearts through the presence of the Holy Spirit."[99] I find this strikingly similar to how we

understand the missional nature of God where the Father sends the Son, the Son sends

the Spirit and the Spirit sends the church into the world. This only strengthens the

interconnected relationship of the missional nature and the evangelistic nature of God.

It is any wonder then, that as a communicative being, one of the titles of God is

"him who speaks" (Heb 12:25). He is the one who communicates, and from the opening

verses of Genesis his communication was good. God is always communicating good

news, because it is intrinsic to his being.

> The entire Bible is a record of God's speaking in human history. God spoke in
> the beginning when he created the universe . . . He spoke to Adam and Eve . . .
> When God began to institute his plan for humanity's salvation, he spoke to an
> individual—Abraham . . . God spoke to Moses when he broadened the plan of
> salvation to incorporate a whole nation
> . . . God spoke to the people of Israel . . .[100]

The sending, or missional, impulse of God is entwined with his evangelistic

impulse. So certain is this, it is practically a truism to say that just as God is missional,

so is he evangelistic and as is the mission, so is evangelism.

If we explore this evangelistic centrality to the *missio dei*, how are we to

understand what evangelism's goal is? How do we re-define it? We are left with a

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[98] Moon, "God as a Communication System," 106.
[99] Poythress, "Inerrancy and the Trinity," 17.
[100] Bockmuel, *Listening to the God Who Speaks*, 13.

conundrum of sorts, for if evangelism is part of God's nature, and if evangelism is about communication, then what of persuasion? What is the goal of evangelism if not conversion? And if it is conversion, how then can God be about trying to constantly convert Himself? I think that we will find that the answer, while veiled, has been before us all along. I would argue that conversion is not the goal of evangelism.[101] Instead, the goal of evangelism is the communication of the knowledge of God. By suggesting that knowledge is the goal of our evangelistic efforts, I am not suggesting merely the giving of information.

Faithfully communicating the good news of God and his Kingdom includes what He has done through his Son that people might enter the Kingdom and what He is doing in our world. All of this is the good news of God to the world, and we are to make knowledge of these things known. Yet, we must be careful to understand how knowledge is understood. Without a Biblically informed underpinning of what is meant by knowledge, we might easily construe the goal of evangelism as simply a modern—or postmodern—rebranding of Gnosticism.

I recognize that some would argue against defining the Gospel in terms of knowledge. Paul Hiebert argued when "Positivism defined the missionaries' gospel . . . it divorced the cognitive from the effective moral dimensions of life and defined the gospel largely in terms of knowledge."[102] While I agree with the negative influence that positivism had upon the mission enterprise, I would disagree with the notion that

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[101] It is notable that in the Bible the word "convert" is never used as a verb, describing what believers ought to do, but only as a noun, describing a person who now believed.

[102] Hiebert, *Missiological Implications*, 27.

defining the Gospel in terms of knowledge is wrong. Rather, I note that defining

knowledge by positivism's enlightenment understanding is where the error lies.

When the Bible speaks of knowledge, especially in terms of humans knowing

God, it speaks not from the cognitive, systematic, reductionistic, categorical

understanding of knowledge of modernity, but rather it is a relational knowing that is in

mind.[103] God cannot be known, biblically speaking, apart from relationship. It is this

realisation that encourages an incarnational witness of the church. As we faithfully

embody the character of God, it is as if we become avatars which mediate God and

translate his presence to those who are yet without eyes of faith to see Him.[104]

This is why God came in the person of Jesus to make Himself know, he wanted

to be known relationally and experientially and not just through facts and information

about Him.[105] And His church is invited to imitate Him and to do the same in their

evangelism practices in making God and His Gospel known. [106] Knowledge is multi-

sensory and tactile, which we come to know because we have felt it. The knowledge we

pass on is that "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have

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[103] "It is knowing God in personal relationship that is, in fact, the goal on which the biblical view of knowledge focuses. This is the ultimate goal of God's self-revelation. He lets us know about himself in revelation in order that we may respond appropriately and know him in a deeply personal way—in salvation and fellowship." Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, 387. Bultmann ("γινωσκω, γνωσις, ἐπιγινωσκω, ἐπιγνωσις, κ.τ.λ.," 689–719) explains how the Greek usage understood that knowledge "takes place in man's dealing with his world, in experience." And that it "can also mean personal acquaintance and friendship with persons." He further explains that knowledge is regarded as a mode of seeing.

[104] This is similar to how Bosch (*Transforming Mission*, 413) writes, "evangelism should be perceived in terms of its nature, as mediating the good news of God's love in Christ that transforms life, proclaiming, by word and action, that Christ has set us free."

[105] Seversen (*Not Done Yet*, 88) supports this experiential knowledge when she reports that "Perhaps the most significant thing churches can do to help unchurched emerging adults become new creatures in Christ is to give them opportunities to encounter god firsthand."

[106] "In Greek thought, knowledge comes through the senses, and that which is known can be verified by observation." Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, 383. This understanding further strengthens the notion that evangelism cannot be reduced to words but requires an embodied witness to verify the truth.

looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). This helps us to understand the effectiveness of the shift in evangelistic engagement from believing before belonging, to one which invites belonging and engagement in the community of faith, prior to believing.[107] Similarly, Kreider and Kreider emphasize that "The early Christian preachers did not urge their hearers to evangelize their friends; instead they urged them to obey Jesus' teachings and to 'imitate' his way in their lives."[108] In short, they were encouraged to live their way into a new way of believing.[109]

Finally, knowledge rightly understood recognizes that there is an interplay between knowledge and faith that creates a symbiotic relationship. It is true that "Belief is, in fact, the source of all knowledge."[110] Worldviews start with a belief from which we argue prior to coming to know it evidentially. However, "An act of faith in the biblical tradition is always undertaken in an environment of knowledge and it is inseparable from it."[111] In short, knowledge strengthens faith just as it can also lay a foundation for faith, and knowledge assumes a faith commitment prior to knowledge being confirmed.

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[107] This "belong before believing" focus was made popular by George G. Hunter III, in *The Celtic Way of Evangelism.* See especially chapter 4, 47–55.

[108] Kreider and Kreider, *Worship and Mission*, 138–39.

[109] Johnson (*From the Outside In*, 62–63) referencing Van Gelder says, "Van Gelder says that after 1890, dramatic transitions occurred both on the technical level in the arts and sciences, and on the popular level within the broader culture. All these fields shared in common the gradual shift from objective reason to subjective experience as the basis for knowing and sharing human meaning." This suggests that in a post-modern context evangelism should address subjective experience and not just reason.

[110] Bosch, *Believing in the Future*, 50.

[111] Willard, *Knowing Christ Today*, 20.

This type of relational, experiential, faith-recognising-knowledge is the goal of evangelism.[112] When such knowledge is faithfully communicated in a multiplicity of ways and means, such knowledge will bear the fruit of conversion. In order for this to occur, the church must tend to the tree of knowledge and allow the fruit of conversion to ripen in its own time.

Not all knowledge is of the same type. The concept of propositional knowledge is well known, even if it is not known by that term. Most statements of facts are stated propositionally, and scientific knowledge is largely propositional. But propositional knowledge is not the only kind. A child learning to ride a bike, for instance, may have very little propositional knowledge about riding a bike but through opportunity and practice they gain knowledge. Such know-how knowledge is of a different type, but it is also knowledge. However, there is also a type of knowledge which is referred to as knowledge by acquaintance.[113] This type of knowledge requires a personal encounter.

In Phil 3:9–10 Paul equates knowing God with participation in the resurrection power and even death of Jesus. It is a relational type of knowledge. In Phil 4:12 Paul writes, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty." Here knowledge is again used in the sense of being acquainted. It is the failure of acquaintance knowledge that causes Jesus to say to some, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matt 7:23b). When we, by our presence, bear witness of Jesus, we allow others to become more acquainted with the presence of Jesus so that

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[112] Bowen (*Unfolding Gospel*, 105) similarly makes this point when he writes, "The good news needs to be communicated in a way that in itself conveys what the gospel is, a way that actually gives a foretaste of the gospel even before it is believed."

[113] These categories are taken from Brandon Rickabaugh's article, "Eternal Life as Knowledge of God," 204–7.

they may come to experience Him through us. As Rickabough states, "There is also acquaintance knowledge of those who have been transformed by the Spirit and live in the kingdom of God with graceful transparency. These people can, as Moser says, 'Personally, saliently, and veridically manifest the reality of God's loving character to others, even if somewhat indirectly.'"[114] This, type of knowledge communication is the unique role that Christians can play in making God and His kingdom known to others.

A brief overview of some relevant passages helps to support and understand this claim. In 1 Tim 2:3–4 Paul writes, "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." Here salvation is coming to a *knowledge* of the truth. Clearly, "to come to a knowledge of truth" implies acceptance and subsequent reorientation around such knowledge. Isaiah's vision of the eschatological goal of God's mission is worded in this way, "for the earth will be filled with the *knowledge* of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:9). Knowledge of God is the great fulfillment of God's evangelistic mission. The silent announcement in nature, which Paul says reveals Christ, does so in this way, "Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal *knowledge*" (Ps 19:2; see also Rom 1:18–20). The goal of nature's witness is to reveal knowledge of God and his glory. Hosea records that God says, "my people are destroyed from lack of *knowledge*" (Hos 4:6). They lack knowledge to their own destruction, which implies that they are saved from the obtainment of knowledge. In Romans we discover that the abandonment of knowledge led to the downfall of humanity when Paul writes, "Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the *knowledge* of God, so God gave them over to a

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[114] Rickabaugh, "Eternal Life as Knowledge of God," 224.

depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done" (Rom 1:28). It was the corruption of knowledge in eating from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which brought death to the human race. Furthermore, we are told that it is God "who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the *knowledge* of him everywhere" (2 Cor 2:14). Since Christ is leading us in mission, then it seems that this mission He leads involves spreading knowledge of Him. In our efforts to faithfully communicate we are called to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the *knowledge* of God" (2 Cor 10:5). It is competing knowledge that we must confront. Yet, we should not confuse those who hold false knowledge as enemies to be destroyed. On the contrary, in dealing with those who oppose us we are urged, "Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a *knowledge* of the truth" (2 Tim 2:25). Knowledge of God is needed in various forms and delivery models, appealing to minds as well as hearts, for it seems that knowledge is the key to bearing evangelistic fruit.

This communicative understanding of evangelism has implications for how it is practiced. Evangelicalism has largely reduced the evangelistic mandate of the church to simply a speaking act.[115] Yet, we see in Jesus more than simply the use of words to communicate. Many of his healing miracles were enacted parables, demonstrating how the one who is holy and pure could touch the impure and make them clean. This was the case of the raising of the widow's son in Luke 7 and the healing of the woman subject to bleeding in Luke 8. Peter declared to Cornelius that Jesus ". . . went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil . . ." (Acts 10:38b).

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[115] Teasdale (*Evangelism for Non-evangelists*, 83) reminds us that, "Any practice that embodies the good new can properly be named evangelistic."

Furthermore, it was not only through words and deeds that Jesus communicated, for his very presence bore witness to God and his Kingdom. Jewish people believed that the Temple was more than simply a building; it housed the very presence of God. Jesus affirms this when speaking to the Pharisees. He says, "And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it" (Matt 23:21). When Jesus declared himself as greater than the Temple (Matt 12:6), he was acknowledging that God's presence was present in him. He was making God known in his being. This is the essence of the incarnation: God was in Christ making himself known.

By having focused our evangelistic efforts around the words spoken at the expense of the other areas, like embodied witness and faithful presence, we end up with a philosophism which prioritizes argumentative speaking above all. It was this very distortion that led Os Guinness in 1974, speaking at the Lausanne Congress regarding encountering professional evangelism, to say:

> Part of our failure to get thinking people to take the Gospel seriously is born of a credibility gap. We claim Christianity is true—a claim which is awesome by contemporary standards, but then we whittle down our claims by the patent incongruity of our practices of the truth. The way we operate speaks louder than what we say. Without the practice of truth, evangelism is in danger of becoming a giant institutional mouth or as E. M. Forster dismissed it scornfully, "poor, talkative, little Christianity!"[116]

Since all that we do is communicating to those who observe us, it follows, therefore, that evangelism is not simply an activity, it is a way of being. This is what Paul meant when he described the Corinthians as letters from Christ, written with the Spirit that everyone reads (2 Cor 3:1–3). As such, evangelism is not only about telling others, but also about the conforming of a believer's whole life in order that they

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[116] Guinness, "Thinking People," 718–19.

adequately communicate the Good news of God's reign.[117] As Newbigin has written, "If this biblical story is not the one that really controls our thinking then inevitably we shall be swept into the story the world tells about itself. We shall become increasingly indistinguishable from the pagan world of which we are apart."[118] As such evangelism ceases to be something that believers just do as a separate activity, but it is something we actively practice in every aspect of our life. It is this evangelistic regard that Paul has in mind when he writes, "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Col 4:5–6). Every act should be used to leverage the sharing of our faith. Every conversation of the believer is meant to exhibit the grace of God and create a thirst for Living Water, regardless of whether we are speaking about a "religious" topic or not. The manner of our speaking is to be evangelistically informed.

We have now explored a brief theology of evangelism where we have grappled with the *evangelium dei* and the communicative nature of evangelism. Additionally, we are coming to recognize that evangelism is not merely a type of activity the church engages from time to time but is intrinsic to the life of the community. Let us now begin to consider what it means to equip the people of God so that they become evangelistic.

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[117] Although I appreciate Bowen's emphasis upon verbal communication, I disagree when he says, "Evangelism is passing on information that someone does not have." Bowen, *Unfolding Gospel*, 93. Evangelism is not merely about information but, as I have argued, it is about knowledge.

[118] Newbigin, "Biblical Authority," 2.

A Theology of Equipping

In considering the nature of equipping, in much of the Evangelical church, it becomes quickly apparent that the same deforming influences of anthropocentrism and individualism that have marred evangelism have also skewed the task of equipping in which many church leaders engage. What I mean by this is that equipping efforts primarily focus upon the individual efforts of Christians in sharing their faith with other individuals. The individual becomes the focus of equipping. These equipping efforts are observed through the provision of tools, such as tracts and pamphlets, as well as outlines of what needs to be said. It is also seen in the efforts to motivate both positively, by over emphasizing the joy that comes in leading a person to faith, or negatively, by using guilt. This negative motivation could even include calling into question a person's love for Jesus, if they do not evangelize.

This is not to say that a focus upon individual training is not needed, but if evangelism is about faithful communication, how we train individuals must be seriously overhauled. However, evangelistic equipping needs to be about so much more than simply focusing upon the individual. The corporate life of the church needs to be equipped. The church organization as a whole needs to be shaped in light of the *evangelium dei*. Still, before looking at the specifics of what this might look like, let's first consider what is meant by the term "equip".

The Greek word *katartizo,* often translated "equip" in the New Testament, in other contexts, can also be translated as: fit, frame, join, mend, perfect, prepare, and restore.[119] In Matt 4:21 we read of James and John "preparing" their fishing nets. In Heb

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[119] This according to Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, 1300.

10:5, the writer quotes the Psalmist in telling how God "prepared" a body for him. A chapter later, in Heb 11:3 this same verb is used to describe the formation of the world. These uses express an activity that is far more than simply teaching. According to J.R. Briggs and Bob Hyatt, "In ancient times, equipping had four different meanings: setting a broken bone correctly, packing a ship with supplies for a long journey, restoring something to its original condition and preparing a soldier for battle."[120] Although equipping can be understood in relationship to an individual, it also has a broader meaning which suggests fitting things together. To equip the church is not limited to individual training, it also includes the organizational aspects of church life.

