

ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE ROLE OF DISINTERESTED BENEVOLENCE
IN REGARDS TO SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT
AT WALK OF FAITH FELLOWSHIP, CLEVELAND, OHIO

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
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To my wife and children who have supported me throughout my journey to this
point and beyond

APPROVAL PAGE

Accepted by the faculty and the final demonstration examining committee of Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the project is to discover how changes in the local mission of the church transform the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio, regarding their view of servant leadership. The method used to determine the impact of servant leadership was a questionnaire developed to assess attitudinal changes after people had participated in servant related activities. The results of the survey showed substantial positive impact on the participants cognitive, affective, relational, and spiritual attitudes. The conclusions that I drew from this study was the servanthood expressed through disinterested benevolence greatly improved spirituality amongst the participants.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to discover how changes in the local mission of the church transform the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio, regarding their view of servant leadership. The research question derived from the purpose statement is: In what ways have changes in local mission transformed the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland Ohio regarding their view of servant leadership?

Overview

The project focused on discovering what, if any, transformation has taken place among the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in regards to their attitudes and actions with regard to servant leadership. The church has gone through a period of redefining its mission, relocation of its building, and reorganizing its basic functions. The leadership board has been involved in a discipleship process for the last three years that included small group experience, changes in worship location, and the planning and implementation of an interactive missional worship service. The congregation has realized the full impact of this journey. This project sought to determine the personal transformations that occurred because of these activities. It also sought to measure how these events have shaped the attendees personal missional perspectives regarding the role of servant leadership and their future

involvement.

The rationale for the project is built on the biblical, theological, historical, and contemporary resources that inform the project. The data gathered and analyzed explains how the attitudinal and behavioral changes regarding servanthood, mission, and discipleship affected the health of the congregation.

Data for the project was collected through one survey questionnaire. That instrument assessed the affective, cognitive, interpersonal, and spiritual dimensions of change. These data demonstrate theological, attitudinal and behavioral changes that occurred from the experience of these attendees in discipling, the changes in location and the changes experienced in the design and implementation of an interactive missional worship service.

Rationale

The world is changing and the church seems to be coming more and more irrelevant in the Western world. The major issues in the church are unknown in the secular world. It is because of the discontinuous change in society around us in North America, which directly effects the church, that requires a new look at how church is done (Roxburgh 2005, 29). It is for this reason that we look at the rationale for this project.

The rationale for this project was developed from personal, biblical, theological, historical and contemporary perspectives. These informed the project and provided a framework to analyze the data acquired. First, I will look at the personal perspective which drives my ministry and then turn to biblical,

theological, historical and contemporary issues.

Personal Rationale

I planted Walk of Faith Fellowship in the inner urban region of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1997 with the expectation that it would be a missional church. It was planted with a primarily postmodern and pre-Christian constituency in mind. After the initial growth and development of the group by primarily churched people, it became a traditional congregation in its own right. This tradition was not drawn as much from the historical model of mainline churches but from its own newly formed ceremonies and rites. What was lacking was a truly Biblical fellowship and structure that followed the model and instruction of Jesus on how God's people should operate in regards to servanthood and mission and the implications that has for discipleship and servant leadership.

This inward focus was limiting the church. It was in this context that the leaders began a discipling group in January of 2006. We spent time in learning spiritual disciplines and healing. We looked at the historical elements of revival that include Bible study, prayer, personal piety, fellowship and evangelism (Lovelace 1979, 42) and began applying them to our individual and corporate lives.

After a year in this discipling process we found the weakest area of the five was evangelism. In the middle of 2007 we found ourselves without a church building. This caused us to relocate in a rented storefront for almost a year where the church had been operating a teen center. It was through this

relocation that the church began a process of redefining its identity through a new worship design in our new surroundings and mission context. It became our focus to create an interactive and missional worship service that would be meaningful for the unchurched with special emphasis on children.

My rationale for this project is derived from my personal experience and journey into servant missions. My desire was to study the transformational affects of active missional servanthood on the attitudes and actions of the church attendees in order to help me to understand how to produce disciples in line with Jesus' example and teachings. It has been my passion for twelve years to produce this type of church as a model of biblical faithfulness to the intent of Jesus' mission for humanity on earth and the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer in John 17:18 that His people will be sent into the world as He was sent.

As I journeyed through this process I could not help but be informed and transformed by the process. As a servant leader, there is no greater blessing or reward than to duplicate oneself in the discipleship of others.

Biblical Rationale

Two primary themes are at stake in this project. The first is servant leadership and the other is disinterested benevolence. I limit my discussion in the biblical rationale to two specific biblical characters and develop their teachings and how they modeled it. Jesus and Paul understood the topic of servant leadership and applied it in their own lives. I am aware that the Scriptures have more to say on this subject in both the Old and New Testaments,

but I chose to limit my discussion for the sake of focus.

Jesus is the best example of servant leadership that the Bible gives us. He not only specifically taught on the topic, He also openly modeled it for His disciples. Jesus demonstrated first-hand what it looks like through acts of disinterested benevolence. This term has a particular history in my religious tradition and the concept is widely referred to in the Christian heritage. Disinterested benevolence means to give without expectation of a return. Jesus refers to this concept when he says “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8). For Him, these two concepts went hand in hand in His ministry and teachings. As I began the research, I was amazed at how much of Christ’s teachings deal with the topic. Once my eyes were opened, many parables and stories of Christ came to light.

Jesus articulated his understanding of his mission and goals in a synagogue reading found in Luke 4:18-19 (unless otherwise noted, all references are from the NIV). Jesus said His mission was to free the oppressed, heal the blind and preach good news to the poor. His goal was to bring about a radical transformation of society through the realization of the Jubilee. This was to create a level playing field, raising up those who were socially and economically downtrodden. With this text as the foundation of the study into Christ’s life and purpose, other texts become clear.

Jesus says that he did not come to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). His ultimate act of service was to be His death on the cross. In light of the root of all human sin and selfishness, Jesus came to live a life that was in

harmony with the attitude of heaven, that of selfless service.

He taught these lessons in parables. Examples include Matt. 18:21-35, the servant who is forgiven much; Matt. 22, the wedding banquet; Matt. 25, the sheep and the goats; Luke 10:30-37, the Good Samaritan and the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5: 13-16) regarding the purpose of salt and light.

Examples of Jesus modeling behavior associated with serving and disinterested benevolence include Jesus' example in the foot washing experience in John 13:1. In this ceremony Jesus demonstrated how servant leadership and disinterested benevolence come together. Other demonstrations include the healing of the sick and physically damaged and the occasions of feeding large crowds. Christ's final and greatest act of disinterested benevolence was His death on the cross. It has been a great insight to me in how much the integration of disinterested benevolence fits with the overall teaching and activities of Christ.

Paul was a "Pharisee of Pharisees" by his own admission. Pharisees were well trained in the law and it was the Pharisees who continually contested with Jesus over his prioritizing human needs over human rules. Paul therefore could be thought of as not fully understanding the relationship of servant leadership and disinterested benevolence as taught by Jesus.

But throughout Paul's writings we find evidence that he did develop an understanding of what Jesus taught. In Romans 15:1-3, Paul writes about bearing with the failings of the weak and pleasing the neighbor for his good (as Christ did for us). This is clearly a description of disinterested benevolence. What we do should not be for our own benefit, but to benefit others.

Not only did Paul teach that we should serve with disinterested benevolence, but that we should become a servant. Probably Paul's most famous statement regarding servanthood is found in Phil. 2:3-8. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: . . . who made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant." Jesus did nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but came to serve. According to Paul, we should be like Jesus. Paul used two key words to demonstrate the meaning of disinterested benevolence: mercy and grace. He describes God's mercy and grace, and urges others to become transformed in God's image. This transformation brings about a change of viewpoint that goes from self-centered to other-centered. Paul's logic in Romans, 1 Corinthians and Philippians makes this even clearer.

These two great teachers set the stage for the importance of servant leadership and the acts of disinterested benevolence. Just as with the teachings of Jesus, I have come to understand Paul in a new and deeper way. His theological teachings matched those of Jesus in the area of disinterested benevolence.

Theological Rationale

Theologians have written much in two specific areas related to this project. The first is sanctification as a means of transformation and the second deals with Christian praxis.

In Chapter Two, sanctification is discussed in two parts. The first is the general view of theologians on this topic and the other is more specific to my own

denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist understanding and application. The chapter speaks to the relationship between justification and sanctification.

Some terms that are discussed in Chapter Two and that are important to the understanding of sanctification are regeneration, holiness and (what Ronald Sider calls) holism. Holism is a variant spelling of wholism and is a term that refers to the complete person, body, mind and soul. Ronald Sider is quoted as saying “Too often Christians (especially evangelical Protestants) have proclaimed a cheap grace that offers the forgiveness of the gospel without the discipleship demands of the gospel” (Chilcote and Warner 2008, 191). I find this statement significant to the discussion of disinterested benevolence and a clear connection between one’s belief and their behavior. One significant purpose of this study is to demonstrate the relationship of the two as to how they interact and inform each other and strengthen each other.

Since Adventism was influenced by the holiness movement of the late 19th Century, sanctification is an integral part of its basic theology. Much has been written by Adventists regarding the relationship between justification and sanctification, but the most basic understanding is that they are intricately intertwined. This understanding has helped me in this project to see the significance of the two in the understanding of spiritual development.

The second theological area explored in Chapter Two is Christian praxis. This is defined as the action that takes place to achieve a goal or purpose. In Christian understanding, the ultimate goal of all praxis is the revelation of God in history and points toward the second coming of Christ (Anderson 2001, 103).

It has been said that among the three great monotheistic religions, Christianity is primarily orthodoxic while Judaism and Islam are primarily orthopraxic (Armstrong 2002, 66). A number of contemporary theologians are exploring the issues of praxis in the Christian church.

It became clear in my research that there are two main strains of concern when it comes to orthopraxy. The first discussion deals with the praxis of the church in areas such as divorce and remarriage, women in ministry and homosexuality in the clergy (Anderson 2001, 110-112). The second, which is no less controversial, is what is called the social implications of the gospel. This is what I understand Jesus to be referring to when he said his mission was to free the oppressed, heal the blind and preach good news to the poor (Luke 4:18-19).

There is a wealth of literature from the late 19th Century and early 20th Century urging the church to take a stand on social issues. There is also much that has been written against this position by evangelical Christians who felt it watered down the “real” gospel work of proclamation. I was greatly enlightened by this research and it significantly impacted the direction of my thinking throughout the rest of the project. The work of current writers is included in the contemporary section and deals more thoroughly with this topic.

Historical Rationale

The historical context of servant leadership and disinterested benevolence ranges across the vast breadth of Christianity, but I focused on two specific streams of thought from the historical context of my ministry. First, I reviewed the

Wesleyan history which demonstrates strong social gospel involvement. This stream significantly informed the early Adventist founders.

Secondly, I reviewed the literature from my own ecclesiastical tradition of Seventh-day Adventist faith. I developed a deeper understanding of how early Adventist theology informed the orthopraxy of both the church as an institution and the members as individuals.

Wesley's preaching alone was not the key to the revival he led. His understanding of the role of social issues and care for the poor and downcast was just as important, if not more so. Wesley lived in a time of "ecclesiastical arrogance and truculence, the shallow retentions of Deism, the insincerity and debasement rampant in Church and state" (Bready 1938, 405). This sounds quite similar to the state of religion in the world today.

Wesley's was a holistic revival. Any spirituality that was devoid of the love of others and did not demonstrate that love through social action could not be true religion. For Wesley orthopraxy was key, in combination with orthodoxy, as he understood the New Testament (Bready 1938, 405). This approach to Christian witness first turned 18th Century England upside down and soon afterward moved to the fledgling country of America.

Seventh-day Adventism arose during the second great awakening in North American history and there was a strong Wesleyan influence among its founders. It is out of that context that the church's identity, ecclesiology and practice arose. One of the primary founders of the Adventist movement was Ellen G. White. It is accepted by most Adventists that Mrs. White had the gift of prophecy and she

was an influential writer and thought leader in the developing church.

I found in my reading that the understanding and application of disinterested benevolence was not always agreed upon or in line with some of the clear statements by White. I also found that some of the institutions and ministries of the church that are taken for granted today did not always have the clear support of the leaders of the Adventist Church. I discuss this at length in my account of the development of the official humanitarian agency of the church, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

My study of this history gave me a better picture of why some in the Adventist Church are still struggling with or are unclear in their application of these gospel principles. Adventism has always had strong evangelical leanings and some aversion to social issues which became evident in my historical review and this aversion continues today.

Contemporary Rationale

There are two issues that can help us better understand the contemporary context of this project. First, the world is changing and much of the Western church is not adapting rapidly enough to meet the challenges. Secondly, some congregations are doing creative things and show real potential to meet the needs of the postmodern Western world. I look at both of these issues.

The contemporary reality of the modern church in the West is generally dismal. One author writes that the imminent demise of the church is widely forecast because of the culture of institutionalism and civic religion (McNeal

2003, 1). He isn't the only author to predict gloom and doom for the modern church if it does not change.

The world is changing more rapidly than at any time in history. We live in a time when the nuclear family is disintegrating, sexuality is confused and relationships are often superficial. We live in a post modern culture that has a global context. Established assumptions and belief systems are questioned or changed. A "back to basics" approach seems to be the common denominator of many suggestions to cut through the noise and confusion.

One concept that the modern church must come to grips with is the incarnational approach to ministry. Hirsch tells us: "Our very lives are our messages, and we cannot take ourselves out of the equation of mission" (Hirsch 2006, 133). He goes on to relate that servanthood and humility are commitments believers must make with one another and the world (Hirsch 2006, 134). Going back to the old ways includes becoming an incarnate witness as a missional Christian in the world, not calling the world to come see what the church has to offer.

This context provides a foundation to explore the basic issues that will help the church reach today's culture. What activities or attitudes on the part of the church will impact the world for Christ in a significant way? What missing element in much of the Western church touches the world in a meaningful way when it is present?

There are some creative ministries engaged in disinterested benevolence in North America today. One example is Steve Sjogren whose primary work

began in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has developed a church based on “servant evangelism” which he describes as “low risk, high grace” (Sjogren 1993, 53). His approach is simple: give freely without any expectation of return. His church regularly does simple service projects for the community to demonstrate that God is love. His is an interesting case since he is working in a community that is upper middle class.

Probably the most common form of disinterested benevolence is among the poor and destitute. The Salvation Army has focused on this sort of ministry since 1865. The Salvation Army constantly upgrades and modifies its activities based on current needs. The Salvation Army web site states the organization’s mission:

Salvation Army social service programs meet the basic needs of daily life for those without the resources to do so themselves. Often, the programs provide food, shelter, clothing, financial assistance to pay utilities, and other necessities based on the need. (Salvation Army Services)

My own denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, sponsors Adventist Community Services (ACS) in the United States. Beginning with local churches providing ACS services to their local communities all the way to the denomination’s support of ADRA International, Adventism has a focus on disinterested benevolence.

These contemporary issues, along with the biblical, theological and historical backgrounds inform the project and helped the analysis of the data. It is also important to describe the local context of the project.

Context

Walk of Faith Fellowship was a “type A” church plant that originated in February 1997. Type A means that it was started by a single person or family unit without the assistance of a core group people that might spawn from an existing church. My wife, two children and I were sent into the West Side of Cleveland to start a church from scratch. The target area was identified and a demographic study was done prior to my arrival and I was to take this area and plant a church there. Since there was no core group, direct mail was sent out advertising Bible studies and door to door contacts were made. There was limited success with this approach for several reasons. I, as the church planter, was not culturally aware of the context. Secondly, there was no building to operate from except my home, and people were cautious about newcomers and going to the home of a newcomer.

What eventually got the new church off the ground was a group of 12 to 15 Seventh-day Adventist young adults that were turned off by their previous church experience. They were intrigued by the desire to build a culturally relevant church using small groups as the core element and a contemporary worship format. This was rare in the Adventist Church which tends to be rather traditional in its theology and practices.

Within a year we were seeing 40 to 50 in worship each Sabbath in a house church with four functioning small groups. Most of the people attending were either Adventists or friends of Adventists. Among those attending, no one, except my family, lived in the target area. A very traditional Adventist evangelism

campaign was held that was primarily cognitive in style and focus, during which little was done to deal with relational or social issues. The event was held in the target area and about 20 individuals from the community started attending worship and joined the small groups. Less than five of these people remain in the church today.

At the beginning of 2008 the congregation was in a holding pattern. Small groups had disappeared. The weekly worship service became the center of the life of the church with a community teen center as its primary outreach program. Less than 10 members had any involvement with this mission to the community.

One problem from the beginning of the church plant was that those who joined the church did not have a missional outlook, but were focused on self interest. The members are predominately young, single postmoderns who crave relationships with one another but are often unstable in their lives and worldview. This creates an inward-focused group that makes decisions primarily based on their wants and needs not from the perspective of God's kingdom. This attitude was present in the general operation of the church and in how things were done in worship and service to the community.

At the time of the writing of this paper and at the completion of the project, things have changed significantly in the life of the congregation. Outreach and social issues are at the forefront of the activities of the church.

Project Goals

The purpose of this project is to discover how specific changes in the local

mission of the church impacts the overall development of servant leadership in the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio. The goals of this project are:

1. To determine what, if any emotions were felt by the attendees in the process of changes regarding servant ministry.
2. To determine what, if any spiritual improvement took place with the attendees as they were involved in servant ministry.
3. To determine how the attendees think about servant ministry as a result of the changes they experienced.
4. To determine if the changes made any difference in the interpersonal relationships experienced by the attendees.

These four goals are key to understanding the outcome of the changes that took place at Walk of Faith in the past few years. The secondary elements in the project include measuring attitudes toward volunteering and charitable organizations. These secondary elements help to understand some of the underlying issues that may affect the respondent's answers to the key questions.

Assessment

The purpose of this project is to discover how specific changes in the local mission of the church impacts the overall development of servant leadership in the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio. The assessment of this project was designed to discover the relevant attitudes and thoughts of the attendees by using open-ended and closed-ended questions in a survey about their views.

The four goals of this project deal with the affective, spiritual, cognitive and

relational aspects of their lives. Questions were developed to measure each of these dimensions and assess if there were any noticeable changes that took place.

The assessment tool was primarily developed by the researcher. Some sections of the questionnaire were borrowed from another research tool. The borrowed questions all dealt with attitudes toward charities and volunteering. The primary goal questions and the open-ended questions were designed by the researcher.

The key items that relate to the goals of this project are sixteen questions (four in each category) that asked the respondents to answer on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being “agree strongly”. In Chapter Five the responses are compared in chart form to display a comparative value for each.

The secondary issues of attitudes toward volunteering and charitable organizations are measured and evaluated in the same manner as the primary goals. In both instances the answers are evaluated statistically with the researcher drawing conclusions based on the comparisons.

In addition three open-ended questions allowed the participants to clarify their responses or add anything that the researcher may have missed in the primary questions.

The analysis of the questionnaires provides the basis of determining to what extent the goals of the project were met. The data was also analyzed to find patterns that may be helpful in future advances in ministry.

Design and Procedure

The research question posed in this project is: “In what ways have changes in local mission transformed the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio regarding their view of servant leadership?” The glaring weakness in the purpose statement and research question was the constituency in which the project was originally located from the research proposal. It would have been an inadequate sample to survey just the leadership of Walk of Faith since by the time the survey instrument was administered the leadership consisted of only six people. In order to have a more substantial sample, the survey question was changed to “attendees” instead of leadership. The change gave a survey sample of twenty-seven instead of six. This change is reflected throughout the document wherever necessary.

This is a discovery project that seeks to determine the effects of changes in ministry focus that take the congregation from a consumer-oriented perspective to a service-oriented one. The design of the project looks at the role orthopraxis has in the life and ministry of a Christian as it is informed by his or her orthodoxy. This question has implications for discipleship as well as mission. The project activities were implemented as follows.

1. I examined the teachings and practice of Jesus and Paul to determine a biblical context and reality of orthopraxy in relationship to orthodoxy.
2. I looked at the historical context of the Wesleyan movement and my own denominational history to determine the role that orthopraxy plays in the context of ministry and mission.
3. I also looked at the contemporary North American church to see how the modern Western church sees the role of orthopraxy in mission and

ministry.

4. After six months of operating Walk of Faith Fellowship in a store front with less emphasis on our own worship experience and more on disinterested benevolence, I conducted a survey of the attendees to see what impact this mission of compassion has had on their spirituality, attitudes toward the lost and their interpersonal relationships with other church members.
5. The survey responses were compiled and the data analyzed to determine the impact this experience has had on the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio.

Personal Goals

I serve as a missional pastor in front-line, inner urban ministry and this church is the only professional ministry I have known. I desire to reproduce myself as a disciple of Christ and a servant leader. I also desire to further the Kingdom of God. I have experienced both joy and frustration in attempting to fulfill my call.

In the past twelve years I have learned more about what I don't know and understand than what I thought I knew. My introduction into professional ministry and my training was highly cognitive and theological in orientation. When I entered into field work, I found little impact that the training had on the people whom I served.

It continues to be my desire to improve my spiritual growth through my praxis and to make the theoretical more real. As I continue in this growth journey, this project has helped to fulfill the following personal goals:

1. To more clearly understand the relationship of servanthood to mission in the role of a Christian leader.

2. To better understand the role of servant leadership in the discipling process.
3. To become a better servant leader.

Significant Terms

Altruism: Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines this word as "unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others". This term is neither used frequently today nor a concept that is publicly and routinely practiced. In the context of this paper, this term is used to describe the Christian's duty of practicing unconditional love.

Disinterested benevolence: This term is not used much in our vocabulary but was used frequently a century ago to describe behavior based in altruistic attitudes. In other words, demonstrating love in actions without regard for a return on the investment. Giving of one's time, talents and efforts without any expectation or hope of a return is how this term is being defined in this paper.

Incarnational: In theological terms, the word incarnation refers to Christ's entering into our world by becoming one of us; the word became flesh. For the purposes of this paper, incarnational refers to believers entering into the lives of those whom we are called to serve: mingling with the lost and hurting in order to better understand their circumstances and their needs and be able to serve them better because of that relationship.

Missional: This term was first coined in the book: *Missional church: a vision for the sending of the church in North America* and later explained by Alan Roxburgh:

The word missional was coined to express the conviction that North America and Europe are now primary “mission fields” themselves. Missional also expressed that God’s mission is that which shapes and defines all that the church is and does, as opposed to expecting church to be the ultimate self-help group for meeting our own needs and finding fulfillment in our individual lives. (Roxburgh 2005, 12)

Orthodoxy: Right thinking

Orthopraxy: Right doing.

Servant leadership: Jesus was a radical leader who changed the human understanding of leadership. Jesus taught His disciples the significance of giving (Matt. 10:8) and He taught that the first shall be last and the last shall be first (Matt. 19:30). A leader in the Kingdom of God is not one who lords it over others, but serves with humility as Christ did. Servant leadership stands against the norms of human understanding that leaders must dominate. Jesus teaches that the model of heaven is to be in submission.

Plan of the Paper

I want to explain the plan of the paper to better assist the reader in understanding the project and the journey that has been undertaken. The next chapter (Chapter Two) looks at the biblical, historical and theological foundations of disinterested benevolence (altruism). Chapter Three reviews the contemporary literature related to the concept of disinterested benevolence. Chapter Four includes a detailed description of the context in which the project took place, the method, procedure and design of the project. Chapter Five provides a comprehensive presentation of the results of the survey of participants with graphs and comparisons with which to evaluate the data. Finally, Chapter

Six concludes the paper with reflection on and applications of the findings.

I fully expect that you will be challenged and blessed with this description of my journey discovering the application of disinterested benevolence and its impact on Christian growth and spirituality.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Almost everyone remembers where they were and what they were doing on September 11, 2001. We also remember the heroic stories of survival and service that came from the aftermath in the following months: stories of rescue and stories of volunteerism. As a means of introducing this chapter, I want to share from a book written by Bill Kramer that reflects thoughts from one group of heroes from post-9/11. St. Paul's Chapel lies directly across from what once was the World Trade Center. It is a historic landmark from the 18th century and boasts the original pew where George Washington sat and prayed for his country before it became a country. Amazingly, after the collapse of the Twin Towers, there was not a crack in the windows nor were the chandeliers disturbed. This was the venue for some amazing acts of altruism that emerged from the recovery efforts post-9/11 (Kramer 2007, 27, 28).

If the external world of Ground Zero was still gray with soot and ash, grim and solemnized by death, the interior of St. Paul's Chapel became its conscious opposite, a rainbow unleashed, holy light refracting in every corner as compassion and love. The guiding assumption of the volunteers was that the high-intensity altruism of recovery workers, battered daily by their grueling labor and the remains of the dead, could not be sustained without an abiding commitment to help. "Love loving love" is how they explained it. Or, as one volunteer simply stated, "Love that is stronger than death."

