

Preach  
Teacher  
Liberator  
Christian  
Healer God with Us  
Apostles Social Justice Church  
Holy Spirit Evangelism  
Make All Nations Share  
Father Go  
Baptize Disciples  
Missio Dei  
Mission  
Gospel  
Savior

# I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY: RECLAIMING EVANGELISM AS GOOD NEWS

Rev. Jeffrey S. Smith

*SOMETHING WE CAN ALL BELIEVE IN!*

*JESUS AS THE EMBODIMENT  
OF THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD*



# SOMETHING WE CAN ALL BELIEVE IN!

Mark begins his gospel (the first written account of Jesus) declaring, **“The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the son of God.”** (Mark 1:1). There’s a new beginning taking place in Jesus – good news to all who hear the story of who Jesus is and what Jesus does for us.

- The good news is in reference to Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection – not just part of the story, but the whole story! It’s not limited to one thing.
- Every gospel writer shares the good news found in Jesus from their own vantage point – each declaring the same message – that there’s good news to be found in him.
- The disciples were entrusted with this story and commanded to share it with everyone – and so is the Church!
- I didn’t come to a saving faith in Christ apart from the Church; someone had to share it with me. The Church is entrusted with this story – “the old, old story of Jesus and his love.” We love this story and should want to share it because it means something to us.

# THERE ARE MANY IMAGES OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

If you interviewed Christians from differing faith traditions and backgrounds and asked to define what the “good news” found in Jesus is, you might be surprised to find differing answers that speak truth to the same Jesus we’ve come to know.

Not every Christian or denomination will agree on every aspect of our theology, but the one thing we can all agree on is that Jesus is the embodiment of the good news of God. This is something we can all believe in!

We may also articulate differing answers of our understanding of the “good news” based on our Christology, for our understanding of Jesus comes from the authentic relationship we have with him.

We come to know Jesus in a specific way, which bears witness to the truth of who Jesus is, but it can be limited to one face or image of Jesus that we encounter in the gospel stories.

# EVANGELISM AS “A BIAS FOR THE GOOD NEWS”

We share what we know to be true – our bias for the good news. Mark Teasdale defines evangelism as the “bias for the good news,” declaring this definition allows space for Christians of every faith tradition to reflect on our beliefs about God and determine what we believe the good news to be.

This doesn't reduce it to one universal truth found in Jesus; rather, it gives room for every believer to articulate the good news we've discovered in our relationship with him. We share our own bias of whom we've come to know.

Our bias is based on particular stories of the gospel accounts that shape and formulate our understanding of who Jesus is. This often leads us to see Jesus in a particular way, an image or face of Christ presented by the gospel writers.

And while bias is often perceived as being negative, our bias is positive because it's rooted in who God is revealed in Jesus Christ. Essentially, God, through the Holy Spirit, has drawn us to see God's self in a particular way. While there are many faces of Jesus presented in the gospels that we can easily identify with, we tend to be drawn to a particular image or face of Jesus.

# THESIS

- That our Christology, the lens through which we see Christ most clearly, affects our view and practice of evangelism; how we tell the story. I believe an analysis of one's favorite gospel story or stories can reveal their bias for the good news, and it directly shapes the way that they view and practice evangelism.
- If we are drawn to Christ by the story of his life, then there are specific stories that speak to us and meet us where we are. And if this is true, then our authentic relationship with Jesus will also dictate the Jesus we share with others and how we share him.

# METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative research using a mixed method approach to seek answers that shed light on the accuracy of my thesis.
- It involves conducting group interviews with Presbyterian (USA) pastors in Salem Presbytery, as well as teaching a class and surveying congregants of First Presbyterian Church Boone, North Carolina, where I serve as pastor.
- Mixing these methods provides different approaches to the same results that meets pastors and congregants where they are, with the goal of defining whether or not their Christology, their bias of the good news, aligns with the corresponding method of evangelism associated with that Christology.

# RESEARCH OUTCOMES

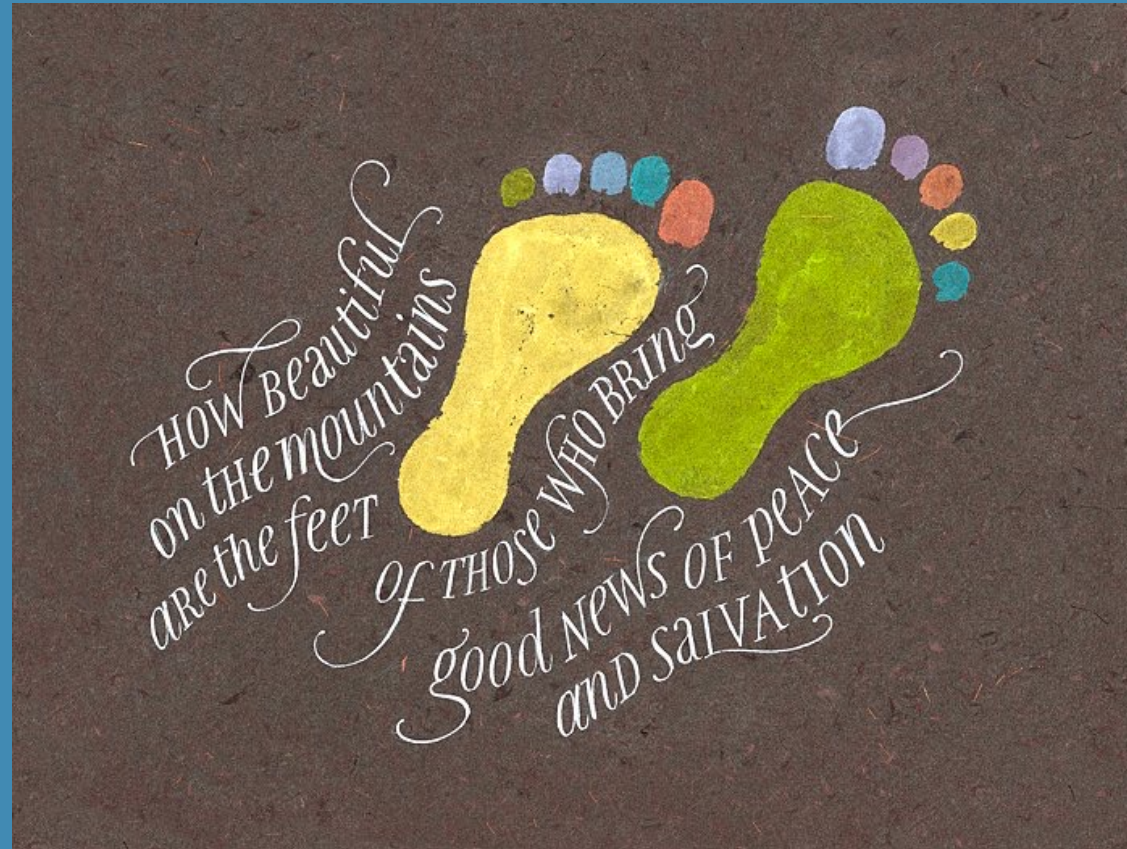
1. To highlight that within one denomination there is a diversity of thought represented in our Christology.
  2. That both lay people and pastors can identify with the seven images of Christ presented, and that there is a direct correlation between one's lens of Christ and their view and practice of evangelism.
- If true, the Church must self-reflect when it comes to doing evangelism, because most churches do not focus on evangelism at all, or they practice evangelism in a “one size fits all” model.
  - Reflecting on our favorite gospel story/stories helps identify our bias and be more intentional evangelists.
  - It also allows us to share the gospel in a multiplicity of ways that broadens the church's ability to connect with its members to do outreach in a way that fits within the framework of their understanding of Christ, rather than asking them to share Christ in ways that make them uncomfortable.



# SUMMATION

- In short, we should love to tell the story; it shouldn't be a burden because Jesus is not a burden, he is true joy for all who come to know him.
- Our call is to share the Jesus we've come to know as our Lord and Savior, to share our bias for the good news, because every Christian, regardless of one's faith tradition, believes Jesus is the embodiment of the good news of God.
- This is something we can all believe in and share!