Evangelism is to shape the whole of the church's life, including its corporate life together in both large and small group gatherings. Michael Gorman, quoting theologian John Colwell reminds us that:

> The gospel story . . . defines the life of the Christian and the life of the Church, while the life of the Church and the life of the Christian is, correspondingly, a retelling and reinterpreting of the gospel story. The world has no access to the gospel story other than as it is narrated in the life, worship, and proclamation of the church . . . Through its service and being as witness, the Church is a rendering of the gospel to the world.[121]

Since the whole of the church is to be an evangelistic entity, then the equipping role of the evangelist must engage the whole life of the church. It is to this united purpose that Paul appeals in 1 Cor 1:10, "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united (*katartizmenoi)* in mind and thought."

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[120] Briggs and Hyatt, *Eldership*, 47.
[121] Coldwell, *Living the Christian Story*, 85.

The need to equip the whole church requires the pastors to address the institutional aspects of church life. It seems that while many people are anti-institutional these days, I find myself agreeing with Gordon Smith's statement, "Institutions matter. Vibrant institutions—effective organizations—are essential to our personal lives and to the common good. Thus, they merit our time and attention."[122] James K. A. Smith offers a helpful perspective on equipping the institution of the church when he writes,

> Institutions are durable, communal ways that we can act in concert with our neighbors to achieve penultimate goods. So, instead of thinking about institutions as big, hulking, static behemoths, think of institutions as dynamic, social *enactment*. Try to imagine "institutions" as spheres of action. Institutions are not just something that we build; they're something that we *do*.[123]

It is in this light that the evangelist must engage the equipping task in relationship to the institution. In particular, the evangelist must help the church to change to become evangelistic, while not simply engaging in evangelistic activities but by embodying the evangel. The evangelist's aim should be to help the church to proclaim the Gospel in its way of being. As Newbigin said, ". . . the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it."[124]

However, as mentioned above, the equipping of the church must not neglect equipping the individual. Unfortunately, the penchant for giving people tools with which to do evangelism seems to have reinforced the misunderstanding that evangelism is simply an act, rather than a way in which Christians are meant to live their lives. The often-quoted Great Commission in Matt 29:19–20 is frequently wrongly emphasized as a sending text, when in fact the participle translated "go" has less of an imperative force

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[122] Smith, *Institutional Intelligence*, 1.

[123] Smith, "Editorial: We Believe in Institutions," 3–4. Emphasis original.

[124] Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, 227.

and might better be understood to be saying "as you go" implying that wherever we go, whatever we do, we are to be engaging this evangelistic mission. No doubt this is because wherever we are going and whatever we are doing, we are always communicating. Therefore, when Jesus talks about equipping in Luke and says, "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained (equipped) will be like their teacher" (Luke 6:40), the emphasis is not upon skills or techniques but upon character.[125] Development of an evangelistic character is core to the evangelistic equipping task.

Another area that is often neglected in evangelistic development is with regard to the use of spiritual gifts.[126] By and large churches have not equipped and trained the spiritually gifted with an outward orientation of those gifts towards those who are turned away from God (with the exception of the gift of evangelism). This unfortunate distortion regarding how the gifts are to be used reinforces a false dichotomy implying that evangelism happens outside of the church while discipleship happens inside.

The great irony is that the gifts of the Spirit are ways in which the Spirit manifests his presence in the lives of people. This light of the Spirit is given not solely to be exercised among church people within a church building. Spiritual gifts are also given so as to allow the light of the Spirit of God to shine through them to those who are unaware of Him. By removing the gifts from being out in society and harboring them

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[125] Richards (*Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, 227) comments that this verse defined the goal of discipleship. Regarding this verse he says, "Likeness, not simply knowledge, was the goal of Jewish discipleship." Leon Morris similarly argues that "the disciple's one aim was to be *like his teacher*." Morris, *Luke*, 133. Emphasis original.

[126] Abraham developed an ecclesiologically rich notion of evangelism "as that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time." The six activities that Abraham articulates are conversion, baptism, morality, creedal understanding, spiritual gifts and spiritual disciplines. Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 95.

inside a church building, we are literally doing what Jesus said sensible people should

not do, taking a light and hiding it under a bowl (Matt 5:15). This tragedy of focusing

spiritual gifts inward to serve the church at their own gatherings has helped to reinforce

the distortion regarding how many practice evangelism; simply invite people to church.

Inviting people to a church service has become the substandard substitute for

true evangelism and is not anywhere close to real corporate evangelistic engagement.

The gathered people of God need to scatter into the fabric and systems of the

community and allow the light of their gifts to shine as those gifts are used. As we see

the needs of those we meet, we invite others, who are spiritually gifted to meet those

needs, into the circle of relationship with us. In this way the whole body of Christ works

to manifest Christ to their neighbours; like a jigsaw puzzle, each person reveals a

different part, until the image of Christ and the nature of the Kingdom becomes apparent

as they are fitted together. Together the process of evangelism is engaged. Together they

learn to accurately hear and converse. And together they intercede, love and celebrate

the movements towards Christ that they all are working cooperatively to see. It is as the

body of Christ works together that an individual encounter with Jesus is made possible.

Our corporate witness allows for a personal evangelistic occasion, even as it is also our

corporate witness that allows us to have a voice and bear witness to other institutions in

need of a redemptive institutional presence.

While hesitant to offer my own ministry practice as an example, I do so in order

to illustrate how I have attempted to put into practice some of these concepts. I have

found that one of the great challenges is helping those from the business world, who are

in church leadership, to not view our church ministry solely through the lens of business

practices. How we treat others as an organization communicates. So, we do not inflate prices for camps, room rentals or our garden patches for example. We allow people to park in our lot for free and we do not charge, if possible, for ministry events to the community such as movie nights. We hope that they will experience the kindness and generous nature of God who blesses all people indiscriminately. From a business perspective this is not wise. But we recognize that the church does not exist to make money, but to serve others and work for the good and flourishing of the community.

We work hard to communicate with our community messages that are positive and work hard at listening to our community. We do this through our community Facebook group, our outdoor sign and with an open-door policy to our building. We open our building to community groups such as the South Asian Seniors community—a group of predominantly Sikh men, in order to extend the hospitality of God and to fight xenophobia. Often issues of private property, building maintenance and financial restraints dictate to the church how it should operate.

We recognize that for many people, coming into a church building is an intimidating cross-cultural experience. We work hard to make our building a hub for community life so that it becomes less intimidating. We provide our building for city initiative such as "sit to be fit" exercise classes for seniors, polling stations during elections and summer camps from other organizations. This is intentionally done in order to increase familiarity with our building and remove barriers from people who may be curious to enter when we are offering events for the community. Having said this, we would like to take our ministry gifts offsite in recreation centers or libraries

where we can allow the light of Jesus to shine where people who would not normally come to our building might be ministered to.

We have also sent out teams to rake leaves for free, clean up school properties, and participated in city initiatives, all in our effort to be with, among and for the community. These kinds of ministry efforts can be initiated by anyone in our congregation. We have provided an easy process for anyone with a ministry burden and idea, to have their idea supported by the church. This way ministry is not simply top down from leadership or staff, but from the people of God who often have a better pulse of what is happening in the neighbourhood.

In these very few and brief examples I have sought to show how equipping addresses issues of attitude and perspective, organization and programming, as well as systemic issues to remove barriers related to how ministry ideas can be supported.

Conclusion

The question now remains, how is the Evangelical church doing at equipping their congregations evangelistically? What are the ways in which evangelistic equipping is understood as it is practiced? We now turn to discover the answers to these questions in our next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter represents an empirical study of the qualitatively different ways that pastors from Evangelical congregations understand the evangelistic equipping task within their context. The method of study I chose to utilize was phenomenographic research. Phenomenographic research is an inductive approach to research. The goal of the research is to provide a careful uncovering of the different ways in which the phenomenon of evangelistic equipping is understood and practiced. These different ways are then described in ways that are ". . . relational, experiential, content-oriented and qualitative."[1] This means that this study will examine the nature of the relationship between pastors and evangelistic equipping. Their experience of the equipping phenomena is probed to find not only what they do but also how they go about it.

The study consisted of two research inquiries: questionnaires and interviews. The first was two online questionnaires (see Appendices 1 and 2). One was distributed to congregants of Evangelical churches to gain understanding of what their perception and understanding was of evangelism and how their churches were engaged both in the equipping and practice of evangelism. The second was sent to pastors of Evangelical congregations asking similar questions to gain their perspective as to how they understood evangelism and the equipping task. The questionnaires to pastors also invited any who were interested to participate in the interview portion of this study.

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[1] Marton, "Phenomenography," 33.

These initial questionnaires were held in consideration as the research questions for the interviews were formulated.

The interviews, which comprised the main body of my research, were conducted over Zoom and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. While obtained from eleven different pastors, the transcripts are considered in toto. Samantha Sin notes that in regard to interview transcripts, "The aim is to look for qualitatively different conceptions of the phenomenon of interest collectively rather than the conceptions of individual participants . . . They collectively constitute the overall data where the meanings are interpreted in relation with the others."[2]

The interviews, taken from pastors across Canada, represented different provinces, denominations, and churches of various sizes. The interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes but varied in range between 23–43 minutes. Pastors were asked a variety of open-ended "why" and "what" questions with regard to evangelistic equipping that were followed up with prompts to delve deeper into their understanding, perception, experience, and conceptualization. (See Appendix 3)

The transcripts were then closely read and coded to analyze the different ways in which evangelistic equipping is conceived and practiced. Those interviewed were told that, "I want to understand pastor's experience of equipping their churches to be evangelistic and not just their experience, but how they conceive of that as well, recognizing that sometimes we have higher ideals than we can actually put into practice." The answers given represent these aspirational aspects of how evangelistic equipping is understood, even while it is acknowledged that these ideals were not

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[2] Sin, "Considerations of Quality," 315.

always acted upon. The analysis was a dialectical process that brought the voices of the different participants together in order to contrast and differentiate between them. In order to sort them into conceptual groups, their statements were arranged around groups that emerged from the data. As Ference Marton explains, it is wise to be ". . . looking for the most distinctive characteristics that appear in those data; that is, we are looking for structurally significant differences."[3] The four conceptual groups that emerged included the pedagogy of equipping, the goals of equipping, the formative purpose of equipping, and the hindrances to evangelistic equipping. I further noted any overall impressions regarding the research data and paid careful attention to those pieces of information that did not fit within these analytical groupings.

The grouping of data was charted and summarized in a preliminary way to create the different sub-categories of description that made up the different conceptual groups of understanding regarding how evangelistic equipping is understood. These sub-categories were further compared, along with the core concepts within them, and refined until a rich, descriptive summary of each of the different levels of equipping began to emerge that accurately described the findings that were present from the research data. These descriptions of the levels of equipping are the primary outcomes of phenomenographic research.

The impetus behind my research is the discovery of the answer to my research question, which is, "Within Evangelicalism, how are congregations being trained and equipped for evangelistic engagement in order to be evangelistically faithful?" The process of discovery was to utilize phenomenographic analysis to uncover the

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[3]Marton, "Phenomenography," 34.

qualitative variations and range of understanding. Each of the different levels of variation was organized in a hierarchy, with each higher level encompassing those below it and with each level representing an advanced understanding of the evangelistic equipping phenomenon.

These categories were then cross-checked and peer reviewed by another scholar to confirm the reliability of my findings and to confirm the credibility of the analysis and verify that it was found from within the research data.[4] The feedback was then considered and used to adapt the descriptions as appropriate. This "interjudge reliability approach" is thought to enhance the reliability if others are able to identify the same variation in the data.[5]

In this chapter I will begin a summary discussion of the findings from the initial questionnaires that were sent both to lay congregational members of Evangelical congregations and to pastors of Evangelical congregations. Having reviewed these findings, I will give the results of my research interviews providing descriptions for the different ways in which evangelistic equipping is understood and practiced. Having described the levels, I will discuss the implications of these findings and then offer a brief conclusion.

Summary Discussion of Questionnaire Findings

The first of two questionnaires sent out was directed to congregants of the study sample of Evangelical churches. The questionnaires were answered by sixteen people from five

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[4] Such crosschecking helps to protect against the "blinders" that individual researchers can have and is often a critique of phenomenological study. See Bowden and Wash, "Phenomenology," 57.

[5] Beaulieu, "Phenomenography: Implications," 70.

provinces and seven denominations. The questions were designed to help me to discover how the people who are members of Evangelical congregations understand evangelism and how they perceive their church is helping to equip them.

The second questionnaire was sent to pastors most of whom were of the same congregations as the congregants but not all. The questions were answered by sixteen pastors from five provinces and thirteen denominations. The questionnaire had similar questions as those asked of the congregants related to understanding their perception of evangelism. However, the pastoral questionnaire had more questions related to how evangelistic equipping was pursued.

Summary of Congregant Questionnaire Responses

Regarding how people feel about evangelism, they were provided a list of emotions and asked to "select all the emotions that you personally associate with evangelism." Chart A, below, tabulates those emotions from the most felt to the least. It appears that the

Chart A: Congregant's Emotional Response to Evangelism
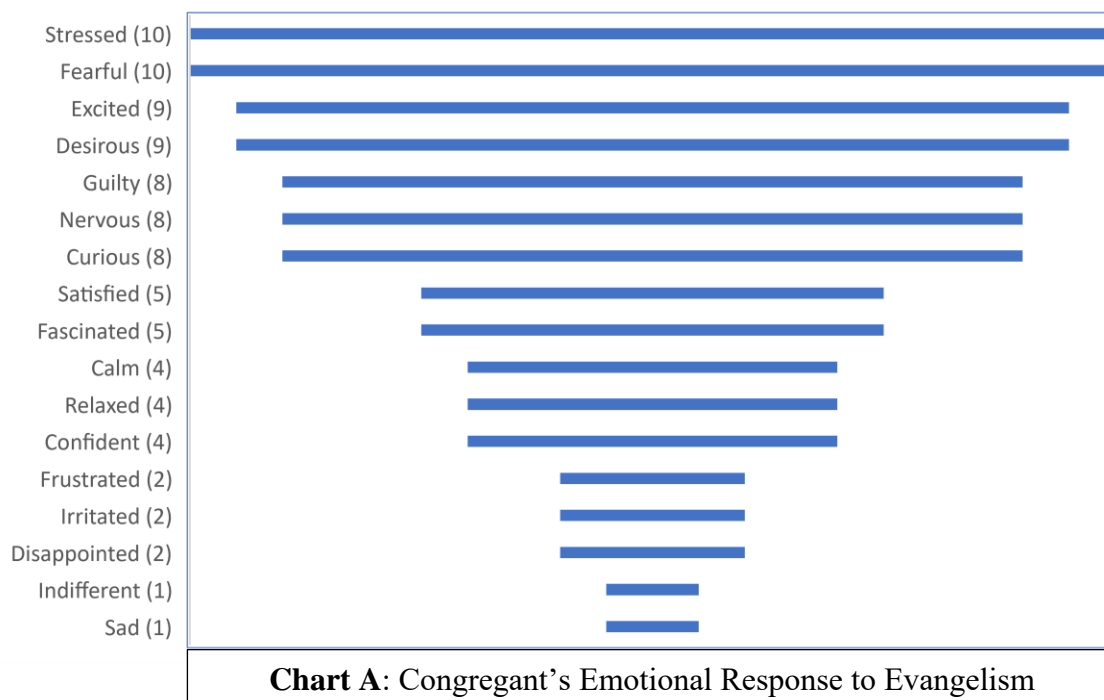
congregations are conflicted about evangelism as they conceive it. They are stressed and fearful, but at the same time, excited and desirous. It appears that evangelism is something they want to participate in, but they are afraid and uncertain how to participate.

When asked if they have friendships with non-Christians that they are attempting to influence for Christ, all but one said yes. And when asked about praying for non-Christian friends to come to follow Jesus, all but one was praying. Some were praying daily (3), most weekly (8), and the rest more sporadically (4). Regarding the relevance of evangelism, most (14) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, "Evangelism is no longer relevant." One replied that they did not know, and one did not answer.

It appears that many congregants are endeavoring to be evangelistically faithful among their relationships and believe that evangelism is important to the life of the church.