"There was an unwritten rule that you *serve*," said another volunteer. "You don't ask questions if it makes sense or doesn't make sense. You just did whatever next task was in hand: sweeping the floor, or giving coffee, or hugging or listening or going out for more butter."

Sister Grace summed it up eloquently. "We think what we do here shows the gospel more than any words could ever say." (Kramer 2007, 51, 55)

How we create this atmosphere under normal circumstances is a valid question. Maybe a more valid question would be: How do we create this atmosphere in Christianity? It seems to me that Christianity has lost part of its purpose for being today. The meta-narrative of scripture tells us that we are living in the after-effects of a post-traumatic event of sin and that unless some serious rescue and recovery work is done, many lives will be lost.

Unfortunately, it seems that the church today in North America is more of a place where we go instead of who we are and what we do. Churches attempt to entice people to come to them by putting up signs advertising special services or programs for families. The major assumption is that if we have a good product or a great building and offer consumer oriented programs that meet the needs of the seeker, we will add people to our church rolls. Much of what we do as a church community has a hook or a catch to it. We literally use the biblical analogy of fishing and we rationalize that fishing requires bait, despite the fact that in the Bible fishing was done entirely with nets and did not include bait, a later notion from modern culture.

Many of the decisions at the leadership level of churches have a return on investment premise no different than any for-profit business. We expect to receive something in return for what the church does. We look for church growth in areas such as membership, attendance and tithing. Is this what Jesus taught regarding our role as disciples? Are we to measure things or spiritual development? Os Guinness puts it this way:

The two most easily recognizable hallmarks of secularization in

America are the exaltation of numbers and of technique ... Numbers - or what the Southern Baptists call 'nickels and noses' – have little to do with truth, excellence, or character. As one sociologist says, 'Big Mac', even with billions and billions of hamburgers served, need not mean 'Good Mac.' ... Church growth viewed in measurable terms, such as numbers, is trivial compared with growth in less measurable but more important terms, such as faith, character, and godliness. (Guinness 1993, 49, 50)

But the question remains: Is this biblical church growth? Is this the type of discipleship Jesus is looking for? What was Jesus' motivation for doing what He did? Did Jesus heal or teach or save with the express intention of getting something in return or did He give for the sake of giving? How then should the church function, based on Christ's example? These are some of the questions I hope to explore and they serve as the basis of this project and specifically what this chapter seeks to understand.

The purpose of this project is to discover how changes in the local mission of the church transform attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio regarding their view of servant leadership. The key word in this statement is transformation. Transformation is related to the theological term sanctification. In this chapter we will be looking at the connections between sanctification and servant-leadership with the emphasis being on how a servant of Christ serves those in need. The term I am using in this paper to describe that service is "disinterested benevolence." This term has a particular history in my religious tradition and the concept is widely referred to in the Christian heritage.

For many today, the terms altruism or disinterested benevolence carry no meaning. These terms are used synonymously in this paper. When I use the term disinterested benevolence, I do not intend it to mean no interest

whatsoever, as in a lack of concern or attention, but no self-interest, no expectation of being paid back or receiving something in return for one's benevolence.

We live in a world that is becoming more and more self-serving and *doing* things for others, let alone *living* for others, is a foreign concept. Many who live in North America have been raised with the motivation of "what's in it for me?" One of the purposes of this chapter is to determine whether the attitude of disinterested benevolence is consistent with the biblical teachings of Jesus and Paul, and the practice of the church historically or theologically. This chapter seeks to understand what significance serving others has for the Christian?

This chapter looks at three areas which become the filters or lenses through which we view disinterested benevolence. The first area is the biblical in which I limit our survey to two primary voices in the New Testament, Jesus and Paul. I review their teachings and practices as a means to determine the validity and significance of disinterested benevolence in the life of a Christian.

The second area is the work of theologians on the role of sanctification and good works in the life of the committed Christian. Since disinterested benevolence cannot save a person, what role does it play? What correlation is there between a converted person and transformed behavior? The role of works in relation to salvation is a complex topic that has involved much discussion through the years. I do not expect to fully answer this question but to survey what some theologians have written as it relates to this project.

The third area of interest is in the historical application and understanding

of disinterested benevolence. My focus in this area will concentrate on two groups in the roots of my own denomination. I will first look at the Wesleyan tradition with emphasis on the teaching and practice of John Wesley. Second, I will review the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including the teaching and practice of one of the primary cofounders of Adventism, Ellen G. White.

Biblical Foundations

There are two concepts that I see as inseparably linked, servant leadership and disinterested benevolence (altruism). They fit together like hand and glove. A leader cannot teach a concept without demonstrating that concept in their life and practice. The lifestyle of disinterested benevolence is not something leaders can tell others to do and not demonstrate themselves. To live a life of disinterested benevolence requires a humble spirit and a servant's attitude. Therefore, implied in this discussion is servant-leadership, although the primary discussion and explanation deals with disinterested benevolence.

I limit my discussion to two specific biblical figures. I will explore their teachings and how they modeled the concepts. I want to focus on Jesus and Paul to clarify how they understood the topic of servant-leadership and applied it in their own lives. I am aware that the Scriptures have more to say on this subject in both the Old and New Testaments, but I have chosen to limit my discussion for the sake of focus.

Jesus and Disinterested Benevolence

Jesus is the best example of servant-leadership that the Bible gives us. He not only taught specifically on the topic but He openly modeled it to His disciples. Jesus demonstrated firsthand what it looked like through acts of disinterested benevolence. These two concepts seem to go hand in hand in the ministry and teachings of Jesus. The scriptural record of Christ's teachings on these matters is significant enough to give serious thought as to their implications for today's disciples.

Jesus understood His mission and goals and He revealed them to others in a synagogue reading found in Luke 4:18, 19. Jesus said His mission was to free the oppressed, heal the disabled and preach good news to the poor. His goal was to bring about a radical transformation of society through the realization of the Jubilee. Jesus' whole mission to a lost world was one of reclamation and restoration. Sin had caused pain, suffering, and injustice to be the rule of the day. It was Jesus' primary purpose to create a level playing field, raising up those who were socially, economically, physically, and spiritually downtrodden. Since this was Christ's goal it would make sense that it should also be the goal of Christians in the world today wherever we live.

Jesus' own understanding regarding His mission was that of serving mankind. He said that He did not come to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). His ultimate act of service was to be His death on the cross. In contrast to the root of all human sin, suffering, and selfishness, Jesus came to live a life that was in harmony with the attitude of heaven, that of selfless service.

Jesus taught these lessons in parables and by example. I will first look at what He taught. Jesus took many opportunities to sit down with the crowds and with His followers to teach them what the kingdom of heaven was about. He used parables and, on occasion, sermons. His most notable message is called the Sermon on the Mount. One of the teachings in that sermon was that those who are merciful are blessed. The concept of mercy is primary to the understanding of disinterested benevolence. Mercy implies that one gives without an expectation of return. In fact, the word mercy indicates that the one receiving it cannot give anything in return.

Jesus better explains what He means by mercy through a parable found in Matt. 18:21-35. A servant who owes more than he can ever repay is forgiven his whole debt, an act of extraordinary mercy. We can classify this as an act of disinterested benevolence. Not disinterest in the sense of not caring about the person, but active disinterest in the debt owed or the ability to return the favor or repay the act of mercy to the king. The servant shows his self-interest instead of disinterested benevolence when he leaves the king and does not act in kind toward a fellow who owes him money. He demands the money or else!

Another allusion to disinterested benevolence taught in the Sermon on the Mount is found in the symbolism of salt and light. In both cases, salt and light do not exist for themselves but to benefit others. Light does not give light for itself but for all that is in proximity to it. In the same way salt does not flavor itself but flavors foods that contact it. Salt, without other foods to flavor, is not functional for itself. Inherent in these symbols is giving unselfishly without any expectation

of return. Unfortunately, many today understand the meaning of salt and light to be preaching the gospel. But preaching the gospel before living it through disinterested benevolence goes against the model Jesus taught. A quote attributed to St. Francis of Assisi is appropriate in this context: "Preach the Gospel at all times. Where necessary, use words." (St. Francis of Assisi, quoteworld.com)

In other parables Jesus taught the concept of selfless giving. Two significant parables come to mind. The first deals with a wedding banquet found in Matt. 22. The king invites all to attend the wedding feast. The invitation list is not dependant on class or social status or even the ability to return the favor someday, all are invited. The biblical record describes it this way: "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests" (Matt. 22:9, 10). The invitation of people to the king's banquet that had no means or status was definitely an act of disinterested benevolence.

Not only was the invitation to the banquet an act of disinterested benevolence, but so was the gift of the wedding garment that everyone was to wear to the banquet. The king provided it for the guests who had no means with which to acquire it. Jesus was teaching about the mercy and grace of God in the parable but it was also intended to convey an attitude of the kingdom that would be demonstrated by kingdom dwellers. Jesus said: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who

built his house on the rock” (Matt. 7:24).

The second significant parable in which Jesus taught disinterested benevolence is the parable of the sheep and the goats found in Matt. 25. The setting of this parable is the judgment and it portrays two classes of people being judged by the Son of Man. The criterion for judgment is not belief but action. How one treats others is the basis of determining which are sheep and which are goats. The clear demonstration that this is disinterested benevolence is the attitude of those judged sheep. They are totally unaware of their acts of kindness toward others. They have not been keeping score as to what they have done and what they expect in return. This is the very basis of disinterested (no concern for repayment) benevolence.

There is one more teaching opportunity from Jesus that I want to discuss that is not really a parable but a story Jesus told to demonstrate a point about loving your neighbor. It is the story of the Good Samaritan. Even though this story does not directly speak of disinterested benevolence, we can find clear examples being demonstrated in it. The Samaritan had no prior involvement with the wounded man; in fact, he put himself in danger by stopping to help. He doesn't stop his benevolence by just helping the man with his wounds, but he takes the man to an inn where he pays the rent, so to speak. But the climax of the story is that the Samaritan is willing to come back and pay any extra expenses if necessary.

What motivation does the Samaritan have for doing this random act of kindness? Will he be honored in the Jewish community? Will he be paid back in

kind should the need arise? The response of the expert of the law to Jesus should answer these questions. When Jesus asks “Who was the neighbor in this story”, the expert of the law could not even say the word Samaritan! The acts of the Samaritan are true disinterested benevolence (Luke 10: 25-37).

Jesus not only taught about disinterested benevolence but he also modeled it. The incarnation was in itself an act of sacrifice (or disinterested benevolence) for humanity even prior to His sacrifice on the cross. Jesus condescended to earth for the benefit of humankind. The reality of that sacrifice was confirmed by the fact that while Jesus lived among humans He used no divine prerogatives for Himself, only others. Ultimately, the crucifixion was His greatest act of disinterested benevolence that He bestowed upon humanity. He gave for us what we could never repay in any amount of time or effort.

Secondary to the incarnation and crucifixion, Jesus’ next greatest demonstration of disinterested benevolence as a servant-leader was the foot-washing ceremony He instituted during the Last Supper. The Scriptures explain it like this: “Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love” (John 13:1). In the foot washing ceremony Jesus demonstrated how servant-leadership and disinterested benevolence come together. Peter’s response to Christ’s act of humility and service is representative of sinful humanity’s response to the service of others. Peter rejected the gift and wanted no part of the service given by Jesus. He would rather do it himself. Jesus taught His disciples that service to others is the greatest honor bestowed in the kingdom of heaven.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus demonstrated disinterested benevolence through healing and casting out of demons for people of all social classes, ethnic backgrounds, and genders. Jesus healed lepers, the blind, the deaf, those afflicted with issues of blood, and those with withered hands. He fed five thousand and again fed four thousand. He cast out demons and He raised the dead. In all these cases of modeling behavior, Jesus gave to those who could not give back. His service was given with no strings attached. In one case of ten lepers, only one returned even to thank Him. He did not take back the gift of healing from the other nine even though there appears an attitude of ungratefulness. He did not heal to get something in return; He healed as a means of disinterested benevolence.

In one instance of sending out the twelve disciples, Jesus instructs them to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons” (Matt. 10:8). Jesus goes on to say: “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8). This is the underlying premise of disinterested benevolence; freely you have received, freely give!

When Jesus was confronted by the disciples of John the Baptist, they questioned whether Jesus was the promised Messiah or not. They wanted to take the answer back to John in prison. Jesus’ response was not a theological discourse about the Old Testament prophecies, but He gave as evidence He was the Messiah the works of disinterested benevolence He was doing. Jesus said, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised,

and the good news is preached to the poor” (Matt. 11:4, 5). This response of Jesus to John’s disciples indicates the significance He placed on those acts of disinterested benevolence.

It is evident that Jesus both taught and modeled a clear demonstration of disinterested benevolence in His servant-leadership toward humanity. Even though Jesus desired that humanity accept His gift, the giving of the gift was not based on the probability of that acceptance. The offer was given freely to all regardless of what was done with the gift. This is in contradiction to what we see many Christians and churches doing today in their ministries.

Based on the evidence we have seen so far, we can say that disinterested benevolence represents a major teaching even though Jesus never specifically used the term. Jesus never taught or modeled an understanding that reflected the return-on-investment mentality of business, but He gave of Himself freely to all as a demonstration of His love and mercy; a love and mercy that had (and has) no strings attached.

Paul and Disinterested Benevolence

In the first generation of the Christian church, one of the most influential leaders clearly demonstrates that he understood what Jesus taught and modeled. Paul identifies himself as a Pharisee of Pharisees by his own admission (Acts 23:6). Pharisees were well-trained in the law and its application. It was the Pharisees that continually contested with Jesus over His actions of setting human needs over that of human rules. On one occasion, when Jesus

was confronted by the Pharisees, Jesus criticized their attitude toward mercy and disinterested benevolence. In Matt. 23:23, 24 Jesus said, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness." It would not be unusual then for the Pharisee Paul to be thought of as not understanding the relationship of servant leadership and disinterested benevolence as Jesus taught.

Paul did not operate in exactly the same manner as Christ. He did not teach in parables nor do we have the same kind of stories about him as are recorded about Christ in the Gospels. Much of what we have regarding Paul is from Luke's account in Acts and his own pen where he wrote counsel to others. Much of what Paul wrote was an explanation of the Christ event and how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. Therefore it is more difficult to point out the details in Paul's teachings than we could in the life and teaching of Jesus.

There are two words that Paul uses extensively that convey the basic meaning of disinterested benevolence. Those words are mercy and grace. Mercy implies showing compassion or pity by divine grace; meaning that mercy is unnatural apart from divine assistance. Mercy, then, is an act by one who has the ability to give something toward one who has no ability to repay. Grace on the other hand carries the meaning of a way of thinking or acting that shows the influence of the divine upon life (Thayer 1981, 665). These words are close in meaning and both attitudes come from God and are not inherent in humanity.

Paul taught extensively on the concept of grace; he used the word eighty-six times in his epistles. He used the word mercy twelve times.

Much of Paul's instruction in this area is on the grace and mercy of God toward us. Paul understood the message of Jesus that God's grace was given to us at no cost to ourselves but at an unimaginable cost to the Godhead. He understood that the gift of God was a demonstration of disinterested benevolence and Paul affirms that consistently in his writings.

In Romans 11:5, 6 Paul tells us: "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." If we could repay the gift, it would no longer be a gift; grace wouldn't be grace if we were able to repay it. According to Paul, to accept this gift of disinterested benevolence is our only hope. Paul continues this theme by using the term gift. He says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). According to Paul, boasting is reserved for one who earns or deserves the gift, but the gift of God cannot be earned or deserved. Clearly, God's gift is an act of disinterested benevolence.

Paul uses other terms to describe this ultimate act of disinterested benevolence by God. Phrases such as "freely by grace" (Rom. 3:24); "abundant provision" (Rom. 5:17); and "incomparable riches of grace expressed in His kindness to us" (Eph. 2:7) are just a few examples. Paul clearly understands that God's act of salvation is an act of disinterested benevolence toward us. The question we must ask is: "Did Paul understand how that disinterested

benevolence affects our actions?”

We can find evidence in Paul's writings that he did develop an understanding that what Jesus did for us was to affect our behavior. In Romans 15:1-3 Paul talks about bearing with the failings of the weak and pleasing the neighbor for his good, as Christ did for us. This is a classic description of disinterested benevolence. What we do should not be for our own benefit, but to benefit others. Paul also quotes Proverbs 25:21 when he says, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (Romans 12:20). Unless Paul had been transformed himself, he could never have made this statement as a Pharisee who persecuted the Christians and approved of the stoning of Stephen.

In other passages Paul affirms the concept that God's gift transforms us. He says: “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others” (1 Cor. 10:24). Seeking the good of others requires we put them first. In order to put others first we must become selfless, as opposed to our human nature of selfishness. A transformation must take place in order to accomplish this. Paul speaks of humility as a transformed character trait when he says: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3, 4).

Not only did Paul teach that we should serve others with disinterested benevolence, but that we should become a servant. Probably Paul's most famous statement regarding servanthood is found in Philippians 2:5-8. Paul says

to “let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,” who took the form of a servant. Jesus did nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but came to serve. We should be like Jesus, according to Paul.

These two great teachers set the stage for the importance of servant-leadership and acts of disinterested benevolence. Through time, theologians have studied the Scriptures and commented on them in such a way as to influence the church. I turn now to these theologians to find out what they have said that will inform our study.

Theological Foundations

In this section I will look at what theologians have written on two specific aspects of this project. The first area deals with sanctification as a transformation in the life of a Christian and the second deals with Christian praxis (or practical theology). They are intimately related to each other and have a direct bearing on disinterested benevolence as the characteristic behavior of a transformed person. In surveying the theologians regarding these two concepts, I hope to demonstrate a better picture of the role of sanctification in the life of the Christian and how that impacts the praxis and its practical impact on servant-leadership and disinterested benevolence.

Sanctification

Sanctification has been a controversial doctrine throughout the history of the Christian church (Peterson 1995, 15). Technically, sanctification has been defined as “a process of moral and spiritual transformation” (Peterson 1995, 15).

The discussion of sanctification by theologians degrades into a technical one that primarily focuses on several questions. First, is justification a separate event from sanctification or are the two simultaneous? Is the work of sanctification something we do by our selves, or is it the result of what Christ has already done in us? Is sanctification a declared event or is it demonstrated through practical character transformation in the life of the Christian?

These questions are bantered back and forth with biblical support for both sides. It seems that both sides of the questions have merit. The issue that needs to be considered then is the tension found in the biblical concept of sanctification.

The term sanctification comes from the Greek word *hagiasmos* and can be translated as: holiness, sanctification, or to become holy (Peterson 1995, 140). To be holy is to be set apart or dedicated to divine purposes. Both the Old and New Testaments offer a call to be holy (Lev. 11:44; 1 Cor. 1:2). It would seem that holiness or sanctification is something God wants in us and from us. The question to be asked is: "What does sanctification (holiness) look like?"

Ronald Sider uses the term regeneration when he speaks of sanctification; a work of the Holy Spirit in those who have been justified. As an Anabaptist, Sider's view of regeneration is slightly different from mainstream Evangelicalism. Anabaptists have a holistic view of regeneration as evidenced in community as apart from the Evangelical view of sanctification as an individual experience (Brunk 1989, 41,42). Sider's argument is that anyone who omits or deemphasizes both the justification and regeneration is preaching his own

gospel, not the gospel of Jesus. Sider notes: “Too often Christians (especially evangelical Protestants) have proclaimed a cheap grace that offers the forgiveness of the gospel without the discipleship demands of the gospel” (Chilcote and Warner 2008, 191).

Peterson connects godliness to sanctification. He argues that sanctification is a process or a movement toward God; a pursuit of godliness (Peterson 1995, 88). Peterson describes this pursuit of godliness this way: “Positively, godliness in the Pastorals appears to be the manner of life issuing from a true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ” (Peterson 1995, 90). How is this manner of life expressed? Wainwright says “It expresses a devotion to God whose practice effects family and societal relationships” (Wainwright 1993, 223).

By affecting family and societal relationships, I understand this to mean an outward act by one that is becoming holy. This then transfers to how we treat one another. In answering a question regarding which law is the greatest, Jesus responds by saying: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt. 22:37-39). Loving others as yourself is demonstrated by giving freely without expectation of return. We have been using the term disinterested benevolence to describe this concept. Just as God demonstrated His love for us by giving His Son, so we too must demonstrate our love to both God and others.

For Adventist faith, sanctification has always been a part of the overall theology of grace. This theology of grace defines God’s work and man’s

response to that work. George Knight explains it this way: “While works are not a means of salvation, good works are the inevitable result of salvation. However, these good works are possible only for the child of God whose life is inwrought by the Spirit of God” (Knight 2003, 121). This concept is clearly a biblical one that is derived from Ephesians 2:10 which states: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works”.

Skip MacCarty explains it in this manner: “Sanctification is the work of God in the hearts of those who willingly respond in faith to His saving initiative to make them holy as He is holy” (MacCarty 2007, 240-241). Sanctification and grace are two parts of the whole for Adventists and one naturally flows from the other. Even though they are considered by some theologians as two separate doctrines, they are intricately intertwined.

There are volumes written on the doctrine of sanctification that are theoretical and spiritual. Much of what is written tends toward defining terms and meanings of who does the sanctification and when it occurs. Sanctification boils down to becoming made in or conformed to the image of Christ. Regardless of when it happens, by whose initiative, or how long it takes, there is a consensus by many theologians that this is a real event that occurs in the life of a Christian. This real event has a measurable and visible result to the one experiencing sanctification.

With this working definition of sanctification, we can now look to the application of this doctrine in the life of a Christian. Holiness, or becoming Christ-like, produces tangible results that should have a practical application. The

doctrine of sanctification goes hand in hand with Christian orthopraxis. With this understanding of sanctification, we can now turn to practical theology, or the praxis, of Christianity.

Orthopraxy (Orthodox practice)

Praxis is defined as the action(s) that take place to achieve a goal or purpose. In the Christian understanding, the ultimate goal of all praxis is the revelation of God in history and points toward the second coming of Christ (Anderson 2001, 103).

It has been said that among the three great monotheistic religions, Christianity is primarily orthodoxic while Judaism and Islam are primarily orthopraxic (Armstrong 2002, 66). Orthopraxy would be defined as “right actions” and orthodoxy is defined as “right thinking”. From at least a couple of writers I reviewed, this emphasis of orthodoxy with a diminished view of orthopraxy seems to be a result of the teaching of the modern church that arose out of the Enlightenment (Wells 2005, 29). With that being understood, I want to survey what some theologians have said in regard to issues of praxis in the Christian church.

According to Anderson (in agreement with Wells), theory and practice split in the modern period of church history. The Enlightenment period attempted to explain everything logically. Thinking was the primary focus and being able to dissect the text, to understand the meaning of the text, or to exegete the text was the primary function of the theologian. The practical application to life was not a

part of modern thinking. Being able to rightly divide the word and to preach it in such a way as to understand it was the goal (Anderson 2001, 14). Anderson goes on to comment:

At the center of the discussion of the nature of practical theology is the issue of the relation of theory to praxis. If theory precedes and determines practice, then practice tends to be concerned primarily with methods, techniques and strategies for ministry, lacking theological substance. If practice takes priority over theory, ministry tends to be based on pragmatic results rather than prophetic revelation. (Anderson 2001, 14)

This seems to be a chicken-or-the-egg controversy. I would agree that practice and theory must inform one another. The problem lies with the overemphasis of one over the other. Apparently, modernism put too much emphasis on theory and thinking and practical application suffered from it. But if modernism put too much emphasis on the “knowing,” postmodernism has thrown the baby out with the bathwater in its rejection of any objective truth that can be known (Anderson 2001, 21). There must be middle ground where theory and knowledge impact and is impacted upon by practical living.

The church cannot separate the two or it goes against the very definition that Jesus gave regarding the two greatest commandments to the expert of the law in the story of the Good Samaritan: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). “Only in action can the meaning of love and compassion be revealed” (Pattison 1994, 32).

How is practical theology (praxis) being applied by some modern theologians? As one would expect, the areas of major discussion seem to be the

ones of greatest concern to the theology of the church. The three major areas being discussed are: divorce and remarriage, women in ministry and homosexuality in the clergy (Anderson 2001, 110-112). While those areas can clearly be defined as Christian praxis, it does little to help understand the role of the church in dealing with the poor, the damaged and the social outcasts. The first three areas require mercy and compassion but they don't always deal with the "least of these brothers of mine" matters.

The orthopraxy of Jesus as evidenced in Scripture was to fulfill the commission of Luke 4 as we discussed in the biblical rationale above. We do see Jesus dealing with divorce and women in His praxis but it seems less in the context of a theology of women in ministry than women as human beings. We also see Jesus' commentary on divorce as a concession of God toward sinful humanity, but this wasn't a detailed exegesis of the matter. Jesus makes no commentary regarding justice issues of human sexuality. But what we do see in Jesus is a glaring commentary on how we treat people as a whole.