# RECLAIMING EVANGELISM AS GOOD NEWS: WHAT IS BIBLICAL EVANGELISM AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY FOR THE CHURCH?



# RECLAIMING EVANGELISM AS GOOD NEWS: WHAT IS BIBLICAL EVANGELISM AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY FOR THE CHURCH?

## Old Testament Witness –

The Triune God creates the world and everything in it; “indeed it was very good.” God is the source of all good and all good news. Sin enters the picture through the disobedience of humanity, and yet God refuses to abandon them.

God pursues his people with a “hesed” love and the O.T. is a witness to this love pursuing them relentlessly, from God’s blessing to Abraham, their deliverance from Egypt, and even in their deliverance from exile. Isaiah 40:9; 52:7 are the only two uses of the term “gospel” in the O.T. (Septuagint)

Mission in the O.T. is not so much about the people of God witnessing to Gentiles and converting them, rather *“it’s about God’s missionary activity in the world. God is the missionary bringing the nations to Jerusalem to worship him there with his covenant people.”* (David Bosch – *Transforming Mission*)

# RECLAIMING EVANGELISM AS GOOD NEWS: WHAT IS BIBLICAL EVANGELISM AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY FOR THE CHURCH?

## New Testament Witness –

Isaiah's prophecy is consistent with God revealed in Jesus Christ who is the good news. Evangelism (*euangelion*) “eu” good (euphoria/euphemism) and “angelos” angel or messenger. “*The content of evangelism is the gospel and the one who brings good news is the evangelist.*” (Priscilla Pope-Levinson – *Models of Evangelism*).

The gospel writers are evangelists/messengers who bear witness to the good news in Jesus.

- Luke writes about the “good news of great joy for all the people.”
- Matthew explains this child is to be named Jesus for he, “will save his people from their sins.”
- Mark portrays Jesus announcing good news saying, “repent and believe the good news.”
- John connects Jesus as the divine word of God from the beginning who takes on flesh and gives the right to “become children of God.”

While God appoints messengers/disciples to share the good news, Jesus is the first evangelist pointing people to God's victory in his life-giving sacrifice and glorious resurrection.

# RECLAIMING EVANGELISM AS GOOD NEWS: WHAT IS BIBLICAL EVANGELISM AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY FOR THE CHURCH?

## Missio Dei – “God’s Mission”

God initiates mission – God’s character as Triune, sending God’s self into the world in Jesus to bring about reconciliation, but also sending the Holy Spirit to sanctify us, to be with and guide us, and to help us declare the good news.

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane – *“As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”* (John 17:18). He also gives his disciples the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20.) This commission extends the good news to the Gentiles *“all nations.”* After his resurrection, Jesus tells his disciples, *“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I send you,”* and then he breathes the Holy Spirit upon them. (John 20:21)

Evangelism is not optional for the Church! Jesus told his disciples that they would “fish for people.” We believe that this good news is *“so urgently good that it must be shared.”* (Darrell Guder – *Called to Witness*). *“What difference has Christ made in your life? A difference worth claiming is a difference worth sharing... that difference is the gospel according to you.”* (Thomas Gillespie – *The Historical/Cultural Setting for Evangelism*).

# DISTORTIONS OF BIBLICAL EVANGELISM

## **Evangelism – The “E” Word**

Evangelism has become a negative word in the Church. The word that cannot be named (such as the name Voldemort in the Harry Potter series). Evangelism has received a negative connotation over the years for multiple reasons:

- **Expansion of Western Christian nations using evangelism forcefully through colonialism.**
- In a postcolonial world, evangelists can be judgmental, pushy, and treat people as objects to be manipulated – “souls to be won for Christ.” ”Repent or burn,” bull horn messages - scaring people out of hell, rather than drawing people into a loving relationship with a loving God.
- **The term evangelical has morphed into a political term in America that defines a certain group of Christians who vote a particular way.**
- Televangelists preaching a wealth, health, and prosperity gospel; a “watered down” version of what Jesus preaches. Some evangelists have even been associated with scandal – embezzlement, and sex scandals.



## RECLAIMING EVANGELISM AS GOOD NEWS!

Brian McLaren says that it's not biblical evangelism that's to blame for all the negative reasons people choose to avoid it, but "the late-twentieth century styles of evangelism." He says,

*"And what if for every obvious and sleazy religious huckster there are, in fact, a dozen subtle but sincere examples of spiritual authenticity and vibrancy whose influences would do the rest of us a lot of good?... And what if you and I, who begin as wandering and confused people, could be so helped by our caring God-sent and love filled friends that we could join them as messengers of grace, carriers of good news, secret-angels, case studies in God's power to change, enrich, fill, and rescue lives that were being wasted, ruined, and self-sabotaged?"* (McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*)

Refusing to share God's good news is like hoarding food from a beggar. (D.T. Niles). Sharing Jesus with others is not just a mandate from Jesus; it's rooted in our relationship with him. John Flett says that evangelism isn't a second step, a mandate per se; he says that evangelism is rooted in God's being and act and that the Church is a missionary community that lives in fellowship with the Triune God. (Flett, *The Witness of God*).

We are not to be salespeople trying to close a deal; we are called to be witnesses of the risen Lord who's encountered us. Our witness is personal and therefore we share what we know to be true – our bias for the good news! We must reclaim evangelism as good news!

# In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace

*An update on America's changing religious landscape*

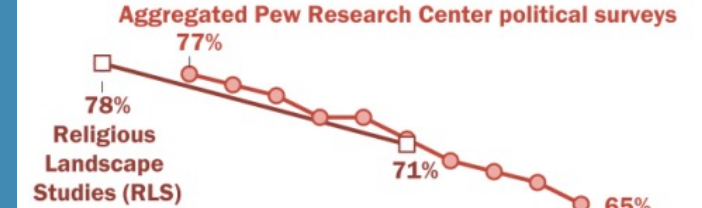
THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM:  
THE DECLINE OF THE  
AMERICAN CHURCH



## In U.S., smaller share of adults identify as Christians, while religious 'nones' have grown

% of U.S. adults who identify as ...

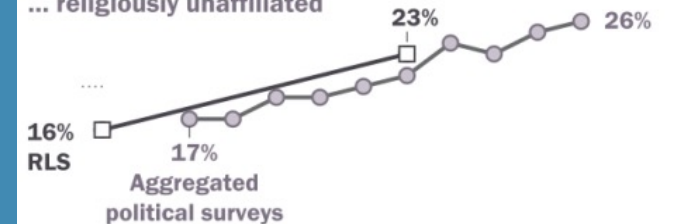
... Christian



60 ....

40 ....

... religiously unaffiliated



0 2007 2009 2014 2018/'19

Source: Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Studies (2007 and 2014). Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted 2009-July 2019 on the telephone. "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



## THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM: THE DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH

If evangelists are common people who believe the risen Christ is with all people, and if evangelists truly have good news to share about Jesus to the world, then we would assume that Christianity in America is blossoming just like the early church after Pentecost, right?

Unfortunately, Christianity in America is declining and so is church membership across denominational lines. The Covid-19 pandemic has only made what was already difficult more pronounced. You would think that livestream technology would provide significant increases in participation, but it hasn't fostered churches booming with new members. Any pastor can be a "televangelist" today, but we are all a "dime a dozen."

Jesus' model of evangelism was meeting people where they were. He didn't call everyone to the Temple, nor to the synagogues; he and his disciples were always taking the gospel on the "road."

This shifted when Emperor Constantine I established Christianity as the religion of the state. Christianity became institutionalized as house churches transitioned into basilicas, establishing fixed places of worship where people would come to. This model hasn't changed since then! Even so, we have plenty of pews that remain unfilled in churches all across America every Sunday.

## THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM: THE DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH

Although the Christian Church has grown in number and has spread into most of the known world, Christianity in the United States has seen a major decline in the last thirteen years.