Concerning their perspective regarding the church's evangelistic equipping, only four responded that their church provided regular opportunities for evangelism training or classes. When asked if they knew their role in their church's evangelism strategy, seven agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if evangelism is a priority in their church, nine disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, regarding feeling confident in getting evangelism training from their church, seven agreed or strongly agreed.

It appears that just under half of those questioned felt that their church would receive a passing grade regarding evangelistic equipping endeavors.

Finally, the congregants were asked, "As you think about evangelism, what do you think are the challenges that are facing your congregation?" They replied with: "they don't know how," "it's hard," "lack experience," "nervous," "lack of genuine care for others and for Christ," "busyness," "pastoral indifference," "the world has changed so much," "offending others," "lack of practice," "lack of training," "lack of modeling from pastor." It appears that, for congregants, the primary challenges regarding evangelism have to do with how they understand the nature of evangelism and the lack of equipping they are receiving.

Summary of Pastoral Questionnaire Responses

The pastoral questionnaire was slightly longer and asked more questions around equipping. However, there were some questions that overlapped with the congregant questionnaire. Chart B represents the answers to their response regarding the question to "select all the emotions that you personally associate with evangelism":

Chart B: Pastor's Emotional Response to Evangelism

Once more, like the congregants, we see that pastors feel conflicted about evangelism. There is a strong sense of excitement, curiosity, and desire around evangelism, but also strong feelings of inadequacy, fear, disappointment, and nervousness. It seems to indicate a desire but one that is not often satisfied and leaves them feeling frustrated.

When inquiring about their own evangelistic efforts, in reply to asking how much time they spent in a typical week nurturing friendships with non-Christians, the responses range between fifteen minutes to 10.5 hours per week. A little less than half (7) spend four hours or more per week, while the majority (9) spend two hours or less. This might support the observation of the congregants that their pastors do not model evangelism efforts well.

When it came to their assessment of their congregation's evangelistic health, many felt they were not healthy. When rating their evangelistic desire, just over half (9) said that their congregations were weak or very weak. In their attempts at evangelism, the majority (12) felt their congregations were weak or very weak. Even more (13) believed that their congregations' evangelistic effectiveness was weak. However, most (13) believed their congregations' love and concern for non-Christians were strong or very strong. The majority (10) also believed that their congregations' evangelistic understanding was strong or very strong. In addition, the majority (10) believed that their congregations' engagement with non-Christian neighbors and friends was strong.

This appears to suggest that their congregations have strong concern, knowledge, and relationships for evangelistic engagement. However, these attributes have not translated into desire, attempts, and effectiveness in their efforts. These findings suggest

that a key issue may be a lack of adequate equipping for evangelism, a suggestion that was subsequently probed in the interviews.

The need for evangelistic equipping only becomes more apparent when pastors were asked about their church growth.[6] Only two reported that they were growing, with the other fourteen stable or declining. When asked their level of agreement that "evangelism should be the top priority of the church," nine of the sixteen said they disagreed or strongly disagreed. The group was split when asked if evangelism is offensive, with eight agreeing or strongly agreeing and eight disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. However, when asked if evangelism is no longer relevant, there was a clear consensus in which twelve of the sixteen strongly disagreed and four disagreed.

So how comfortable are these pastors in their equipping role with regard to evangelism? When asked about what emotions they feel when thinking about training and equipping their congregation in evangelism, "hopeful" was the number one response with fifteen responding this way. These were followed by desirous (14) and excited (12). Yet, juxtaposed with these responses were that they felt frustrated (11), discouraged (11), and inadequate (10). Chart C, below, shows the full results.

When asked if they feel confident that their church is providing good evangelism training for their people, only two agreed, with twelve disagreeing and two strongly disagreeing. Yet, fifteen of the sixteen agreed or strongly agreed that they have been well trained and prepared to share their faith, and eleven agreed or strongly agreed that they have been well trained and prepared to equip others to share their faith. So, it

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[6] The question asked was, "When considering your church attendance over 2019, how would you describe your current congregation's present numeric growth?" By looking at 2019, it factored out the influence of the COVID 19 pandemic upon church attendance.

appears that while pastors feel able and experienced to train others, they do not feel they are providing good training.
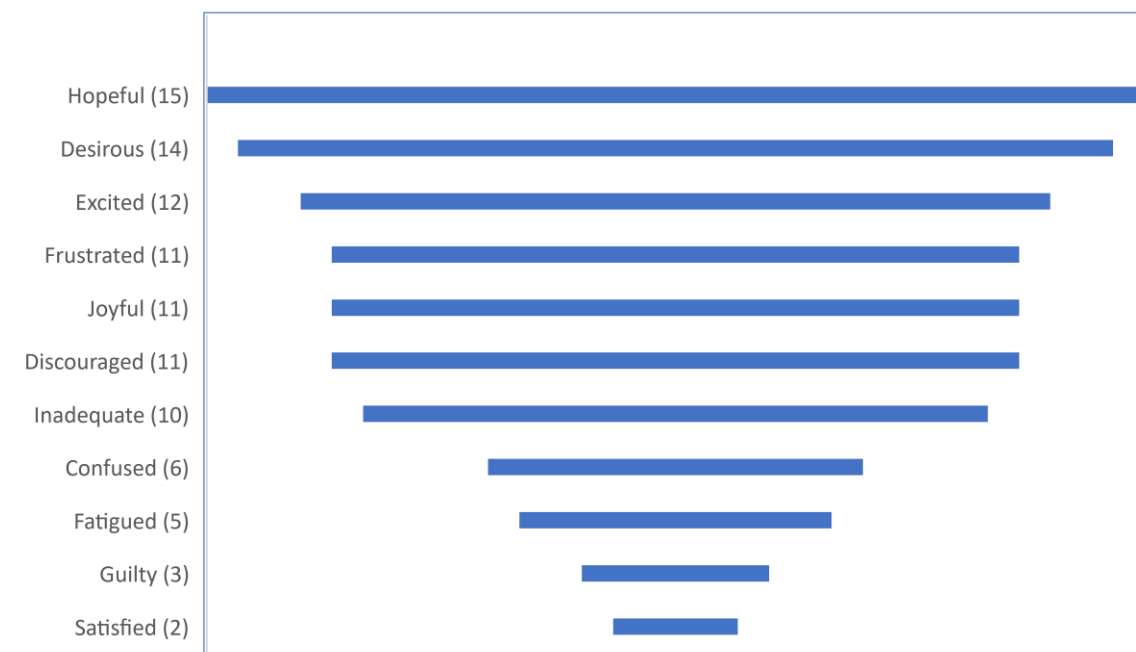
Chart C: Pastor's Emotional Response to Evangelistic Equipping

Pastors were asked the question, "Thinking about your congregation as a whole, what do you think are the challenges in equipping them evangelistically?" They replied that their congregation was: introverted, nervous, fearful, complacent, ignorant, lacking compassion or motivation, apathetic, lacking desire, distracted, indifferent, resistant to change, busy, did not feel responsibility, lacking margin, feelings of inadequacy, non-receptive, and comfortable. Interestingly, the congregants' responses seemed to indicate that they felt that they were not fully equipped, while the pastors seemed to think the people lacked motivation to be equipped.

One last question that helped in exploring the evangelistic equipping efforts of pastors was, "What would you say is the purpose(s) of evangelism?" Without exception, every answer focused on how evangelism reaches out to others. This is no doubt a good

thing, perhaps even the main thing, but certainly not the only thing. A few also indicated

that evangelism had to do with obedience, usually in reference to the Great Commission.

Yet, what was totally missing from all of the answers was any acknowledgment of how

evangelism shapes and forms the people who bear witness. It was seen as something that

is only done for the sake of other people, without any acknowledgment that it is also for

the sake of those who are engaged. Furthermore, the focus of evangelism was solely

seen in anthropocentric terms. No one commented on how our evangelism might affect

God, how it brings Him glory, or how our evangelism serves as performative worship.

Concluding Reflections on Questionnaire Responses

The questionnaire responses seem, at the very least, to indicate a disconnect between the

perspectives of pastor and people. There appears to be a love-hate relationship with

evangelism and equipping. There is desire but fear, excitement but frustration. Why is it

that evangelistic equipping seems to be missing the mark so badly—especially at a time

when it is so desperately needed in society? These are some of the questions I hoped my

research would uncover as I probed the issues further in the interviews and examined the

research data within my interview transcripts.

Results of Interview Data

My interviews were transcribed verbatim and yielded 4121 single-spaced lines on 103

pages of data. These interviews were then read and re-read to discover the conceptual

groups, sub-categories and core concepts that were emerging. I eventually came up with

four main conceptual groups for my organizational structure. The organizational structure followed the following breakdown:

Conceptual groups

↳ Sub-categories within conceptual groups

↳ Core concepts within Sub-categories

I first culled the data looking for the ways in which equipping took place. I labeled this as "the pedagogy of equipping" and grouped all the aspects of the equipping efforts that were undertaken. This list was then analyzed to look for synonymous terms or comparable activities that were easily and logically grouped together. This exercise produced a list of six sub-categories related to their equipping efforts.

The second criterion for organizing my data looked at what pastors hoped to accomplish through their equipping efforts—what would be the fruit of their efforts. I focused upon the objective outcomes at which their efforts were aimed. I labeled this as "the goals of equipping." This conceptual group was organized into like categories and was condensed into five different sub-categories associated with what they hoped their equipping efforts would accomplish.

The third criterion by which I organized my data was around the subjective outcomes of their efforts. What did they hope would become of the people and entities that were being equipped? What were the formative aspects of their efforts, both people and the institutional aspects of the church? I labeled this conceptual group the "formative purpose of equipping." Similar to the other two groups, this was reduced to eight sub-categories in relation to the formative purposes.

The last conceptual group by which I organized my data was to include a list of comments that addressed what they felt were the hindrance to evangelism that their equipping efforts needed to overcome. Upon analyzing these comments in more detail, I was able to organize them within six sub-category types.

The Pedagogy of Equipping

The pedagogical approach used to equip congregations was able to be grouped into six different categories: means of equipping, training topics, motivation, organizational formation, focus of effort, and generic terms. While each of these categories represents a spectrum of concepts, at their core they elaborate the pedagogical emphasis around which they could be grouped.

Chart D: Pedagogy of Equipping

Conceptual Groups	Sub-categories withing conceptual groups	Core concepts
Pedagogy of Equipping	Means of equipping	Practice opportunities
		Academic training
		Preaching
		Modeling/mentoring,
		Storytelling
		Resourcing
		Relational connections
	Training topics	Academic
		Cultural
		Character Development/interpersonal
		Evangelism specific training
	Motivation	Emotional support
		Volitional support
	Organizational formation	Structural considerations
		Strategic considerations

Conceptual Groups	Sub-categories withing conceptual groups	Core concepts
		Identity considerations
	Focus of effort	Individuals
		Groups
		The organization
	Generic terms	Help
		Educate
		Teach
		Enable
		Train
		Instruct
		Prepare

Means of Equipping

The means of equipping were represented by seven core concepts: practice

opportunities, academic training, preaching, modeling/mentoring, storytelling,

resourcing, and relational connections.

Practice Opportunities

This grouping comprises any type of opportunity where people can engage in some

manner in order to develop evangelistically. It includes formal liturgical opportunities,

communal habits, and spiritual practices to help train people in activities such as

noticing God at work, trusting God, and remembering their purpose. It also includes

practicing telling one's testimony or presenting the Gospel to those in a class, church

event, or community service event.

Academic Training

The spectrum of activities under this concept includes reading books, taking classes, watching video instruction, Bible studies, or engaging in programs. The focus is the intellectual development of the participant.

Preaching

Although preaching may be thought of as academic training, it is more than that. Preaching tells stories, motivates, and instructs. Given the central place that preaching holds in Evangelical congregations, it seemed appropriate to include this as its own concept, which was widely cited as a means for equipping congregants in evangelism.

Modeling/Mentoring

Showing how and allowing others to observe evangelistic engagement was also a means for providing instruction. Although this concept was mentioned frequently, it was among the least of the concepts expanded upon.

Storytelling

Telling stories of God working, people coming to faith, or simply making attempts to move people forward in their faith journey was an oft-cited pedagogical technique. Pastors might include stories in sermons, provide opportunities for people to share during the church gathering, or simply retell stories from other sources. Stories both motivate and instruct and are used by many pastors.

Resourcing

By providing books which instruct or pamphlets as a tool to engage in evangelism, resourcing people is another means for training that is often used. As one pastor explained, "a part of my role as a pastor is for them to come and ask questions and I'll point them towards the right resources"

Relational Connections

A final concept that was noted for evangelistic equipping was the provision of relational connections—those connections with the pastor in coaching meetings, with peers in Bible studies, or with God in journaling activities. Pastors help to facilitate, organize, or set up relational connections where evangelistic instruction can take place.

Training Topics

The second category of the pastors' pedagogical approach to evangelism equipping addressed the area of training topics. What topics are addressed regarding evangelism? In this category there were four core concepts: academic, cultural, character development/interpersonal, and evangelism specific training.

Academic

Academic training focuses upon intellectual areas of study such as apologetics, philosophy, theology, or missiology.

Cultural

This area of study is geared to helping people to consider issues such as contextualization, cultural awareness, and matters of worldview.

Character Development/Interpersonal

The focus of this area is to help people to understand themselves so that they have a healthier self-identity, grow in emotional maturity, and manage expectations. They are then able to address issues around how to contact others, talk to them, and build friendships.

Evangelism Specific

This area of training broadly looks at the theory and practice of how evangelism has been traditionally understood. It addresses such topics as scriptural rationale for evangelism, principles of evangelism, how to develop one's testimony, and Gospel presentations.

Motivation

When it comes to evangelism, pastors believed that motivation is important, yet not all motivation is the same. There were two concepts of motivational equipping that emerged in the analysis. First, there was that which provided emotional support, and second, that which provided volitional support.

Emotional Support

This type of support included confidence building, loving, and encouragement. This type of motivation was the predominant type of motivation provided. As one pastor noted, when asked what the goal of their equipping was, "To free people and to allow people to know that they can do the work and encourage them to go and share their story."

Volitional Support

This type of support sought to motivate people to do what they know they should. It may take on rather subtle forms like simply reminding people, or more assertive forms like challenging them. The pastors sought to inspire as well as hold people accountable for their own evangelistic endeavors.

Organizational Formation

Efforts to form the organization in concert with its evangelistic equipping goals were not absent, and there were three main concepts that emerged in the analysis: structural considerations, strategic considerations, and identity considerations.

Structural Considerations

This cluster of responses addressed how the church systems were organized, structured, and how programs and ministry planning took place.

Strategic Considerations

Borrowing from the corporate world, strategic considerations addressed matters of goal

setting, strategies, priorities, and corporate hospitality between their institution and other

institutions.

Identity Considerations

These considerations revolved around shaping the culture and ethos of the institution.

By and large, they were incorporated into vision, mission, and values statements.

Focus of Efforts

This category considered the objects of pastoral equipping. There were three concepts in

this category: individuals, groups, and the organization.

Individuals

In the pastoral interviews, it was all but assumed that the equipping efforts should be

focused upon individual congregants in the church. Almost every effort to equip was

focused this way.

Groups

A few respondents focused upon smaller subgroups of the congregation as the object of

their equipping efforts. One pastor mentioned that if she was starting a church plant, she

would start with the "development of small groups, because small groups are the place

whereby people are able to be real with one another, receive from the Holy Spirit, learn

and grow, and to provide that context of fellowship, of learning, of prayer. That's the infrastructure."

Organization

As addressed above in "Organizational Formation," the church organization as a whole was only rarely identified as the subject of equipping efforts.

Generic Terms

This last category sought to probe how pastors used other words as synonymous with "equipping" to provide insight into how they understood the task of equipping. There were seven terms used: help, educate, teach, enable, train, instruct, and prepare.