Social justice and the social gospel have been topics for some theologians, but conservative Protestant or Evangelical Christians largely eschew these topics based on their modernist views. Greg Kehrein (a practitioner, not a theologian) comments, "Evangelicals condemned most social action ministries as liberal and cared only for getting people 'saved.' In their eyes, to feed or house a poor person was like arranging chairs on a sinking ship" (Perkins 1995, 169).

G. Thomas Halbrooks notes that conservative evangelical Christianity moved away from the social gospel early in the 20th century because it was the

primary focus of the writings of “liberal” theologians. Halbrooks notes that as a conservative and pietist he too held these views until he read Rauschenbusch. Halbrooks opinion was changed and he notes this about his reading of Rauschenbusch: “Rauschenbusch did not deny any of my prior understanding, but he did assert that it was a truncated understanding” (Evans 2001, xiii). F. Earnest Johnson also laments the loss of the social gospel emphasis in 20th century Christianity. He says: “the church jettisoned that theological (social gospel) tradition at its peril” (Johnson, 1940, 12-13).

The man both of these theologians reference is Walter Rauschenbusch, one of the most famous proponents of the social gospel, who died at the end of WWI. His book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* is a huge volume that dealt directly and solely with this topic. In this book he predicted: “The social problem and the war (WWI) problem are fundamentally one problem, and the social gospel faces both. After the war the social gospel will ‘come back’ with pent-up energy and clearer knowledge” (Rauschenbusch 1945, 4).

Unfortunately, he was wrong. If anything, after WWII the church in North America became less involved and aware of the social gospel from a Christian perspective. Even though the two wars damaged the modernist idea that we were progressing upward as humans, that concept did not go away. From the time of the Civil Rights Movement on, the church largely turned its back on social issues, especially in the inner city where white flight caused serious social degradation (Perkins 1993, 9-10).

The social gospel and social justice are closely tied together. Anderson

makes this insightful comment about social justice:

Social justice is not an abstract principle, nor is it an ideal to be pursued. Social justice is the core of human experience. It is bread and water; it is blood and bones; it is brothers and sisters who unlearn the knowledge of how to hurt and how to kill and who learn to live in the power, the freedom and the hope with which God intended that we should live. (Anderson 2001, 311, 312)

The social gospel and social justice do have a role in practical theology (Christian praxis). There is strong biblical evidence for a practical theology of the social gospel. It appears conservative theologians have spent most of their time and effort on exegeting other topics.

Sanctification and orthopraxy from a theological perspective form part of the definition of what a Christian does as a matter of being. Christianity is not just a set of beliefs that a person agrees to and acknowledges as true; it is also a becoming of something that we normally do not gravitate towards being on our own. There is significant evidence from scholars of the truth of this matter and from this we now turn to the historical rationale for this project.

Historical Foundation

The historical context of servant leadership and disinterested benevolence ranges across the vast breadth of Christianity, but I want to focus on two specific streams which form the historical context of my ministry. First, I want to review Wesleyan history which demonstrated a strong social gospel involvement. I want to determine the rationale and motivation for this social gospel focus. This stream of church history significantly informed the early Adventist founders.

Secondly, I will review the information from my own ecclesiastical tradition

of Seventh-day Adventism. I want to develop an understanding of how early Adventist theology informed its orthopraxy and the development of social action in both the church as an institution and the members as individuals.

Wesley and the Social Gospel

I want to begin this section by looking at Wesley's context, his teaching and his practice. In this context, I want to see how society functioned during the time of the Methodist revival that Wesley played a significant role in and how this affected him personally. I want to develop his understanding of sanctification and what he taught and practiced regarding the role of works in the life of a converted Christian. I will also show the development of Wesley's understanding of the role of servant-leadership and disinterested benevolence in the Methodist movement. I will discuss the development of class meetings and how over time they changed and how social gospel issues became a significant element for the classes.

Wesley lived in a time of "ecclesiastical arrogance and truculence, the shallow retentions of Deism, the insincerity and debasement rampant in Church and state" (Bready 1938, 405). The effects of deism can be summarized in the following Bready statement: "Religion came to be looked upon chiefly as a matter for intellectual discussion ... Christian faith thus undermined, Christian morality was attacked at its roots" (Bready 1938, 40-41). The state of the church at the time of Wesley was empty and formal. There was materialism in the clergy and the people had no clear direction of moral teaching. Slavery, excessive gin drinking, the abuse of children, the abuse of animals for entertainment and the

associated gambling as a form of amusement, and immorality were the signs of the times for the society of Wesley (Bready 1938, 141-160). These conditions may or may not be exactly similar to the church today but the outward demonstration of the behaviors in the world of Wesley's day sound quite similar to the state of the world today.

John Wesley was raised by a priestly father and pietistic mother. This left him grounded in a high church Anglican perspective and a Puritan practicality (Heitzenrater 1995, 72). Wesley tended to float in the middle between a faith with no works attitude and a stress on outward works (Heitzenrater 1995, 83). He went through much of his life defining the edges of his theology of justification and sanctification.

Wesley's theology was formed over a period of time and with the help of different people and experiences. He didn't absorb everything but he did consider all these inputs. Wesley was informed by the Church of England, the Puritans, and Peter Bohler and the German Moravians. "The life and thought of the Oxford Wesleyans manifested a theology and praxis that amounted to an Arminian methodology" (Heitzenrater 1995, 45). Jacob Arminius stressed the concept of free choice in the life of a believer. He believed those who chose to respond and accept by faith God's gift of grace would be saved; this response was indicated by choices and actions on the behalf of a believer (Heitzenrater 1995, 11). Armenian teachings would have serious implications regarding sanctification in the life of a believer for Wesley in the future.

Because of the Armenian leanings, Wesley was always concerned with

personal piety or the works that accompanied salvation. This could be seen in how he handled his own money. Wesley lived on twenty eight pounds per year his whole life and gave away anything that he made over that amount to the poor and needy (Thompson 1971, 8).

The revival Wesley was involved in was not just a spiritual revival but from his perspective, a holistic revival. According to Wesley, any spirituality that was devoid of the love of others and did not demonstrate that love through social action could not be true religion. Wesley's theology had a strong grace component but that grace was transformative. He believed "the new birth was a distinct event, but was preceded and followed by growth . . . in sanctification" (Snyder 1996, 40-41). For Wesley, orthopraxy was a key component in combination with orthodoxy as he understood the New Testament teachings (Bready 1938, 405). This approach to Christian witness first turned 18th century England upside down and soon afterward moved to the fledgling country of America.

Wesley began his own journey into social action (disinterested benevolence) while he was a student at Oxford and involved in the "Holy Club". The members of the club were involved with prison work, helping the poor, ministry in a work house and a school for underprivileged children. They preached, gave pastoral support and even provided financial support (Marquardt 1992, 23-24). Wesley did not just preach disinterested benevolence to others, he lived it firsthand.

Wesley began to construct a structure for the poor who became converts

through his preaching in 1739 where he formed them into societies. These societies, he believed, were the basis of Christianity from the beginning of the early church (Snyder 1996, 35). Eventually, he was concerned that: “many Methodists did not live the gospel” (Snyder 1996, 36). Because of this, Wesley instituted the class meeting which in his eyes was a true community that functioned biblically as a church.

The class meeting was structured for two primary purposes. First, it was evangelistic and a primary means of grace for many Methodists. Secondly, it served a disciplining function which called people to accountability (Snyder 1996, 55). In a sermon entitled “On God’s Vineyard,” Wesley said this about the class meetings and the evidence of a person desiring to be united to the Methodists: “This desire must be evidenced by three marks: Avoiding all known sin; doing good after his power; and, attending all the ordinances of God” (Snyder 1996, 55). For Wesley, the “doing good” almost always was in the context of helping the poor and the marginalized.

But what about Wesley’s teaching regarding disinterested benevolence? As we saw in the Biblical section, the word mercy conveys the idea of disinterested benevolence. Wesley was constantly enjoining the Methodists on to works of mercy. Thompson reports the following by Wesley: “Those who professed sanctification were enjoined to ‘Beware of sins of omission; lose no opportunity of doing good in any kind. Be zealous of good works; willingly omit no work, either of piety or mercy’” (Thompson 1971, 27).

What was the result of Wesley’s revival? There was an influence upon the

social life of the Methodists themselves that improved their social condition, it improved thriftiness, health and encouraged them to take part in self-help societies (Thompson 1971, 25). There was also an impact on society at large. The poor were being fed and Wesley was actively open about speaking against the ills of society, including slavery. The Methodist society members' defects were being openly addressed and improvement was seen.

We can see in the Methodist revival a sound combination of social action (disinterested benevolence) and the gospel were the keys to the success of Wesley and the revival attributed to him. Wesley had a thorough understanding of the biblical understanding of mercy and its application in the life of the Christian. He had a clear theology of sanctification and combined orthopraxy with orthodoxy in his teachings and his own practice. Wesley attempted to follow in the footsteps of Christ and Paul and succeeded in turning the society around in which he lived. As we move forward one hundred years we come to another revival that occurred on another continent and also impacted the society of its time by this same combination.

Seventh-day Adventists and Disinterested Benevolence

Adventists entered the scene during the Second Great Awakening in North American history. It is out of that context that the church's identity, ecclesiology and practice arose. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized by a remnant of the Millerite movement which focused on the immediate return of Christ with a strong emphasis on prophetic preaching. Even with this strong

emphasis, the church did not miss the relationship between the gospel and people's well-being. From the beginning, "Adventists taught that Christ's ministry of mercy to the suffering was an example to his followers" (Schwartz and Greenleaf 2000, 458).

Early Adventists were also involved in abolition or anti-slavery activity, the temperance movement and other social causes. For example, John Byington, the first president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists operated a station on the Underground Railroad on his farm in upstate New York (Reid 1985, 48). Cofounder Joseph Bates was an officer in the American Temperance Society (Schwartz and Greenleaf 2000, 101).

Disinterested Benevolence and Ellen G. White

Ellen White was not only one of the cofounders, but was accepted by most Adventists as exercising the spiritual gift of prophecy. She was an influential thought leader in the developing church. She was a prolific writer and throughout her life she wrote what amounted to 60,000 typewritten pages. At the time of her death there were twenty-four books in circulation and another thirty have been published posthumously as topical compilations from her manuscript files. She also contributed 4,500 articles to denominational periodicals (Schwarz and Greenleaf 2000, 356).

Throughout her writings and in the practices of the early Seventh-day Adventist Church we find a significant commitment to servant-leadership and disinterested benevolence. In fact, White uses the term "disinterested

benevolence” 121 times in her writings. In one of those statements she relates the following:

I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and ***disinterested benevolence***. This is God's test of our character. If we have the true religion of the Bible, we shall feel that a debt of love, kindness, and interest is due to Christ in behalf of His brethren; and we can do no less than to show our gratitude for His immeasurable love to us while we were sinners unworthy of His grace, by having a deep interest and unselfish love for those who are our brethren, and who are less fortunate than ourselves. (White 1942, 511; emphasis mine)

God and the heavenly angels are watching to see how we treat others as a test of character. Sympathy, love and disinterested benevolence are grouped together in a category that would be parallel to the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matt. 25. White taught and believed that those who have received the gift of God's grace and the transforming power of that grace would become like Christ, giving sacrificially for the sake of others with no expectation of return, just as Christ gave to us in His life and death.

In determining how to understand the term disinterested benevolence, we must look at a broad usage. The term in early Adventism did not mean to just give money or things to those who were less fortunate or needy or to just work for social justice. It also meant giving of time and influence to those who needed guidance in their lives. In one statement that helps us understand this definition, White talks about influencing young people which is as much a service to God as any other, and all Christians are to participate in this work. She says:

Young men and women who are not under home influences need someone to look after them and to manifest some interest for them; and those who do this are supplying a great lack and are as verily doing a work for God and the salvation of souls as the minister in the pulpit. This work of ***disinterested benevolence*** in laboring for the good of the youth is no more than God requires of every one of us. (White 1954, 551; emphasis mine)

For early Adventists such as White, the Bible and its study was important as a practical guide to life. As we developed earlier in the biblical section, Jesus was a model of disinterested benevolence and White was well aware of this.

She mentions that Jesus is the perfect pattern and that pattern must be developed in the life of the Christian who desires heaven as a goal. She states:

Those who want heaven must, with all the energy which they possess, be encouraging the principles of heaven. Instead of withering up with selfishness, their souls should be expanding with benevolence. Every opportunity should be improved in doing good to one another, and thus cherishing the principles of heaven. Jesus was presented to me as the perfect pattern. His life was without selfish interest, but ever marked with ***disinterested benevolence***. (White 1922, 174; emphasis mine)

One caution that I want to make at this point deals with an apparent works orientation that may be seen in this statement. This is one of the dangers in taking selected statements without the full context of a person's writing. As we saw in the earlier section on the theology of sanctification, Adventism strongly teaches both justification and sanctification as the work of Christ in us and for us. With this in mind we cannot take a statement dealing with sanctification, as the previous one dealt with, and make it seem that salvation comes by what you do. What White is saying is that when you have Christ in you, you cannot help but be transformed into Christ's likeness and to live as He lived.

White goes on to say more about the character of Christ and how He

demonstrated the behaviors that we will have when we become like Him. She says:

The Saviour's entire life was characterized by ***disinterested benevolence*** and the beauty of holiness. He is our pattern of goodness. From the beginning of His ministry, men began to comprehend more clearly the character of God. He carried out His teachings in His own life. He showed consistency without obstinacy, benevolence without weakness, tenderness and sympathy without sentimentalism. (White 1913, 262; emphasis mine)

Not only did Ellen White write and teach about disinterested benevolence, she practiced it. She and her husband spent much of their time and money on raising the fledgling church. She did not make much money from her books but she was always able to find enough money to give to others less fortunate. She describes in her diary a time where this very activity was practiced.

I rode down to the city and purchased a few things. Bought a little dress for Sister Ratel's babe. Came to the office, assisted them a little there, and then came home to dinner. Sent the little articles to Sister Ratel. Mary Loughborough sends her another dress, so she will do very well now. Oh, that all knew the sweetness of giving to the poor, of helping do others good, and making others happy. The Lord open my heart to do all in my power to relieve those around me. "Give me to feel my brother's woe." (White 1952, 324)

Ellen White was often found giving to others less fortunate. She sewed rag rugs for her home and to give to others. She raised vegetables and flowers in her gardens and frequently gave to her neighbors. She opened the door of her home and on occasion had as many as sixteen at her table (White 1990, 279).

Ellen White consistently understood, taught and lived the concept of a transformed life that caused a Christian to be more Christ-like. She taught that those who were in Christ would become servants and have mercy and

compassion on their fellow humans. Disinterested benevolence was a term she not only was familiar with but used frequently in reference to serving others. She consistently encouraged Seventh-day Adventists to demonstrate their Christianity by acts of service and benevolence to both believers and non-believers because that is what Jesus did.

Adventism and the Praxis of Disinterested Benevolence

The heavy emphasis of Adventism since its inception has been on preparing people for the soon coming of Christ. Schwarz and Greenleaf believe that this focus caused early Adventists to devote less time to issues such as abolition, temperance and other social ills which they felt would continue until Christ came (Schwarz and Greenleaf 2000, 95). But Monte Sahlin writes that “the role of social concern and community service in the mission of the church is no more clearly stated than in Ellen White’s paradigmatic passage on missionary strategy” (Sahlin 2007, 6). He then quotes:

‘Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow me.’” (White 1905, 143)

The leadership of Ellen White and the intensity of her statements, as shown in the previous section, are in contrast to the view that Adventist’s withdraw from the needs of the world. Schwarz and Greenleaf later state that the Seventh-day Adventist Church eventually became active in social issues such as the temperance movement, women’s suffrage and taking care of the poor (Schwarz and Greenleaf 2000, 489). Hudson remarks on the connection

between expecting the soon return of Jesus and social action in the Seventh-day Adventism. "Noting their many good works, one observer has commented that seldom, while expecting a kingdom of God from heaven, has a group worked so diligently for one on earth" (Hudson and Corrigan 1992, 335).

Because of the leadership of White and her writings, Adventists developed a strong interest in health reform. The need for this was evident in 19th century America where personal hygiene, diet, and medicine were primitive and confused. A good example of the need for reform is documented during the Civil War where medical services to the wounded were unsanitary and ineffective. Ninety percent of the wounded who developed pyemia (pus in the blood) died (Katcher 1992, 86).

It was during the 1860s that the Adventist movement first took initiative on health reform. The church promoted the elimination of coffee, tea, tobacco, and alcohol as a means to improve health. Churches conducted cooking schools and other classes on healthful living as a community service. Soon the message included dietary improvements such as the reduction or elimination of meat and the inclusion of greater amounts of fruits and vegetables. Hydrotherapy and bathing were included and by the turn of the century the church began to open sanitariums. The most well known Seventh-day Adventist health reformers were the Kellogg brothers. One was a doctor and operated the Battle Creek Sanitarium and the other became the father of breakfast cereal whose fortune survives today and good works continue in the Kellogg Foundation. Eventually, the denomination founded a medical college which continues as part of a health

sciences university sponsored by the Adventist Church, Loma Linda University in southern California (Schwartz and Greenleaf 2000, 102- 112).

During the 1880s and 1890s, Adventists started city missions in most of the large cities of America and in London and other places overseas. These included a variety of services to help those in need. A number of these missions included free clinics for the poor. Dr. Kellogg worked closely with Jane Addams and the settlement house movement in Chicago, bringing his medical and nursing students from Battle Creek to staff clinics and health education activities. But all of this was disrupted soon after the turn of the century when Dr. Kellogg split with the denomination's leadership and eventually moved his sanitarium to Florida (Sahlin 2007, 8-9).

Although local churches and overseas missionaries continued to blend evangelism with medical care and help for the poor, the denomination did not enter into a major social action initiative again until after WWII. Due to the widespread devastation of the war, Adventists mobilized to ship relief supplies to Europe and welcome refugees to the U.S. The former European colonies in Africa and Asia faced tremendous needs as liberation movements stirred and in 1956 the Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Relief Service, Inc (SAWS) was created. This agency operated more at the international level than the local level. SAWS operated under the umbrella of the Lay Activities Department until 1973. SAWS was primarily a relief agency in that its purpose was to respond to disasters and famine. That changed in 1983 when SAWS became ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, and its focus widened to continue to work after

emergencies were over to develop and improve primitive communities. Food for the hungry was a prime concern but the agency also provided a range of services such as well-drilling, irrigation systems, maternal care education, construction of schools and health care centers and improved farming techniques (Schwarz and Greenleaf 2000, 459-461).

The church sponsors a faith-based community action agency in the U.S. called Adventist Community Services (ACS). It coordinates local church activities. ACS distributes clothing, household goods, food to the needy, and small grants of money on emergency occasions. ACS has national contracts with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Red Cross under which it engages in disaster response in cases of flooding and other natural disasters. ACS also has a number of community development projects under its Inner City Program. It is through this organization that local churches help the poor and needy in their local community. The Seventh-day Adventist encyclopedia states, "All members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are encouraged to take part in Christian benevolence and welfare service" (Neufeld 1996, 401).

In a recent article published in a denominational magazine, the President of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist church affirmed what the church has taught regarding Biblical practice for the Christian. He writes:

So we must show how the values we advocate relate to life as we live it now. Compassion, selfless service, love of freedom, tolerance and respect for each other, willingness to give rather than take these eternal biblical values have immense significance in today's world. (Paulsen 2008, 8)

Seventh-day Adventists are in harmony with the Bible and historic evangelical Christians in regard to sanctification and acts of benevolence as taught and demonstrated by Jesus.

Summary

I asked a couple of questions in the introduction that I would like to answer based on this review of the biblical, theological, and historical foundations for this project. First, how should the church function based on Christ's method? The answer is clear: the church needs to preach the gospel but only after it has demonstrated it by its actions of practical love toward humanity. The church needs to be doing more than just proclaiming the "Truth," it needs to be living it.

Second, what significance does serving others have in the grand scheme of things for Christianity? I believe that this chapter has answered that question without doubt. There is significant evidence that what we as Christians do for others has eternal consequences for them and ourselves. Disinterested benevolence is a key component for the development of servant leadership in the kingdom of God here on earth. The biblical evidence is compelling in that both Paul and Jesus taught and demonstrated disinterested benevolence. There is ample evidence from theologians regarding the significance and relevance of sanctification and its practical application in the life of the Christian. There are also ample demonstrations in the historical practice of the church from two revivals in church history that understood and applied the biblical teaching of disinterested benevolence as the practical application of the gospel to the life of a

Christian.

As was stated earlier, modernity in the church removed the emphasis on disinterested benevolence and placed it on rational knowledge and doctrine, which reduced the emphasis on practical application. There is a gap, in my experience, between what is policy and teachings of a group or denomination and what is being lived by the average Christian in the pew.

It is because of this apparent gap between official belief and real practice that this project was undertaken. The scope of this discovery project is to determine what, if any, significant difference is experienced and demonstrated by those who are participating in acts of disinterested benevolence and those who are not. What are the effects in the thinking, emotions, spirituality and interpersonal relationships of those who have willingly performed random or organized acts of disinterested benevolence?

With the biblical, theological and historical foundations presented in this chapter as the basis of our discussion, I will next review and attempt to understand the recent literature that specifically informs this study. Do others see a correlation of acts of kindness or disinterested benevolence as a means of conveying the message of the gospel to those who do not know Christ? Are other Christian groups outside of the Adventist Church struggling with making the life of the believer consistent with his or her theology? The answers to these questions are found in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The world is rapidly changing and so is Christianity in North America and other developed countries. We in the church cannot turn a blind eye to these changes. These changes range from what many are calling postmodern thought to religious diversity in a country that once thought of itself as primarily a Christian nation. Not only is culture and society changing but the modern church appears to be clueless as to what is happening and what is to be done about it. The Christian church of North America is losing ground at a fast pace. In each successive generation after the “Builders” (those born before 1946) the percentage of those attending church has dropped significantly (Rainer 2001, 34).

What needs to be done? How are Christians to function in this new world of change and transition where we are having less and less of an impact? Hollywood has a greater impact on culture than Christianity does. Shouldn't we be concerned? Shouldn't we take a deep look at ourselves and find out what we have been missing in the realm of mission? We need to go back to the roots of “primitive” Christianity, or the timeless principles taught by Christ and found in Scripture. This “primitive” Christianity is not about programs, denominations, or church buildings. This Christianity is about transformed people and how they function as fully devoted servant-leaders to a lost world for which Christ died.

The purpose of this project is to discover how changes in the local mission of the church transform attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio

regarding their view of servant leadership. In this chapter I want to look at how the world is changing and how this change impacts the church and its mission. This chapter will review what others have written that may provide a foundation for this project regarding disinterested benevolence and servant leadership. Secondly, this chapter looks at what is happening with a movement called the “Emergent Church.” This is a cross-denominational movement, not a new denomination, which represents fresh attempts to connect to our changing world and find a way to make Christianity meaningful once again. This chapter looks at aspects of this movement that coincide with disinterested benevolence and the modeling of Christ and how those things relate to mission.

Finally this chapter will look at what the emergent church, postmodern church and traditional church are doing to reach people for the kingdom in non-traditional ways using service as their focus. Traditional means of evangelism are becoming more and more ineffective in North America but there are some who are reaching this upside-down world. I want to look at what they are doing and examine the relevance of these efforts to what I am proposing in this project.

The Changing World

One of the contemporary realities of the modern church in the West is the dismal condition that it is in. One author writes that there is an imminent demise forecasted for the church because of the culture of institutionalism and civic religion that has become pervasive (McNeal 2003, 1). McNeal laments the present condition of the church and what it is doing to “fix” itself. An entire

industry has sprung up to help churches get healthier. Consultants help churches offer small groups, have a contemporary worship service, market their services, and return the church to basics. But the real issue is that “church activity is a poor substitute for genuine spiritual vitality” (McNeal 2003, 7). He is not the only author to predict gloom and doom for the modern church if changes are not widely adopted.

There is a decided program mentality of church both from the institutional level and from the person sitting in the pew. Many of my peers have been frustrated at the consumer attitude that permeates Christianity today. People will come to see what you are offering, but they do not seem to come to offer anything of themselves. Brian McLaren comments on this very attitude, “churches tend to become gatherings of self-interested people who gather for mutual self-interest—constantly treating the church as a purveyor of religious goods and services, constantly shopping and ‘trading up’ for churches that can ‘meet my needs’ better” (McLaren 2004, 107).

Worship, as defined both in the Old Testament sanctuary service and in the New Testament formulation of the Lord’s Supper and foot-washing, is all about sacrifice, not consumerism. God is the object and receiver of worship; the worshipper doesn’t receive anything except God’s approval. The Apostle Paul would agree with this definition: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as *living sacrifices*, holy and pleasing to God—this is your *spiritual act of worship*” (Rom. 12:1 emphasis mine).