### 2018-19 Pew Research Center Survey Concluded:

- 65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, which is down 12 percentage points over the last decade.
- The religiously unaffiliated, which consists of people who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular,” now stands at 26%, which is up from 17% in 2009.
- Protestantism and Catholicism in America are also on the decline. In 2009, 51% of Americans identified as Protestant, whereas only 43% do now, and likewise, 23% identified as Catholic, whereas only 20% do now.
- Yet, the religious “nones” – those who claim to have no religion are increasing – atheists from 2% in 2009 to 4% now; agnostics from 3% to 5%, and 17% of Americans describe their religion as “nothing in particular,” which is up from 12% in 2009.

# THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM: THE DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH

## PC (USA) Church Trends Data – 2018-2021

- The PC (USA) lost 158,931 members, which is equivalent to an average of over three members leaving a local church each year. This reveals that the PC (USA) had a net loss of members for four consecutive years.
- As a member of Salem Presbytery, in the same four-year time frame, Salem lost 2,997 members, an average net loss of over five members of every church each year. Statistics show only 96 baptisms reported in Salem in 2021 with 132 congregations reporting. This is less than one baptism per congregation.
- To be fair, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the gathering of many congregations for at least part of the year, but with a total membership of 19,646 members this number still seems low. Yet, this is also representative of the whole denomination given the total number of baptisms reported in 2021 in the PC (USA) was 9,770 with 8,774 churches reporting. This equates to just over one baptism per congregation.
- Nonetheless, the data shows a continual decline in membership, as well as our congregations struggling to baptize new members in the faith. It is important to note that the PC (USA) has still not entered in all the data they've received at this time due to the pandemic and to staffing shortages.

# THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM: THE DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH

## The Mainline Evangelism Project – Four-year Study

- “New Christians are joining the faith in mainline churches, but the vast majority are our own children or new spouses, and 65% to 80% of the fastest growing congregations in each denomination are in the South or are predominantly racial/ethnic. (Only the American Baptists, at 51% have a large percentage of racial/ethnic churches. The other mainline denominations are 89% to 97% Caucasian.”
- Findings show that the largest growth occurs from natural growth of Christian families from the South, where church is a part of the culture. Researchers agree that these racial/ethnic churches are covering for Caucasian congregations that are showing little to no growth in membership. In addition to the ongoing decline in new converts to the Christian faith, the Covid-19 pandemic has added another variable to the decline of church membership as many of its members have developed new habits and have not returned physically to the church building.
- An Institute for Family Studies analysis shows a significant drop in church attendance the last two years, finding that, “The share of regular churchgoers is down by 6 percent, from 34 percent in 2019 to 28 percent in 2021.” And yet it also found that, “Secular Americans who have never or seldom attended religious services increased by 7 percent.” In the midst of all the depressing statistics showing churchgoers abandoning the Church, there is a glimmer of hope that some folks are seeking faith.

# MISSIO DEI EVANGELISM

## Reclaiming our Apostolicity as Christ's "Sent Ones"

Church websites and clever marketing campaigns are helpful, but not the only ways in which churches are called to share Christ – these methods continue to tell people, “Come here to find Jesus.” Jesus didn’t do this – he found them. We must be open to being apostles as the Book of Order states:

*“Apostolicity is God’s gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God sends the Church into the world to share the gospel of God’s redemption of all things and people... To be members of the body of Christ is to be sent out to pursue the mission of God and participate in God’s new creation, God’s kingdom drawing the present into itself.”*

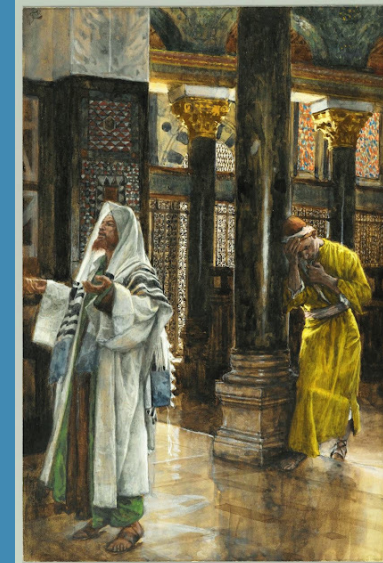
Leslie Newbigin puts it this way:

*“If the gospel is to challenge the public life of our society... It will only be by movements that begin with the local congregation in which the reality of the new creation is present, known and experienced, and from which men and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God’s redeeming grace for the whole life of society.” (Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*).*





# OUR CHRISTOLOGY SHAPES OUR EVANGELISTIC PRACTICE



# THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

## Who is Jesus?

Jesus asks his disciples, “*Who do people say that I am?*” “*Who do you say that I am?*” (Mark 8:27)

Our Christology is based on our interpretations of the gospel accounts, but our primary Christology – the Jesus we’ve come to know most clearly can be understood in light of our favorite gospel story or stories. For my project I have utilized two primary resources to support my research: Steven Bevans and Roger Schroeder’s book, *Constants in Context: A Theology for Mission Today* & Brian McLaren’s book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*.

Bevans and Schroeder share six constants that frame Christianity in its missionary nature: in the world:

- *Christology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, Soteriology, Anthropology, and Culture.*
- They provide continuity despite the various contexts where the church is present in the world.

They share three typologies that come from church historian, Justo Gonzalez, and liberation/feminist theologian, Dorothee Solle. The typologies lay out a common theme in the constants that help identify how people view mission and evangelism through a certain theological lens.

- Gonzalez formulates these from the early church fathers of Christian history: Tertullian, Origen, and Irenaeus.
- Solle depicts them in a more generalized political lens: orthodox/conservative, liberal, and liberation theology.



## BEVANS AND SCHROEDER

**Blending Gonzalez and Solle's typologies looks like this:**

Type A – Tertullian/Orthodox – focus on law

Type B – Origen/Liberal – focus on truth

Type C – Irenaeus/Liberation Theology – focus on history

**As to mission and evangelism, each type takes different approaches reflecting the diversity of the Church.**

**Type A Christians** – “*Saving Souls*” – Church's mission is to save souls, preaching the gospel so that others may experience the salvation of Jesus Christ. They see their vocation as proclaiming the good news everywhere. This requires a verbal proclamation of what Christ has done, intentionally speaking to people about faith and its importance in our lives. They see salvation from God as a gift to be shared with urgency.

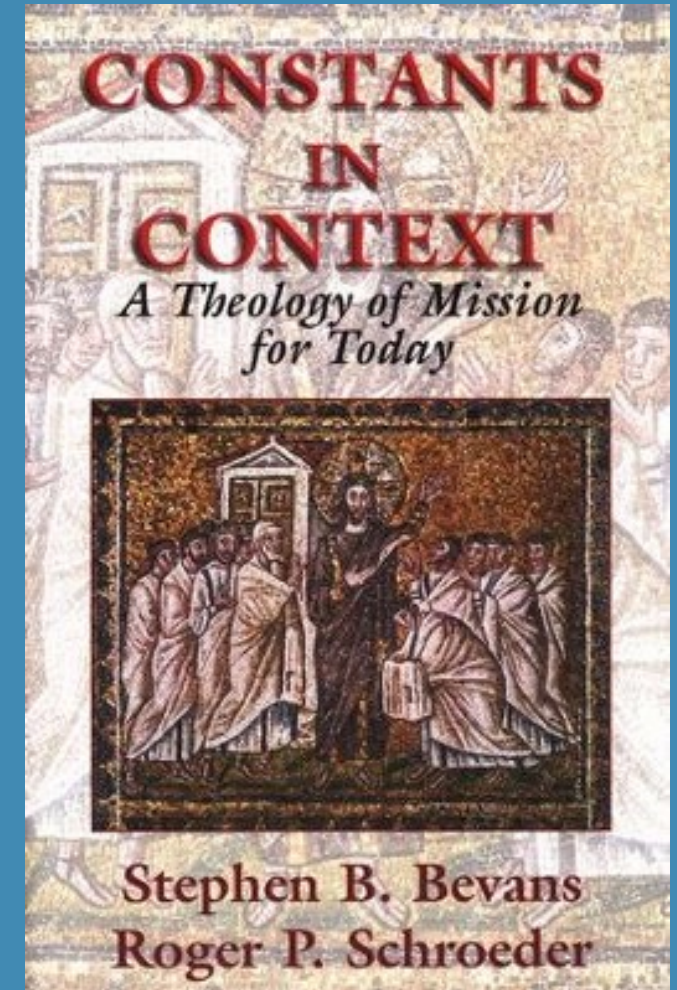
**Type B Christians** – “*Mission/Nurtured Faith*” – Church's mission modeled with bold humility. One is not taking Christ into a given situation because Christ is already there. They view mission as participation in Christ's presence which is not dependent on everyone accepting the gospel; God will provide opportunities beyond this. This Christian sees the importance of proclamation as discipleship, a nurtured faith, rather than conversion. They view Christian education as the ongoing process of learning and growing into the fullness of Christ. They value the importance of spiritual growth as a means of living into the kingdom on earth.