Since these terms served as synonyms for "equip," it is not necessary to try and find a distinction between them. It is important to note, however, that all these words are primarily focused toward the evangelistic equipping of individuals. What is conspicuously missing was any consideration of corporate fitting and framing as was discussed in Chapter 2 on "A Theology of Equipping." By focusing upon the individual without attention being given to the corporate ethos, it is possible that the systems within the organization can thwart individual equipping efforts and even discourage them. The church, as a whole, must be shaped to support the evangelistic desire of the congregation.

The Goals of Equipping

The second conceptual group of organizing my data considered the objective goals of

the pastors' equipping efforts. What ultimately did they hope would happen? What did

they want to see? How would they know if their equipping efforts were being effective?

This category yielded five sub-categories. These sub-categories included: individual

relational movement toward Jesus, societal changes, quantitative growth, theocentric

goals, and personal growth.

Chart E: The Goals of Equipping

Conceptual Groups	Sub-categories withing conceptual groups	Core concepts
Goals of Equipping	Individual relational movement toward Jesus	Movement toward Jesus
		An introduction to Jesus
		Salvation from Jesus
		A changed life because of Jesus
	Societal changes	
	Quantitative growth	
	Theocentric goals	
	Personal growth	

Individual Relational Movement toward Jesus

The most frequently cited goal was for non-Christians to move relationally toward

Jesus. This sub-category envisioned such core concepts as: movement toward Jesus, an

introduction to Jesus, salvation from Jesus, and a changed life because of Jesus.

Movement toward Jesus

Pastors hoped their equipping efforts would help diminish negative impressions some

non-Christians have of Jesus and help them begin pursuing knowledge of Jesus. As one

explained the goal of equipping, "Primarily, it's to move people towards Christ. A lot of people are moving away from Christ. Christ is not even on the radar, or they have a negative attitude to the church or to Christianity. So, there is a tremendous resistance to Christianity, so in many ways I just want to break down some of those barriers."

An Introduction to Jesus

For those who have never considered Jesus, they hope that those who have been equipped would give positive first impressions of Jesus—that unbelievers would be introduced to Jesus.

Salvation from Jesus

They also hoped, having been introduced, that people would come into a saving relationship with Jesus. This hope was expressed in many ways, such as: salvation, lead them to the Lord, saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, saying "yes" to Jesus, surrendering to Jesus, people come to Christ, drawn to Jesus, and saying a prayer to receive Jesus.

A Changed Life Because of Jesus

Pastors hoped that that those who entered into a saving relationship with Jesus would continue to grow in that relationship. The fruit of this growing relationship would be evidenced in service and ongoing commitment.

Societal Changes

Though seldom mentioned, there were some who felt that a change in society should take place because of the equipping efforts. They hoped for a change to take place to oppressive social structures and systems. As one pastor expressed it, they wanted the community to be exposed to the good news by "bringing heaven to earth."

Quantitative Growth

The desire for measurable, quantifiable results is still hoped for. The measurements mentioned were not about material forms of growth such as finances or building projects, but rather they were about people engagement. They hoped to see more people attending church, getting baptized, and engaging in church activities.

Theocentric Goals

Although it may have been assumed, very few mentioned Godward goals. However, there were some who hoped that they would be used by the Holy Spirit, and that through the obedience of those equipped, the triune God would receive glory and praise.

Personal Growth

It seems that the spiritual growth of those who participate in evangelism was almost completely overlooked as a goal to be considered in their equipping efforts. Only one pastor mentioned this formative aspect of evangelistic engagement and saw the personal growth of the person evangelizing as a goal.

Formative Purpose

The third category of the data focused on how pastors hoped their equipping efforts would shape those on the receiving end, be that a person or organization. What was the change that they were hoping to see in order that the goals mentioned above could be realized? Whereas the goals of equipping looked at the objective end of the equipping efforts, the formative purpose looks at the subjective end. There were eight different concepts associated with the formative purpose: emotional formation, lifestyle formation, intellectual formation, skill formation, character formation, corporate formation, identity formation, and volitional formation.

Chart F: The Formative Purpose of Equipping

Conceptual Groups	Sub-categories withing conceptual groups	Core concepts
Formative purpose of equipping	Emotional formation	Joyful passion
		Boldness
		Love
		Emotional intelligence
	Lifestyle formation,	Relational development
		Alertness to opportunities
		Community engagement
		Lifestyle practices
	Intellectual formation	
	Skill formation	Conversational skills
		Relational skills
		Preparatory skills
	Character formation	
	Corporate formation	
	Identity formation	
	Volitional formation	

Emotional Formation

While every pastor mentioned some way in which they hoped their people would be formed emotionally, four themes emerged: joyful passion, boldness, love, and emotional intelligence.

Joyful Passion

Pastors wanted their people to be enthused at the idea of engaging in evangelism. They longed for their people to express delight in the prospect of evangelistic engagement and to be joyful in the opportunity.

Boldness

Boldness was the most often cited outcome that they hoped their equipping would develop in their people in relation to their evangelistic endeavors. Many felt that their people were intimidated and fearful of speaking and bearing witness about Jesus.

Love

As the second most cited outcome pastors desired for their congregation, love was the overarching emotion they hoped would pervade their evangelistic endeavors. They not only wanted their congregants to love other people, but to love the Gospel message they shared, the Savior in whose name they witnessed, and the Kingdom about which they witnessed. They wanted love to be the primary emotion that their congregants relate to evangelism.

Emotional Intelligence

Although pastors wanted their congregants in the community meeting neighbors and engaging in relationships, there was some hesitancy in how they might represent the church due to a low emotional intelligence. They hoped their equipping efforts would help to address this aspect of their emotional maturity. One pastor observed, "You need people with really high emotional intelligence. There're some people who have a passion for evangelism because they love the gospel, but they don't have an emotional intelligence that is sensitive to how to win, and to share it well."

Lifestyle Formation

This concept was by far the greatest single subjective goal that pastors hoped to accomplish within their people. Under this concept were four outcome emphases: relational development, alertness to opportunities, community engagement, and lifestyle practices.

Relational Development

Pastors wanted their congregants to develop relationships with non-Christians. They wanted them to prioritize making friendships and becoming intentional in their efforts. They wanted their equipping to prepare people to be present to the other, to serve them, and to commit to the long-term costs that friendships require.

Alertness to Opportunities

Opportunities to bear witness do not always come at opportune times. Yet, being

mindful, alert, expectant, and ready to be used by the Holy Spirit for those opportunities

is another aspect of lifestyle that pastors aimed to be formed in their people for

evangelism through their equipping efforts.

Community Engagement

Not only did pastors hope to equip their people to engage with other individuals, but

they also hoped to equip them in civic engagement. They wanted their people helping in

matters of social justice. They wanted them to be people who strive for the flourishing

of community life and contributing to those efforts that make it happen.

Lifestyle Practices

The outcome that pastors desired in regard to lifestyle formation change was a

commitment to lifestyle practices that shaped them to be evangelistic. Whether it be

practicing hospitality or a habit of inviting others to church, they wanted their people to

be mindful of representing the Kingdom of God in all that they do.

Intellectual Formation

Although not a major emphasis, just under half of pastors expressed the desire to see

their people more intellectually informed for evangelism. They hoped for a greater

understanding of basic theology of the Gospel and how to answer questions regarding

the Christian faith.

Skill Formation

Developing evangelistic skills was a high priority for pastors. Three aspects of skill

formation were emphasized: conversational skills, relational skills, and preparatory

skills.

Conversational Skills

Helping people to engage in conversations with others and to talk with ease about their

faith was a desired formative purpose for evangelistic equipping. However, they also

noted that they wanted their people to be able to ask good questions and to listen well.

Relational Skills

Pastors wanted their people to relate to non-Christians. They hoped their congregants

would interact with others and find common ground.

Preparatory Skills

This aspect of skill formation revolved around the anticipatory attitude of people in

expecting God to use them. It included the necessity of listening to the Holy Spirit,

praying, discerning where God is at work, and being prepared to join with Him.

Character Formation

The desire for character formation concerned helping people embody the person of Jesus

in the whole of the congregants' lives. This emphasis upon character expressed the

concern for coherence between word and deed. One pastor said he had put practices in

place for his congregation in order that they might ". . . have the Christian character to be attractive."

Corporate Formation

Pastors who talked about corporate formation spoke about the ways in which the life of the Christian community expressed God's love among them, compelling others to draw near. It also acknowledged the institutional face of the church as it related to other civic institutions and the secular community at large.

Identity Formation

Although this was seldom mentioned, some pastors hoped their equipping efforts would lead their people to see themselves as missionaries to their culture.

Volitional Formation

Pastors wanted their people to desire evangelistic engagement. They hoped that by equipping them, a hunger and willingness to evangelize would be developed.

Hindrances to Evangelism

The final conceptual grouping of organizing the data concerned what pastors understood as the challenges or hindrances to evangelism that they were attempting to address in their equipping. There were six sub-categories of issues that were grouped under hindrances: congregational issues, old models, organizational issues, leadership issues, cultural issues, and the difficulty of evangelistic equipping.

Chart G: Hindrances to Evangelism

Conceptual Groups	Sub-categories withing conceptual groups	Core concepts
Hindrances to evangelism	Congregational issues	Lacking skills
		Lacking knowledge
		Lacking volition
		Emotional restraints
		Miscellaneous others
	Old models	
	Organizational issues	Structural issues
		Programming issues
	leadership issues	Lay leader issues
		Pastoral training
		Pastoral emotional issues
		Pastoral priority issues
	Cultural issues	Secular cultural issues
		Christian cultural issues
	The difficulty of evangelistic equipping	

Congregational Issues

When pastors talked about the hindrances to evangelism, they all agreed that in some

way issues in the congregation were part of the problem. While there were a variety of

reasons given, most of them could be grouped within five different core concepts:

lacking skills, lacking knowledge, lacking volition, emotional restraints, and

miscellaneous others.

Lacking Skills

Although their critique was thorough, only a few pastors mentioned a lack of skill on the

part of the congregation. They felt that the congregation lacked training, ability,

practice, and discernment when the opportunity to evangelize arose.

Lacking Knowledge

Just over half of pastors believed that their congregations had complicated evangelism and misunderstood what was involved. One pastor commented, "I think sometimes we make it more confusing than we need to, and we get into talking about stuff that we don't need to talk to them about right early on." In a similar vein one pastor told a story about a congregant who phoned him to share the Gospel with his friend and his response was to think to himself, "What are you thinking is so complicated that you can't share that story with someone. The pastor doesn't need to share it."

Lacking Volition

The congregations' lack of willingness was the single most cited reason for what hinders evangelism. In the pastor's view, people have become too busy and have not valued evangelism as a priority. They have a consumer mindset and have grown indifferent to evangelism. Even when being trained, they do not apply what they are taught. The pastors feel as if people have stalled in their discipleship and resist learning evangelism.

Emotional Restraints

Pastors believe that people in the congregation are too fearful, uncomfortable, and insecure to engage in evangelism. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, they lack the emotional intelligence to engage in evangelism effectively.

Miscellaneous Others

Several other one-off issues were raised which placed the hindrances to evangelism at the feet of the congregations. The one-off issues mentioned were the high turnover of people once having been trained, people having the wrong personality or the wrong skills to engage in evangelism, the selfishness and sinfulness of the people, or the assumption that they did not have non-Christian friendships.

Old Models

All but two of the pastors noted that the old models of evangelism are no longer effective, which made it difficult to know how to train as they did not have new models to offer.

Organizational Issues

When it came to the corporate side of evangelistic equipping, many of the pastors noted that the way the church was organized hindered their evangelistic faithfulness. There were two core concepts to this category: structural issues and programming issues.

Structural Issues

Pastors spoke rather generically about there being broken systems or a lack of structure in the church. When asked about the hindrances to equipping one pastor commented with regard to those equipping, "They don't have the systems in place." However, they did not elaborate on the brokenness of the structures or systems.

Programming Issues

The pastors felt that there were competing priorities within the church, and that, in fact, the way that programs were offered took their people out of non-Christian relationship circles. Furthermore, what evangelistic programming was offered was sporadic and incomplete.

Leadership Issues

The pastors were not easy on themselves when it came to their observations regarding what hindered the church from being evangelistic. When it came to the hindering leadership issues, four core concepts came to light: lay leader issues, pastoral training, pastoral emotional issues, and pastoral priority issues.

Lay Leader Issues

Although this is labeled as a "lay leadership" issue, the problems are the responsibility of the pastors. They see their lay leaders as lacking evangelistic focus, not being well trained, and buying into an errant professionalism that places evangelism at the feet of the paid staff.

Pastoral Training

The pastors do not believe that they themselves have been trained well enough to evangelistically equip their congregation. They feel that they are deficient in knowledge and understanding to implement change so that they end up being passive in their training. Interestingly this is different from the questionnaire's finding which had 11 of

the 16 saying they were well trained to equip their congregations. It may have been that when asked a breadth of questions specific to evangelistic equipping they found that they were not as prepared as they once thought when answering the initial questionnaire.

Pastoral Emotional Issues

A few pastors mentioned their own fears, sense of inadequacy, discouragement, and negative past experiences and associations with evangelism, which make them very hesitant to engage evangelistic training wholeheartedly. One pastor explained his struggle with evangelism in this way:

> I've been discouraged, and probably this is rooted deeper in past churches where I've served on staff. I've gone through a number of programs. The Ray Comfort brand of evangelism, where you convince people they're filthy sinners and use all sorts of object lessons on the street. I had a church walk us through that. And I think I was so turned off that I just wrote off the whole genre. And despite reading a lot, I'm pretty naive in this area.

Pastoral Priority Issues

It is very clear from the interviews that pastors felt torn in many directions when it comes to how they spend their time—there are too many other priorities that take precedence over evangelistic equipping. They lack the energy, capacity, and focus to do it well, if at all.

Cultural Issues

While not considered a source of hindering evangelism by most, some pastors did name cultural issues that prevented evangelism. There were two core concepts they believed contributed: secular cultural issues and Christian cultural issues.

Secular Cultural Issues

Some believe that secular culture has become too complex and confusing to navigate.

They suggest that the culture's ignorance of Christianity has contributed to non-

Christians resisting any attempts the church makes to evangelize and that the culture has

created more barriers than there were in the past.

Christian Cultural Issues

Another barrier to evangelism is the one that Christian culture has made for itself.

Pastors believe that the Christian culture has alienated itself from secular culture and

limited evangelistic engagement. Christians have become too caught up in fighting

cultural wars which detract from effective evangelism and we have isolated ourselves

from non-Christians, having created our own Christian ghetto.[7]

The Difficulty of Evangelistic Equipping

A majority of pastors expressed that evangelistic equipping is just plain hard. It is slow,

frustrating, and difficult to measure. It takes time and intentionality, and it is not easily

controlled. The attempts that are made feel unsuccessful, and many feel that they are not

doing a good job.

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[7] This observation is supported by other researchers, such as Beth Seversen, who reports, "Among Christians in Protestant and evangelical churches, there is a general withdrawal from close relationships with the unchurched." Seversen, *Not Done Yet,* 33.

Conceptualizations of the Phenomenon of Evangelistic Equipping

This section represents the aim of phenomenographic research, which is ". . . to describe the variations of conception that people have of a particular phenomenon."[8] Upon reviewing, examining, and analyzing the data, I found there to be four levels of description that depicted the breadth of understanding by Evangelical pastors regarding the phenomenon of evangelistic equipping. Each of the subsequent levels builds off the descriptions of those that precede them. The following diagram (Figure 1) visualizes these four levels of understanding.