The world is changing more rapidly than at any time in earth’s history. We

live in a time where the nuclear family is disintegrating, sexuality is confused and relationships are conducted through a mouse, cell phone, or text message. We live in a postmodern culture with a global worldview that is pluralistic in its application. Alan Hirsch states it this way, “America ... is now experiencing a society that is increasingly moving away from the church’s sphere of influence and becoming genuinely neopagan” (Hirsch 2006, 51).

All of the previous assumptions and belief systems are being questioned or changed. A back-to-basics approach (one that Jesus modeled and taught) seems to be the only common denominator that will reach through the noise and confusion in which the world is now living. Hirsch agrees with this idea and he devotes the major portion of his book to uncovering the basics of Christianity and their function in the local church as a way of life. Hirsch uses the term “incarnational practice” the definition of which includes (but is not limited to) the focus of my study, disinterested benevolence (Hirsch 2006, 21). I make this connection because disinterested benevolence was the focus of Jesus’ incarnation and practice as was demonstrated in Chapter 2.

In his book *The Sky is Falling*, Alan Roxburgh describes the changes we are experiencing as discontinuous. He uses the children’s story of Chicken Little as an illustration to describe the difference between continuous change and discontinuous change. “By contrast, if continuous change is comparable to a single acorn hitting us on the head, discontinuous change is an all-out acorn assault” (Roxburgh 2005, 29). This all-out assault is what is hitting our culture and our churches. The church is not immune to the effects of the globalization of

our economy, increasing pluralism and postmodern thinking. This “discontinuous change” that we are currently experiencing is greater than any generation has experienced in the world’s history.

Unfortunately, many of those who are of the previous generations, the Builders and the Boomers, are struggling to come to grips with this radical change. The next two generations, the Busters and Mosaics, are living within the change. Roxburgh uses two terms to describe these two groups. The first group he terms Liminals. Liminality is defined as: “the condition of being on a threshold or at the beginning of a process” (Merriam Webster Dictionary). Liminals remember a time of stability and continuous change and long to go back to the way things were. The second group he terms Emergents. These people have never known anything but discontinuous change and can not understand the perspective of the Liminals (Roxburgh 2005, 20-21).

Here is a significant aspect of the difficulty we are experiencing in the Christian church today. Liminals make up the generations that still control most congregations and they want the church and the world to return to a state of continuous or evolutionary change. This reality is demonstrated by Roxburgh with a real life illustration from the experience of a pastor coming into a church that was founded one hundred years ago. An elder gave the new pastor this advice, “With a little more visitation and a few more programs, the church could revert back to the way it was twenty years ago” (Roxburgh 2005, 29).

Emergents aren’t much better off. These generations are trying to live within this discontinuous change without a road map. They are comfortable with

discontinuous change, but they have no idea where this change will take them. They are riding on the currents of change with no apparent ability to steer the ship. Both Liminals and Emergents are frustrated, but for different reasons (Roxburgh 2005, 21).

Being from the Boomer generation I fit the Liminal definition. Both of my children are from an Emergent generation. This makes me well aware of the issues, the discordance and frustration within both groups. The more I experience ministry in my context, the more I am convinced that change is imperative and imminent. The church at large and many in my own denomination tend to want to dwell on issues that are meaningless to the society in which we find ourselves. We argue over worship style and music types, we focus on what version of the Bible is correct and we digress into theological issues *ad nauseam* such as the nature of Christ. All the while we have “neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness” (Matt. 23:24). Recently I saw a church sign that illustrates this problem. One side of the sign said, “We still sing from the hymnal” and the other side said, “We still use the KJV”. That sign is irrelevant to the world of the unchurched who would need an ecclesiological encyclopedia to understand what this sign means.

As a student of history I agree with Roxburgh, that we are living in a time of discontinuous change. The situation today is as significant as the time of the Reformation. We cannot go on living as if nothing is changing or that we can go back to the way it was in the past. Just as in the Reformation, once the door was opened, there was no going back.

Roxburgh is correct in his assessment that we cannot go back to the relative stable culture of the church and society that existed in the post-WWII context until the mid-seventies. If we cannot go back to that stability, if the corporate style of the church will no longer work, if the core attitudes of Christians must change, we must look to something different in order to succeed. Christ did not give us a mission that cannot be accomplished, so our methods must adapt to the situation; we cannot change the situation to make our methods work.

What seems to be needed is a theology that leads to the praxis of Christ. By this I mean every believer needs to be guided toward living a Christian faith that acknowledges the kingdom of God now, not just waiting for it to appear in the clouds at some future time. What the church needs is a praxis that brings about both societal and individual transformation. It needs a praxis that is selfless and mercy-driven. The church needs a praxis that includes a strong element of disinterested benevolence toward our fellow human kind. I will focus on the description of this praxis more in the third section of this chapter.

Not only is our secular culture changing, but so is the religious landscape of North America. Robert Wuthnow details the transformation of North American culture from what was perceived as primarily a Christian nation to an unprecedented religious diversity (Wuthnow 2005, 130). The trend that emerges from his research is that we have become a pluralistic society. There is not one truth or way to God in North America today but many competing truths and spiritualities.

People today tend to “shop around” for spiritual truth and practices. This

means they will collect concepts from Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity and practice all of them without seeing a conflict. Wuthnow describes it this way:

The new approach to religious diversity that emerged during the last quarter of the twentieth century is what we might appropriately term spiritual shopping. The idea of shopping reflects the fact that American religion is shaped by the consumer culture to which all Americans are exposed. (Wuthnow 2005, 107)

One reason people are “shopping around” is that their Christian tradition does not display any real transformational experience that is enticing to the shoppers. Christianity, as a civic religion, offers little more than do the other groups or clubs available. If there is no measurable or observable transformation that makes a difference in an individual’s life, why should one continue to shop at that particular market? When the gospel reaches to the core of a person and changes one radically, people notice and they want that powerful experience too.

Accordingly, this makes North America more of a mission field than ever before. Theologian and historian David Wells writes, “America is the world’s most religiously diverse nation now and from a Christian point of view it is as fully a mission field as any to which churches now are sending their missionaries” (Wells 2005, 108). The contrast of the comparatively high level of religiosity with the great variety of religious viewpoints— including significant segments of nonbelievers in any faith and secular “seekers” deeply interested in spirituality, but leery of organized religion— makes the United States perhaps the most complex mission field on the globe.

For almost 200 years, Christianity has been the dominant religion in North America. Many today continue to carry this vision of the United States as a

Christian nation, but this is rapidly changing. We might cherish rich religious memories of Washington kneeling in the snow at Valley Forge or Lincoln hallowing sacred ground at Gettysburg or Norman Rockwell's paintings of a 1940's vintage family saying grace over Thanksgiving dinner, but the reality of the situation is far from the impressions. Alan Roxburgh explains it this way:

Many of the founding stories and developing myths of the nation are so embedded with Christian symbols and images that in the minds of many Americans, there is little distinction between God and country, church and nation, faith and people. (Roxburgh 2005, 35)

This very attitude amongst Christians is causing cognitive dissonance in the church. Somehow we believe that the model of church we have been functioning under for about three hundred years is God-ordained for time and eternity. When in reality, the church of the mid to late 20th century was devoid of practical godliness and servant-leadership mentality. It became a consumer-driven church that lost sight of some strong biblical teachings regarding personal responsibility and sanctification. Roxburgh again best describes the situation this way:

America's religious history has been deeply shaped by the nation's history and social formation ... a deep conviction has developed that individualism and economic opportunity are the highest expressions of Christian life. The gospel and Christian discipleship have been cast in terms of this larger individualistic, consumer-oriented, suburban world. (Roxburgh 2005, 35)

Consumerism is one of the outcomes of modernism that is still manifested in postmodernism. If the modern world originated consumerism, postmodernism is perfecting it. We have discussed in the previous chapter that disinterested benevolence is biblical, historical and necessary regarding the attitudes and

actions of God's people. If this attitude is missing in the modern church, what happened? How has Christianity gone so far from its roots? The answer lies in the curse of consumerism and its after-effects. We live in the most highly urbanized and consumption driven culture ever experienced on earth. This consumption is not just about shopping; it's about buying identity and meaning for ourselves (Wells 2005, 76-77).

In the self centered process of re-inventing ourselves and reveling in the options for our identity and meaning, we give up our ability and desire to serve the poor. In serving others, a sacrifice is needed; a sacrifice of time, talents and money. Since our culture is finding meaning in consumption, not sacrifice, we have lost sight of the meaning God gives to us when we give unselfishly. When those in the wealthier countries are finding meaning in what we have or what we consume, it becomes difficult to comprehend the needs of those less fortunate.

Ronald Sider wrote a book in 1977 entitled *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* and he updated its fourth printing in 1997. In this book he documents the economic difference between the First-World and the Third-World and what would need to be done in order to balance the scales of inequity between the richest 20 percent of the world and the poorest 20 percent. His argument is compelling and biblically supported, but it receives little notice from many Christians in America because of the sacrifice that is required to meet the needs of the poor in the world.

Sider argues that God identifies with the poor. "Only in the Incarnation can we begin to perceive what God's identification with the weak, oppressed, and

poor really means. ‘Though he was rich, ... yet for our sake he became poor’” (Sider 1997, 49). What modernism and consumerism brought to Christianity is not God’s plan or purpose. To continue to operate under these parameters is neither Biblical nor Christian. It may be that God is bringing about this discontinuous change for the purpose of righting the scales.

Many in North America have lost sight of the mission field that is emerging on this continent. Some of that mission field is made up of the children and grandchildren of people sitting in the pews. The church’s attitude is that people in this country should know better, but the reality is they do not. The church is losing its ability to speak to the world around us for two reasons. The first reason is because we do not understand the climate we are in and the second is because we are not living the values that Jesus espoused.

Christians historically have spent a lot of time and energy trying to convince other Christians that they had something better. People either stayed in the church of their family for generations or they shopped other congregations or denominations. Discipleship of the type that Jesus modeled has not and is not taking place. Discipleship that requires sacrifice is not one of the preferred commodities of Christianity and therefore is not on their shopping list. Today, people are shopping not only at other Christian churches but at other religious groups and the religious equivalent of the do-it-yourself stores.

Much has been written trying to describe the postmodern mind that is becoming ascendant in Western civilization. Since the prevalent mindset for Liminals has been modern thinking, it has been a culture shock for this

generation to try and understand the emergent mindset of postmodernism.

Although postmodernism appears to be an illusive target when it comes to a neat definition or description, one of the best overviews I have read has been that of David Wells in his book: *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*. He gives a real insightful comparison of the two worldviews. "If the one [modernism] is found in books and art, if it is debated on campuses and in the academy, the other [postmodernism] is found in rock music, in the malls, on television, and in the workplace" (Wells 2005, 64).

One of Wells' observations regarding the spirituality of the postmodern has relevance to our discussion. Wells contends that there are strong parallels between ancient Gnosticism and today's postmodern spirituality.

It is not insignificant that these Gnostic movements [ancient Gnosticism] germinated in a time of social flux and of great uncertainty, at a time when the cultural nerve was failing in the Roman world, when the prevailing worldview was collapsing, and when the pursuit of what is spiritual offered itself as a way out, almost as an escape from the gathering cultural meltdown. . . . This is the context in which Gnosticism grew up, and it is not hard to see that there are echoes of this situation in contemporary Western societies today with their fallen cognitive ceilings, their loss of truth and moral fabric, their hedonism, and their self-abandonment. (Wells 2005, 137-138)

How does this affect the modern, Liminal church? First and most significantly, propositional truth is no longer the common currency. When a Christian attempts to convince a non-believing postmodern about the truth of Christ and the Scriptures, they are speaking different languages. Postmoderns don't really believe what you say; they only understand and believe what you do. Wells agrees and explains it this way: "The postmodern reaction against

Enlightenment dogma [modernism] will not be met successfully simply by Christian proclamation” (Wells 2005, 315).

A recent book entitled *UnChristian* documents the attitudes of postmoderns toward the church and raises some interesting insights. David Kinnaman spent three years researching the attitudes of postmoderns (Emergents) to find out what their perceptions of the church were. He found six major areas of negative perceptions toward the church by post moderns: a hypocritical attitude, heavy emphasis on getting saved, anti-homosexual, sheltered from reality, too political, and judgmental. There were some favorable images of the church that were documented but not with the same strength of correlation. The positive images about Christianity included: teaches same ideas as other religions, good values, friendly, and shows love for others (Kinnaman and Lyons 2007, 28). Nowhere did the positive images reflect a people who make life better for others.

Kinnaman isn't the only one to report such dismal details. Dan Kimbal reports similar findings in his own research that was published in his book *They Like Jesus, But Not the Church*. Kimbal and Kinnaman are both in the postmodern generation and they have an insider's view of the attitudes of their generation.

This is a sad commentary on the church. We are known for what we say or the attitudes we seem to hold but are not known for who we help or how we show real compassion to a hurting world. If our words alone will not convince the postmodern generation, then our actions become essential to establishing the

authenticity of our faith. This does not indicate that propositional truth holds no power or is irrelevant. What it does mean is that our words carry power only when the power of the words have been displayed in action and made a visible difference in who we are and what we do.

There is one behavior that draws the attention of both modern and postmodern adherents and that is disinterested benevolence. Because unconverted people are inherently selfish, they cannot give of themselves unselfishly or without expectation of a return. Selfless behavior and attitudes can only come from God and is genuinely manifest only in a truly converted person.

One key term being used in the literature describing the Emergent church is incarnational. The contemporary church must come to grips with and apply an incarnational approach to ministry in a very real and practical manner. Hirsch tells us: "Our very lives are our messages, and we cannot take ourselves out of the equation of mission" (Hirsch 2006, 133-134). He goes on to relate servanthood and humility as commitments we must make with one another and to the world (Hirsch 2006, 134). Going back to the basics, or old ways, includes becoming incarnated as a missional Christian in the world, not calling the world to come to see what we have to offer in the realm of programs or buildings. The concepts of incarnational and missional will be dealt with more in the next section describing the Emergent Church.

If all that the unchurched, postmodern person sees is what is being espoused in television, radio or print media where the visible proponents of church are pointing out the sins of the world, but they do not see that Christians

are working to help resolve issues in real and tangible ways, why should they listen to what we say? There must be something more or different that the church provides to make our witness effective. I refer back to a statement by Ellen White in the previous chapter: “Christ’s method alone will bring true success in reaching the people” (White 1905, 143). Christ did not begin to call people to follow Him until he had established a constructive presence in the community, demonstrated His compassion in tangible ways, met their needs and won their confidence.

This situation that the church and the world are found in today seems intractable and gloomy. But as bad as it may seem nothing happens that the Creator God isn’t aware of and is already working to counteract it or use it for His glory. If, as Wells alleges, post modernity is akin to ancient Gnosticism, God has dealt with this before and will lead His church through it again. With that thought in mind, God is not compelled to use the same church systems that we have become accustomed to in the Protestant era. Instead, God may be developing new wineskins as He did two thousand years ago.

It cannot be refuted that there is much merit in the discussion that is taking place regarding the changes we are seeing in the world, society, and in the church. It seems to be an almost overwhelming situation but there is a response taking place. I now want to turn our discussion to what is “emerging” out of the chaos that seems to be overwhelming the church today – the Emergent Church.

The Emergent Church

I begin this section with a disclaimer. There is much controversy taking place in the discussion of the Emergent Church. This sort of dialog took place when Paul and the upstart churches of Acts were causing trouble in Jerusalem and when Martin Luther started causing all that trouble with his contradictions of the Papacy. This controversy regarding the Emergent church rages within my own denomination and in weblogs and websites such as Apprising Ministries (Silva www.apprising.com).

Questions have been raised about the orthodoxy of the practices being espoused and in definitions of the words being used by the Emergents. The purpose of this paper is not to engage in dialogue on the viability or Christian authenticity of this movement. It is too early to tell what this movement will become as it continues to find its full identity and purpose. What is intended is to look at some of the discussion and language coming out of the Emergent Church that is relevant to this project focused on the application and understanding of disinterested benevolence.

Since the Emergent Church is relatively new and it is still morphing and materializing, a clear definition that lays out the boundaries of this movement may be difficult. One definition will function as a starting point for my purposes. The Emergent Church is being categorized as having some or all of the following four characteristics: highly creative approaches to worship, a flexible approach to theology, a more holistic approach to the role of the church in society, and a desire to reanalyze the Bible against the context into which it was written (Kjos

Ministries website). For this paper I am focusing on only one of these four aspects of the Emergent Church, the holistic role of the church in society. It is in this area that much of the missional and incarnational approaches to ministry are being developed.

The beginnings of the Emergent Church movement can be dated to the mid 1990's partially as a response to postmodernism. It began at about the same time in North America and in England, as well as other parts of Europe. Those within the movement do not see themselves as a phase that the church is going through. Emergent Church leaders understand that changes need to be made in the church in order to reach new generations made up of people who think differently than the manner the church is used to. In a book entitled *Emerging Churches*, Gibbs and Bolger give us a starting place to understand this new brand of church.

We were also concerned to dispel the myths that the emerging church is simply a passing fad representing an avant-guard style of worship ... neither do we believe emerging churches to be halfway houses of a parent church, established to provide a holding tank for younger members until they emerge from their adolescent years or "worldly ways." Emerging churches are missional communities arising from within postmodern culture and consisting of followers of Jesus who are seeking to be faithful in their place and time. (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 28)

According to their description the Emergent Church is rising out of the discontinuous change that has overtaken the modern church and Western culture. It is a church that is not a subset of the modern church but a new plant rising out of the ground that, according to Gibbs and Bolger's definition, is culturally relevant, missional, and faithful to following Jesus. It may not look like

your parent's church, but it is attempting to be faithful to Jesus and His mission.

In a recent web interview, Professor Scot McKnight of North Park University said this about the Emergent Church: "It can't be simply defined; it can't be simply categorized. And it's causing no end of frustration for people who'd like to have tidier boxes" (Lawton 2005, Religion and Ethics Newsweekly). This is one of the main reasons there is so much consternation among many traditional mainline churches and their theologians.

There are significant struggles in my own denomination regarding the Emerging Churches and what this means for the future of Adventism. Those who are of the modern mindset find this new style of church to be very uncomfortable and a threat to the denomination. An Adventist theologian, Peter Roennfeldt recently described this situation in an unpublished paper. "From the perspective of the strongly ordered hierarchical structure of Seventh-day Adventism, *missional* and *emerging churches* look 'messy, chaotic, and dynamic.' They are just as messy for those involved! It is a journey—experimental and experiential" (Roennfeldt 2008, 12 emphasis his).

But there are some key concerns being raised in the Emergent Movement that are worth examining in light of this project and I will specifically look at some of the terms being used by Emergents. These terms are defined in light of this project as they correlate to disinterested benevolence.

There are four primary themes or terms that have become a major focus of Emerging Churches in regard to the holistic role of the church in society and they are: following Jesus' model, the kingdom of God, incarnational and

missional. There is some overlap in some of the terms but this discussion attempts to understand these terms separately in light of the focus of this paper.

“Following Jesus’ model” appears to be directly related to the research regarding attitudes of the postmodern person towards religion. Gibbs and Bolger report that “95% of the nonchurched have a favorable view of Jesus, so Jesus is not the problem. It is the church that people are saying they dislike, because they do not readily see the church living out his teachings” (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 48). It would seem to be a logical conclusion that if people don’t see Jesus as the problem, that’s a good place to start.

The question being asked by the Emergents about being like Jesus is what does that look like? What about Jesus’ behavior and modeling was culturally conditioned and what were true expressions of the kingdom? John Howard Yoder gives one answer to this question. “This is at the point of the concrete social meaning of the cross in its relation to enmity and power. Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness absorbs hostility. Thus—and only thus—are we bound by New Testament thought to ‘be like Jesus’” (Yoder 1994, 131). Yoder emphasizes the servant role of Christ instead of the powerful role. This is an area where the mainline church must stand up and take notice.

Jesus’ servanthood is a major theme that the Emergent Church sees as worthy of emulating. As previously discussed, servanthood and disinterested benevolence go hand in hand. Serving humanity for no other reason than love is one of the keys to kingdom living. This is one reason why the literature coming out of the Emergent Church is so relevant to this paper. This movement is trying

to reclaim the social behavior of Christ and attempting to replicate it in their lives. Regardless of what one thinks of the overall theological positions of the Emergent church, this one aspect is worthy of consideration and duplication in any approach to Christian faith and life.

A second term that the Emergent Church focuses on is the kingdom of God. For the Emergent movement, the kingdom of God is much bigger than any Christian denomination or even all religions. This is problematic for some who negatively assess the emergent movement on this sole point. On the web site “Apprising Ministries” reference is made to a pastor, Samir Selmanovic, of my own denomination who has started an interfaith ministry in New York called Faith House Manhattan. This website criticizes Selmanovic—and even calls him an apostate—for his attempt to connect other faiths who are journeying on a similar path (Silva, Apprising Ministries). The attitude of these critics seems to be that God is not involved in the world except through Christianity.

Scripture is clear that the primacy of Christ is the only path to salvation. This is hard to refute or diminish. But, it also states that God so loved the world, that He gave His Son (John 3:16). All “truth” comes from God but truth can be found in many places other than Scripture, including other religions. Therefore God must have planted that truth as a means to draw all men to Himself.

The Bible gives ample evidence to this fact. Jesus makes the claim that He is the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6) and He also states that Satan is the father of all lies (John 8:44). Therefore truth can only come from God, not the father of lies. In Psalm 145:18 the psalmist claims that God is near

to all who call on Him in truth. Paul affirms the view of universal call of God in Romans 16:26 when he writes, “by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him.”

The Emergent understanding of the kingdom of God is a universal call (not necessarily a universal response) from the loving heart of the creator God who is calling all people to salvation. “Jesus respects human freedom to respond to His love. Jesus draws people to Him without coercion” (Gulley 2008, 41). It appears that Selmanovic is entering into this bigger view of the kingdom of God to open dialog with others who are seeking truth. God is bigger than what we have traditionally given Him credit for and He is working in and with cultures and people that we do not always see or understand.

The next two terms are closely related to each other. Incarnational and missional have direct implications, each toward the other. One cannot really stand apart from the other. The first term, incarnational is a theological term that describes what Jesus did when He left heaven to enter into our world to bring salvation to humanity. Jesus did not call us from a distance (heaven) to come up to Him, but He came right down into our cesspool and dwelt among us. Philippians 2:6-8 is the basis of Christ’s incarnational experience. Paul precedes this description of Christ’s incarnation with the words: “let this mind be in you” (Philippians 2:5). Paul means that we should emulate and follow Christ’s attitude and actions. We too should incarnate ourselves as Christ did.

Incarnation for the Emergent movement means to enter into the culture in a meaningful way. Dialogs are begun in coffee houses and clubs where the

Emergent generation spends much of its time. Dialog is also engaged on the Internet through chat rooms and blogs. The message being sent is one of “we want to engage you in conversation”, not “come to us and we’ll tell you what you’re doing wrong”. People are treated with respect. Incarnational ministry means winning the right to share the immeasurable riches of Christ with people with whom they have built a relationship of friendship and trust (Kimball 2003, 286).

Dan Kimball describes incarnational ministry using an example of Daniel Hill, a pastor on the Axis team at Willow Creek Community Church.

Daniel now concentrates his evangelistic efforts on more of an incarnational apostolic (“sent out”) approach. He is designing various events and gatherings to simply build friendships outside of any seeker-sensitive service. Inviting people to come to a relevant church service is not working like it did with baby boomers. He is now training people to think that evangelism to post-Christians is going to take a lot more time, effort, and trust building, and prayer than ever before. (Kimball 2003, 200)

Gibbs and Bolger describe the emphasis of incarnation in emerging churches in this way: “The focus of emerging churches is on incarnating the gospel, not numerical or economic success” (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 94). For the Emergent Church, incarnation itself becomes the primary measurement of success, not how many people come to worship services or join the church. Their measurement is not who comes but who is disciplined to go. According to the Great Commission of Matt. 28, this seems to be a biblical approach.

This measurement flies in the face of the modern business model of church that counts baptisms, people in the pews and tithe income to the local church (nickels and noses) in much the same way that commercial enterprises

count sales and revenue. These are tangible measurements that can be graphed and put on PowerPoint presentations for the board or church business meeting. Transformational measurements of who is being changed to live the gospel may seem less concrete and generally involve much smaller numbers. People have trouble with the smallness and imprecision of this system.

The second of this pair of terms is missional. The whole purpose behind Christ's incarnation was mission to a lost world. This is why the two terms are almost inseparable. True believers enter into an incarnational approach to their culture for the express purpose of mission. Anderson explains the deep relationship of incarnation and mission this way.

For the church to be both incarnational and Pentecostal in its theology and praxis, it must recover the dynamic relation between its nature and mission ...