# BEVANS AND SCHROEDER

**Type C Christians** – “*Social Justice/Mission*” – Church’s mission is a visible witness of God’s liberating power lived in community, where proclamation of reconciliation with God is practiced with mercy, compassion, and justice to liberate the suffering and the poor. This Christian sees proclamation in service to the poor and suffering. They approach mission and evangelism from the standpoint of serving those in need, whether it’s feeding the hungry, dealing with systemic issues of injustice, or providing medical care to those who can’t afford it. They are not as focused on verbal proclamation as they are in embodying the gospel in their liberating efforts.

These typologies reflect the diversity of personalities that exist within the body of Christ and understanding them helps us see three different approaches to mission and evangelism. We see these approaches to mission and evangelism lived out in our congregations through the diversity of those who participate in the body of Christ.



# PC (USA) MODELED UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE CHURCH PARTICIPATES IN MISSION

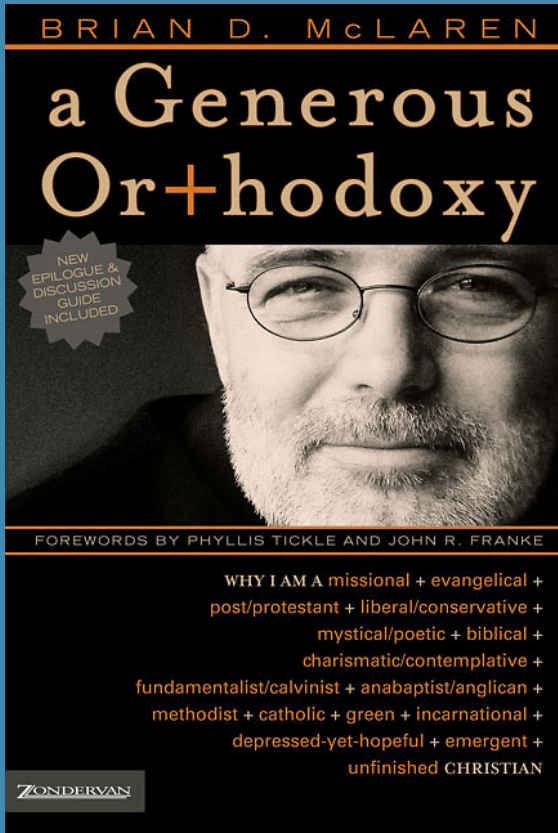
In the PC (USA) we can see these typologies present as well. This model details mission broken out into three subsets:

- **Evangelism (Type A),**
- **Compassionate service (Type B),**
- **Social justice (Type C)**

**Note:** These typologies are not perfect, but they help us see why people respond to mission and evangelism differently and it lays the groundwork for how we engage these different types of people in our congregations.



# BRIAN MCLAREN – A GENEROUS ORTHODOXY



McLaren's book is centered on the good news that the Church of Christ is diverse when it comes to our personal Christologies. He shares the seven Jesus' he's come to know along his journey of faith. In his view, each image of Jesus is essential to who Jesus is and rather than elevating one above another, the Church should celebrate that we have a generous orthodoxy that proclaims all of them as being good news found in Christ.

For my project, I am using McLaren's images of Jesus as a framework for the seven different Christologies found in the gospels. However, in order to ensure that his political and denominational references do not skew my research, I have renamed them to be more biblically based.

## McLaren's Titles:

1. Conservative Protestant Jesus
2. Pentecostal/Charismatic Jesus
3. Roman Catholic Jesus
4. Eastern Orthodox Jesus
5. Liberal Protestant Jesus
6. Anabaptist Jesus
7. Jesus of the Oppressed

## My Research Titles:

1. Savior
2. Healer
3. God with Us
4. Life-Giver
5. Social Justice
6. Teacher
7. Liberator

# MODELS OF EVANGELISM

In addition, I researched different models of evangelism to understand various ways in which the church shares the good news of Jesus Christ. For this project I have utilized models from Priscilla-Pope Levinson (Models of Evangelism), Frances Adeney (Graceful Evangelism), Rick Richardson (Evangelism and Social Capital) and William Abraham (The Logic of Evangelism). In doing so, I have compiled all the evangelism models into five primary models that identify with the seven images of Jesus. They are:

**Conversion Model:** - Aligns with the image of Savior

Type A (Bevans and Schroeder)

- I. Conversion/sharing the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection and the importance of a personal relationship with him. This could be prison ministry, one on one conversations, personal visitation, mentoring, proclamation of salvation – evangelistic crusades, big tent revivals, etc....

Frances Adeney –

Priscilla Pope-Levinson –

William Abraham –

Transforming Worldview and Church Planting

Personal Evangelism and Church Growth

Public Proclamation of the Gospel, Converting Individuals to the Christian Faith, Church Growth and Planting



## MODELS OF EVANGELISM

**Demonstration of God's Power Model:** - Aligns with the image of Healer and Liberator

Type B (Bevans and Schroeder)

2. **Demonstration of God's power/speaking and emphasizing Christ's miracles and power over things that oppress or hold us captive.** This could be praying for the sick, laying on of hands, healing and wholeness services, caring for those who are ill or grieving, helping fight addictions, and seeking revival through the Spirit's power.

Frances Adeney –

Faith Sharing

Priscilla Pope-Levinson –

Visitation and Revival

Rick Richardson –

Demonstration of God's Power

**Proclamation of God's Presence Model:** - Aligns with the image of God with Us and Life-Giver

Type B (Bevans and Schroeder)

3. **Proclamation of God's presence with us in all of life's situations, including hardship and death.** This could be an incarnational ministry – being with people where they are, extending hospitality by preparing and giving food, committing to a prayer ministry, sending cards and notes as an extension of Christ's Church, and inviting others to church to encounter the good news of Christ through worship.

Frances Adeney –

Community Practices

Priscilla Pope-Levinson –

Visitation and Liturgical

William Abraham –

Public Proclamation of the Gospel

Rick Richardson –

Distinctive Lifestyle of the Alternative Community

## MODELS OF EVANGELISM

**Acts of Mercy Model:** - aligns with the image of Social Justice and Liberator

Type C (Bevans and Schroeder)

4. Acts of mercy, justice, peace/caring for the marginalized, poor, needy, and those who cannot help themselves.

This could be participating in feeding ministries, helping the homeless, impoverished, and working towards justice through the prophetic witness of Christ's care for the downcast.

Frances Adeney –

Fulfilling Needs and Prophetic Preaching

Priscilla Pope-Levinson –

Prophetic

William Abraham –

Public Acts of Mercy, Justice, and Peace

**Making Disciples Model:** - aligns with the image of Teacher

Type A (Bevans and Schroeder)

5. Making disciples/focusing on becoming disciples and followers of Jesus, which includes imitating Christ's ways and living an alternative lifestyle. This could be inviting others to church to participate in classes designed to share Christ, like Alpha, or leading small group Bible studies that invite those outside the church to participate and learn about Christ.