Figure 1: The Four Levels of Equipping

Level 4:
Systems Thinking
and Corporate Witness

Level 3: Corporate Awareness and
More Intentionality

Level 2: Rote Attempts with Little Attention

Level 1: Informal, Individual, Cheerleading
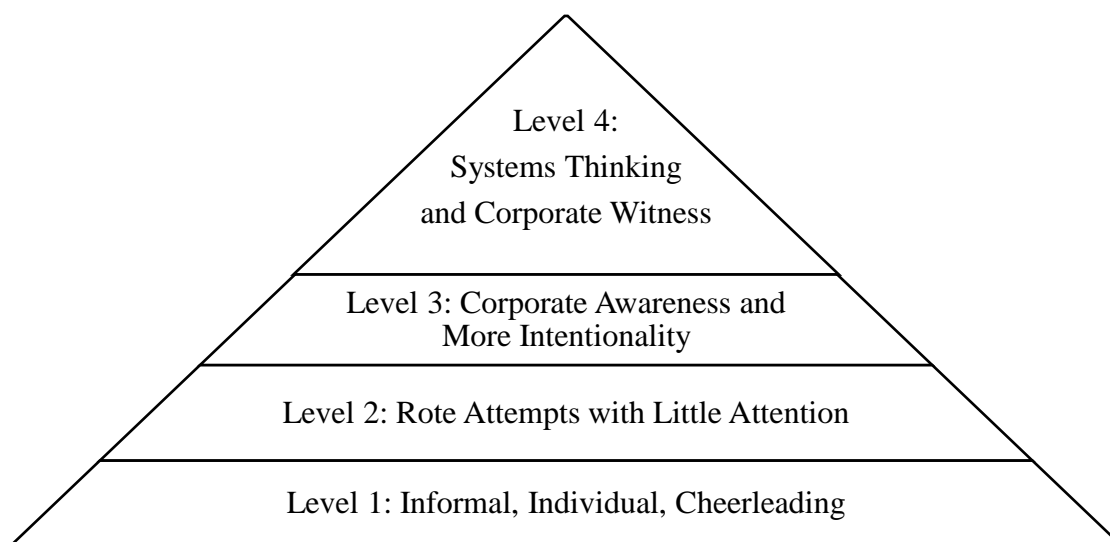
Level 1—Informal, Individual, Cheerleading

As to this first level of evangelistic equipping, a nod is given to organizational equipping, but very little elaboration was provided. This level focuses almost solely upon training individuals within the church to embrace evangelism as a friendship-

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[8] Sin, "Considerations of Quality," 306.

making activity with non-Christians. The focus of the training centers around encouraging congregants to be bold and unafraid in striking up conversations and being ready to talk about Jesus. At this level the training is less formal and more relational. I could not help but think that these pastors understand their role as cheerleaders. They explain "how to do it" and then tell stories and offer encouragement to make congregants feel that they can "do it" too. Even though they acknowledge that the models we have are outdated, they continue to focus their training on old evangelism theory and methodologies. The teaching is primarily focused upon conversational skills, and opportunity is provided to prepare and practice what they might say to a non-Christian.

The pastor's goal is for individuals who are not Christians to move closer to a relationship with Jesus. Although the hope is that these people will eventually identify as followers of Jesus, they have a more tempered expectation for their evangelistic endeavors. If they can simply remove some of the barriers that keep people from considering faith in Jesus and give them a positive experience of Christ, they view their as efforts successful. They tend to see evangelism as a process that leads to a commitment. Yet, because they feel that people are so far from faith in Christ, they focus their evangelistic training on moving people forward toward Jesus, even if those they engage do not make a commitment right away. They tend to see people's faith on a scale and the goal is to move them up the scale. As one pastor stated, "People are at zero and to get them to ten . . . You know, if we can get them to two or three, it might not be across the line, but if you can get them, you know, any movement towards Christ . . . if

we can have had a place in moving them towards Christ of putting open the door a crack. I think that's . . . to me, that's evangelism."

As far as the issues that hinder and stunt evangelism efforts, there was a consensus that again the problem lay with the congregation. The congregants simply are not willing. A recurrent theme was that the people themselves have no desire or volition for evangelistic engagement. Perhaps this explains why pastors seemed to see themselves as cheerleaders. But if the people are not willing, it may have been because of what pastors identified as another great hindrance to equipping—there are no new models. The way of engaging evangelism which pastors were often taught in seminary, Bible college, or from parachurch organizations is seen as no longer working, but they have no other options to offer. It seems that pastors feel stuck between the guilt of feeling they should be teaching evangelism and the guilt of knowing that what they are teaching is ineffective. That makes it hard to cheer with any sense of enthusiasm or conviction.

Finally, the last hindrance to equipping, and likely the more vulnerable confession, was that pastors felt it was hard. As with anything that people find hard to do, they avoid it. They may put in the motions to appease their conscience with a plausible deniability should it accuse them of not teaching evangelism, but the pastors themselves are discouraged and disheartened regarding evangelism. Yet, it appears that their attempts to assuage their conscience are not working as many pastors come across as feeling guilty, inadequate, or defeated about their equipping efforts. This observation is supported by such statements as:

- "I just feel all sorts of self-conscious that I haven't done as good a job as a pastor as I should have, so this might be a confession time."

- ". . . this is something that I feel like I have lacked in throughout my ministry and I'm actually looking forward to reading what you end up writing on this."

- ". . . when it comes to evangelism, I guess, sort of how to do evangelism, I am not that focused on teaching that. And it may be because I'm not sure how interested people would be."

- "Well, we don't actually have a formal training program. I think I mentioned that to you before, which is why frankly, I'm a little uncertain of . . . what value I could be to you here."

- "What hinders me from equipping, on one hand would be the same problems as I'm trying to overcome for everyone. So, I would have my, my own feelings of inadequacy, my own feeling that I don't have a training program because I don't know how to do that."

Although this first level of equipping individual members makes attempts to prepare the congregations (or congregants), in the end it is quite probable that the efforts are not contributing life to the health of the church. Indeed, it is even likely that it has a negative net result as it perpetuates poor models and heightens people's sense of fear and inadequacy.

Level 2—Rote Attempts with Little Attention

The second level describing the phenomenon of evangelistic equipping focused on the formal statements of the church as the way to emphasize the evangelistic mandate of the

organization. Their vision statement, purpose statement, mission statement, and even

their core values statement often included mention of the importance and priority of

evangelism. However, it does not appear that these statements bear much weight when it

comes to influencing the structures, systems, or programs of the church.

The training in this second level becomes a bit more well rounded in that there is

more emphasis upon character development and interpersonal skills as well as a more

formal, academic training emphasis. Much of this training took place in a classroom

lecture style format with some providing opportunity to live out what was taught at a

structured event. The means also included "mentoring," but this term is used rather

loosely and, more often than not, it simply means "telling stories." One pastor described

his evangelistic equipping in this way, "a program where people, more of a mentoring

thing, where people are sharing their lives with each other and regularly sharing stories

of how they are growing in the state and living that faith outside of the church." Another

pastor when asked about the keys to equipping said this,

> Number two would be a kind of a mentoring thing, so it might be done in
> tandem, reflect upon the spiritual, your own spirituality, because I think
> it's not simply a knowledge-based thing that we're trying to teach or
> should be trying to teach in seminaries. I think it should be a life
> approach. And that life approach requires us to reflect on how God is
> working in our own lives.

Here the language of mentoring is used but there is no specific mentor identified in the

process—mentoring appears to be more of a self-reflective process.

While the vast majority of references to mentoring were, by and large, without

details, there was one pastor who told how he provides experiences in this way:

> I might have a couple from my neighborhood over and I'm going to have
> another couple that I'm discipling, mentoring, equipping in the church are
> going to come over for dinner and we're going to have a conversation. I'm

going to ask questions that allow me to start showing or sharing stories of God at work in my life. And then I'm going to poke and prompt questions in my neighbor's life that don't know Jesus because they all have a relationship with them. So, I know when and where I can poke, push and prod. But then I'll also find ways to draw the couple from the church in and get them telling stories or get them sharing where God's been at work in their lives. And afterward I might sit with them and talk through, what did you hear? What did you see? What did you experience? Where were the opportunities to, you know, be able to talk about Jesus and then maybe, maybe later we'll do it again but this time I'll let them be a bit more of the lead.

Yet, as encouraging as his example was, even he hedged his comments by noting that this is the goal, and it does not always happen.

The purpose of the equipping seemed to expand from individual congregants making friends with non-Christians to also engaging in their local community. A strong emphasis upon love was noted, and their skill formation training included developing relational skills. They looked at identity issues, emotional maturity, and spiritual gifts, as well as how to manage their expectations. As noted by one pastor:

There's some people who have a passion for evangelism because they love the Gospel, but they don't have an emotional intelligence that is sensitive to how to win, to share it well, and I wish I had an expert that I could bring in and teach a course on emotional intelligence, but I'm amazed that just some Christians just don't have the emotional intelligence to know how to, when you share it. Some of them are just really struggling with their own emotional intelligence stuff and it turns people right off.

At this second level the goal of quantitative growth arose. Although most noted that growth in numbers is not the be all and end all, they felt it must be acknowledged as relevant and important. This growth was primarily measured in relationship to Sunday attendance, but others cited engagement in other church activities, baptisms, and church memberships.

While the main congregational hindrances in level one were perceived to be primarily volitional, the main hindrances in level two were identified as a lack of

knowledge on the part of the congregation as well as their emotional restraints. Most of these restraints were understood as fear, lack of confidence, and insecurity. Pastors also noted that they themselves lacked training and equipping in how to equip their congregations evangelistically. As previously mentioned, one pastor confessed, "OK. What hinders me from equipping, on one hand would be the same. . . I would have the same problems as I'm trying to overcome for everyone. So, I would have my, my own feelings of inadequacy, my own feeling that I don't have a training program because I don't know how to do that."

Perhaps these candid confessions of the pastors indicate a more fundamental root of the problem which stems back to their own training. It could be that the academic world, known to have a love-hate relationship with evangelism, seems to have neglected this area of evangelistic study, and so evangelism training has been abandoned to a time and worldview that no longer exists and renders its efforts at evangelistic equipping as futile. However, it may also be a lack of continued education and learning on the part of the pastor.

<center>Level 3—Corporate Awareness and More Intentionality</center>

In this third level of description, considerations of evangelistic equipping gave more attention to the organization's strategic matters. Evangelism is part of the goals, priorities, and strategies for ministry. Evangelism is also a consideration in more mundane decision-making. For instance, one pastor explains how evangelism guides their leadership team's decisions about building use in this way:

> . . . certainly, in the local community, we've made our property communicate. So we've made our building accessible. We've put picnic tables and benches out on

our church lawn. We have a corner lot. You know, fairly substantial property, which is like a park, really, and it's well used by the community. And again, it's very soft sell, but we have some verses up, but the fact that we provide that space, the local school uses it to gather for when you have a fire drill at the school. You know, and we've used it as a place for having barbecues and other things, so we just try to at least with our building, and of course, our buildings open in a lot of ways to the community, to community ministries and programs.

In this third level of corporate awareness with more intentionality, the academic training includes cultural training, addressing topics such as worldview, contextualization, and cultural awareness. It is evident that pastoral motivation is not simple encouragement to address congregants' emotions, but it also includes the more challenging aspect of engaging their volitions. This would not include the guilt manipulation that has been associated with evangelism motivation in the past. Their volitional prompting includes things such as inspiring them with stories of how God uses people. They would remind people of the need to help keep evangelism on the front of their minds and make them aware of needs in the community. It includes encouraging accountability and covenanting as well as verbally challenging people to engage evangelistically.

At this level I observed in the data that there was more focused small group training. In some cases, the evangelistic training was only focused on leaders and those who are "evangelistically gifted." This may have had an adverse effect of reinforcing the stereotype that evangelism is only for the "more mature" or "special" people and, consequently, discouraging others from engaging. In other situations, small group training was available to all.

The purpose of their equipping efforts included a desire to see more people joyful and desirous of evangelistic engagement. In other words, rather than seeing

evangelism as a fearful obligation that they must be bold and courageous to engage, they

hoped to equip people to see it as something much more positive. They also stressed that

the congregation was not responsible to make opportunities, but rather they needed to

develop sensitivity to what the Spirit of God was already doing. Their evangelistic

efforts were not to try and make evangelism happen but to see where it was already

happening and to join in the opportunities that God had initiated and invited them into.

At this level also, it was acknowledged that evangelism's goal must also include

some theocentric aim. Rather than seeing evangelism as only something done for the

sake of non-Christians, they viewed it as something that was engaged in for the sake of

God. They wanted God to be glorified; they wanted Christ to be worshipped; and they

wanted the Holy Spirit obeyed and obedience to God's word and will to become

normative.

As far as hindrances are concerned, they continued to see that it was not simply

knowledge that their people lacked, but it was evangelistic skills on the part of the

congregation. They also noted that there were organizational issues and structural issues

regarding the corporate life of the congregation that hindered evangelism. As one pastor

mentioned:

> . . . so I guess one of the greater hindrances then is we circle the wagons. We
> spend too much time looking inward at the church and that's a problem for sure.
> What does the statistics say? Something about within two years or within five
> years, you're not going to have any friends outside of the church? How can you
> do evangelism? You don't know anybody who needs Christ. As you know, when
> you first become a Christian, you're excited about Christ. You want to learn
> about Christ. The best way to do that is to hang out with Christians. And so now
> you no longer share your Friday night at the bar. It has been replaced by Sunday
> morning at church. These (Friday night people) aren't your friends anymore;
> these (Sunday morning people) are your friends. Your time is now divided.
> You're being asked to join a worship team or asked to help with kid's ministry,
> and you really want to be involved. And so, you start to drop your softball league

and stuff. And then, of course, the churches have our own softball league. So, we play against other Christians, and we hang out all the time. And so, all of a sudden, all of our friends become Christians?

This comment, along with others, seems to suggest that the systems of the church are crippling their evangelistic faithfulness. The church itself has seeded the weeds of its own demise, which choke out new growth through evangelism.

As far as personal hindrances are concerned, I heard pastors admitting their own lack of evangelistic focus. One commented that, "in the last couple of years we've increased our focus on relationships within the church because it struck me that we can't very well be attracted (attracting others) inside the church if we can't share on a deeper than surface level inside the church." Another said, "There's a lot of things to do. When it comes to evangelism, I guess, sort of how to do evangelism, I am not that focused on teaching that." I suspect that the exercise of answering questions about evangelism may have prompted introspection, which shone a light on the failings that became more evident as the interview continued.

At this third level of description, I sensed that there was a feeling of frustration, even despair. As one pastor expressed it, "I don't think you can ultimately equip someone who's not interested. You can provide opportunity, you can encourage, and you can rattle their cage, you can do all that, you can do a lot of things . . . and if at the end of the day they still refuse to do it, what else can you do?" Pastors felt that their equipping efforts were not bearing the fruit they had hoped for, and they were at a loss to know what to do next.

Level 4—Systems Thinking and Corporate Witness

The fourth and final level of description is evangelistic equipping which focuses upon

the organizational structures of the church. There was a concern expressed about being

an evangelistic church and not simply about doing evangelistic activities. In this level

the goal of equipping considers its corporate identity and the hope that, as one pastor

said, "How we live together as the people of God is part of communicating the good

news." Evangelism is understood less as an activity that the church and its members

participate in, and more of an identity that exerts influence over every aspect of the life

of the community and its members.

In this level the goal is not simply focused upon individual conversions, but it

also sees the church as a change agent within society. The goal is to "bring heaven to

earth" and to be catalysts in bringing social redemption. They want their community

exposed to the good news by changing unredeemed structures and social systems. At

this level also, they understand the formative role that individual evangelistic

engagement has in shaping the person bearing witness. They see evangelism as a two-

way street in bringing about conversion. The people who are evangelizing are changed

in the process.[9]

The hindrances cited in this level were frustrations with people leaving after

having been trained, people's sinfulness, and people having the wrong personality type

to be trained. These issues could be seen to be more like pastoral griping than significant

barriers to effective evangelistic equipping. There was, however, now a new type of

hindrance that was blamed, not just the congregation or the pastor, but how culture itself

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[9] Teasdale (*Evangelism for Non-evangelists*, 7) likewise argues, ". . . those who accept the good news must be formed by the good news."

was seen as a hindrance. The secular culture had grown too complex, bringing about much cultural confusion. Sexuality was mentioned as one specific area which makes Christian engagement with culture more difficult. The past Christian memory is all but gone, and people do not know anything about the Christian message. Some suggested that this issue is not simply neutral, but there is an active and angry resistance toward Christianity that must be overcome. As previously noted, one pastor described it in this way, "A lot of people are moving away from Christ, for a lot of people, Christ is not even on the radar, or they have a negative attitude to the church or to Christianity. So, there is a tremendous resistance to Christianity in many ways . . ."