In a sense the church becomes what it is (nature) by virtue of its existence as a witness to Christ's continued ministry of reconciliation in the world (mission). Mission and nature thus cannot be separated as though the church could exist without mission or that mission could take place without the existence of the church as the presence and power of Christ. (Anderson 2006, 186, 187)

The term *missional* evolved over a period of time. The implication of the term has a direct impact on re-converting the churches of Europe and North America. The term was coined to "express the conviction that North America and Europe are now primary 'mission fields' . . . *Missional* is also a way of saying that *God's mission* (or *missio dei*) is what shapes and defines all that the church is and does" (Roxborough 2005, 12).

A recent blog entry gives a little more insight into the working definition of missional. "When I hear the word 'missional' I think of simply being with people

where they are at—in the workplace, at the market and coffee house, over dinner at each other's house, at school events, and such" (Missional Journey, John L. comment posted May 10, 2008). This is where the terms incarnational and missional seem to blur. For John L., his definition sounds more like incarnational. The primary way to separate the two terms is that incarnational is the mode of action and missional is the motivation for the act.

Missional implies that the reason the church exists is for mission, not to have a mission department. The incarnation was missional in that Jesus' act of incarnation was motivated by His mission to save humanity. All that Jesus said and did was to fulfill the mission given Him by His Heavenly Father. This is the mission and purpose of the church, nothing more and nothing less. This focus on mission as a primary emphasis in the Emergent Church does not contradict the Scriptural message. One may not be in total agreement with all that the Emergent Church is doing but there are clear biblical principles that can be gleaned from their position.

The Emergent Church is not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but it is causing discussion and a reassessment of what it means to be church and to do church. Even though the Emergent Church has received much negative comment, this should not surprise anyone. The Reformation caused many negative reactions even to the point of a church council that condemned the actions of the Reformers as heretics. The Emergent Church's emphasis on mission, incarnation, the kingdom of God and behavior modeled by Jesus fits within the parameters of the focus of this paper and that is why it has been

surveyed in this section.

I have shown that disinterested benevolence is biblical and theologically sound. I have shared historical evidence that shows revivals are created around an understanding and participation in disinterested benevolence. In the previous two sections of this chapter, I have demonstrated that disinterested benevolence is being rediscovered today in a context of discontinuous change through the activities of the Emergent Church movement.

In the final section of this chapter, I intend to look at what is successfully being accomplished today in all manner of churches (modern or postmodern) in regard to the application of disinterested benevolence. This is where the rubber meets the road in practical theology and living as Jesus would.

The Church in Mission

The social gospel was introduced in chapter two in the theological foundations. This movement began around the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries and arose in the North American scene. The theology of the movement was primarily liberal (Evans 2001, 102). Melanie May gives a concise definition of the goal and purpose of this movement.

The social gospel, therefore, was engaged in issues of industrial labor, the conditions of the working class and poverty, and urban problems. This is to say, it was the kingdom of God here on earth that was so central to the social gospel. Social sin was to be eradicated and social salvation established, corporately and institutionally and governmentally. (Evans 2001, 38)

The outcome of this movement in history most likely generated the moral and spiritual ethos that precluded the New Deal policies of the 1930s (Evans

2001, 147). But the conservative Evangelical wing of Christianity shunned this movement and focused more on an individualistic ethic and a privatized faith (Evans 2001, 115).

There seems to be a resurgence of the concerns of the social gospel if not a restructuring or reapplication of its principles. Pamela Couture makes a clear case for relationship of pastoral care to the social gospel.

If the imitation of the compassion of Jesus is the model for pastoral care, and bringing about the kingdom of God is its eschatological vision, then each of the situations has embedded within it claims on the pastoral care ministries of the church. ... Emerging practices that may need to be taught: faith-based sustainable economic development, community organizing, interfaith collaboration, artistic expression, spiritual formation, technological communications, peacemaking (including community and domestic conflict resolution, victim-offender reconciliation, and non-violent living), ethical guidance around biomedical technology, postmodern worship styles, bivocational ministry, and the cultivation of public square leadership when the congregation's place in the local community is changing. Some of these emerging practices of ministry are directly related to pastoral care ministries; all involve components of care that must be addressed in order to create adequate ministerial training. Many of these ministries, especially economic development and community organizing, have direct relations to the ministries of social gospel congregations of the past. (Evans 2001, 164, 165)

It is with the social gospel of the past (that has in it an element of disinterested benevolence) in mind that I survey the actions of ministries today.

There are some creative people performing disinterested benevolence in North America today as a normal way of doing business. Although the Emergent Church claims to be more missional and servant-minded than the modern church, we can find examples of disinterested benevolence and servanthood in all types of churches. I will now review a few models of servanthood as a means of mission to find out what these churches are doing and to whom they are

ministering.

One example is Steve Sjogren and his work in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the Vineyard Community Church (Sjogren has recently relocated to Tampa, Florida). It was there he developed a model of servant evangelism that he wrote about in his book, *Conspiracy of Kindness*. This is a church-wide program based on servant evangelism that he describes as “low risk, high grace” (Sjogren 1993, 53). His approach is simple: give freely without any expectation of return. This is a modern paraphrase of disinterested benevolence; the term being used in this paper. The churches Sjogren started—five all together—regularly perform simple service activities for the community to demonstrate God’s love (Sjogren Stevesjogren.com). In a recent web article, one of Sjogren’s disciples comments on the motivation for this servanthood. Doug Roe is pastor of the Dayton Vineyard church in Dayton, Ohio and he writes:

Pastors often ask, “If I do this serving thing in my church how many people will come to my church?” That is the wrong question to ask, and really reflects a “me” mentality. Servant evangelism is about the Church being the Church and serving others. (Roe, Outflow Servant Evangelism)

It is clear what the primary motive is for this type of servant evangelism. They do it because they “want to show God’s love in a practical way” (Sjogren 1993, 17). In a recent blog, Sjogren had to clarify this issue because some are beginning to use his servant methods as a ploy to get people to come to their church. Steve responds:

It’s not doing something to get people to **come to your church...**We serve because the spirit of Jesus dwells in us. Our ‘new normal’ is to serve. We don’t take serving lessons. We don’t manipulate others/anyone - anytime—in order to get them to listen to us—to respond

to us. We serve in utter simplicity because it is normal for us. (Sjogren 2008, Purposeful Forgetfulness)

The types of things being done by following his methods are simple enough that everyone can participate but significant enough that people remember. In the back of Sjogren's book he has twelve pages of charts listing fifty-eight suggested activities that can function as simple acts of kindness. They range from free distribution of drinks or batteries to simple services such as a car wash or cleaning up yards.

There is something unique and different in this model from most social gospel models. The Vineyard Community Church is, effectively, a middle-to-upper middle class church and many of the acts of kindness that Sjogren describes were directed to affluent people. They are not necessarily wealthy, but those on the receiving end are not targeted as indigent and poor. This church and the others Sjogren has begun are not ones that I would classify in the Emergent category. They would be classified more in the modern model of church. But the aspect of disinterested benevolence works in touching people at all social levels.

Another person who has been involved in social gospel issues that relate to the topic of this paper is Dr. John M. Perkins. Dr. Perkins came out of the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties. As a Black man who lived through this time period, he understands the problems that still existed in the inner cities after the smoke cleared from that movement. Through his work over time he developed an enterprise called the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA).

It was through community development work that Dr. Perkins and his family developed an understanding and application of the ministry of disinterested benevolence to the racial underclass of the inner city.

This attitude of ministry to the needy appears to be a large factor in the Black churches of North America. Another prominent Black Christian thought leader, Howard Thurman proclaims:

Again and again our missionary appeal is on the basis of the Christian responsibility to the needy, the ignorant, and the so-called backward peoples of the earth. There is a certain grandeur and nobility in administering to another's need out of one's fullness and plenty. (Thurman 1976, 12)

As opposed to the Vineyard church, the work of the CCDA and Dr. Perkins is directed toward the underclass, the most distressed of the inner city. Dr. Perkins believes that the equal rights laws produced much of the negative aspects of the poor in the inner city that we see today. He explains it this way:

Ironically, however, eliminating these injustices (civil rights) helped to create the situation we have in the inner cities today. As a result of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, many upwardly mobile blacks began seizing this new opportunity to move up and out of the inner city. Armed with new jobs that moved us into the middle class, we left the community behind, buying homes outside the neighborhood and returning to the area only to administer programs for the people still living there. (Perkins 1993, 9-10)

Dr. Perkins goes on to describe what he believes to be the only effective and healthy way that the church can minister in this context. He uses three Rs to describe this approach: relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution (Perkins 1993, 36-37). As he describes them, each of these three concepts require humility and sacrifice; the key components in disinterested benevolence.

Relocation states the need for the educated and upwardly mobile to move

back into the depressed areas of the inner city to become members of the community they desire to serve. It does not work to commute into an area to serve them; one will always be an outsider and no chance for real lasting ministry will take place. Just as Jesus relocated to earth to serve us, the call of the cities is for missionaries to relocate there to serve. This is clearly parallel to the Emergent Church emphasis on being incarnational.

The second R is reconciliation. This is not easy for either side of the racial divide. Since Dr. Perkins has seen the worst of the Civil Rights Movement, he can attest to the pains of the Black community and the ongoing struggles with racial reconciliation. Whites are generally clueless as to the issues and reconciliation requires both sides to humbly communicate with one another so we can move forward.

The third R is probably the most relevant to my project on disinterested benevolence. Restoration of the inner city is a work of service and sacrifice. It is not a work of doing for others, but a work with others to restore dignity, power, education, employment, health, security, recreation, and beauty to the lives of those in the inner city. This work includes job training, providing employment opportunities, development of housing and indigenous leadership. All this is done working from within the context of the neighborhoods where there is need (Perkins 1993, 90-102).

Comparing Sjogren to Perkins, they are worlds apart in the magnitude of the acts of kindness and disinterested benevolence and in whom they target as beneficiaries of the kindness. But both fit within the definition of serving others

for no other reason than God sent His Son to serve us. The question then is not how big your acts of kindness may be, nor is it about whom you serve. The key questions is, are you growing in grace as you perform acts of kindness (disinterested benevolence) and are you doing it with the proper motivation?

Recently, Bill Hybels wrote a book that fits perfectly with the emphasis of this paper entitled *The Volunteer Revolution*. He documents the need for the Christian to actively pursue serving opportunities and he included many stories of those whose lives will never be the same because of the choice they made to serve. Hybels challenges Christians:

Every local churchgoer has a choice to make. He can park in his usual spot in the church parking lot, make his way to a comfortable seat in a favorite row, watch a good service, chat with friends, and then go home. That choice makes for a nice, safe Sunday morning experience. Or he can throw himself into an adventure by rolling up his sleeves, joining a team of like-minded servants, and helping to build the local church God has called him to be a part of. (Hybels 2004, 17)

A quick check of the Willow Creek Community Church website lists many opportunities for those interested in serving. Reading through the list one finds the majority of the ministries are to the needy and disadvantaged. The servant opportunities listed include mentoring at risk youth, rehabbing residential properties, homeless and street ministries, prison ministries, senior-citizen ministries and others (Willow Creek website). Hybels has a clear picture of the need for a devoted Christian to serve as Christ served.

In dealing with the Emergent Church's methodologies of disinterested benevolence, there are no how-to books written. Much of what is being written or spoken of in the Emergent Church is in magazines or on websites. It seems that

with the Emerging Church's primary theology of incarnational mission there is an understanding and attitude of disinterested benevolence as the norm; but this has not gelled into a systematic theology that has been put into formal writing.

Parkwood Community Church in Lombard, Illinois feels that its primary ministry is to the marginalized of society. Helen Lee writes:

We are trying to revisit what it means to love God and love your neighbor. ... Two key ways churches are demonstrating God's love are through mercy and justice ministries in their local communities, and by creating recovery ministries to bring healing and support for those who need it. (Lee 2007, 37)

Michael Washington, a pastor at New Community Covenant Church in Chicago reports on what his church is now doing in the area of disinterested benevolence. After seeing a need in the community for a warming center (a place where homeless can go during the day when shelters are closed) his church opened its doors four years ago and today its services to the homeless are thriving. The church has become a place for practical necessities for the homeless - restroom facilities are available, food and clothing is given away, and phone access for people to contact family members. The church also serves as a place where the homeless can receive mail (Washington 2007, 40).

Mark Jobe, of New Life Church in Chicago also comments on his church's movement into disinterested benevolence and service to his community. Jobe writes, "a church also needs to establish a corporate relationship with its community, revealing genuine care for the needs around it" (Jobe 2008, 65). His church has offered GED classes, after-school programs, job skills training for the elderly, free immunizations, marriage seminars, recovery support groups,

counseling, homeless ministry and cooking classes (Jobe 2008, 65). All of these things are provided at no charge to the community at large, not for the purpose of conversion growth, but because God calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

There is one potential explanation for the phenomenon of distaste for helping the poor and destitute. Gibson Winter prophetically claimed back in 1965 that the protestant church would, through upward mobilization, become more middle class and vacate the city for the suburbs. He claimed that by 1975 this exodus would leave the urban areas destitute of churches. His prediction seems to be eerily accurate (Winter 1962, 44). Winter also talks about the ideology of the church when he writes, "American Protestantism views religious life almost exclusively as preaching, sacraments, and beliefs and pays little attention to the social embodiment" (Winter 1962, 193).

What is interesting and amusing regarding this incarnational and missional attitude, as the Emergents express it, is that it is neither new nor radical neither in the history of the church nor in scripture. It really goes back to a simple gospel that is lived out on a practical basis. I really struggle to understand why this would create so much controversy, except that I understand human nature goes against the concept of sacrifice on our part. We love to accept the sacrifice of Christ, but we tend to reject taking up our crosses to follow Him.

Probably the best known application of disinterested benevolence by the church has historically been the Salvation Army's work with the poor and destitute. They have been doing this sort of ministry from 1865 until the present. They are constantly upgrading and modifying their activities based on the needs

of the day. The Salvation Army website makes this statement:

Salvation Army social service programs meet the basic needs of daily life for those without the resources to do so themselves. Often, the programs provide food, shelter, clothing, financial assistance to pay utilities, and other necessities based on the need. (Salvation Army Services website)

The Salvation Army has a clear definition of what “social service” stands for and they have held to that definition since their inception. William Booth created the definition when he said: “Those operations ... which have to do with the alleviation or removal of the moral and temporal evils which cause so much misery of the submerged classes and which so greatly hinder their salvation” (Waldron 1986, 236). Not only are these actions done to alleviate suffering, but to remove barriers that would prevent the poor and suffering from hearing and responding to the call of Christ.

The Salvation Army theology includes a concept they term social holiness. Captain Bruce Brydges explains their motivation for doing gospel social work. He writes, “unless we truly see ourselves as God sees us, we will not be disturbed and vexed by the conditions around us, and consequently moved to do something about it” (Waldron 1986, 109). Brydges continues quoting Catherine Booth. “As the stories come to me ... stories of destitution, sickness, sorrow and suffering, no less than of sin and crime and shame, what can I ever say that will arouse God’s professed people to some concern and care ...” (Waldron 1986, 109)? The condition of sin and its effects should motivate God’s people to serve humanity. This entire denomination is another example of a church living the values of disinterested benevolence. The Salvation Army has long understood

the Biblical mandate of Jesus to love your neighbor as yourself.

When people hear the name Salvation Army they think of two things. First they think of the bell ringers at Christmas who collect money to be distributed to those in need. Secondly people think about soup kitchens and feeding the hungry and homeless. When you compare their work with that of the Emergent churches it is hard to see much difference in the acts of service and mercy. The Salvation Army is a grass roots Christian organization when it comes to disinterested benevolence.

Finally, I turn to some things taking place in my own denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. With the two recent tragedies in China and Myanmar, Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA) has mobilized and been at the forefront of the relief work in both countries. In fact, ADRA was already in Myanmar working on projects from the tsunami relief when the cyclone struck. The official ADRA website reports:

ADRA's presence in Pyinsalu began long before Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar on May 3. Terry Dinh, ADRA Myanmar's associate country director, along with a group of assisting field staff were constructing a jetty as part of a tsunami rehabilitation project in the village of Amageley. Hours after the storm subsided, he and his staff purchased rice and transported it from the town of Labutta to survivors in Amat, Theik, and Ayar Daw, and shared their own clothing, assisted with basic clean up, and helped bury the dead. (ADRA website)

The ongoing relief efforts and many community development projects conducted by ADRA as the official humanitarian agency of the Seventh-day Adventist Church show the commitment of the denomination to disinterested benevolence. What is less publicized and sometimes overlooked as not very

significant is the work being done by regular folk in regular congregations. This is where the emphasis needs to be applied and one of the driving reasons for this project. My purpose in this project is to find out if there is a measurable correlation of spirituality to an individual's participation in acts of kindness or disinterested benevolence.

Another example of the changing attitudes in Seventh-day Adventism is the work being done in Pittsburg, PA, through the Adventist Community Services (ACS). In 2004 when hurricane Ivan dumped large quantities of water in the Pittsburg area, hundreds of homes were flooded. Local authorities contacted ACS and requested that they help out. ACS entered and opened up a center to aid the disaster stricken areas and continued this work until 2006. After the disaster relief subsided, ACS continued to operate a center helping families in crisis, the homeless and immigrants. The program there has launched a church and continues to be an active participant in community services (Sahlin 2007, 156-158).

Summary

Not all that is said and done in the name of postmodernism and the Emergent Church is theologically or biblically sound. There are serious flaws in the lack of a metanarrative of the postmodern thought. Yet, as Ray Anderson writes, "Despite the problems with many forms of postmodern thought ... the postmodern vision of reality approaches more closely the biblical view than the vision of the so-called modern period" (Anderson 2001, 21).

It is this biblical view that is the missing element that needs to be recovered if the church is to authentically and effectively advance the kingdom of God on earth. From the literature surveyed in this section, it appears there is a strong argument that the discontinuous change we are experiencing in the world and the church today is cause for a new look at the modern church and its methods. This has produced at least one new model of church that is being called Emergent. This discontinuous change appears to act like a forest fire that clears the old growth in the forest so that new growth can gain nutrients and sunlight. If this new growth is akin to the original vine, the forest will be fruitful and multiply.

A question was asked in the introduction to this chapter that needs to be answered here. How are Christians to function in this new world of change and transition where we have less and less impact? It seems clear that our words are not enough to make a dent in this postmodern world of discontinuous change. The church needs to be a witness to the world that is transformative and tangible. The church needs to connect to the world at one of the most basic levels, concern and care for human needs. Until Christians take this responsibility seriously, they cannot earn the right to be heard on other biblical truths that are held as absolute and necessary for restoration.

Chapter two developed the Biblical, theological and historical rationale that informs this paper. Chapter three reviewed the development of the contemporary issues of discontinuous change, the Emergent Church and churches which provide successful models of disinterested benevolence in their communities.

These two chapters provide the conceptual foundation for this project and will help to interpret the significance of the data collected in this study. With this background in place, chapter four lays out the local context of Walk of Faith Fellowship where this project was conducted, the demographics of the study and the procedure used to procure the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this project is to discover how changes in the local mission of the church might transform the attendees of a congregation in their view of servant leadership. This study seeks to answer the basic question, “In what ways have changes in local mission transformed the attendees of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland Ohio, regarding their view of servant leadership?” In this chapter I will describe the context of ministry of Walk of Faith Fellowship (WOFF) and explain the changes that took place as a result of changing the mission focus of the church and through several physical moves that the congregation made. I will share the demographics of those who participated in this study along with the methods used to develop the research tool and how the data from it were analyzed.

Context

Origins of Walk of Faith Fellowship

WOFF began as a type A church plant that originated in February, 1997. Type A means that it was started by a single person or family unit without the assistance of a core group people that might spawn from an existing church. My wife, two children and I were sent into the Westside of Cleveland by the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to start a church from scratch. The target area was identified and a demographic study was done before we arrived. We were called to relocate into the target area, use the demographic information and

plant a church there. Since there was not a core group, mailers were sent out soliciting participants for Bible studies and home visits were made. There was limited success for several reasons. First, the church planter (myself) was not culturally aware of the context. Secondly, there was no building to operate out of except my home and people were cautious of such a private venue due to the dominate local religions being more institutional in form.

What eventually got the new church off the ground was a group of twelve to fifteen young Seventh-day Adventist adults who were disgruntled with their current church in a different part of Cleveland. These young people were intrigued by my desire to build a culturally relevant church using small groups as the core design and utilizing a contemporary worship format. This style of church was and still is very rare in the Adventist denomination.

Within a year our worship attendance was forty to fifty each week in a house church with four functioning small groups. Most of the people attending were already Seventh-day Adventists or their friends. No one in the congregation lived in the target area except my family. A very traditional Adventist evangelism campaign was held in 1998 that focused primarily on cognitive teaching of doctrine. Little was presented that dealt with relational issues. The event was held in the target area and about twenty from the community started attending worship and small groups. Less than five of these individuals remain in the church today.

By 2004, it appeared that the congregation was in a holding pattern. Small groups had disappeared from the life of the church. The weekly worship

service became the center of its life with little or no outreach activity. The leadership group had stopped meeting on a regular basis and lethargy was the rule of the day.

From the beginning of the church plant those who joined the congregation lacked a strong missional outlook and tended to be focused on self-interest. The original members were predominately young, single, post-moderns who craved relationships with one another but were unstable in their lives and worldview. This created a very inward focused group that made decisions primarily based on their wants and needs, not on God's Kingdom perspective. This inward focus generally continued in the normal operation of the church until 2005 when things began to change.

Recent Developments of Change

Because of my frustrations with the situation, I felt the need to personally get more involved outside of the church in community ministries. In the fall of 2003, I began to coach baseball and flag football at Halloran Recreation Center, a municipal facility near the church. Because of this ministry I was impressed to begin a teen drop-in center that would allow neighborhood teens to have a safe place to hang out and play games. In the spring of 2005, using grant funds and donated equipment, the church rented a storefront two blocks from Halloran Recreation Center where we opened Teen Esteem Christian Teen Center (CTC). We had a pool table, foosball table, air hockey and ping-pong table. We also supplied jig-saw puzzles, board games and crafts for the kids. We designated

Friday night as a time to suspend the games and have what we called “Teen Talk.” This time was set apart to discuss with the teen’s life issues such as violence, drugs, sex, school, and family dynamics. We supplied popcorn and drinks, and sat in a circle to talk.

We continued to rent a Presbyterian church for worship on Saturdays, but the outreach ministry occurred Monday through Friday at the teen center. In the beginning help was plentiful but as time progressed and some began to realize this was not a ministry event but a lifestyle, volunteerism waned. We soon added a food pantry along with a couple of community events in local parks. We also held community “give-aways” instead of yard sales. All these events began to reshape how the congregation saw itself in regard to the local community.

In the spring of 2007, our landlords (the Presbyterian Church) notified us that they were closing their doors due to the age of the congregation and their shrinking numbers. We were asked to decide whether we wanted to purchase the building or to vacate. We had sixty days to decide. I did not really want the building for three primary reasons. First, the building was in need of much repair and upgrading. Second, it was expensive to operate. Finally, it was not conducive to the type of community ministry we were entering into. Even though we had a great relationship with the kids in the neighborhood, they had not come to the stone church. But they loved coming to the teen center.

We searched diligently to find another place in the neighborhood, but there was nothing else available at that time. We ended up spending the whole month of August worshipping in the park doing ministry with the kids there, a

church without walls. We did locate another church building near our teen center and began renting there, but the relationship did not work out. We found ourselves a church without walls again after two months. With no other option, we began to hold services in the teen center. This storefront building had only 1,000 square feet of space with the pool table, table tennis, foosball table, and air hockey table for us to work around.

On our first Sabbath there we held a community giveaway on the sidewalk in the afternoon after worship. The response was amazing. The people attending the giveaway could not believe we were just giving things away. When some people found out what we were doing and why, they wanted to help. One man with tears in his eyes gave us a \$50 donation; another woman left and came back with a carload of clothes she wanted to donate. Needless to say, we could not believe what we had just witnessed. This was a ministry that was touching people's lives without a lot of effort on our part. But the most important element was what was happening to those who participated in the ministry. Eyes were being opened and hearts changed by doing something practical for others. The motive for this ministry was altruistic or disinterested benevolence. "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8).

We began to make changes in our worship service to accommodate the new location and the new potential for ministry. We started holding a fellowship meal every week, open to the public. We also changed our order of activities. Instead of having our Sabbath School at 10:00 a.m. before worship, we decided to move it to after our fellowship meal at 2:30 in the afternoon. The rationale for

this was that the kids in the neighborhood were less inclined to come before noon. If we made food available and then offered some religious instruction they might just stay. We then added a prayer time from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., before worship, to pray for our church and its ministries. This made the worship/ministry experience an all day event.