Frances Adeney –

Discipleship in Context

Priscilla Pope-Levinson –

Small Group

William Abraham –

Recruiting and Making Disciples of Jesus

Rick Richardson –

Distinctive Lifestyle of the Alternative Community

# MODELS OF EVANGELISM

## Five Models & Images Simplified

1. Conversion Model: - Savior
2. God's Power Model: - Healer and Liberator
3. God's Presence Model: - God with Us and Life-Giver
4. Acts of Mercy Model: - Social Justice and Liberator
5. Making Disciples Model: - Teacher

## PASTOR PARTICIPATION

### Pastor Participation:

- 45 pastors of Salem Presbytery, were invited to participate of which 33 participated.
- I setup group interviews on Zoom in which I asked them to answer two primary questions which were emailed out in advance of the meeting:
  1. What is your favorite gospel story (this could be about Jesus or a teaching of him) and how have you come to know Jesus most clearly through this story? (Are there other factors that make this story personal for you such as life experiences (good or bad), upbringing in a particular faith tradition, or even your current faith tradition?).
  2. Considering the question above and based on your relationship with Christ, of the five evangelism methods listed below, which method are you most led to practice? Would you say there's a correlation between your relationship with Christ and the way you do evangelism?
- Following the shared group time, I then shared the seven different images of Jesus that I was teaching a class on at our church and asked them which one or ones did they most identify with. Answers were shared and recorded.
- Responses were coded and into an Excel spreadsheet which allowed me to see if there their Christology aligned with their preferred model of evangelism.



## CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION

### Congregational Participation: “Images of Jesus”

FPC Boone, NC

- 7-week Sunday school class highlighting a different image of Jesus each week during Lent.
- Also preached a 7-week Sermon Series on this in tandem.
- Class was included lecture and small group conversation centered on two stories in the gospels that spoke to the particular image of the day.
- Biblical Art was used as a vehicle for conversation – images that depicted the stories we read about.
- Classes were in person and on Zoom and all classes were recorded on Zoom so that members could go back and watch a class if they missed one.
- I developed an online survey for participants to take after they had been a part of all seven classes.
- We had over 68 participants involved in the class and 48 completed the survey.
- Survey results were compiled and coded into an Excel spreadsheet which allowed me to see if their Christology matched their preferred method of evangelism.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Clergy Data:

- Throughout five weeks, 33 pastors were interviewed in small groups – age ranges from 26-75.
- 18 were men, 15 were women, 31 were Caucasian, and 2 were African American.

### The pastors represented:

20 senior/head of staff pastors, 1 transitional executive presbyter, 1 associate pastor, 1 parish associate, 3 honorably retired pastors, 2 campus ministry pastors, 3 validated pastors, and 2 members at large pastors.

Each pastor shared their favorite gospel story, which I have broken down into categories:

- Teachings of Jesus (parables or direct instruction) - 12
- Healing stories - 6
- Resurrection accounts (empty tomb or resurrection encounters) - 5
- Encounters with Jesus (woman caught in adultery, Samaritan woman at the well, disciples called to follow) - 5
- Miracle stories (calming the storm) - 2
- Incarnation account (birth of Jesus) - 1
- Mystery account (transfiguration) - 1

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Clergy Data:

#### Of all the stories shared:

- The Parable of the Prodigal Son was mentioned 5 times,
- The woman caught in adultery was mentioned 2 times,
- The Samaritan woman at the well was mentioned 2 times,
- Jesus calming the storm was mentioned 2 times.

All six healing stories were different, and of the five additional teaching stories (besides the Parable of the Prodigal Son), none were the same.

Each pastor also shared their preferred method of evangelism based on the five models provided to them. Below is a breakdown of the pastor's responses:

- God with Us - 17
- Acts of Mercy - 6
- Making Disciples - 6
- Conversion - 2
- Demonstration of God's Power - 2

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Clergy Data:

- Within one presbytery in the PC (USA) a diversity of evangelistic practices exists among its pastors. This may have implications, reflecting this could also be true for each of the denomination's 166 presbyteries, although further research would be needed to prove it.
- Most pastors in Salem Presbytery prefer to share the good news in an incarnational way; caring for people in various ways, as well as through acts of mercy which include caring for the marginalized, poor, and needy through material and immaterial means such as social justice work.
- In my 23 years of experience serving in the PC (USA) in non-ordained roles and as a pastor, this reflects a strong emphasis of evangelism as mission – serving the poor and needy, which is reflective of the PC (USA)'s largest emphasis with its Matthew 25 initiative that seeks to care for the poor and marginalized as well as working towards the eradication of poverty.
- **As it pertains to whether one's Christology shapes their view and practice of evangelism, 100% of the pastors interviewed articulated an image of Jesus consistent with their preferred method of evangelism.** Once again, this is based on hearing their interpretations of their favorite gospel story as they are coded from the models of evangelism. There were absolutely no discrepancies among those interviewed.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Clergy Data:

I gave pastors the opportunity to pick which image of Jesus they most preferred after our interviews, and several of them asked if they could choose more than one, which I allowed. Below is the breakdown:

- Jesus as God with Us - 12
- Jesus as Teacher - 6
- Jesus as Life-Giver - 4
- Jesus as Socially Just/Social Justice - 3
- Jesus as Liberator - 3
- Jesus as Savior - 2
- Jesus as Healer - 2
- “None of the above” – 1

29 responded with images that corresponded directly with their favorite gospel story, and four responded with a different image; however, that image was interconnected with the evangelism model they chose.

For instance, a few shared a gospel story that connects with the “Social Justice Jesus,” but they mentioned “Liberator Jesus” as the image they connected with. “Liberator” is coded with “Social Justice” (model #4) and with “Healer” (model #2), thus, they were still on point with their model of evangelism; they just mentioned another image that’s closely associated with the other.

One refused to pick an image of Jesus because he felt that it was too hard to parcel Jesus into different categories. Thus, 32 of the 33 participants affirmed an image of Jesus consistent with their Christology as coded from their gospel story and evangelism models.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Clergy Data:

Just within one gospel story, people can see different images of Jesus based on how they interpret the passage. Interpretation is the key to understanding one's Christology.

- Five pastors noted that the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) was their favorite story. Out of the five responses came three different images of Jesus – “God with Us,” “Social Justice,” and “Teacher.” One pastor emphasized the mercy extended to the prodigal son and the eldest son, which correlates with the “Social Justice” Jesus – the One who acts with mercy. Two pastors emphasized the love of the Father that never leaves either of his sons, which reflects the “God with Us” Jesus. And two pastors emphasized the parable as Jesus’ teaching, for he is teaching us about God’s grace, love, and empathy for all of us – the faithful and wayward, which correlates with “Teacher” Jesus.
- Within one story there were three different of images of Jesus identified, which is interesting because I taught this story to our congregation from the standpoint of Jesus as “Savior,” which provides a fourth image that could also be seen.
- This is also true of three pastors who shared that the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) was their favorite story. Between the three of them, two images of Jesus were noted.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### FPC Boone Data:

- While we had as many as 68 participants in the weekly Sunday school class (in person and via Zoom), only 48 participants filled out the final survey.
- All were Caucasian, 29 were female, 19 were male, and participants ages ranged from 42-82 years of age, with the average age being 67.5 years old.

Each participant was asked in the survey to share their favorite gospel story, which I have broken down into categories:

- Teachings of Jesus (parables or direct instruction) - 18
- Encounters with Jesus (Samaritan woman, anointing of Jesus, calling the disciples, Mary and Martha, Jesus and the children, and an adulterous woman) - 8
- Miracle stories (feeding the 5,000, changing water to wine, and calming the storm) -8
- Healing stories (all were the healing of the woman with the blood disorder – Luke 8:43-48) – 3
- Incarnation stories (birth of Jesus) - 2
- Mystery account (Jesus' baptism) - 3
- Crucifixion account - 1
- “Summary of the Bible” account (John 3:16) – 1

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### FPC Boone Data:

Of all the stories shared, the Parable of the Prodigal Son was mentioned six times, the Parable of the Good Samaritan was mentioned six times, the feeding of the 5,000 was mentioned six times, the Samaritan woman at the well was mentioned four times, the resurrection account was mentioned five times, and the healing of the woman with the blood disorder was mentioned three times. The majority of participants chose a story that involved Jesus teaching, performing a miracle, or of a divine encounter with him.