Although the secular culture has made the task of evangelistic equipping all that much more difficult, some pastors also mentioned that the broader Christian culture has further alienated the church from being able to effectively influence others with the good news, making it more difficult to know how to equip. As one pastor mentioned, "Western Christianity (has) become a little bit dogmatic . . . and they've got this red flag in front of us all time, and you can't actually see the wood for the trees." It seems that our "evangelistic zeal" has become wrong-headed. This observation alone seems to call for a revamping of the church's evangelistic equipping efforts.

Although this final level of description offers much to praise, it is apparent that very few of the pastors are operating in this level of description. Furthermore, it shows that there is still much that needs to be done to improve the evangelistic equipping efforts of the church in order to nurture evangelistic faithfulness.

Conclusion

As I analyzed the survey and interview data regarding the efforts to equip congregations evangelistically, it became evident that there were four different categories of description regarding this phenomenon. By and large, the pedagogical methods and content of the training were shaped by how the pastors understood the goal of evangelism, the formative purpose of their equipping, and the hindrances that they sought to help overcome. It was very clear in the responses that most pastors feel that they are not seeing the results that they hope to achieve, many are feeling frustrated, and almost all of them recognize that evangelistic equipping is hard work. This frustration has some pastors despairing, not knowing what to do, and simply reiterating old methodologies that they acknowledge as no longer effective. Some have all but abandoned providing any kind of formal training. Regarding the institutional life of the church, it is evident that evangelism, once a hallmark of the Evangelical movement, is no longer front and center in its influence over the organizational makeup of the church.

It is also evident that there are some very serious blind spots which have been unaddressed. One also cannot help but recognize that the training received in seminary, Bible college, or through parachurch organizations often has failed to prepare them to adequately equip congregations for evangelistic faithfulness.

My own practice of equipping has been greatly helped by understanding the complexity of equipping that was brought out by my research, that I was previously unaware of. By complexifying evangelistic equipping, it allows a greater depth, thoroughness and nuance to my own equipping efforts. This will be elaborated on in the following chapter.

Although my research revealed weaknesses in evangelistic equipping efforts, it is not all bad news. Both pastors and congregants believe that evangelism is important and necessary to the life of the church, and while most pastors indicated that one of the main hindrances to their evangelistic equipping efforts was the lack of desire by the congregants, this perception contradicted the survey findings. Congregants wanted to learn how to become more effective in their evangelistic efforts, yet the majority of the congregants believed that the church was not offering adequate training.

If the church can begin to address the weaknesses revealed in this research regarding evangelistic equipping, it might find that there is still an abundant evangelistic harvest that can be reaped.

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In my efforts to equip my own congregation and in my attempts to help others do the same, I have felt that my work was often frustrating. "Why," I thought, "if there is such an obvious need for evangelistic equipping, are pastoral efforts to equip so often ineffective?" My knee-jerk reaction was to assume that the fault lay at the feet of the congregation, as so many other pastors believed, yet I was not sure that this was the "head of the snake" concerning the matter. I needed to research the issue and substantiate or discredit the reputed assumption credited with the undoing of evangelistic equipping.

Furthermore, I was hoping to create a conversation around what appeared to be an obvious lack within the church. That lack, as shown by the research, was an undeveloped attention to evangelistic equipping within Evangelical congregations. Yet, it was not simply a conversation that I hoped to stimulate, but also a reawakening of evangelistic equipping imagination. How can Evangelical churches realign their equipping efforts so that they might become a more evangelistically faithful reflection of the *evangelium dei*? Reflections based on my research findings have revealed a far greater depth to evangelistic equipping that may help spark the imagination of pastors in encouraging their congregations in evangelistic faithfulness. In this chapter I offer some of my insights, thoughts and suggestions born out of the research findings and that will help me in my own equipping efforts and by thinking through the lens of my own

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experience, provide some creative, practical ways for churches to implement the findings of this study in their own evangelistic equipping practice. In no way should this imply that the problems to waning evangelistic equipping will all be fixed by applying what is suggested, however it is hoped that these suggestions might provide grist for the mill as others engage in their own evangelistic equipping efforts, research and writing on this topic.

Implications

My research has allowed me to complexify my evangelistic equipping endeavours by providing multiple equipping strategies as revealed in my research. The analysis of my findings uncovered 25 different ways of equipping that can be applied across the three spheres of equipping (individual, group and institution) and each of these can be focused upon the three different communication areas (words, deeds, and presence). Admittedly, not all of the means are applicable to each sphere and each area, but there are still plenty of ways in which these means can be applied.

The means that came out of my research were:

- practice opportunities
- academic training
- preaching
- modeling
- mentoring
- storytelling
- resourcing

- formal training

- structural considerations

- strategic considerations

- identity considerations

- peer reflection groups

- self reflection

- encouragement

- exhortation

- accountability

- coaching meetings

- bible studies

- journaling

- informal conversations

- spiritual practices

- liturgy

- role playing

- reminding, and

- interactive dialogue.

Each of these 25 ways of equipping can be expanded to include multiple applications. A few examples will serve to illustrate this point. In the area of spiritual practices there were several practices provided that are used by those interviewed to advance the equipping goals: morning and evening prayers, hospitality, scripture engagement (memorization or study), Sabbath observance, gathering, corporate

storytelling, covenanting, intentional listening (both to the Spirit, neighbours and the community), and prayer walks were all cited as spiritual practices. Some are more obviously communal practices and some more naturally individual. And while these practices only touch the surface of what can be done, we already have in this one way of equipping 11 methods available to be used.

A second example we might consider is resourcing. There were a number of ways in which pastors equipped their congregations through resources. They spoke of training resources such as books (both inspirational and educational), Bible study materials, video resources, conferences, webinars, seminars, and classes. They also spoke of resourcing their congregations with means for evangelistic engagement. This might include providing opportunities by hosting events in which they could participate, or outings specifically geared to evangelistic engagement, such as times of neighbourhood discernment, handing out sandwiches, or street preaching. They also spoke about resourcing their congregations with evangelistic materials such as tracts, giveaways (for instance sandwiches, or bottles of water) or invitations to church programs to hand out. They also spoke of resourcing their congregations in non-material ways such as providing their people with language to use, outlines for sharing testimonies, forming strategies, or prayer support.

A final example is with regard to formal training. There were many topics that were suggested for providing formal training to the church: apologetics, theology, missiology, contextualization, culture, and spiritual gifts. There was also "how to" courses on topics such as: how to share your story, how to build relationships, how to be a friend, how to discern God's voice. The training suggested was both theoretical and

practical. However, as several pastors mentioned, it was important to discern what was needed for each particular congregation as it reached out to the particular needs of their community with the strategies discerned by the church body. They were wary of "plug and play" formulas with regard to the overall evangelistic training strategy.

It was also clear from my interviews that equipping considerations should have a wholistic approach. Attention needs to be given to not only intellectual development, but also to emotional, volitional, and spiritual development and growth.

Furthermore, all of this equipping should be thought about through the different filters of the formative aspect of the training for those on the receiving end, the doxological considerations in how God is glorified through the equipping as well as the effectiveness in achieving the objective goals that are being aimed at.

To this we also need to be reminded that equipping has not simply a building aspect but there is also a deconstructing aspect that needs to be considered, often before building up can take place. Pastors mentioned things such as: breaking down misconceptions about evangelism, breaking down personal restrictions that people have placed upon themselves, and addressing some of the misconceptions about the Gospel itself, as well as the nature and purpose of the church.

It is evident that the sphere of evangelistic equipping is exponentially larger as the different aspects of what is involved are added together. And although complexification is helpful it is also intimidating. It is perhaps no wonder that pastors feel overwhelmed by the equipping task associated with evangelism. As I have reflected upon my research findings, the admission of pastors that they feel discouraged, guilty, and inadequate to the evangelistic equipping needs of their congregation suggests that

my own equipping of pastors will require a greater emphasis upon the emotional needs of pastors.

The challenge of evangelistic equipping will take time, persistence, wisdom, and a patient resolve. It will be emotionally and spiritually exhausting for pastors who are already feeling overwhelmed by the demands that pastoral ministry places upon them. Furthermore, I could not help but sense that they are cynical. Many have tried past evangelism strategies and programs which have left them feeling flat with regard to future evangelistic undertakings. They have seen movements come and movements go that later generations scorned and left them feeling burned by.[1] This pastoral situation is even more complicated by the fact that many are stuck in a quagmire of old theological models and definitions of evangelism that have not been challenged. Although there are a few good resources, as Johnson has said, ". . . churches tend to have their own functional definitions."[2] In short there does not seem to be a trickle down of evangelistic imagination and creativity, because the pastors have been unable, unwilling, or unable to find those resources that might simulate such things.

This type of support and emotional equipping has been sadly missing from my own efforts to help pastors equip their congregations and is a major takeaway from my research that I will strive to implement in my own efforts.

There are also several other implications that emerge from the findings of this research. In general, the findings suggest that there needs to be an overhaul of how evangelistic equipping is taught and practiced. This overhaul is not simply to be more

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[1] I am thinking of movements such as the church growth movement, the seeker-sensitive church movement, the cell church movement and the muti-site movement to name only a few.
[2] Johnson, *From the Outside In*, 73.

effective in reaching out, as is often assumed to be the goal of evangelism, but to be more faithful in our evangelistic mandate toward the God whose we are. If Christians can relinquish the results of evangelism to God and stop being consumed with the quantitative measuring of the numbers of decisions, focusing instead upon the qualitative integrity of our witness, might we see more lasting fruit and find the church becoming increasingly more Christoform in its nature. In short, when it comes to evangelism, what is faithful "works," but what "works" is not always faithful. The research findings suggest several areas of overhaul that need to be considered.

Focus More Upon Institutional Equipping

One of the most glaring oversights regarding the equipping of the church is the neglect of corporate equipping efforts. As noted in the theological review and supported in the research findings, when evangelistic equipping is considered, it defaults to an individual perspective. There is almost a complete lack of consideration regarding the evangelistic role of the church in influencing other institutions in the broader society. The failure to acknowledge the role of the church as an institution in the life of its community will, no doubt, limit its place at the table of ideas in municipal and civic settings. It will further relegate it to the margins of the society and reinforce the ever-increasing sacred/secular divide that assumes the church to be irrelevant to the good of the community. Dallas Willard notes the importance of the role of the church as a "knowledge institution," and how there is tremendous pressure for those institutions, like the church, which make available moral knowledge, to be silenced. He further argues: "The disappearance of moral knowledge is simply a social condition into which the United States and most of

the West has drifted."[3] Unless local churches acknowledge and embrace this role, this slide will only continue and will fail to provide the "salt" of their witness in preserving society from moral decay so that it may flourish (Matt 5:13).

Furthermore, James K. A. Smith notes that institutions such as the church, are the primary instruments for shaping people through embodied practices. He even argues that "There are no private practices; thus our hearts are constantly being formed by others, and most often through the cultural institutions we create."[4] When the church fails to provide these formative practices which shape people's desires, they abandon the hearts of their congregants to be shaped by other secular institutions. More importantly, it is very unlikely that churches are devoid of such practices and where those practices have not been fully considered, it is possible that the church institution can have cultural practices embedded into its life that can actually deform the witness of the members. The findings suggest that there has been far too little imagination or consideration of how to embed evangelistic liturgies into the life of the church so that the congregants are formed by them.

The inattention to equipping the church as a whole, instead of just its individual members seems, in part, to stem from a failure to have adequately understood the nature of equipping itself. It is evident in the findings, and in much of the literature, that the idea of equipping is often reduced to simply an educational activity, while the structuring implications of the equipping task have been neglected. Very little consideration has been given to how the church and all its constituent parts are to be joined and fitted together to enable it to become an evangelistic entity, so that ". . . the

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[3] Willard, *Knowing Christ Today*, 82–83.
[4] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 71.

whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph 4:16). The evangelistic mandate of the church requires the unity and healthy integration of members into the evangelistic life of the church. This blind spot of a structural equipping emphasis, seen in the literature and in the interview responses, needs to be addressed and carefully considered if it is to be evangelistically faithful.

The need to equip the whole church requires the institutional aspects of church life be addressed. While Smith notes that institutions are often looked upon as something negative, he asks the question, "Can we perhaps actually recognize that institutions are essential to human flourishing? Rather than seeing them as a problem or a necessary evil, can we appreciate instead that institutions are the very means by which communities thrive, individual vocations are fulfilled, and society is changed for the good."[5] The presence of healthy, vibrant religious institutions helps to provide security for the spiritual, emotional, and moral foundations of society. A redemptive church community can serve as salt and light to other institutions. Furthermore, "If as a church you want to have a long-term impact on the lives of individuals, families and community, and the lives of those in that community, then you must consider the institutional character of congregational life."[6]

It is in this light that the pastor must engage the equipping task in relationship to the institution. In particular, the pastor must help the church to change to become evangelistic. Evangelistic equipping is not simply so congregations engage in evangelistic activities but to embody the evangel and to help the church to proclaim the

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[5] Smith, *Institutional Intelligence*, 3.
[6] Smith, *Institutional Intelligence*, 5.

Gospel in its way of being. As was mentioned previously, Newbigin has said, ". . . the only hermeneutic of the Gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it."[7]

Since evangelism is primarily about communication, the church as an institution must be intentional about the messaging their corporate identity sends to the surrounding community and other institutions. There needs to be an intentionality in how and what they communicate. How does the institution of the church communicate, for example, with the institution of the police department? Failure to even acknowledge that a conversation between the church and other corporate entities is taking place is almost assuredly having the affect of poor communication at the very least. Some examples of how we communicate as an institution might be evidenced is such things as:

- The upkeep of the church building and property. Poor stewardship sends an un-welcoming message to the community.

- Presence and representation in civic meetings and committees. When the church does not show up, their voice is not heard, and it further gives the impression that they simply don't care.

- Messaging through written media, be it via billboards, lawn signs, newspaper advertising or electronic and social media. They all need to be filtered through the eyes of an unbelieving community. We often use insider language, which not so subtlety says, "This information is for church people only."

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[7] Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, 227.

- Forming relationships through kind deeds and service towards other institutions. Providing a "Thank-you breakfast" for the police, for example, helps to build relationship with police headquarters.

- Partnering with the goals and agendas of other institutions with whom we might find synergy. Partnering with a civic group such as the Kiwanis club in their outreach events to the community builds goodwill, trust and opens the door for mutuality.

While these examples are not exhaustive, they help to illustrate how communication can be nurtured institution to institution. Preliminary steps will probably be necessary to ascertain the present state of the church's reputation in the community. In some cases, the institution of the church might have to repent of messages of indifference or superiority that might have been sent inadvertently. Another preliminary step that might need to be addressed is informing the congregation of the importance of corporate engagement and the sometimes-delicate dance that is needed when working with institutions whose values don't always align with the church.

Embrace a More Expansive Understanding of Evangelism's Goal

The research clearly showed that, for most respondents, the primary goal of evangelism is to get non-Christians saved. While it may be argued that salvation is indeed a goal for evangelism, it is very difficult to aim at a goal that is beyond the ability of those participating to achieve. As previously mentioned, salvation is God's work alone. Evangelism does not save anyone. The Reformation has clearly taught that it is God

alone who saves. Thus, there is a need to understand and teach other achievable goals through the evangelistic task.