This strategy seemed to be working for the community but not everyone in the congregation was in agreement. There were many in the church that had a hard time with the changes. Some stopped staying for lunch and Sabbath School. Some stopped coming to church altogether because they could not handle either the location where we were meeting or the direction we were taking in our ministries. Our attendance dropped from an average of seventy to an average of forty for worship.

In the spring of 2008 we found another storefront, one that we had looked into leasing when we opened the teen center in 2005. My congregation decided not to rent the building then because it had not developed the interest in community ministry that had emerged in the past three years. The owner of the building said in 2005 that he might be selling in the next couple of years. Now it became available and because of the recent drop in real estate values, it was available for half the original price. The building was on the same street as our teen center and was more than three times the size. Right in front of the building is a Rapid Transit Authority (RTA) bus shelter. This shelter may not seem to be a big deal to some, but it was perfect for our ministry. In an urban neighborhood, public transportation is the primary mode of transportation other than walking.

The building had recently been renovated to accommodate a day care center that had never opened. The renovation also included handicap accessible restrooms and a kitchen. Both of these were crucial to our community outreach. We moved into the new building on the first day of June in 2008.

The building now serves as a community center, housing the teen center and other services, as well as our worship activities. We have expanded our food pantry, clothing give-aways, and furniture and appliances for needy families. In August, the leadership board voted to hire a part-time social worker to better network our community center with other agencies in the area so we could better serve our community. The other primary responsibility of the social worker is to coordinate volunteers for all of the activities and services we provide.

Now that we had gone through some major changes as a congregation over three years, it was time for an assessment. For those who had stayed through the journey from a traditional stone church to a community center; from a rather traditional, once-a-week worship experience to a seven-days-a-week community ministry, we needed to ask the question, What was the impact? Was there a transformation in thinking and behavior? Did relationships change between members and local residents? Did anything change in the congregation's spiritual focus and relationship with God? These questions needed to be explored to see if the changes in the ministry focus and context had done anything other than change the outward experience of the congregation.

One question kept coming up throughout our discussions: Was this journey the leading of God? Did God orchestrate the direction and outcome of

our journey and destination? Only by doing this assessment, asking if the journey developed deeper spirituality and relationships with one another and God, could we conclude that this truly was of God. With this background on the events leading up to this assessment we can focus on understanding the participants in the study.

Participants

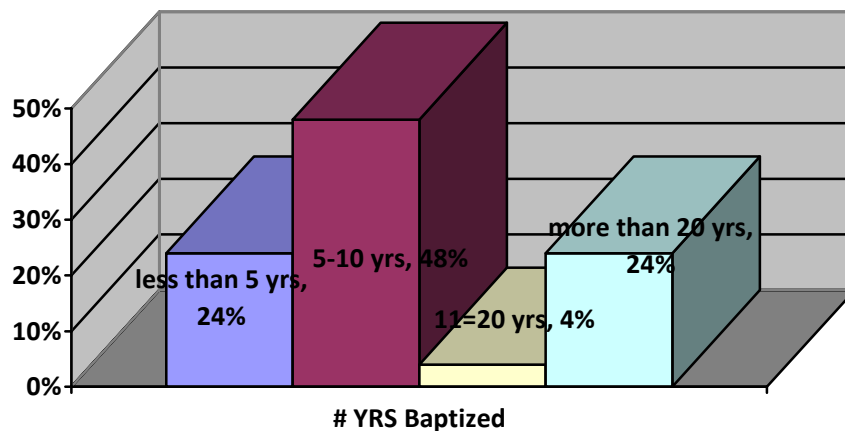
My original intention was to focus on the leadership of the church as the target for this study. Unfortunately, there were less than ten leaders which are too few to do a valid study. Therefore the study was broadened to include all of the regular attendees who were eighteen years old or older. The frame was defined to include those who attended for two consecutive Sabbaths or longer.

Forty-two questionnaires were distributed and twenty-nine were returned, which represents a sixty-nine percent response rate. Two additional questionnaires were returned that were not useable, one by a person younger than eighteen and the other by a mentally handicapped adult.

When asked about their attendance at WOFF, seventy-two percent reported four out of four Sabbaths in the previous month. Another twenty percent reported attendance of at least three Sabbaths in the previous month. The high attendance reported by this group seems to indicate a strong involvement in the life of the church at least in the area of worship. This question does not reveal how involved the respondents might be in service activities or disinterested benevolence.

The questions about membership and baptism showed only seven percent who reported they were not baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Of those who reported being baptized members, forty-eight percent had been baptized between five to ten years, twenty-four percent reported being baptized less than five years, and those who were baptized for more than 20 years was twenty-four percent (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Number of years baptized at WOFF

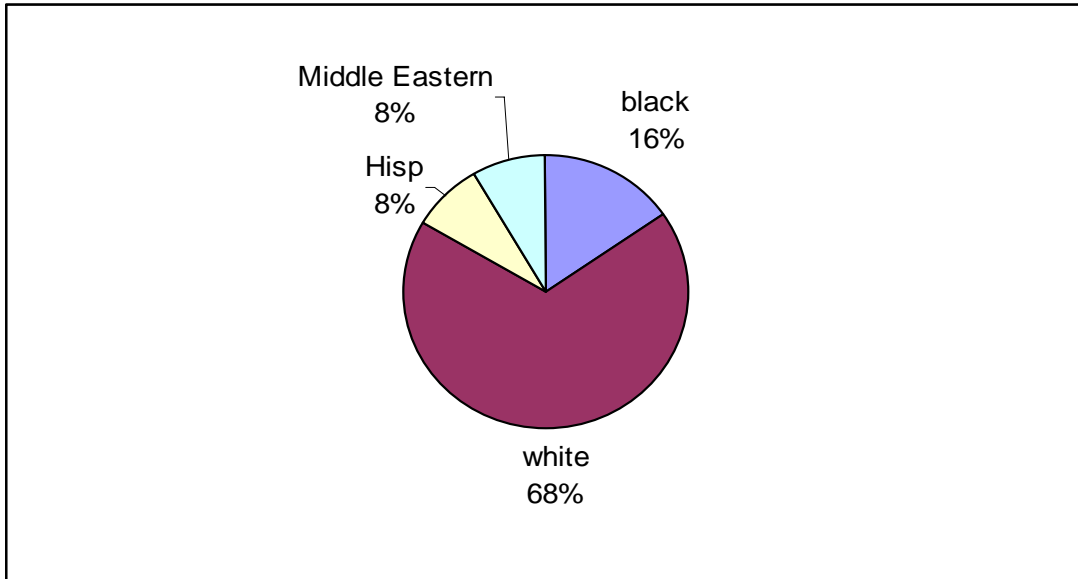


These data seem to demonstrate that the respondents are a relatively young spiritual group that may still be forming their walk with Christ.

Of the total respondents, seventy percent were women. The ethnic breakdown included sixty-five percent white, fifteen percent black, eight percent for both Hispanic and Middle Eastern and four percent multi-ethnic (see Fig. 2). The area around the church shows an ethnic breakdown of eighty percent white, seven percent black, nine percent Latino and two percent Multiracial. There are no demographic numbers of Middle Eastern residents in the local demographic

data (zipskinny.com).

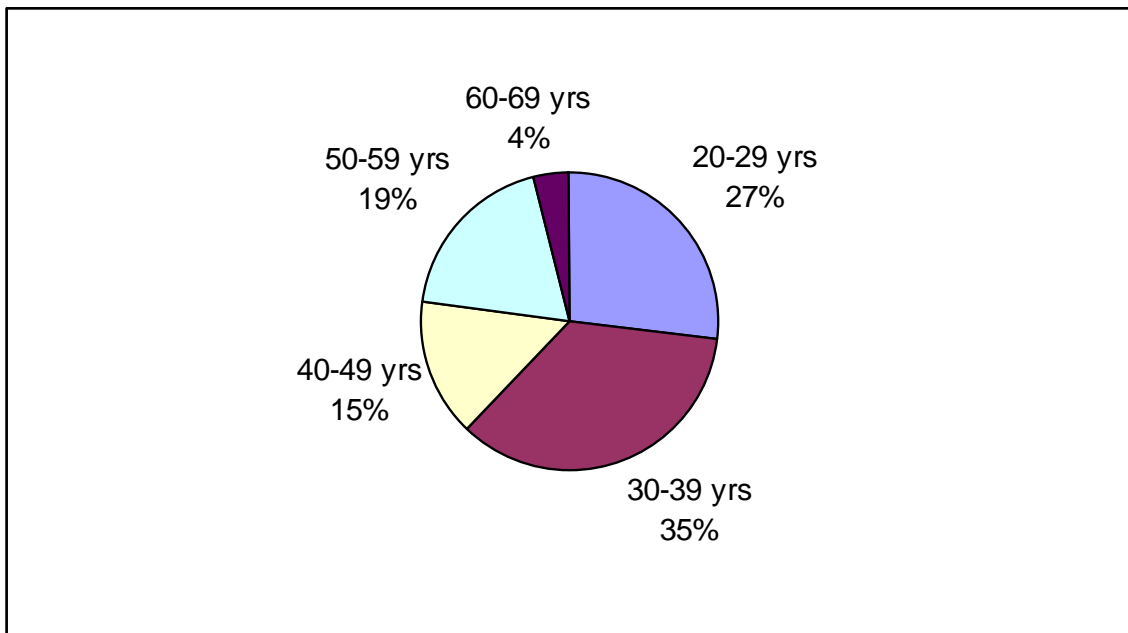
Figure 2. Ethnicity of WOFF



The marital status of participants includes sixty-three percent married, eleven percent divorced and twenty-two percent never married as compared with forty-seven percent married, thirteen percent divorced and thirty-one percent never married in the area around the church (zipskinny.com).

The ages of the respondents included twenty-seven percent between twenty and twenty-nine years of age, thirty-five percent between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine, fifteen percent between the ages of forty and forty-nine, nineteen percent between the ages of fifty and fifty-nine, and four percent between the ages of sixty and sixty-nine (see Fig. 3). This does not directly compare to local data due to differences in age categories.

Figure 3. Age breakdown of WOFF

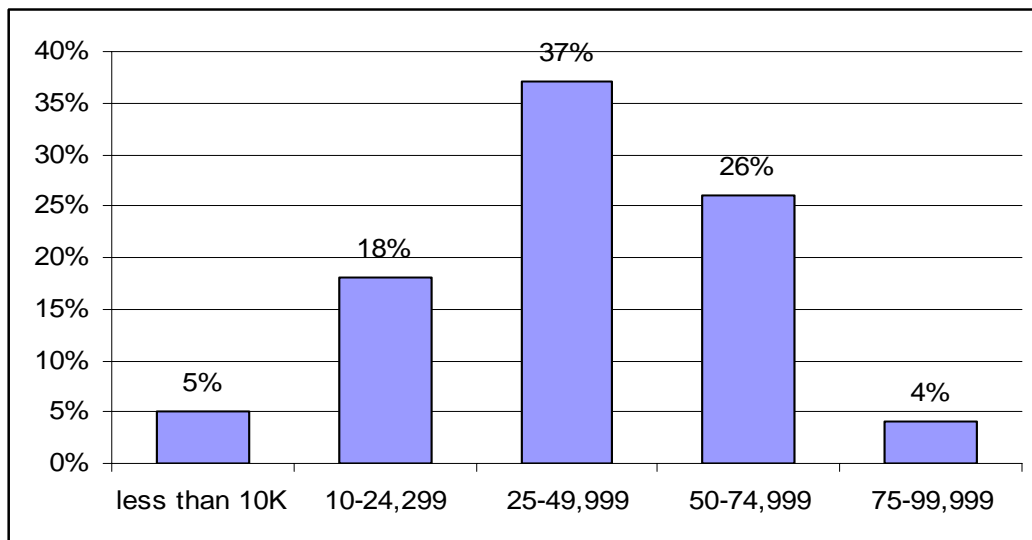


The education data on the participants showed a high level of schooling. Over seventy-three percent of respondents had at least some college with thirty-three percent of the total having a college degree. When these data are compared with the local demographics, we find that only forty-eight percent have had some college and only seventeen percent had a bachelors degree or higher (zipskinny.com). There is significant difference in the educational level of the respondents to the survey and the residents of the community.

Higher levels of education did not directly equate to higher levels of income among the survey respondents. Only twenty-nine percent had an annual household income of \$50,000 or more, compared with thirty-four percent of those living in the local area. For those earning less than \$25,000 a year the percentage was thirty-three percent of those responding to the questionnaire as

compared to thirty percent of local residents. Some thirty-seven percent of respondents had incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year (see Fig. 4). The primary occupations reported were thirty-eight percent in an unclassified “other” category and thirty-one percent in professional or managerial positions. The local demographic data show that the two primary occupations of those living in the area surrounding the church were sales and office at twenty-eight percent and management or professional at twenty-six percent (zipskinny.com).

Figure 4. Income breakdown of WOFF



Procedure

The purpose of this project is to discover how specific changes in the local mission of the church impact the overall development of servant leadership values, attitudes and practices in the Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio.

The changes that the congregation underwent outwardly, described earlier in this chapter, are not part of this study. Analysis of the inner life of participants is

the focus of this project. The analysis was developed as a means of measuring the changes that were occurring to the members in the context of Walk of Faith Fellowship. The research method used in this study was to, first, develop an instrument that would assess specific goals; second, to administer that assessment tool to the primary participants; and third, to complete a statistical analysis of the responses.

In order to develop the assessment tool, specific goals had to be identified as a guideline for question development. The goals used to develop that tool were to determine the degree of transformation that has taken place with respondents in regard to four primary areas of their personal and corporate spiritual life. These four areas deal with affective attitudes, spirituality, relationships and behavior of those participating in disinterested benevolence. The following are the goals that were identified and used to inform the questionnaire.

1. To determine what, if any emotions were felt by the attendees in the process of changes regarding servant ministry.
2. To determine what, if any spiritual improvement took place with the attendees as they were involved in servant ministry.
3. To determine how the attendees think about servant ministry as a result of the changes they experienced.
4. To determine if the changes made any difference in the interpersonal relationships experienced by the attendees.

Once the tool was developed it was reviewed by a well-known researcher in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, Monte Sahlin. It was then

administered to the congregation on two successive Sabbaths. The questionnaires were numbered so that the number of questionnaires distributed would be known. An administrative assistant distributed the questionnaires and kept track of the names of the people who received a questionnaire and the number assigned to each. This information was not known by the researcher at any point, but was used entirely as a means to recover the completed questionnaires.

Instructions on completing the questionnaire were explained verbally to reinforce proper adherence to the intent of the study. Participants were reminded to be honest and that there were no “right answers” except for their truthful views. The participants were allowed to take the questionnaires home and to return them the following week. This was done for two reasons. The first reason was to prevent the survey from being a distraction during the worship service. The second reason was to give people plenty of time to think through their responses.

The questionnaires were collected over a period of four weeks by the administrative assistant. This follow-up included reviewing each questionnaire for completeness and going back to the respondent to ask them to fill in areas that they might have missed. In a couple of cases, full pages were not filled out because the respondent skipped over them for various reasons. This individual work, by the assistant, ensured confidentiality with the researcher and aided in a more accurate study.

Once all the questionnaires were collected, the data were transferred to a spreadsheet for statistical analysis. A code book was prepared and sent with the

spreadsheet file to Dr. Petr Cincala (statistician for the Natural Church Development organization in Europe and the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.) who completed the data processing and statistical analysis for the study on the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Assessment

The data from the survey instrument were analyzed to determine whether or not any changes took place in the values, attitudes and practices of the participants and to what degree those changes occurred. The primary comparisons will determine if those who reported spiritual growth were involved in disinterested benevolence and to see to what degree their involvement had an affect on the changes indicated by their responses.

The procedure for determining whether transformation took place in the four areas is to measure these elements based on individual self-evaluations as reported through the questionnaire. To improve the reliability of the data, four questions were used in each area as identified from the goals mentioned earlier.

The four questions dealing with affective attitudes used feeling statements (see Appendix 2 for assessment tool). These are items six, ten, fourteen, and eighteen in the questionnaire. Another set of four questions dealt with cognitive issues and these are items eight, twelve, sixteen, and twenty in the questionnaire. A third group of questions dealt with personal spiritual issues and spiritual disciplines. These items appear in the questionnaire as questions

seven, eleven, fifteen, and nineteen. The fourth group of questions dealt with relationships between others and God and these make up questions nine, thirteen, seventeen, and twenty-one in the instrument. The rating used for this primary set of questions was a scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly).

The survey also looked at attitudes regarding volunteerism and charitable organizations and the questionnaire included a number of items on these topics. In this section the same rating scale of 1-5 was used with 5 being the strongest answer and 1 the weakest.

There were three open-ended questions that were included in the questionnaire to provide opportunity for qualitative data. The first of these questions was to give the respondent the ability to either affirm the contents of the study or to point out a possible situation that was not addressed in the main question set. The second open-ended question allowed the respondent the ability to recognize any difficulties that they encountered through the change process and the third question gave the respondent the ability to determine what they personally thought the most significant change element that affected their spirituality.

The qualitative section of the survey questionnaire was analyzed by grouping the relevant answers together by using key words or phrases as interpreted by the researcher. These groupings were then compared and analyzed to determine what if any impact they had on the rest of the data gathered in the quantitative section of Chapter Five. Although the majority of the

qualitative information was either non-existent or not relevant there was some data that could be collected and analyzed.

This chapter has reviewed the context and participants of the project. It has described the process of generating the research questionnaire and the assessment of the responses to those questions. The next chapter will look at the relevant data compiled from the questionnaires and attempt to draw relevant conclusions that will assist in assessing the validity of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this project is to discover how specific changes in the local mission of the church impacts the overall development of servant leadership of the attendees at Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio. The previous chapter outlined the changes in ministry focus and explained the process used to evaluate those changes. The previous chapter also described the instrument developed to assess the impact on four primary areas related to the goals of this project. These four primary areas are the affective, spiritual, cognitive, and relational attitudes and behavior of members of the congregation.

1. To determine if emotions of the participants were altered during the process of change. (affect)
2. To determine if spiritual improvement took place with the participants as they became more involved in servant ministry. (spiritual)
3. To determine what participants think of servant ministry as they experienced the changes in the congregation. (cognitive)
4. To determine if the changes made any difference in interpersonal relationships experienced by the participants. (relational)

The specific dimension related to each of these goals was measured by four specific items in the survey instrument completed by twenty-seven members of the congregation. The survey data will indicate to what degree these goals were achieved.

Analysis of Survey Data

The first step will be to look at the responses to questions six through

twenty-one as they relate to two independent variables. Then each of the four goals will be discussed separately according to their ranking based on mean scores. After completing the discussion of the four goals, the relevant data acquired from the cross-tabulations which display any correlations with the demographic items and other items will be presented. This information may show patterns related to education, gender, religious background or ethnicity. Due to the small sample, these are statistically significant when there are at least twenty percentage points difference.

In addition to assessing the goals of this project, this survey includes information about attitudes toward volunteering and charitable organizations in questions twenty-three through thirty. These data also include information regarding attitudes of sacrificial giving in the area of volunteering and charitable organizations.

The last segment of this chapter will present information from the survey that does not fit in any of the other categories, yet has some relevance to this study. This includes crosstabs that did not fit in any of the other categories.

Overall Effects

The key survey items related to the four stated goals of this project are questions six through twenty-one. The responses to these questions all showed a marked positive outcome with the difference between the highest and the lowest mean score of less than one point (0.83) on a five-point scale. The mean scores are listed in Table 1, ranked from highest response to the lowest.

Table 1. Ranked averages of all responses

Question	Score
Think about my behavior (Q16)	4.56
Feel good about self (Q6)	4.48
Feel good about others (Q10)	4.41
Think about others I serve (Q19)	4.30
Better understand God (Q21)	4.19
Relationship with Christ improved (Q20)	4.15
Relationship with others improved (Q9)	4.15
Think about others (Q12)	4.04
Closeness to God (Q15)	4.00
Spiritual growth improved (Q14)	3.96
Confidence positively affected (Q8)	3.96
Closer to others Spiritually (Q17)	3.89
More focused Spiritually (Q18)	3.88
Bible study improved (Q11)	3.74
Relationships improved with those I serve(Q13)	3.74
Prayer life improved (Q7)	3.73

Note: The responses were given to each item on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”.

First Independent Variable

The first independent variable is a question (four) that asks, “To what degree have you grown in your faith?” Eighty-four percent of the respondents reported “some” or “much” growth. Since a large proportion of the respondents (sixty percent) reported “some” growth, the most significant comparison is between those reporting “no” growth, the smallest response, and those who reported “much” growth, the second highest level of response. Cross-tabulation shows that sixty percent of those responding that they had “some” growth were in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 annual household income bracket.

Table 2. Comparison between no growth and much growth

Question #	No	Much	Diff.
Spiritual growth improved (Q14, A)	2.75	5.00	2.25
Better understand God (Q21, S)	3.00	4.83	1.83
Closeness to God (Q15, S)	3.00	4.67	1.67
More focused Spiritually (Q18, A)	3.00	4.67	1.67
Prayer life improved (Q7, S)	3.00	4.66	1.66
Relationship with Christ improved (Q20, R)	3.25	4.83	1.58
Closer to others Spiritually (Q17, R)	3.25	4.83	1.58
Relationships improved with those I serve (Q13, R)	2.75	4.33	1.58
Bible study improved (Q11, S)	3.00	4.50	1.50
Confidence positively affected (Q8, C)	3.67	4.50	.83
Think about others (Q12, C)	3.67	4.17	.50
Think about my behavior (Q16, A)	4.25	4.66	.41
Feel good about self (Q6, A)	4.50	4.83	.33
Feel good about others (Q10, A)	4.25	4.33	.08
Relationship with others improved (Q9, R)	4.25	4.17	(.08)
Think about others I serve (Q19, C)	4.50	4.33	(.17)

Note: Each item is identified as to which of the four dimensions it measures; A = affect, C = cognitive, R = relational, S = spirituality. This same letter is used in all tables that display these questions individually.

Table 2 details the responses of those reporting “much” spiritual growth and “none” by displaying the mean scores for these two groups for questions six through twenty-one. The first item listed in Table 2 (Q14) validates the significant difference between the two groups. Respondents who reported “much” spiritual growth also consistently gave the maximum response to question fourteen, as would be expected. The next eight items in Table 2, each with a mean difference between the two groups of 1.5 points or more, deal primarily with spiritual and relational topics. All four of the questions on spirituality are found in this section of the table, along with three of the four questions on relational dimensions. This consistency further validates the results of the survey. There is a clear

correlation between the independent variable and the other indicators of spirituality.

These data support the conclusion that the change of focus in ministry at WOFF, which included a strong service component, had a strong positive affect on the spiritual outlook of the twenty four percent reporting “much growth” and at least some positive affect on the sixty percent who reported “some growth”.

Second Independent Variable

The second independent variable (Q5), asked if the respondent had been involved in some service to others in the community and/or the church. Nearly nine out of ten (eighty-nine percent) responded affirmatively. This correlates to question twenty-six in which people reported whether or not they were asked to serve. Nearly the same proportion (eighty-five percent) responded affirmatively. This is significantly greater than similar items in other surveys conducted in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. In a 2004 survey of Adventist congregations across North America, more than half of the attending members reported that they were not involved in any kind of volunteer service (Dudley 2004, 3). In a larger sampling from 2001, only twenty-two percent of Adventist Church attendees reported involvement in community service. In the interdenominational U.S. Congregational Life Survey conducted at the same time, just nineteen percent of worship attendees gave the same report (Sahlin 2003, 61). The participants in this project are way above the norm on this item, and these data confirm that the changes at WOFF moved many more members

to engage in some form of service to others.

Table 3 displays a comparison between all respondents and those who reported involvement in service. The column to the right shows the difference in mean scores between the two groups on each item. Nine of the items show a greater response among those participants who were involved in service, while there is no difference on one, and the remaining six show a lower response among those involved in service. A similar pattern exists in this comparison as in the previous one. All four of the items about spirituality show a positive difference related to service as do three of the items about relationships. This continued consistency tends to validate the overall outcome of the survey.

Table 3. Comparison of respondents involved in service with the total sample

Question #	All	Yes	Diff.
Spiritual growth improved (Q14, A)	3.96	4.58	.62
Prayer life improved (Q7, S)	3.73	4.17	.44
More focused Spiritually (Q18, A)	3.88	4.29	.41
Closeness to God (Q15, S)	4.00	4.38	.38
Better understand God (Q21, S)	4.19	4.46	.27
Relationships improved with those I serve (Q13, R)	3.74	4.00	.26
Bible study improved (Q11, S)	3.74	4.00	.26
Closer to others Spiritually (Q17, R)	3.89	4.13	.24
Relationship with Christ improved (Q20, R)	4.15	4.17	.02
Confidence positively affected (Q8, C)	3.96	3.96	0.00
Think about others (Q12, C)	4.04	3.87	(.17)
Relationship with others improved (Q9, R)	4.15	3.67	(.48)
Think about others I serve (Q19, C)	4.30	3.70	(.60)
Feel good about self (Q6, A)	4.48	3.83	(.65)
Feel good about others (Q10, A)	4.41	3.71	(.70)
Think about my behavior (Q16, C)	4.56	3.83	(.73)

See the note on Table 2 regarding category codes in parenthesis.