Each participant was also asked to choose which image of Jesus they most identified with. They were presented with seven images in the class, but they were also given the option to choose “none of the above.” Participants were asked to only choose one option. The breakdown goes as follows:

- Jesus as Savior - 16
- Jesus as Socially Just/Social Justice - 14
- Jesus as God with Us - 4
- Jesus as Life-Giver - 4
- Jesus as Liberator - 4
- Jesus as Healer - 3
- Jesus as Teacher - 1
- “None of the above” – 2



# RESEARCH RESULTS

## FPC Boone Data:

Participants were also asked to choose which method of evangelism they preferred based on the five models shared with them. They were given the option of choosing up to two, although not everyone did so.

Of the lay folks surveyed and based on their response to their preferred image of Jesus, participants preferred the following methods of evangelism:

- God with Us - 16
- Acts of Mercy - 15
- Demonstration of God's Power - 9
- Conversion - 5
- Making Disciples - 3

Because participants were given the option of choosing up to two methods, there were 69 total responses that slightly changed the data presented above.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Conversion/sharing the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection and the importance of a personal relationship with him. This could be prison ministry, one on one conversations, personal visitation, mentoring, proclamation of salvation - evangelistic crusades, big tent revivals, etc...	10.42%	5
Demonstration of God's power/speaking and emphasizing Christ's miracles and power over things that oppress or hold us captive. This could be praying for the sick, laying on of hands, healing and wholeness services, caring for those who are ill, or grieving, helping people with addition issues, and seeking revival through the Spirit's power.	22.92%	11
Proclamation of God's presence with us in all of life's situations, including hardship and death. This could be an incarnational ministry - being with people where they are, extending hospitality by preparing and giving food, committing to a prayer ministry, sending cards and notes as an extension of Christ's Church, and inviting others to encounter the good news of Christ through worship.	45.83%	22
Acts of mercy, justice, peace - caring for the marginalized, poor, needy, and those who cannot help themselves. This could be participating in feeding ministries, helping the homeless, impoverished, and working towards justice through prophetic witness of Christ's care for the downcast.	52.08%	25
Making disciples; focusing on becoming disciples and followers of Jesus, which includes imitating Christ's ways and living an alternative lifestyle (being set apart). This could be inviting others to church to participate in classes designed to share Christ, like Alpha, or leading small group bible studies that invite those outside the church to participate and learn about Christ.	12.50%	6
Total Respondents: 48		

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### FPC Boone Data:

Nonetheless, the data remains consistent as the “Acts of Mercy” and the “God with Us” models are still the top two preferred methods, while “Demonstration of God’s power” remains in the middle, and “Making Disciples” surpasses the “Conversion” model by just one.

This also shows that within one congregation in the PC (USA) that a diversity of evangelistic practices exists among its laity. This also makes the case stronger that it’s equally possible that it could be true for any congregation within the denomination, or any congregation at all.

In addition, the preferred method of evangelism within the church was the “God with Us” and “Acts of Mercy” models, which are identical to the results from the pastor interviews. Once again, this is consistent with the PC (USA)’s focus on mission as it relates to caring for people in need.

As it pertains to whether one’s Christology shapes their view and practice of evangelism, 22 of the 48 surveys directly revealed it to be true (45.8%).

While less than half of the participants showed a direct connection, there were also other factors that I believe contribute to understanding the data better.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### FPC Boone Data:

- Members of the congregation were not put into small groups and interviewed in the same manner as the pastors of Salem Presbytery. They were part of a class and took an online survey on their own. I was unable to listen to their individual interpretations of their favorite gospel story, as was done with the pastor groups. Thus, I had nothing other than what they shared about the story, which was not as detailed as the pastor's responses.
- I noticed a trend among some of the respondents; many of them identified with Jesus as “Savior,” which did not correlate directly with their preferred method of evangelism. Yet when you looked at their favorite gospel story and their preferred method of evangelism, it matched.
- For example, one person noted that their favorite story was Jesus feeding the 5,000 and stated, “*Jesus provides food for the hungry, but also provision for the future.*” His preferred method of evangelism was “Acts of Mercy,” which aligns with his interpretation of Jesus being merciful to those gathered who had not brought anything to eat. Yet, he chose “Savior” as his preferred image of Jesus. Why would he choose “Savior” when he could have chosen “Social Justice?”
- Another respondent did something similar, choosing the Parable of the Lost Sheep as her favorite story and stated, “*Jesus searches for those who are lost.*” Her preferred method of evangelism was “God with Us,” which aligns with her interpretation of the God who pursues us, like the shepherd in the story. Yet, she chose “Socially Just” as her preferred image of Jesus instead of “God with Us.”

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Faith Tradition/Denominational Upbringing –

- As I began to look closely at the stories shared and the evangelistic models chosen, 15 respondents all had gospel stories and methods of evangelism that aligned, but their preferred image of Jesus was inconsistent with what they had chosen.
- One of the benefits of being a pastor is building relationships with your church members. In doing so, you get to know about them and their faith backgrounds. There were nine individuals who chose “Savior” as their preferred image of Jesus and yet had gospel stories and methods of evangelism that matched with a different image of Jesus. All nine of these folks grew up in the Baptist tradition before becoming Presbyterians.
- As one who also began in the Baptist tradition (both in the Southern Baptist and Cooperative Baptist churches) I am aware that the image of Jesus as “Savior of sinners” is the primary image taught and preached. Altar calls are common almost every Sunday so that people may respond in faith and accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.
- So, is it possible that someone’s upbringing in the faith can dictate the image of Jesus they most connect with, and yet their favorite gospel story and method of evangelism be different? I believe it absolutely can. It’s hard to choose another image of Jesus when you’ve grown up hearing that Jesus is “Lord and Savior” time and again.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Life Experience –

- In addition, I noticed one person had chosen a “God with Us” model of evangelism, and their favorite gospel story was of the resurrection account in John’s gospel where Jesus encounters Mary. Yet, she chose “Healer” as her preferred image of Jesus. Once again, this seemed odd, but I also knew that she was a cancer survivor and, therefore, Jesus as “Healer” would be very important and personal to her.

### Vocation –

- Another person chose the Parable of the Prodigal Son, focusing on Jesus’ great love and forgiveness, and chose a “Conversion” model of evangelism that should align with Jesus as “Savior.” Yet her preferred image of Jesus was “Teacher.” She was a lifelong teacher herself, which made sense.
- The data suggests that there are outside factors that can shape one’s preferred image of Jesus against their favorite gospel stories and preferred method of evangelism such as: faith tradition, profession, or even life experiences.
- This can alter the results even when the gospel stories and evangelism models align.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### FPC Boone Data:

- In addition, 11 respondents chose an image of Jesus that was consistent with their favorite gospel story, but their model of evangelism did not align. For instance, one respondent chose an image of Jesus as “Social Justice” and paired it with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. She commented that the Good Samaritan story teaches, “It’s our responsibility as Christians to respond with acts of mercy to those in need.” Her preferred method of evangelism was “Demonstration of God’s power” (Healer/Liberator model), instead of “Acts of Mercy.” She even stated that we are to respond with acts of mercy.
- It appears that she envisioned this model because it speaks directly to “caring for those who are ill,” as the man in the story was left beaten on the side of the road, and the Samaritan bandaged his wounds and sought care for him. The “Acts of Mercy” model speaks more about providing care to the marginalized, poor, and needy and those who cannot help themselves. This could be participating in feeding ministries, helping the homeless and impoverished, and working towards justice through prophetic witness of Christ’s care for the downcast.
- It’s quite possible that her favorite gospel story correlated more with healing than providing conventional care for the needy. This same trend exists with the other 10 respondents as well. All of this suggests that the interpretation of the evangelistic model can also play a role in how one correlates their favorite gospel story with it.



## RESEARCH RESULTS

### FPC Boone Data:

- Lay participants also showed varied interpretations of their favorite stories as it pertains to the image of Jesus that speaks to them, much like the pastors did.
- Once again, the Parable of the Prodigal Son stood out as one of the most loved stories, and yet respondents connected with Jesus as “Liberator,” “Social Justice,” “God with Us,” “Teacher,” and “Savior.” There were six respondents who chose this as their favorite gospel story, and five of them selected different images associated with it.
- Six others chose the Parable of the Good Samaritan as their favorite, and only two images were noted: “Social Justice” and “Liberator.” As you can see, our personal interpretation is the key to the Jesus we identify with.
- Participants were also asked if there was another image of Jesus that was important to them that was not shared in the class, and the responses were: friend, quiet Jesus, forgiver, servant, and a trusted and respected companion.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Does our Christology shape our view and practice of evangelism? YES!