Reconsider Evangelism as Exalting God's Glory

Although specifically mentioned by only one person, according to Scripture God's glory should be a central goal of all the church's evangelistic measures. As the psalmist explains: "Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise" (Ps 96:2–4a). Ultimately our telling of God's Kingdom and salvation is how God's glory is made known. Jim Petersen points out, "If we trace Jesus' use of the word glorify through the Gospel of John, it becomes apparent that glorifying God means revealing something about Him so that people can see Him more clearly. Jesus told his Father, 'I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do . . . I have revealed you to those whom you gave me.'"[8] God's glory is a central goal to evangelism that should be key to the evangelistic impetus of people and churches—a goal that is obtained by the sharing of the good news regardless of whether those we bear witness to embrace it. Granted, it may have been that the goal of God's glory through evangelism was assumed. Yet, what is assumed is often not taught.

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[8] Petersen, *Lifestyle Discipleship*, 31.

Reconsider the Formative Purpose of the Equipping Efforts

Another goal that was seldom cited was the formative implications that evangelistic engagement has upon those who practice it. The practice of evangelistic engagement is developmental. Therefore, evangelism done poorly can be deforming. It seems that a common question being asked about evangelism today is, "What works?" And in response, methods are proposed which give little consideration to how those engaging in those methods are themselves being formed. As one pastor noted, with regard to his involvement with an on-campus evangelism ministry where he was expected to randomly approach people and share the Gospel, "That brought more fear, that brought such anxiety to my life. Walking in and just kind of forcing those conversations. So that was always a hindrance for evangelism. I just got so nervous about it." Is it possible that the evangelism techniques that have been taught are not producing fruit that is consistent with the tender and meek Spirit of Jesus?

Furthermore, the church's evangelistic equipping efforts would also be better served by considering whether its teaching and equipping efforts are achieving the formative purpose it sets out to accomplish. Although the formative purpose that pastors most desire is that there be a lifestyle change in their congregants, the research indicates that little focus is placed upon identifying Christian formation, character formation, and volitional formation practices that might drive these lifestyle changes. Even though many pastors feel that the evangelism techniques of the past are no longer adequate they have resigned themselves to continuing to pass on the outdated training that they received from the institutions or organization that they learned from.

Although institutional training is changing, there is a slow uptake to distance evangelistic education from the modernist assumption many institutions have embraced. Charles Taber notes that, "The modern self, in other words, is not coherent or integrated, not centered; we seem to have as many 'selves' as we have roles to play."[9] Such fragmented identities make it difficult for people to integrate evangelistic faithfulness in all aspects of their lives. Furthermore, many pastors are theologically trained under the rubric of systematic theology. Intellectually this may have much that can be commended, but it fails to cultivate fervor for living out the theological implication. As Paul Hiebert notes, "Moreover, (systematic) theology often does not address the problems of everyday human life that are in constant flux, nor does it lead to a passion for missions that arise from our encounter with real people who are lost."[10] In short, how pastors have been trained has shaped how they attempt to equip their people, and the result of such training may not lead to the integration of evangelistic passion and concern they had hoped to achieve.

It seems that there is a disconnect between how congregants are being equipped and the intended formative goal the pastors are hoping to achieve. Although pastors are attempting to equip their people, one of the common confessions is often that they do not have enough time to do it well, and by all accounts, not enough time to consider how it should be done well. This same lack of margin for equipping congregants is mirrored in how pastors are attempting to equip the corporate nature of the church. As one pastor noted, when asked about hindrances to his equipping efforts, "I'd add busyness, but not busyness rooted in lack of commitment, busyness rooted in all the other pressures of

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[9] Taber, *To Understand the World*, 87.
[10] Hiebert, *Missiological Implications*, 21.

pastoring . . . So, yeah, it's the lack of focus from the leadership." Evangelism, once the hallmark of Evangelical churches, has slipped from *the* priority to just one of many within Evangelical congregations.

It is not only the individual who is deformed by misguided evangelistic techniques. The church itself, which has been shaped to conform itself for the sake of the individual, is often blind to the fact that Christianity is fundamentally not an individual faith but rather corporate and communal. Ellul warned that when technique has engulfed civilization, "Communities break up into their component parts but no new communities form. The individual in contact with technique loses his social and community sense as the frameworks in which he operated disintegrate under the influence of techniques."[11]

In short, as evident in the research findings, individualistic approaches to evangelism often lead congregants and pastors to feel discouraged and demoralized. This is draining the church of its true evangelistic vitality. In part, this is because, as has been quipped, "what you win them with, is what you win them to."[12] And our present individual evangelistic encounters seem to be producing "churches" of one, where each person ends up with their own personal salvation, savior, and version of the Gospel.

Those in church leadership seem to have neglected the fact that evangelism shapes both the individuals and the congregations who are involved. Considering this, the church must not simply reduce its strategy for reaching out to the reductionistic question of "what works" in relation to the conversion of individuals. Equipping needs to proceed with a much more wholistic understanding of what is at stake. Evangelism is

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[11] Ellul, *Technological Society*, 126.
[12] Idleman, *Not a Fan*, 164.

not only for the sake of the individual to whom the church bears witness, but also for the

glory of God and the formation of Christian character in those who are Christ's

disciples. If these are understood as the goals of evangelism, then the question "what

works?" asked in light of these goals is less problematic.

As an example, in an equipping framework I have developed, three spheres are

identified that need to be equipped: the individual, groups, and the institution. I also

identify three communication areas in which the church must be engaged in equipping

within each of these spheres: words, deeds, and presence. Each aspect of this framework

when equipped in isolation and at the exclusion of the other areas or spheres has the

power to deform and distort as illustrated in chart "H" below.

Chart H: Equipping Framework, Distortions

	Words	Deeds	Presence	Distortion
Individual				Individualism
Group				Sectarianism
Institution				Institutionalism
Distortion	Philosophism	Narcistic Altruism	Isolationism	

When the focus of evangelistic equipping is only the individual the distortion can

result in individualism. The increasingly privatized understanding of faith within

Canada can only be understood as the fruit of an overly preoccupied focus on the

individual in the equipping efforts (or lack of effort) in the church and reflects post-

enlightenment culture.[13]

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[13] "The idea that the gospel is addressed only to the individual and that it is only indirectly addressed to societies, nations, and cultures is simply an illustration of our individualistic post-enlightenment Western culture." Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralistic Culture*, 199. To this it could be added that this culture has seeped into the church and directs its equipping efforts.

Similarly, a singular focus upon the group at the expense of the individual or institution develops a breeding ground for sectarianism. It could be argued that such parochialism has long shaped the increasingly splintered Protestant church and can easily be replicated in the congregational life of the church.

In regard to a focus primarily upon the institution, this would lead to institutionalism. Arguably this was the distortion that Christendom eventually succumbed to.

Concerning the areas in which these spheres need to be equipped, when the church has focused our evangelistic equipping around words and messaging at the expense of the other areas, we end up with a philosophism which prioritizes speaking above all. Similarly, when focused only upon the non-verbal witness of good deeds, those efforts become reduced to a type of narcissistic altruism. This type of distortion has been seen in cross-cultural mission ventures which sometimes appears to do little more than stroke the egos of those who are going. Likewise, where the focus is simply upon being present, but failing to engage with those who are far from God, the distortion of isolationism begins to grow. We see this isolationism in extreme holiness movements, like the Essenes in the time of Jesus.

Those equipping need to focus on how we help our churches become evangelistic and not simply "do" evangelism. We need to reconsider how we understand verses like Acts 1:8 which stresses, not witnessing as an activity, but being witnesses as an identity. Similarly, we need to reconsider how we understand Jesus' encounter with the disciples when he calls them in Matt 4:18–22. The result of following Jesus emphasizes their identity as "fishers of people" not their activity of "fishing for

people."[14] It was implied, of course, that people who identify as "fishers" will engage in the activity of fishing, but not all who engage in the activity of fishing will identify as fishers. As long as evangelism is relegated to simply an activity, it weakens the nature and purpose of the church.

Refocus Upon Pastoral Equipping

While all the above suggested recommendations that flow out of my research are important, perhaps the most glaring is the needs of the pastors. Unless pastors are equipped, encouraged and supported in their equipping efforts, no real change will take place it the congregations. It is very apparent from the research that pastors are feeling very conflicted about evangelistic equipping. Most pastors believe that old evangelism models do not work, but there are few alternatives being taught. They feel a sense of obligation to teach evangelism but are hesitant to teach what they believe is ineffective or offensive. What is a pastor to do? Those who do forge ahead and teach old models and past evangelistic techniques often do so without any sense of conviction for what they are passing on. This may be why this study also revealed that many pastors find that one of the main reasons for lack of individual evangelistic engagement is due to volitional restraints. Very few pastors provide volitional support. In other words, they are hesitant to challenge their people in healthy ways.

With all this confliction rending at pastors' hearts and wills, is it any wonder that they feel ill prepared to adequately address the challenges that evangelistic equipping

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[14] It is unfortunate that this subtlety is not reflected in the NIV which uses the phrase "I will send you out to fish for people." unlike the NASB and RSV with translate it more accurately with "I will make you fishers of men."

requires of them? As the findings indicate, this confliction is not only rooted in feelings

of being inadequately trained to equip their congregations, but it is also viscerally rooted

in some of them who have had negative experiences of evangelism. It does not seem that

pastors are opposed to evangelistic equipping, but they do not know where to turn.

Perhaps this dearth of evangelistic equipping training and resourcing can be traced back

to a lack of serious theological reflection and training regarding evangelism in Christian

institutions of higher learning. It has been noted by various authors that this divide

between theology and evangelism has seemingly pushed the subject of evangelism from

serious theological thought. Pickard notes, "Often the theologian is frightened that the

interchange will result in loss of academic and scholarly reputation. For their part,

evangelists may feel that the academic labors of theologians yield little of value for the

practical and urgent task of communicating the Gospel."[15] Although the Academy for

Evangelism in Theological Education[16] and the Missional Church Movement[17] are

actively addressing the barrier between these two fields of study, there is still a long way

to go if the Evangelical church hopes to restore prominence to the role of evangelism in

its pastors and in the local church.

Furthermore, it is apparent that for some pastors, evangelism is a type of

"speciality" skill for extroverts. As one pastor, commenting on those things that keep

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[15] Pickard, *Liberating Evangelism*, 12.

[16] On their website the AETE explain their mission as, "To provide a place for the scholarly study of evangelism . . . In doing this, AETE hopes to be a light to the broader academy of theological education, demonstrating that the study of evangelism is not only a serious academic enterprise, but should help shape the curriculum offered in schools of theological education." See "Mission," [n.d.].

[17] The preface to the *Christian Mission and Modern Culture* series serves as an example of this when the editorial committee states the focus of the series as being to, "develop the theological agenda that the church in modern culture must address in order to recover its own integrity; and [to] test fresh conceptualizations of the nature and mission of the church as it engages modern culture. In other words, these volumes are intended to be a forum where conventional assumptions can be challenged, and alternative formulations explored." Hiebert, *Missiological Implications*, xii.

people from being equipped and engaging in evangelism, noted "some of our people whose skills were more behind the scenes are now less involved because it's harder to utilize those skills as much every week . . . trying to figure out the best ways to equip those that are more challenging in cases that you maybe don't see the extrovert side of them. You don't see the real giftings at work." In his way of thinking evangelism is for the really mature. He continues, "you want to involve those that are ready and those that are, you know, off of the milk and on to the meat and really can handle this and are in need of this opportunity. So, it would have been a fairly narrowed down crew." If evangelism is thought of as a speciality skill for the extrovert, mature, or expert, it eliminates many from participating. Unwittingly, the church abandons much of its evangelistic calling.

It should come as no surprise that with evangelism's abandonment by the academic life of educational institutions, evangelism courses have been increasingly relegated to the "back seat" of many Bible Colleges and Seminaries.[18] Yet, until adequate academic attention is brought to the study of evangelism, there may not be a catalyst for changing this trend. This being the case, other means and organizations committed to pastoral evangelistic equipping training need to be developed.

<div align="center">Provide Pastoral Support</div>

The refocusing upon pastoral training and education regarding evangelistic equipping will also aid in overcoming another major hindrance that was revealed through this

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[18] Although accessing past required course expectations is difficult, I have witnessed evangelism moved from being a required course to an elective at McMaster Divinity College, Ontario Bible College (now Tyndale University), and Regent College. In phone conversations with the registrar at Ambrose University it was confirmed that this was also the case.

research. Pastors find that equipping is difficult. It is a hard, slow, complex, and frustrating process which is complicated to measure and control. While training will provide some support in managing pastoral expectations, other organizations such as denominations, associations, or peer networks could help to provide the ongoing encouragement, resourcing, and support needed to persevere and thrive as they encounter the challenges associated with this task.

Although there are evangelism training organizations, most of them still operate under many of the modernist, Christendom assumptions of evangelism that were critiqued in the theology section of this paper.[19] To my knowledge, outside of those organizations committed to the modernist, Christendom assumptions, I am unaware of any organization that is dedicated to this aspect of pastoral support. This suggests that there is a huge gap which needs to be filled for evangelistic equipping to become more central in the life of the local church.

No doubt the difficulty of the task and the often-cited busyness of local pastors have also contributed to another hindrance, which is that church leadership has not given adequate attention to organizational evangelistic equipping, even while acknowledging that present systems are part of the problem hindering effective evangelism. The adage goes, "Your organization is perfectly designed to get the results that you're now

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[19] The Billy Graham online *School of Evangelism* offers online courses that focus primarily on the delivery of a verbal message and calling for a decision. The Gospel message focuses upon the death of Christ, but little focus is given to the life of Jesus. See "Schools of Evangelism Online," [n.d.]. The Tony Evans Training Center provides free online training with a goal "To equip course participants with a clear method for sharing the gospel." Methodologies for sharing the Gospel echo Ellul's concern regarding technique. In the introduction, they paint a scenario, "You have been praying for this person and building a relationship with them. You have even shared your own story with them about the difference Jesus has made in your own life. Now the Holy Spirit has opened a door of opportunity, and through His filling and empowerment you know that this is the right time to share the gospel." The clear implication is that praying, relationship building, and offing testimony are not evangelism but only telling the message of Jesus death counts as evangelism. "Module 4: Defining the Message and Method of Evangelism," [n.d.].

achieving."[20] It is unlikely that pastors will suddenly change their habits and priorities to embark on the mammoth systemic changes and equipping challenges without there being some support to help guide and resource them.

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[20] There are several versions of this quote attributed to different people. The repetition of it has made it proverbial in business circles in the West.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

I came to my research as a proud member of the Evangelical church community, a community of which I have been a part since my conversion in 1978. Yet, I have seen the "Evangelical" label become increasingly the object of scorn, not only in secular society, but increasingly in the broader church community. Not all of the criticisms of the Evangelical church have been unwarranted. The Evangelical church has changed, and not least in the changes I have observed has been the attitude and practice of evangelism. Although these observations are anecdotal, they have driven me to explore the condition and place of evangelism in the Evangelical church. Evangelism has had a long-standing priority within Evangelicalism and has been a key marker in what makes an Evangelical church Evangelical. So why does it seem to have fallen out of favor?

I approached my research by asking the question, "Within Evangelicalism, how are congregations being trained and equipped for evangelistic engagement in order to be evangelistically faithful?" I was not expecting there to be a one-size-fits-all approach to equipping, but I believed that some approaches were probably more effective than others. Therefore, I chose to approach my research using phenomenographic qualitative research to find the variations and varieties of equipping efforts engaged.

Significance of Findings

For many decades evangelism has remained static in how it is understood and practiced. While innovative ways have come and gone, the underlying assumptions have been left unchallenged. In the modernist Christendom cultural milieu in which they were birthed, these assumptions made sense, but as culture has changed, the church's evangelistic understanding has not. This drift from relevancy may not be well articulated, but it is certainly felt by clergy. Their reticence to teach and equip their congregations for evangelism reveals this perceived inadequacy in evangelistic methods. Sadly, the neglect of evangelistic equipping is very detrimental to the life and vitality of the church—not simply regarding quantitative concerns around numeric church growth, but qualitative concerns regarding the essence of the missional nature of the church and the centrality of evangelism to that mission. It is also detrimental to the formative influence that witnessing has in shaping disciples.