The conclusion that can be drawn here is similar to the first comparison.

Spiritual growth has taken place and there is a correlation between that growth

and the common focus of service.

Groupings of Goals

To prove an analysis of the four primary goals of this project, the responses to each of the four clusters of related items were combined to calculate an overall mean score for each category. These results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Mean scores of combined items by category

Items related to ...	Score
Cognitive positive changes (C)	4.18
Affective attitudes positive changes(A)	4.18
Relationships positive changes(R)	3.99
Spirituality positive changes (S)	3.94

Table 4 shows that both feelings (affect) and attitudes (cognitive) received the same level of overall response. Both ranked the highest level of response, although the difference between the high end and the low end of this particular comparison is almost negligible. (This does not mean that all four of the questions in these areas ranked highest but that the cumulative average of all four mean scores resulted in this ranking.) As was mentioned earlier, significant positive change is reported by the respondents in all four categories. The difference between the highest and the lowest scores is less than one quarter of a point (0.24).

Goal #3: Cognitive Attitudes

The cluster of items measuring cognitive impact on respondents was

statistically tied with the affective cluster. Therefore a strong case is made that the two are closely connected. This dimension is discussed first simply because individual items in this cluster ranked first and fourth highest among all items in the survey.

Table 5. Mean responses to cognitive items

Questions	Score
Think about my behavior (Q16C)	4.56
Think about others I serve (Q19)	4.30
Think about others (Q12)	4.04
Confidence positively affected (Q8)	3.96

Respondents were most likely to report that they “think about my behavior” as a result of their involvement in the project. This simply reflects the reality that intentional behavior change requires thought. This item is closely followed in ranking by two items that show positive responses to thinking about others. The lowest ranked response in this grouping dealt with the self confidence of respondents. Although the response to this last item is positive, it lags behind the others significantly. There is only a 0.6 differential in mean score from the highest to the lowest in this category.

These data confirm that a focus on service to others has a definite impact on how a person thinks about self and others. This focus also requires a conscious effort to change behavior. Although this is a response that might be expected based on the information presented in chapters two and three, it is nonetheless disconcerting. If changes in thinking need to precede behavioral

changes this means that there is limited emphasis being placed by pastors and teachers on the importance of altruistic behavior despite their theological commitments.

Goal #1: Affective Dimension

Affective issues deal with feelings toward self and others. These four questions were designed to determine whether service to others made a difference in a person's feelings. This grouping tied with the cognitive cluster, both having the highest overall mean score. Items six and ten ranked among all the individual items with the second and third highest responses. Feeling good about self and others was clearly an outcome experienced by the project participants. Questions fourteen and eighteen ranked lower but still showed a significant positive response. The differential between the highest and lowest scores for the affective cluster is the same as the cognitive cluster at 0.6.

Table 6. Mean responses to affective items

Questions	Score
Feel good about self (Q6)	4.48
Feel good about others (Q10)	4.40
Spiritual growth improved (Q14)	3.96
More focused Spiritually (Q18)	3.88

From these data it is evident that the feelings attendees had toward themselves and toward others were positively affected during the course of the changes at WOFF. Since there is a statistical tie between the affective cluster and the cognitive cluster it is impossible to determine where there was a greater impact. The conclusion is that the two dimensions are so closely tied together

that we cannot really separate feelings from attitudes when it comes to selfless service.

Goal #4: Relational Dimension

The overall mean score for the cluster of items about relationships trailed the first two clusters by only a fifth of a point (0.19). All four of the items in this cluster received more than average responses. Among the four items, the mean scores were separated by less than a half point (.045), a smaller spread than either of the two previous clusters.

Table 7. Mean responses to relational questions

Questions	Score
Relationship with Christ improved (Q20)	4.19
Relationship with others improved (Q9)	4.15
Closer to others Spiritually (Q17)	3.89
Relationships improved with those I serve (Q13)	3.74

The item that ranked highest in this cluster was, “My relationship with Christ improved.” An almost equal response was given to, “My relationship with others improved.” Responses were almost as strong for the other two items. These data are not surprising. Doing the work of Christ for others brings one closer to Him, and when people intentionally work with and for others it impacts their relationships with the people they serve and work with.

These data are evidence of positive change in relationship among project participants similar to the two previous clusters. This outcome aligns with the overall goals of the project. What is difficult to determine from these questions is

the degree or quantity of improvement and how the individual respondents defined “improvement.” It does seem that the responses to this cluster affirm what Jesus said when asked about the greatest commandment. “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37).

Goal #2: Spiritual Dimension

This fourth cluster of items was designed to determine how the goals of the project related to the spiritual improvement of the participants. The difference between the overall mean score for this cluster and the first two was a quarter of a point (0.24). See Table 4. This is further evidence of the closely-related outcomes in all four dimensions. The spread among the mean score for the individual items in this cluster was less than a half point (0.46) and just an infinitesimal 0.01 greater than the previous cluster.

Although these data provide further evidence that spiritual growth took place, there is no significance that this cluster received the lowest response of the four. These data cannot be compared with the first independent variable (Q4), where there is a significant difference in item ranking. These data are most likely showing two different measurement scales with question four dealing only with spirituality and this section being a comparative evaluation between four different measurements.

Table 8. Mean responses to spiritual items

Questions	Score
Better understand God (Q21)	4.19
Closeness to God (Q15)	4.00
Bible study improved (Q11)	3.74
Prayer life improved (Q7)	3.73

The items regarding better understanding of God and closeness to God received the greatest of the four in this set. These data are evidence that selfless service to others does impact one's view of God. Entering into the work of God gives a person insight that he or she would otherwise not encounter.

Summary of the Four Goal-related Clusters

There is significant evidence from these clusters of items that growth has taken place among the participants related to all four project goals. Each cluster shows a high overall mean positive and these scores are all very close to one another. This is strong evidence to confirm the thesis that growth takes place in all four dimensions when the participants become aware of and participate in service.

Cross-tabulations for Questions six-twenty-one

The data in this section do not affirm or deny the goals of the project. This information may help determine some underlying factors related to the primary responses or help to understand the complex reasons for the responses.

Goal #3: Cognitive Items

The crosstabs for question sixteen, which dealt with thinking about how my behavior affects others, showed two statistical differences worth noting. Fully sixty percent of those who agreed “somewhat” were in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 annual household income bracket compared with thirty-seven percent of the total sample. This indicates that those in this lower-middle income bracket were more likely to be challenged to think about how their behavior affects others.

Also eighty-three percent of those who responded to question sixteen with “strong” agreement were not raised by Adventist parents as opposed to sixty-three percent of the total sample. This suggests that those participants not raised by Adventist were more likely to think more about others as a result of this experience.

In response to question eight which deals with personal confidence, eighty-three percent of those who agreed “strongly” were married as compared to sixty-five percent of the total sample. These data suggests that married individuals who were given opportunity to serve outside their family had their confidence increased by this activity.

Goal #1: Affective Items

In this category of questions, only question fourteen, which dealt with personal spiritual growth, showed any significant difference. Some fifty-six percent of those in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 annual household income bracket report that this is “somewhat” true for them compared with thirty-eight percent of

the total sample. This suggests participants in this lower-middle income bracket were more likely to feel they had only a moderate sense of spiritual growth.

Goal #4: Relational Items

Question seventeen, which deals with feeling closer to others on the spiritual journey, had fifty-seven percent of those who “agreed somewhat” in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 annual household bracket compared to thirty-seven percent of the total sample who answered the same way. This is further evidence that participants in this lower-middle income category experienced more moderate growth.

Also, one hundred percent of those who responded with “strong agreement” to this question were not raised by Seventh-day Adventist parents as compared to sixty-three percent of total sample who answered with “strong agreement.” These data suggests that those not raised in Adventist homes had more growth in their relationships with others through their participation in this project. This might indicate that service is being taught and modeled in some Adventist homes and the emphasis on relationships with others. Another possible interpretation is that Adventists are not growing in this area.

The second item that showed significant difference was question thirteen, which asked if relationships improved with those the participants served. Among those who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement fifty-six percent graduated from college compared to thirty-three percent of the total sample who responded similarly. This indicates that working with others in service may not

be as great a factor for those who have had a college degree as the rest of the respondents.

Goal #2: Spiritual Items

Cross-tabulations in three of the four questions in this grouping showed statistically significant comparisons. In response to question seven, dealing with prayer life, seventy-five percent of those who “agreed somewhat” were in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 annual household income bracket as compared with thirty-eight percent of the total sample who responded in the same manner. Also eighty-seven percent of those who “agreed somewhat” on this item did not grow up as an Adventist as compared to sixty-one percent of the total respondents. This may indicate that those who did not grow up in Adventist families and are in the lower-middle income bracket have a weaker prayer life than others.

In response to question eleven, dealing with Bible study, seventy-five percent of those who were baptized between five and ten years ago responded that they neither agree nor disagree that their Bible study improved as compared to forty-eight percent of the total respondents. This might indicate that after the first five years in the Adventist Church, there is strong involvement with Bible study or that there is little felt need for Bible study.

Of those who “strongly agree” in question twenty-one that they have a better understanding of God, eighty-two percent were not raised by Seventh-day Adventist parents as compared to sixty-three percent of the total sample. In response to this same question, fifty-four percent of those who “agreed

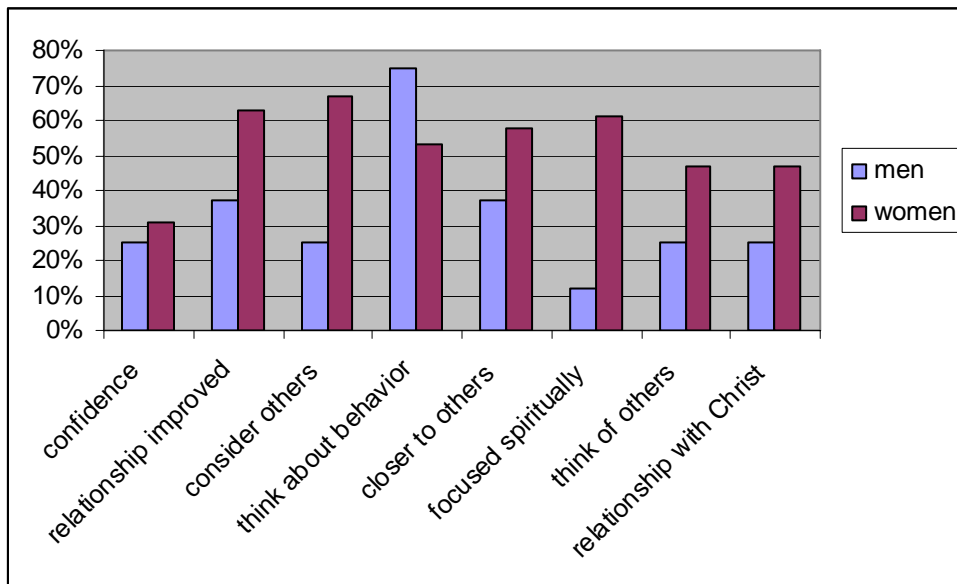
somewhat” were in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 annual household income bracket as compared to thirty-seven percent of the total sample. Once again there is a correlation between this lower-middle income group and those not raised in Adventist families.

Gender Comparisons for questions six-twenty-one

Figure 5 displays the data by gender for questions six through twenty-one. In all eight questions there was a statistically significant difference. In every case but one the responses of women were greater than those of men. In two cases, the responses of the women were more than 40 percentage points greater than those of the men. In response to question twelve, two thirds of women (sixty-seven percent) “agreed somewhat” that they considered others more, while only twenty-five percent of the men gave the same response. In response to question eighteen, nearly as many women (sixty-one percent) “agreed somewhat” that they were more spiritually focused, while only twelve percent of men gave the same response.

For men, only question sixteen received a larger response than that of women. Three quarters (seventy-five percent) of men “agreed strongly” with this statement as compared to fifty-three percent of women. These data may help us to understand how the sexes think. Women seem to think more of others and it impacts their spirituality more than the males. The males on the other hand seem to think more about themselves.

Figure 5: Gender comparisons



Attitudes about Volunteering and Charitable Organizations

Question twenty-two asked if the respondent was giving more or less time to volunteering. About forty-one percent indicated they were giving more time and twenty-six percent said they were giving less. The comparison is statistically significant. It indicates that the change in focus at WOFF has increased participant's awareness of and involvement in giving their time to help others.

Questions twenty-three and twenty-four were not only next to each other on the questionnaire, but were also similar and I believe that many respondents either did not read the questions carefully or got confused. Question twenty-three was designed to ask those who volunteered why they had not given **more**. Question twenty-four was designed to ask those who did **not** volunteer why they had not given **any** time. The reason I believe this confused people is that there were a full twenty-seven responses to both questions when only a smaller portion

of the respondents should have answered each question.

Some information can still be gleaned from the responses. In response to question twenty-three more than a third (thirty-seven percent) said their schedules were too full and twenty-two percent answered that they volunteered as much as they can. There is a lot of cross over between those two answers and the cumulative total is fifty-nine percent. It is interesting that eighty-three percent of those who said they volunteer as much as they can are college graduates compared with thirty-three percent of the total sample. Eighty percent of the respondents who said their schedule was too full were married compared to sixty-three percent of the total sample. This suggests that married people have much more of their time taken up in family activities and therefore have less time available to volunteer than those who are single.

In response to question twenty-four, which asked why the respondent had not volunteered in the last twelve months, fifty-four percent replied that their schedules were too full. The obvious reason people either do not volunteer more or volunteer any of their time is that they feel overwhelmed with various demands on their time. This may be a time management issue or related to setting of priorities in one's personal life.

Item twenty-five asked questions that dealt with attitudes about volunteering. These questions were designed to find out how people felt about the general concept and practice of volunteering. The purpose was to explore the motivations that participants found important relative to volunteer service.

Table 9. Attitudes about volunteering

Item	Score
I feel compassion toward those in need	4.52
Volunteering helps gain new perspectives	4.31
Volunteering is important to those I respect	3.75
Volunteering makes me feel needed	3.56
Volunteering helps me deal with problems	3.46
I can make new contacts for work	2.16

The two highest mean scores in this set of questions dealt with compassion and the opportunity to gain new perspectives (see Table 9). Both of these items ranked above the 86th percentile in terms of positive responses. The least response was to an item that dealt with the personal gain one might acquire from volunteering. Clearly the participants in this project are inclined toward attitudes of altruistic service or disinterested benevolence. These attitudes may not be transferable to the general population but are expressed by those who have been actively engaged in service through WOFF.

Cross-tabulations for Items in Questions twenty-five

The crosstabs show three instances in which there are statistically significant comparisons in this set of questions. The responses to the first question in this set show that those who feel that compassion is “somewhat important” as a motivation for volunteering included sixty-seven percent respondents baptized five to ten years ago as compared to forty-eight percent of the total respondents. This would indicate that length of time since baptism affected how people look at compassion in volunteering to help others.

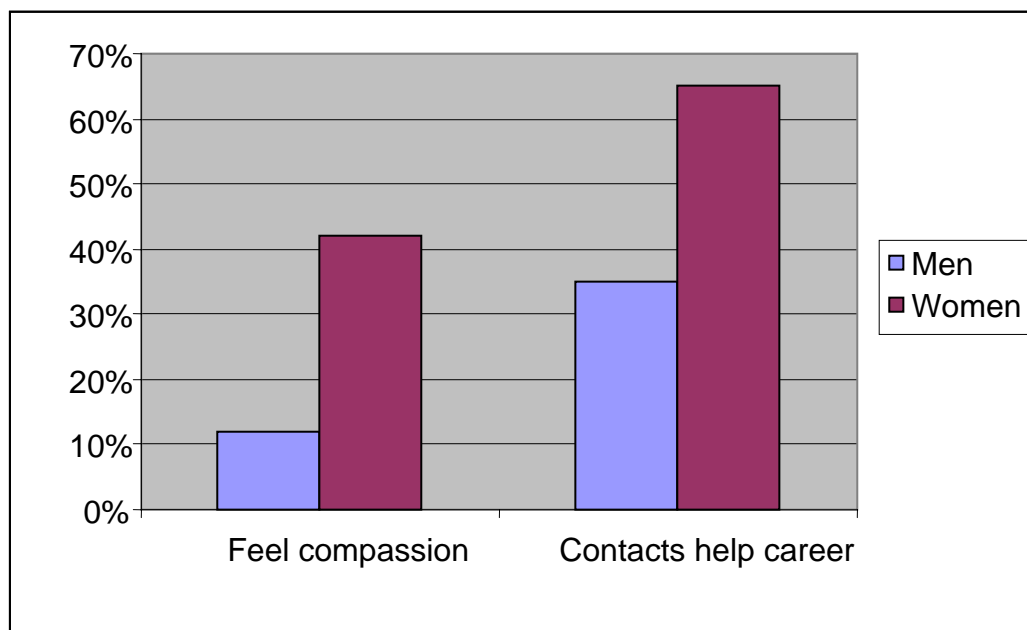
Responses to the second question found that eighty-five percent of those who said volunteering was “somewhat important” because it helps them deal with their problems were married compared to sixty-one percent of total respondents. In response to the same question, sixty-two percent of those who felt that volunteering was “not too important” in dealing with their problems were in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 annual household income bracket compared to thirty-eight percent of the total respondents. These data seem to indicate that married couples find more life-coping assistance in helping others while participants in the lower-middle income bracket are less likely to do so.

Gender Comparisons for Item twenty-five

Comparison of the responses of men and women to the set of questions included in item twenty-five provides two instances in which there is a statistically significant difference.

The first was in the item about compassion. Some forty-two percent of women responded that compassion was “somewhat important” in their motivation to volunteer, while only twelve percent of men gave the same response. In the second instance, sixty-five percent of women reported that making new contacts for work was “not at all important” compared to thirty five-percent of men. These data parallel previous responses in which men seem to be motivated more by self-interest while women tend more toward altruistic motivations.

Figure 6. Gender comparisons on attitudes about volunteering



Attitudes toward Charitable Organizations

Item twenty-six included a set of questions dealing with attitudes toward charitable organizations. The mean scores for the responses to these questions are found in Table 10. The three highest responses among these questions all expressed a positive view of charitable organizations. Responses to the need for charitable organizations, the idea that individuals have the power to improve the welfare of others and the concept that charitable organizations play a major role in communities all ranked above the overall mean score in this category of four out of five. These data provide additional evidence that the respondents have a generally positive attitude toward charitable organizations.

Table 10. Attitudes about charitable organizations

Question	Score
There is a need for charity organizations	4.74
I have the power to improve welfare for others	4.37
Charitable organizations play a major role in making communities better	4.11
Charitable organizations impact important issues	3.74
Government has responsibility to care for others	3.37
Charitable organizations are more effective today	3.26
My concerns come first	2.93
Charitable organizations are honest	2.89
Charitable organizations make little difference	2.69

The lowest positive response in this section is to a negative statement—that charitable organizations make little difference. This is a difference of 1.42 in mean scores between those who believe charitable organizations have little effect verses those who feel that they play a major role in communities. This indicates that for the majority of respondents there are strong positive feelings toward charitable organizations and their ability to make a difference in the community and wider world.

Cross-tabulations for Item Twenty-nine

The crosstab data for the questions in this set include three instances in which there is a statistically significant comparison. The first is related to the statement that charitable organizations make little difference in dealing with major problems. Some sixty percent of those who “mostly disagreed” with this statement graduated from college compared to thirty-five percent of total respondents. Also, one hundred percent of those who “mostly agreed” with this

statement were married compared to sixty-one percent of the total respondents. This might indicate that college graduates had a more positive view of charitable organizations than others, while married people had a strong negative view of charitable organizations. The third significant comparison related to this same statement was that ninety percent of women “mostly disagreed” with the statement as compared to sixty nine percent of the total respondents. This is consistent with the other strong female responses in this survey.

Another item asked if the respondent believes charitable organizations are honest. Some eighty-five percent of those who said they don’t know were married as opposed to sixty-three percent of total respondents. This is consistent with the other negative attitudes expressed by married respondents above.

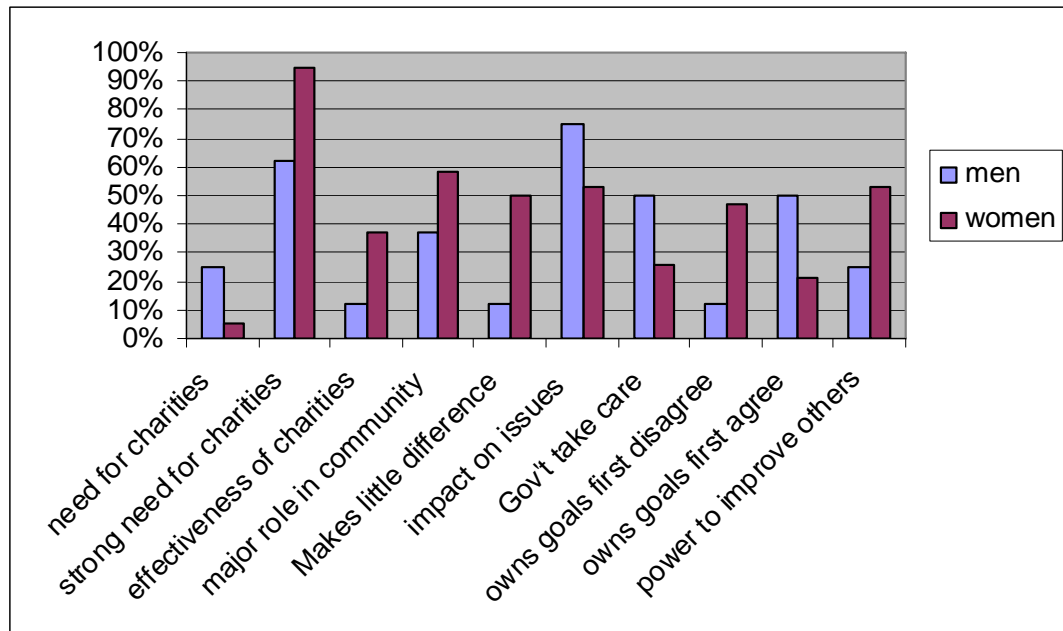
In response to the statement that the government should take care of people, fifty-six percent of those who “mostly agreed” were in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 annual household income bracket compared to thirty-seven percent of total respondents. This would indicate that those in the lower-middle income bracket had stronger feelings in support of government intervention in charitable activities. This has been a growing attitude in the United States over the past seventy years, especially among the urban working class and lower-middle class.

Gender Comparisons in Question Twenty-nine

Men and women in this survey have distinctly different views on the topic of charitable organizations. On six items, at a statistically significant level, women

are more likely than men to respond to a particular item and on four other items men are more likely than women to respond in a particular way (See Figure 7).

Figure 7. Gender comparisons in question twenty-nine



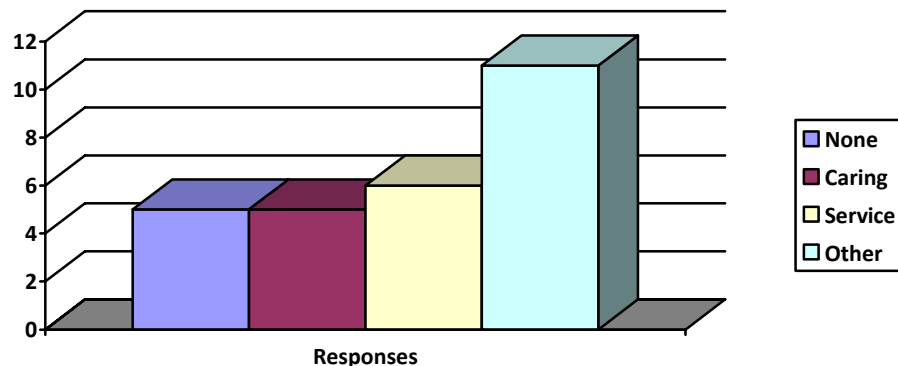
Two instances are important to note. The first has to do with the thirty-three percentage point difference between the attitudes of women and men toward the need for charitable organizations. The other notable difference is in regards to the statement about taking care of one's own goals first. Women are more likely to "strongly disagree" with a thirty-five point difference over the men and men are more likely to agree with a twenty-nine point difference over the women. Again, in both instances, this is consistent with the previous data we have already noted in which women take a more altruistic attitude.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Three open-ended questions included in the assessment tool were included in order to gather qualitative information about the personal perspectives of the participants. These data gathered from these questions were compiled and analyzed in this section.