100% of all pastors interviewed directly connected their Christology to a model of evangelism that correlates with it. Data from the laity of FPC Boone, NC also shows enough evidence for this to be true, with 45.8% of people directly matching their Christology with their evangelism practice.

Trends came out of this research that seem to imply that one's denominational upbringing, life circumstances, and even vocation can influence the image of Jesus one identifies with, even when their favorite gospel story and evangelistic practice match suggesting a different image of Jesus. This accounted for 15 respondents surveyed, which if included, would change the statistics to show 77% of congregants surveyed affirm this thesis. I suggest they should be included because:

Pastors were only asked to share their favorite gospel story and model of evangelism, whereas the laity were asked to share their specific image of Jesus. These 15 respondents shared interpreted stories that aligned with their model of evangelism. So, if we were to compare "apples to apples," these 15 respondents would have been included as a group whose Christology affirmed their evangelistic practice.

In addition, 11 other congregants connected an image of Jesus consistent with their favorite gospel story even though their evangelism model didn't align. This could be attributed to their interpretation of the evangelism model. Nonetheless, it's evident that one's Christology does shape and influence their evangelistic practice most of the time.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- It is also true that within one PC (USA) congregation and within one group of pastors within the same presbytery, that every image of Jesus was identified with, as well as every evangelism model. This affirms that the good news of Jesus is diverse and that our bias of the good news should be shared in a multiplicity of ways to engage everyone.
- This requires churches of every faith tradition to examine their model or models of evangelism and to consider other avenues of sharing the good news, providing opportunities for everyone to be involved. This means that a “one size fits all” model is not enough and leaves out many in our churches who are uncomfortable sharing Christ in one way.
- It also affirms that evangelism can be done in different ways that are still biblical, even if our own denomination or faith tradition doesn’t generally practice it. Sometimes churches can focus on things that divide us rather than on the things that unite us.

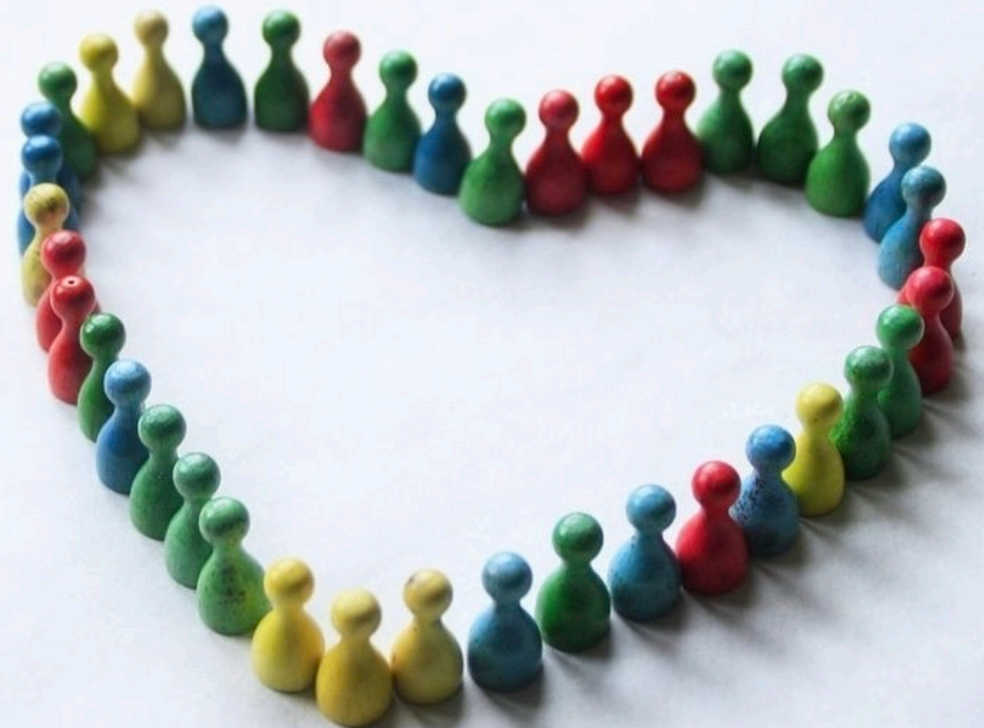
Donald Posterski says, *“We should appreciate followers of Jesus who are from different churches and religious traditions than our own. We have more in common with Christians from other persuasions than we do with people of the society who have no concern for the things of God. What we share in common is far more important than what tends to separate us.”* (Donald Posterski – *Reinventing Evangelism*)

*HOW SHOULD  
THE CHURCH  
SHARE THE  
GOOD NEWS?*

*SEVEN POINTS  
OF EMPHASIS  
REGARDING  
EVANGELISM*

NOW THE  
BODY IS  
NOT  
MADE UP  
OF ONE  
PART  
BUT OF  
MANY.

- 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14 -



## DIVERSITY OF THE CHURCH

- Faith traditions also tend to gravitate towards models that seem to align with their own Christologies and theology, but we must remember that churches are composed of members who identify with different Christologies that do not always align with their particular church's faith tradition.
- Mark Teasdale associates particular faith traditions towards particular models of evangelism. I have diagrammed them within the models I have suggested as William Abraham and Rick Richardson have identified them in their own terms:

### 1. Conversion Model: - associated with Evangelical and Congregational traditions

William Abraham – Public Proclamation of the Gospel, Converting Individuals to the Christian Faith, Church Growth and Planting

### 2. Demonstration of God's Power Model: - associated with Pentecostal traditions

Rick Richardson – Demonstration of God's Power

### 3. Proclamation of God's Presence Model: - associated with Eastern Orthodox tradition

William Abraham – Public Proclamation of the Gospel  
Rick Richardson – Distinctive Lifestyle of the Alternative Community

## DIVERSITY OF THE CHURCH

### 4. Acts of Mercy Model: - associated with Liberation and Postcolonial theologies

William Abraham – Public Acts of Mercy, Justice, and Peace

### 5. Making Disciples Model: - associated with the Wesleyan or Anabaptist traditions

William Abraham – Recruiting and Making Disciples of Jesus

Rick Richardson – Distinctive Lifestyle of the Alternative Community

- Notice that none of the Calvinistic traditions were mentioned by Teasdale. Given the data from my research, most Presbyterians gravitate towards the “Proclamation of God’s Presence” and the “Acts of Mercy” models. This is consistent with the most recent evangelism resource put forth by the PC(USA) called 8 Habits of Evangelism.
- The data from my research proves that within one group of Presbyterian pastors and within one congregation, that every image of Jesus and every model of evangelism was identified with.
- If this is true for one group of pastors and lay people of a particular denomination, it likely points to the same truth within any tradition.
- Thus, a “one size fits all” approach to evangelism isn’t going to involve everyone in the church towards the work of evangelism.



## SEVEN POINTS OF EMPHASIS REGARDING EVANGELISM MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW AND PRACTICE

Points shared from David Bosch's 18 points of Evangelism in Transforming Mission.

### 1. "Evangelism involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do."

One cannot witness to something that they haven't personally experienced, seen, or heard. Evangelism is not devoid of a personal relationship with God, for that relationship bears witness to the personal experience of the mighty grace and love of God. Our task is to bear witness to what Scripture teaches, but it's not a word that exists only in the past; rather, it's the Living Word that has drawn us into his story, which is both past and present and will also be future.

### 2. "Evangelism is always an invitation."

Jesus was constantly inviting others to himself or even inviting himself into a boat or a home with others. Jesus doesn't manipulate or force himself on others. He may pursue someone, but he never forces them to believe. He always offers an invitation.

### 3. "The one who evangelizes is a witness not a judge."

We have not earned the right to be the Judge, nor is it our place to assume who is saved and who is not; rather, it's our place to continue to share the good news of the gospel. We are called to be witnesses of the grace we've received and to extend that same grace to others, regardless of whether they accept Christ as Lord and Savior. Jesus didn't condemn anyone, and neither should we.