This hesitancy to equip their congregations has left pastors between a rock and a hard place. Either they teach what they believe does not work and are hesitant to practice themselves, or, without other options, they fail to teach anything at all. When they do teach, they face the same skepticism and reluctance from their congregants toward evangelism as they themselves hold, and their efforts to cheerlead come across as inauthentic. Yet, they continue to believe that evangelism is vital and necessary to the church. It is a conundrum, which is the source of great angst.

In part, it is the captivity to individualism which has exacerbated the ineffectiveness of evangelistic equipping efforts. By failing to address the institutional structures and systemic issues that thwart evangelism, their efforts to equip at an

individual level continue to be an uphill battle. Furthermore, the individualistic approach to evangelism has resulted in a further neglect in failing to acknowledge and support peer group influencing of non-Christians. As Seversen has noted, "people first become part of a community then convert to Christ as they journey to faith alongside other Christians."[1] By placing so much emphasis upon individual evangelistic efforts, it can easily become an overwhelming burden that most are unable to shoulder.

The difficulties with evangelism have proven to be very frustrating to pastors trying to equip their church. The process of equipping feels slow, complicated, and difficult to quantify. Pastors need support, training, and encouragement to equip their congregations from sources which are not reiterating the evangelistic methodologies of a bygone era.

My hope is that this research will be used in a twofold manner. First, my hope is that this research will be used to help pastors to become better evangelistic equippers. Phenomenography is often utilized to improve the practice of the phenomenon under investigation.[2] The equipping needs of the church have become more complex, yet integral to facing the ever-changing realities that so many pastors in my research have bemoaned. The operational paradigm for evangelism and how it is equipped belongs to an era that no longer exists. This paradigm needs to be changed if the Evangelical church is to be faithful to its historic evangelistic identity. This research can serve as a first step in moving toward this new paradigm.

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[1] Seversen, *Not Done Yet*, 177.

[2] Malcolm Tight ("Phenomenography," 328) notes that "The bulk of the higher education research that has employed phenomenography has been concerned not just to better understand how students and academics think about and approach teaching and learning (or other topics), but to apply these findings to improve practice."

To this end, by utilizing the four levels of equipping that was conceptualized in my findings, those equipping can self-assess where their present efforts land. By acknowledging their present efforts and the limitations associated with those efforts, they can begin to address those areas which are neglected. As was evident in my research, many pastors seemed naively unaware of the insufficiencies of their equipping efforts and stymied as to where they could turn or what they should do to address their weaknesses. Once they are able to identify what level of equipping they default to, they can look up at other levels to see how they might improve. Admittedly, it is unlikely that one person will fall neatly into one category, yet they will no doubt relate more closely to one than another, and the other levels will provide them with ways for improving their equipping efforts.

I further hope that those equipping will check the urge to simply move to programmatic solutions to evangelistic equipping which serve to equate evangelism with a task rather than a way of being. By making the subtle yet significant shift from helping people to do evangelism to helping people become evangelistic, they will enable their congregants to bear faithful witness in all that they do. In essence, by changing their congregant's perspective in seeing themselves as evangelistic, they will be transforming their everyday activities and encounters with non-Christians into evangelistic opportunities.

Second, I hope my research findings will be used to refine pedagogical practice not only in congregations but also in those institutions that train pastors.[3] There is a huge need for pastors to be resourced in how to equip beyond the tired and used

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[3] Beaulieu ("Phenomenography: Implications," 69) reveals that phenomenographic research is "used to refine pedagogical practice."

methods of modernity. They must be taught how to shape institutions as well as individuals. To train and equip future and current pastors in such ways, will no doubt have great ripple effects throughout the ecclesiological landscape of Evangelical congregations. Gordon Scoville warns that:

> . . . too many pastors and ecclesiastical officials have a vested stake in remaining unconscious of the historical vortex that can swallow us into something that bodes a very ugly future. Evangelism in America, in other words, will be harder than most of us ever imagined, for the reason that we ourselves are so largely captured by a status quo that depends for its existence on the destruction of things such as Christian mission.[4]

The institutional church needs to be reshaped if it is to be found evangelistically faithful. There is no other alternative, and it is something that the church, by and large, has been avoiding, in part because the alternative was so uncertain.

Not only does the church need to be taught how to shape the institution, but in order to do that, there needs to be deeper theological reflection regarding evangelism. Paul Hiebert makes the point in this way, "Evangelism without solid theological reflection produces a weak and syncretistic church. Theological reflection without evangelism creates a Christian club."[5] Yet, the shortage of theological reflection on evangelism is crippling the church. It is not necessarily that there is no material available, but it is not always easily accessible and often overcrowded by the popularist materials which entice pastors with the promise of a quick fix. Until such a "well-developed contemporary theology of evangelism."[6] has been established, the modus operandi for evangelism will continue to be pragmatism. This is a shallow starting point

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[4] Scoville, *Into the Vacuum*, 11.
[5] Hiebert, *Missiological Implications*, 109.
[6] Pickard, "Evangelism and the Character of Christian Theology," 141.

that will not sustain evangelism as the church continues to be marginalized from society in its post-Christendom exile.

In the future, continuing to expand the number of pastors surveyed would be helpful in anticipating trends both positive and negative. It may help to anticipate future opportunities to be developed or pitfalls to avoid. Similarly, it may serve the research well if returning to past interviewees to delve even deeper into their experiences and answers, reviewing them in retrospect to see if they have thought further upon those things asked.

My research asked questions which included not only their experience but also their understanding of evangelistic equipping. Many respondents indicated that their concept of what should be involved did not match up with what they actually practiced. In other words, they were speaking conceptually regarding what they believed needed to happen and not necessarily about what they actually did. In short, while the knowledge of evangelistic equipping seems to fall woefully short of what is needed, the practice of equipping is even worse. It might be beneficial to limit the scope of research to see *only* what is actually being done.

Finally, it would be beneficial to go back to the congregants of these churches and, having heard what pastors are attempting to do by way of evangelistic equipping, find out what their impressions are. Have them provide feedback regarding the effectiveness of the efforts, the level of buy in they subscribe to, and if what is being taught is truly being understood.

Conclusion

In my research I have shown that evangelism's starting point is God Himself. The

evangelium dei should be the point from which we launch our evangelistic

understanding. Our guiding question should not be "What works to convert people?" but

"What is faithful in reflecting God's evangelistic nature?" Our present evangelistic

equipping has succumbed not only to pragmatism, but also to the individualism of

modernity. We need to equip the people of God as a whole and to communicate the

good news of the Kingdom by structuring the church to be a corporate witness. By

structuring the church in this way, they can serve as a redemptive force to unredeemed

institutions.

Furthermore, where the institution has been properly equipped to nurture

evangelistic faithfulness, it will become a more effective formative influence to enable

individual witnesses to be more faithful in their circles of influence. There is still a

bright future ahead for the Evangelical church if she will follow the Spirit and embrace

the challenges of evangelistic equipping that lay before he

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Congregational Questionnaire

1. What is your church's denomination?

2. What is your age?

3. Are you actively involved in the life of your church? Active involvement would include regular attendance (or watching online during COVID closures), which would be two times per month.

4. In what Province or Territory is your church located?

5. How long have you been attending your present church?

6. What is the average Sunday gathering attendance of your congregation?

7. What is your gender?

8. Please list any evangelism training you have received and from what organization. If you can't remember just type "CR" in the space provided.

9. When thinking about evangelism, please select all the emotions that you personally associate with it.
   - A. Calm
   - B. Stressed
   - C. Excited
   - D. Bored
   - E. Frustrated
   - F. Fear
   - G. Relaxed
   - H. Confident
   - I. Guilty
   - J. Irritated
   - K. Inadequate
   - L. Desire
   - M. Indifference
   - N. Disappointed
   - O. Nervous
   - P. Sad
   - Q. Satisfied
   - R. Fascinated
   - S. Curious

10. Is there an emotion that was not listed in the previous question, that you associated with evangelism?

11. There are many different definitions of evangelism. What is your definition of evangelism?

12. What would you say is the purpose(s) of evangelism?

13. Do you have friendships with non-Christians that you are attempting to influence for Christ?

14. In the last six months, how often did you pray for non-Christians that you know personally, to come to follow Jesus?

15. When thinking about your definition of evangelism, please tell me your level of agreement with the following statements:
    a. Evangelism only takes place when the Gospel is spoken.
    b. Evangelism is offensive.
    c. Evangelism should be the top priority of the church.
    d. Evangelism doesn't take place unless there is a call to decision.
    e. Evangelism only happens one on one.
    f. Evangelism should not be planned or organized; it should only be spontaneous.
    g. Employees should not evangelize during work hours.
    h. Evangelism is no longer relevant.

16. As you think about evangelism, what do you think are the challenges that are facing your congregation?

17. Does your church provide regular opportunities for evangelism training or classes?

18. Please tell us your level of agreement with the following statements:
    a. I have been well prepared to share my faith.
    b. My church provides many programs for engaging non-Christians.
    c. Our church works hard to create a positive reputation in our neighbourhood.
    d. I know my church's evangelism strategy and understand my role.
    e. Evangelism is a priority in our church.
    f. I feel our church has a good pulse on the culture of my neighbourhood.
    g. I feel confident in getting evangelism training from my church.

19. Are there any other comments that you would like to provide that you think would be relevant to this study?

Appendix 2: Pastoral Questionnaire

1. How long have you been serving as a pastor at your present location?

2. In what Province or Territory is your church located?

3. To which denomination is your congregation associated?

4. To the best of your knowledge, in what year was your church founded?

5. When considering your church attendance over 2019, how would you describe your current congregation's present numeric growth? Feel free to tell why you described yourself in this way.

6. What was your average attendance during your weekly gathering for 2019? Please include all people who attend including children and infants.

7. In 2019 how many people have publicly committed their life to follow Jesus?
    A. By baptism
    B. By confirmation
    C. By testimony

8.   Over the past five years how many people have publicly committed their life to follow Jesus?
    A. By baptism
    B. By confirmation
    C. By testimony

9. As you have sought to influence the community where your church gathers, what type of demographic study have you conducted, and when?
    A. Self assessment by personal observation.
    B. Self assessment using a community demographic assessment guide.
    C. Statistics Canada fact gathering.
    D. Paid demographic survey by third party.
    E. Fact gathering from other third party.

10. What is the assimilation rate of newcomers to your congregation? When someone new attends your gathering, what percentage of them will still be attending 3 months later?

11. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

12. There are many different definitions of evangelism. What is your definition of evangelism?

13. What would you say is the purpose(s) of evangelism?

14. What are the top three books that have influenced you in your understanding and practice of evangelism? Please include the author.

15. When thinking about evangelism, please select all the emotions that you personally associate with it.
    A. Calm
    B. Stressed
    C. Excited
    D. Bored
    E. Frustrated
    F. Fear
    G. Confident
    H. Relaxed
    I. Guilty
    J. Irritated
    K. Desire
    L. Inadequate
    M. Indifference
    N. Disappointed
    O. Nervous
    P. Sad
    Q. Satisfied
    R. Fascinated
    S. Curious

16. Is there an emotion that was not listed in the previous question, that you associated with evangelism?

17. Please list any evangelism training you have received, approximately when you received it, and from what organization. If you can't remember please put "CR" in the box provided.

18. Thinking of a typical week, how much time do you generally spend nurturing friendships with non-Christians?

19. When thinking about training and equipping your congregation in evangelism, please select all the emotions that you personally feel?
    A. Guilty
    B. Indifferent
    C. Excited
    D. Hopeful
    E. Inadequate
    F. Frustrated
    G. Satisfied
    H. Joyful
    I. Fatigued

      J. Discouraged
      K. Confused
      L. Desirous

20. Please record if there an emotion that was not listed that you associate with evangelistic equipping.

21. When thinking about your definition of evangelism, please tell me your level of agreement with the following statements:
    A. Evangelism only takes place when the Gospel is spoken.
    B. Evangelism is offensive.
    C. Evangelism should be the top priority of the church.
    D. Evangelism doesn't take place unless there is a call to decision.
    E. Evangelism only happens one on one.
    F. Evangelism should not be planned or organized, it should only be spontaneous.
    G. Employees should not evangelize during work hours.
    H. Evangelism is no longer relevant.

22. In the last six months, how often did you pray for the conversion of non-Christians that you know personally?

23. What programs/classes are provided to train your congregation in evangelism:
    A. How was this provided (i.e. live, video, online. . .)?
    B. Organization from which the materials came (use "church" if it was developed in house)?
    C. How frequently is it offered?

24. Thinking about your congregation as a whole, what do you think are the challenges in equipping them evangelistically?

25. Thinking about your congregation as a whole, please rate the following.
    A. Evangelistic desire.
    B. Evangelistic efforts / attempts.
    C. Evangelistic understanding.
    D. Evangelistic effectiveness.
    E. Their love / concern for non-Christians.
    F. Their engagement with non-Christian neighbours / friends.

26. Please tell us your level of agreement with the following statements:
    A. I personally have been well trained and prepared to share my faith.
    B. I personally have been well trained and prepared to equip others to share their faith.
    C. Our congregation provides many programs for engaging non-Christians.
    D. Our congregation works hard to create a positive reputation in our community.

E. We have a congregation evangelism strategy.
F. We work hard so everyone understands their role in the congregation evangelism strategy.
G. Evangelism is a priority in our congregation.
H. I feel our congregation has a good understanding of the culture of our community.
I. I feel confident we are providing good evangelism training for our people.

27. Thinking about your congregation over the past five years, what changes have been implemented to facilitate evangelistic faithfulness? Please provide a brief description on any answers chosen.
    A. New or revised congregational evangelistic practices.
    B. New or revised systems to enhance or enable evangelistic engagement.
    C. New or revised congregational resources for evangelist engagement.
    D. New or revised processes for evangelistic ideas and initiatives to be activated.
    E. Development of new or revised evangelism strategy for reaching the community.

28. What efforts/initiatives have been made to build a positive reputation of the congregation in your community?

29. In what year was the last time a sermon or series dedicated to evangelistic education / motivation was preached? [Please indicate if it was a sermon or series.]

30. Thinking of 2019, what types of communication tools did you use to communicate with your unchurched community?
    A. Television.
    B. Radio.
    C. Podcasts.
    D. Website.
    E. Facebook.
    F. Twitter.
    G. Instagram.
    H. YouTube.
    I. Church message board.
    J. Electronic church sign.
    K. Newsletter (hard copy).
    L. Electronic newsletter.
    M. Print advertising (i.e newspaper).
    N. Mailouts.
    O. Other.

31. Thinking about your church as a civic institution in your municipality, how would you rate your corporate engagement with other institutions throughout 2019?
    A. City Hall.
    B. Non-governmental civic clubs or organizations.
    C. The local school board.
    D. Other civic institutions.

32. Are there any other comments that you would like to provide that you think would be relevant to this study?

33. Would you be willing to have a virtual follow-up conversation regarding this study? The follow-up conversation would last between 30-60 minutes. If so, please leave your name and email below so I can be in touch.

Appendix 3: Pastoral Interview Questions

Key Questions:
1. Please tell me what equipping means and involves as it pertains to evangelism in your congregation.

2. How would you define evangelistic equipping?

3. What is involved in equipping a church to be evangelistic?

4. How is evangelistic equipping engaged, what is the process?

5. What would you say is the scope of evangelistic equipping?

6. What would you say is your role in equipping the church evangelistically?

7. What is the goal (or goals) of evangelistic equipping?

8. How do you know if you are being effective in your equipping efforts?

9. What are the hindrances to equipping?

10. If you were to start at a new church tomorrow, where would you start with regard to evangelistic equipping?

11. What if any, are the keys to evangelistic equipping?

12. If you were made the professor of a seminary and assigned to teach how to equip churches to be evangelistic what would the curriculum be?

Follow up Questions:
- Could you explain further?

- What do you mean by that?

- Is there anything else you would like to say about this problem?

- How?

- Can you tell me more?

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