## SEVEN POINTS OF EMPHASIS REGARDING EVANGELISM MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW AND PRACTICE

Points shared from David Bosch's 18 points of Evangelism in Transforming Mission.

4. "Evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelizes – the Church – is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle."

Paul says that we are ambassadors of Christ. This can be positive or detrimental based on how we choose to live. Thus, we are to live in the ways of Jesus, which means that we are to preach and to practice the good news. Evangelism is more than articulating the good news of the gospel; it's embodying it in our lives.

5. "Evangelism offers people salvation as a present gift and with it assurance of eternal bliss."

Salvation is a gift, faith is a gift, and grace is a gift freely given by God. Salvation is more than eternity in heaven; it's real life now. Therefore, evangelism offers this gift that we can't give, a gift that only God can grant. Because it is a gift, it isn't earned or deserved by anyone. This puts everyone on the same playing field, for salvation is not based on race, gender, class, educational status, or anything that humans use to differentiate or separate themselves. It is based on the gift of Jesus Christ, to be experienced now and to be fully revealed when we enter his presence for all eternity.

## SEVEN POINTS OF EMPHASIS REGARDING EVANGELISM MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW AND PRACTICE

Points shared from David Bosch's 18 points of Evangelism in Transforming Mission.

### 6. "Authentic evangelism is always contextual."

Jesus enters a specific context, born an Israelite living under the occupation of Rome. He is born a peasant and identifies with those who struggle day-to-day. His mission is not devoid of the specific context in which he lives, for he encounters real people who find themselves in differing life situations. He doesn't call people out of the world in which they live, but he calls them into a new reality – to live into the kingdom reign of God. The Church is not an escape from the world. The Church is called to follow her Lord whose mission is anywhere and everywhere. Therefore, we reach out to people in their context, recognizing that there are many who find themselves in unjust situations and who desperately need the good news of Jesus Christ.

### 7. "Evangelism is not only verbal proclamation."

The word and the deed cannot be separated from one another; they go hand in hand. David Bosch quotes Leslie Newbigin stating, *"It is the 'Word made flesh' that is the gospel. The deed without the word is dumb; the word without the deed is empty. Words interpret deeds and deeds validate words, which does not mean that every deed must have a word attached to it, nor every word a deed."* (David Bosch, Transforming Mission). It's important that our words and our deeds share the good news of Jesus; they must be consistent!

# HOW SHOULD WE SHARE THE GOOD NEWS?

- How should we share the good news? The same way Jesus shared it.
- These seven essentials of evangelism must guide us as we acknowledge the Jesus we've come to know most clearly and as we engage in evangelistic practices that correlate with our understanding of Christ.
- As a diverse body of Christ, we have been called together as the Church to engage in God's mission of sharing what we know to be true – our bias of the good news in Christ. We should celebrate this rich diversity as God's great design so that we may all contribute in ways that meet people where they are, just as Jesus has met us where we are.
- And even though our specific denomination or faith tradition may lean towards particular evangelistic practices, we must recognize the diversity of Christologies present within our congregations and be intentional in prayerfully discerning how God may lead us to expand evangelistic practices that provide a place for everyone to participate in ways they feel called.
- In doing so, we live into our calling as disciples of Jesus to “tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love,” reclaiming evangelism as good news!

## UTILIZING THIS RESOURCE

- This project is intended to be a resource for churches to use for self-reflection as it pertains to the different Christologies that exist, so that the laity can also be intentional in participating in the work of evangelism.
- Acknowledging the Jesus you've come to know most clearly helps one understand ways in which they can be intentional in sharing him.
- Pastors or lay leaders can use the teaching outlines in the appendix as an opportunity to lead a class focused on doing such work with their congregants. The evangelism models correlate with the specific images of Jesus to provide a roadmap to prayerfully discern ways in which the church can be involved in different approaches to evangelistic outreach.
- The teaching outlines can be used as they are, or as a guide that allows creativity and flexibility to change the scriptures or artwork if desired. One may find other pieces of artwork that better capture what you'd like to focus on, or you may choose a different gospel story or stories to pair with each specific image of Jesus.
- And if you'd rather not do a class, but still seek the same results, you can use the group interview approach with members to discuss their Christology and preferred method of evangelism which is also found in the appendix.

## KEY LEARNINGS

### Variables Contributing to Differences in Research:

- Pastors are trained to think theologically about what they believe and articulate it on an ongoing basis. Thus, interviewing pastors about their Christology is different from interviewing the average layperson. Laypersons have a Christology buried within them, but it takes exploration and self-reflection to discern it.
- My pastoral authority with our congregants may have played a role in the outcomes. I taught from my vantage point of sharing each image of Jesus with them. My intent was not to lead them, but it can still influence results.
- For instance, I taught on the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, the Feeding of the 5,000, and the Resurrection as a part of the class. Ironically, 23 of the 48 respondents (48%) noted one of these stories as their favorite gospel story. Did the class remind them of their favorite story, or did they just choose from the stories they were taught? (Group interviews without teaching might render a different outcome)
- Other variables that came to light in this research were denominational upbringing, life circumstances, and vocation as it pertained to laypersons surveyed. This can influence what they articulate as their Christology even if their favorite gospel story speaks otherwise.
- Pastoral authority can also play a role here with denominational upbringing; for all pastors admitted that their Christology influences their week-to-week sermons, thus lay people are being led to see a specific image of Jesus on a regular basis that can influence their Christology.



## FURTHER RESEARCH

- Does one's Christology change over time? And if so, does their preferred model of evangelism change with it?
- I did not delve into questions of whether one's image of Jesus is consistent with the way they have always connected to him. If life circumstances can be a variable of how we see Jesus most clearly, then it's quite possible that someone could be drawn to a specific image of Jesus but later connect to a different image of him based on the current season of life they find themselves in.
- For instance, can someone acknowledge that Jesus as "Social Justice" has been their primary image of Jesus until they were diagnosed with cancer, and now, they identify with Jesus as "Healer" or as "God with Us?" If so, does their evangelistic practice remain where it was before, or does it shift to align with the image of Jesus they now connect with? These are further questions worth exploring.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE MINISTRY

An eighth point of evangelism that is critical for us to practice:

### **Evangelism is always personal and relational**

- Jesus' proclamation of good news wasn't simply an evangelistic crusade where large groups gathered, but it took place as he encountered people in need – personally encountering people with physical, spiritual, or emotional needs. Jesus wasn't trying to manipulate people to be his followers; otherwise, many of his skeptics would have followed him rather than conspiring to crucify him. Instead, he befriended those who were willing to accept him. His demeanor, his love and grace, and his teachings drew people to him. He also befriended his opponents, accepting their invitations to table fellowship even if they had evil intentions for doing so. Jesus was always relational with everyone he encountered and even with those who sought him out.
- We affirm that God is three in one, triune, and in relationship within God's self. God comes to us in Jesus Christ to be in relationship with us and grants us the gift of the Holy Spirit, of who is Christ's presence in relationship with us daily. Thus, the *missio Dei* becomes the church's mission too.
- We cannot divorce God's being and act from our call to be in relationship with others. Thus, evangelism must model Jesus' relational witness. As I stated in chapter one, "I didn't come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ apart from the Church; someone had to share the story with me so that I could claim it for myself." That witness comes from a personal relationship with someone else who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Evangelism must always be in the context of relationships!

## CONCLUSION

- The gospel is meant to be shared and every believer is called to be an evangelist. Together as the Church of Jesus Christ we are to bear witness to the good news we've experienced in Christ.
- If we truly desire to share the gospel and to promote the kingdom of heaven on earth as it is in heaven, we must be intentional to tell the stories of Jesus that have touched our lives and continue to mold and shape us.
- We can reclaim evangelism as a good thing; not as something condemnatory that focuses on our disobedience, but on Christ's obedience for us that draws us into his grace, mercy, and love, living into the abundant life in the present.
- In doing so, we are intentional as Christ's Church to live into our mission, sharing our faith because it's good news that must be known and shared in a broken world filled with depressing news each day.