The first question asked “What has been the most significant change in your attitude regarding serving others?” Out of twenty-seven responses the largest number (forty-one percent) are unique, providing no repeats or observable patterns. Because the researcher was unable to see any patterns, these responses are grouped in the “other” category in figure 8. Nineteen percent of the participants gave no response to this question and are displayed in the “none” or no answer category.

Figure 8. Responses to question forty-one



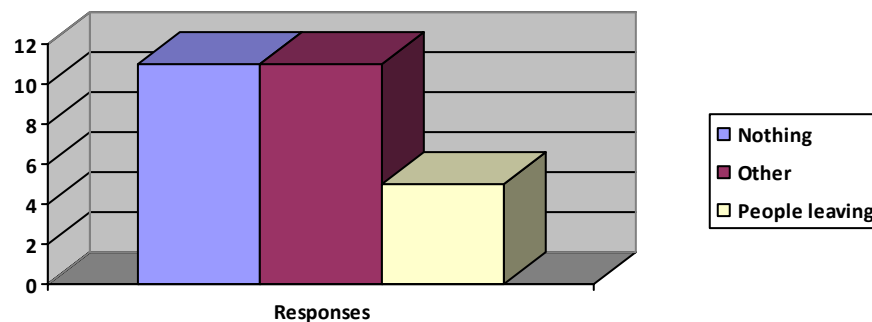
Smaller numbers of participants wrote responses indicating changes in attitude toward compassion and service. Responses clustered under the category “service” included participants who wrote something indicating a change

in attitude toward service. This grouping received twenty-two percent of the responses. These responses show a pattern similar to data in the quantitative section of this chapter.

Responses grouped under the category “compassion” included key words such as: love, patience, compassion, and caring for others. This group comprises nineteen percent of all respondents. These data parallel the quantitative data provided earlier that show a high positive correlation to emotional growth (Goal #1) and the cognitive growth (Goal #3).

Participants were also asked “What has been the most difficult change that you have had to deal with in the changes that have occurred in the church in the past year?” There were only three primary groupings of answers to this question (see figure 9).

Figure 9. Responses to question forty-two



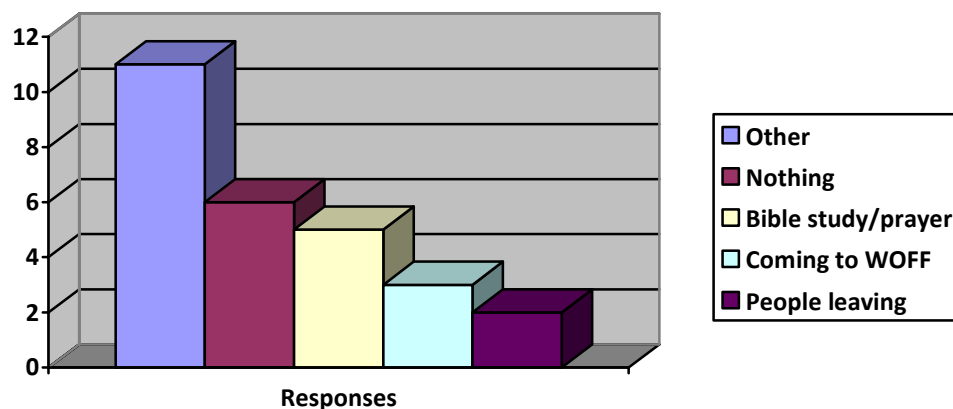
As with question forty-one, the largest numbers of responses are in the “other” group which consists of unique comments that have no similarity to other responses. This made up forty-one percent of the responses. An example of the

idiosyncratic nature of these responses is comment expressing a negative attitude toward the pastor's wife. Forty-one percent of the participants gave no answer at all to this question.

The only grouping of answers that yields a clear pattern is that which lamented the loss of members who left during the process of change and transition. This accounts for nineteen percent of the responses.

A third qualitative question asked participants "What single change has most affected your spirituality?" The answers to this question gave clusters in five primary groupings (see figure 10).

Figure 10. Responses to question forty-three



As with the previous two items, the highest percentage of the responses cannot be clustered and are displayed in the "other" category (forty-one percent). Several of these responses do not relate in any way to the church or the issues dealt with in the survey. The second largest grouping is made up of participants who wrote no answer wrote "nothing" (twenty-two percent).

Nineteen percent of the participants wrote that Bible study and prayer

constitute the most significant item that “most effected” their spirituality. This response is parallel to the quantitative earlier data and could be interpreted in at least two ways. First, it may be that Bible study and prayer make up the motivating factor that allowed many to change their perspectives on service. Another possible interpretation could be that their involvement in service motivated greater spiritual reflection and an increase in Bible study and prayer.

The fourth cluster includes eleven percent of the respondents who said that coming to WOFF was the single most important change that affected their spirituality. This can be understood to mean that the total package of Bible study, prayer and service drove their positive spiritual improvement.

The final grouping of responses to this question seems to be related to responses to the previous item. Seven percent responded that the greatest impact on their spirituality was the loss of members. If these responses are added to the similar responses to the previous question, a full twenty-seven percent of the respondents were affected in one way or another by the loss of members as the church moved through a journey of transformation.

Summary

Much information was gleaned from the comparisons of the mean scores of the responses to the questions (six through twenty-one) related to the primary goals of this project. These data were analyzed in several ways that indicate achievement of all four project goals and a positive response from the respondents to the changes that took place at WOFF. There is ample evidence

to confirm that disinterested benevolence does have a positive impact on the cognitive, affective, relational and spiritual aspects of those who actively participated.

The data collected from the qualitative questions supports the data of the quantitative section of this chapter. The qualitative data also produced at least two unexpected results. The first was the glaring lack of useable information that was produced from these three questions which will be discussed in Chapter Six. But the other surprising result was that so many respondents mentioned the affect of the loss of members had on them in this journey. This response was not a part of the original scope of this project but that data adds another dimension to the study that humanizes the experience of loss as the church moved forward to a new spiritual plane.

Other information gleaned from the survey produced some less important but insightful observations regarding the respondents and how their life situations, genders or education may have impacted how they viewed some of the elements of the project goals. These data may indicate the probability of change in attitudes based on the relevant demographic realities.

A third set of information that was gleaned from this survey has to do with attitudes toward volunteer service and charitable organizations. These data support a correlation between the goals of the project and positive attitudes toward both volunteering and charities.

A regression analysis was also attempted but it is clear that this sophisticated statistical tool cannot produce usable results in data sets of less

than 500, so little was gained from that analysis. The only correlations that could be determined from regression analysis were between question four as an independent variable to question fifteen (closeness to God) and question five as an independent variable to question eight (confidence positively affected). Both of these findings are consistent with the other findings described in this chapter, but no cluster correlations could be found.

I want to reflect here on three comments that were taken from the open-ended questions in the survey. First one participant wrote, “Walk of Faith has re-sparked my interest in helping others. I have helped others in the past but now I really want to help more than ever.” This statement confirms that the positive emphasis on servanthood or disinterested benevolence has a deep connection with people on a very basic level.

Another participant wrote, “I have more love and compassion and empathy towards others.” This is an expression of how the outward effect of service is tangible and life transforming. Jesus came to serve, not to be served and when His people take on His character they will become more like Him in every aspect of their lives.

A third participant wrote, “Serving is a priority in my life.” When this becomes the attitude of the people of God, then the world will know that there is something different, something powerful about God’s people.

I now turn to the final chapter of this project, Chapter Six, in which I draw some conclusions from the project and make a summary of the complete findings. It is in this chapter that I will reflect on some inferences that were drawn

from this study and some potential follow-up studies that could come out of the results found in this project. Also I will take a look at my personal journey in this project and compare it to the goals that were set forth in the original proposal to see if there is a correlation between the expectations and the reality of the project.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In his book *Citizen Soldiers*, Stephen Ambrose details the historic and heroic events of the common men of the greatest generation (my father's) who fought a war not for patriotism or self glorification but because "at the core, the American citizen soldier knew the difference between right and wrong, and they didn't want to live in a world in which wrong prevailed" (Ambrose 1997, 473). Today there is a battle of cosmic proportions going on between good and evil, between Christ and Satan and those who call themselves Christian are combatants whether they acknowledge it or not.

To be a citizen soldier in this battle one must fight like the commander in chief, Christ. His method was to be a servant to all, to love and give more than to take. Disinterested benevolence is the key battle technique in this war. It cannot be won with words alone. It is won one heart at a time as we model the love and care of the Lord. In earthly war, soldiers must fight. In cosmic terms, Christians must serve; there is no alternative. It has been the intent of this study to determine the impact of service on the spiritual and emotional health of the Christian.

The conclusion derived from this study is that disinterested benevolence or altruism has a very real impact on spiritual growth in a Christian. The data affirms the contention that following Jesus' model of disinterested benevolence and the actions of revivalists and reformers in church history has a direct impact

on the personal spirituality of the person who participates in this activity. In correlation to this finding, servant leadership is the practical way to model disinterested benevolence to others as a means of discipleship.

Reflections

It is hard to read the New Testament without seeing in the teaching and parables of Jesus a strong imperative for service when one joins the kingdom of God. One of my favorite verses dealing with the subject of servanthood is in the conversation Jesus had with John and James in relation to their mother's request that they be given the privilege seats of power next to Jesus. Jesus responded: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26-28). Jesus' servanthood was more than just the final act on the cross. The real issue for Christ's servanthood was the nature of the kingdom He was bringing in. He began His servanthood when He came to earth as a baby and lived a life of obedience and service to His Father and for humanity. He gave of Himself constantly throughout His life. The cross was the ultimate act of service, but it wasn't the only such act. Jesus modeled a life of service, first to His earthly parents, then in His public ministry. He ever lived to serve others with no thought of gaining an advantage or a personal return on His investment. He "freely gave" (Matt. 10:8).

The life of Jesus and His parables are discussed in religious classes and taught from pulpits around the world as the great teachings of the Master. But teachings that are not put into effect serve little use other than talking points among the educated and informed. Referring back to the illustration mentioned in the introduction, Christians who do not serve are not Christians. The fruit of Christian faith will be seen in a life of service to the “least of these brothers” (Matt. 25:40).

I have become passionate about the need for *real* Christians to stand up and be like Jesus, in thought, word and *deed*. In the past several years my journey has led me to believe that the professed followers of Christ are not really following the Lord, but just talking and thinking about it. This has been my underlying passion for this project and nothing I have discovered through this process has diminished that passion nor refuted it. With this underlying passion I want to reflect on some issues that came out of this study that can be applied to personal or corporate ministry.

Inferences

One strong inference that came out of this study is that personal assessments are subjective and not objective. People do not see themselves objectively. Some of the survey responses suggest that WOFF is the most service-oriented church the world had ever seen. The reality is that it has been an ongoing struggle to convince the majority of the congregation regarding the importance of disinterested benevolence and to apply it to their lives. Even those

who are beginning to understand are slow to implement disinterested benevolence in more complete forms. I do not mean to denigrate the progress being made by many in the congregation, but there are larger realities than the bottom line of this study. The growing awareness and the beginning steps people are taking, out of their comfort zone to serve others are real and admirable. But the survey responses could suggest greater progress than WOFF has actually made to this point.

Another example of how respondents defined key concepts in their own, unique ways is Question twenty-six: Have you been asked to volunteer in the last year? In the context of the repeated appeals for volunteers in many different projects and ministries, it was no surprise that eighty-five percent of the respondents answered affirmatively. It is astounding that fifteen percent indicated a negative response or the respondents did not know. For two years the focus of pulpit ministry and personal conversations at WOFF has been challenging every attendee to get involved in service, to do ***something***.

I believe that one of the primary purposes of congregational leadership, for both pastoral and lay leaders, is "to prepare God's people for work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12, 13). This has been the major focus of leadership in WOFF. How could nearly one in six respondents have missed the personal challenge to volunteer in some way? The most likely explanation is that unless a person is asked directly to take a specific, individual role in

volunteer ministry, they do not consider that they have been asked to volunteer. These data underline the highly personal nature of moving congregants into service. The individual dimension of conceptualizing how each person might be involved in service and asking them simply and directly to take a specific volunteer role cannot be ignored. It is central and essential to this enterprise.

The second inference that I came to from this study is that at times people tell you what you want to hear. Since much emphasis has been given to spiritual growth through serving God and His people for over two years, I believe some were responding more to what they heard in sermons and discussions rather than any real change in their actual behavior. I have no proof of this other than my personal observations.

The third inference I gleaned from this study is that involvement in service alone is not enough to bring about real transformation towards disinterested benevolence. The change needs to include deeper attitudes and values; not simply behavioral changes. There is some value in the “fake it till you make it” concept of going through the motions until they become meaningful. But people do not always “make it”.

The heart and mind or more specifically the emotional and cognitive undercurrents that drive behavior must be altered in order for transformation to occur. This is a work of the Holy Spirit that comes through a holistic approach to spiritual issues, including personal study of God’s Word and a deep active prayer life. When all three of these experiences come together (prayer, Bible study and service) the life is transformed at a deeper level than can result from any one

element alone. This is confirmed in the life and teachings of Jesus who is our model and mentor in all things spiritual.

A fourth inference that needs to be acknowledged is the lack of useable information that was gleaned from the Qualitative data in the open ended questions. The majority of respondents did not answer most of the questions or answered with “nothing” or “none”. Another large number of responses were not clear enough or related to the project so that usable data could be compiled. The primary reason is related to the wording of the questions. The open-ended questions are not specific enough to the project so that many could easily interpret them in a wide spectrum of answers. This was a research design flaw by the researcher. The second possible reason was that the survey was quite long and some respondents got tired of answering the questions by the time they reached these particular questions.

Finally, I want to comment on what the research reading did for me personally. I was forced to come to grips with some of the issues being written about the cutting edge of ministry in North America, the incongruent changes being experienced in all of Christendom and the struggles others have as they deal with these issues. I read with much interest and passion the books listed in the Reference Section and many more from which I did not quote. My reading has not slowed. Even after the completion of Chapter Three, I have continued to read the ongoing dialogue and commentary of many authors who are wrestling with the issues that I find in the context of my ministry.

Application

This study has an application to ministry in the local church context, regardless of the denomination or the size of the congregation. What is being presented in this study is biblical and is an underlying element in all historic reformations and it was the approach taken by Christ in His own earthly ministry. When a person seeks to follow Jesus he or she must come to grips with the heart of Christ, a heart for service. Without service, spirituality and ministry become self-centered experiences.

The application of the results of this study can aid spiritual leaders in at least two primary ways. First, it provides a theological and practical basis to move toward a more biblical ministry of service as a means to grow closer to Christ. Secondly, it suggests a basis to inform, train, and encourage those who seek a deeper spiritual walk to engage in acts of service with no expectation of gain. This means to serve others for the sake of the kingdom and for the love of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and for no other reason. This service, along with other spiritual disciplines (personal Bible study, worship, and prayer) will aid in deepening a relationship with Christ, bringing the church to greater unity, and improve the church's witness for the kingdom.

Further Study

For the context of WOFF, further study will be done in the form of a follow-up questionnaire administered in six to twelve months. This questionnaire can track the further progress of the program to determine if there is continued

spiritual growth related to the ongoing ministry of service. There are several questions that should be reworded and improved to prevent ambiguity or misreporting of the data.

I recommend this study be replicated in other contexts to confirm the findings. There are some things from this study, however, that should be adjusted for the other congregations. Unlike this study done at WOFF another study could include a control group and a study group that would take two different paths. Both groups could be given a questionnaire similar to the one in this study at the beginning of the project. The control group would not be asked to do anything different than what it was already doing in regards to disinterested service. The study group would be asked to get involved in volunteer work outside of what they normally participate in. After a defined period of time (six to twelve months) both groups would be asked to take a post-study survey. This type of study would give clearer data as to whether or not service alone has a clear impact on the four areas that were defined in this study.

Personal Goals

There were three personal goals set forth in the project proposal that I felt were important for me personally. In fact, I had been considering those goals for myself prior to the beginning of the study. These goals are listed below.

1. I hope to more clearly understand the relationship of servanthood to mission in the role of a Christian leader.
2. I hope to better understand the role of servant leadership in the discipling process.

3. I hope to become a better servant leader.

Goal #1: Role of servanthood to the Christian leader

For several years I have been in process in my growth as a spiritual leader. I remember, at the beginning of my journey, desiring more than just a nominal experience of “church” in a somewhat traditional sense. It felt empty that people were coming to a worship service with no real measurable changes taking place. I felt at the time my sermons were biblical and were encouraging people to move closer to Jesus in their prayers and personal Bible study. I expounded on some of the deeper meanings of scripture to better instruct the attendees. But I felt empty; that no real transformation was taking place.

It was about this time that God placed a burden on my heart that I should engage in ministry outside the congregation. He seemed to be pushing me to serve those who were without a spiritual leader: not in preaching the word, but in serving. I began to give of my time to others who may never become a part of my congregation; not to just give spiritual advice or to condemn their lifestyles, but to serve with no expectation of a return. It was difficult at first because I was torn between my official duties and my personal desire to become something more. There were times when my official responsibilities took me away from my serving the community and it seemed like my priorities were in conflict.

Another conflict that arose when I began to do disinterested service was in the type of service I was doing. What I did to serve did not seem like ministry as it was taught to me in seminary. I was not counseling, preaching or giving Bible

studies. I was hanging out with teens on a playground. I was coaching baseball and flag football, and I was ice skating with the kids in the winter, which was nothing more than a ministry of presence. It was a ministry of showing concern for the children's welfare. I was becoming blessed in ways I could not have imagined.

The second phase of this growth process was to take the stories and encouragement of this ministry back to the congregation. At first they liked to hear the stories but they were not motivated enough to act. It was through this phase that the idea for a church-run teen center came to me and I presented it to the church. I found the money for this project outside the congregation so I did not need board approval, but I asked for the congregation to go on this journey with me. Some came, but many still stood and watched from the sidelines. The excuses were many: "I'm too busy"; "I don't work well with kids"; "that isn't where God has gifted me". But we moved forward with the few that were willing.

It was through this process that God convicted me that a leader cannot take others to a place where the leader has not gone. I must become a servant if I was to move others to become a servant too. This was my first goal and through the process of this transformation in the past several years I was and am convinced that servant leadership is Christ's method of mission and it must become mine and any others who want to follow in Christ's footsteps.

Goal #2: Better Understanding servanthood and discipleship

The second goal is closely tied to the first. I found that I can talk a lot

about the theory of Christianity, but demonstration leads to action. This is demonstrated in the phrase: "You can talk the talk but can you walk the walk?" Teaching theory from the pulpit makes people feel good at times but does not really relate to transforming their behaviors. If I wanted to make disciples, I needed to learn to be a disciple in every concept of the word. A disciple is not one who says he or she is, but a disciple is one who does. I learned that actions speak louder than words and have a lasting impact that transcends any sermon. This has been demonstrated to me clearly over the process of this project.

God had to work a change in my attitude and behavior before any true transformation could take place in the congregation. People watch their leaders and see through any phoniness. I had to serve and do it for the right reasons. Not just to manipulate the congregation, but to understand the heart of God when it comes to His children and their suffering and needs. I needed to become a giver with no strings attached. Only then could I take others on that journey of transformation with me. I could see what needed to be done better and to instruct from first hand experience, not from cognitive assent. With the transformation in me moving forward I could then begin to explain this journey to others with deeper meaning and answer questions that were not always clear to me before. I could lead and disciple others because I was being disciple.

Goal #3: Becoming a better servant leader

The third goal I identified is an ongoing process in me. I am on the journey and I see much more clearly the parameters of that journey. I know what

needs to be done and I see the path before me. Understanding this does not mean I have arrived. Growing in Christ is just that, growing. I can and I am learning more about being a servant day by day. I need to learn more about demonstrating love on an unconditional basis because I am a flawed human that regresses at times or meets new challenges that tries my understanding of disinterested benevolence.

I firmly believe that love is not just an emotion, love is also an action. “God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). My actions are not always consistent and I find myself judging others or myself. I find that some of the more difficult people are hard to demonstrate love and show concern in real tangible ways. I still find myself being selfish, controlling, or demeaning toward those who need the most grace. This journey has taught me one significant lesson and that is that I’m a long way away from where I should be in my development. But this should not and does not relieve me of the need to press on toward the goal of selfless demonstration of God’s love toward others.

Recently I received an email from a young person who has been a part of the WOFF experience since its inception. He was only twelve years old when he and his family came to join our small struggling church plant. Today, he has received his doctorate in physical therapy and is doing his internship out of the state. When he returns home to visit, he always comes to church and wants to talk with me. This is what his email (dated April 27, 2009) says:

Pastor,

I just wanted to write and express my deepest gratitude for the spiritual impact you have had on my life. I honestly don't know where my relationship with Jesus would be today without your spiritual influence. Thank you for making my relationship with Jesus real, reasonable, personal, and tangible.

I've been at WOFF from the beginning, and I know that you've seen a rollercoaster ride of highs and lows, individuals who have come and gone; just remember that Jesus is leading this thing. Every time I come home to visit WOFF, my mom and I always talk about how passionate and talented you are on the ride home. Take courage, and keep on doing the Lord's work.

This is what God is doing in me and through my ministry and its focus.

Regardless of whether everyone in the church gets it or not, one young man has seen Jesus in this ministry emphasis and it has caused his spiritual life to take root and begin to grow. God alone knows the full impact of this emphasis on deep personal spirituality that is growing in me and being taught and modeled to others.

Conclusion

This process of moving toward a holistic discipleship experience began in my ministry before I identified it as a potential research project for my Doctor of Ministry degree. I believe this journey would have taken place regardless of whether I did it as a project or not. The format and organization of the D.Min. research project gave me much more clarity and set up boundaries for this journey that would not have been in place without it. I am grateful and blessed to be challenged to think more deeply and clearly and to do more widespread reading than I would have done on my own.

I have found that others are walking this journey and they have given me deeper insight into the magnitude of the issues that are facing Christianity in North America today. Apart from this understanding of the big picture that writers are describing, one sees an overwhelmingly negative picture that makes him or her feel alone. As I close this chapter and this paper I want to cite an author that has given me some very clear perspectives on the transformations in society and how the church needs to come to grips with those changes. Eddie Gibbs asks the question of what will it mean for the church to become the seeker in seeking lost people. His answer is: "In the first place it will entail the church coming to a fresh understanding that it is called to live not for itself but for the world that the Lord came to save" (Gibbs 2000, 190). His answer resounds in my ear as I close this paper. I want the Church, and my little branch of it, WOFF, to become a giving, serving and loving Church that embodies the Spirit of the One who is its head.

APPENDIX 1
ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MISSIONAL IMPACT OF DISINTERESTED BENEVOLENCE
IN THE CONTEXT OF WALK OF FAITH FELLOWSHIP; CLEVELAND,
OH.

A PROJECT PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
KEVIN KUEHMICHEL

ASHLAND, OH

February 4, 2008

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to discover how changes in the local mission of the church transform the leaders of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio regarding their view of servant leadership. In what ways have changes in local mission transformed the leaders of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland Ohio regarding their view of servant leadership?

Overview

The project will focus on discovering what if any transformation has taken place on the leaders of Walk of Faith Fellowship in regards to their attitudes and actions dealing with servant leadership. The church is presently going through a period of redefining what its mission is through the relocation of the congregation and reorganizing the basic functions of the church. The leadership board is presently being led through a discipleship process that includes: small group experience, changes in worship location, and the planning and implementing an interactive missional worship service. The church in general is realizing the full impact of this journey. This project will determine what, if any, personal transformation that will occur from these activities. It will also attempt to measure whether these events have shaped the leader's personal missional perspectives regarding the role of servant leadership and their future activities.

The project will include a rationale built on the Biblical, theological, historical, and contemporary issues that inform the project. The data gathered

and interpreted will hopefully explain how the attitudinal and behavioral changes regarding servanthood, mission, and discipleship affect the health of the leadership in the local congregation.

Data for the project will be collected through one instrument. That instrument will assess the affective, cognitive, interpersonal, and spiritual dimensions of change. This data will demonstrate theological, attitudinal and behavioral changes that will occur from the journey of these leaders in discipling, changes in location and the changes experienced in the design and implementation of an interactive missional worship service.

Rationale

The world is changing and the church seems to be coming more and more irrelevant in the Western world. The issues that seem major in the church are non-existent in the secular world. It is because of the discontinuous change (Roxburgh 2005, 29) around us affecting the church that requires a new look at the church. It is for this reason that we look at the rationale for this project.

The rationale for this project will be developed from personal, Biblical, theological, historical and contemporary perspectives. This basis will inform the project and help to analyze the data acquired. First, I will look at the personal perspective which drives my ministry.

Personal

I planted Walk of Faith Fellowship in the inner urban region of Cleveland, Ohio in 1997 with the expectation that it would be a missional church. It was

planted with a primarily postmodern and pre-Christian constituency in mind. After the initial growth and development of the church by primarily churched people, it became a traditional congregation in its own right. This tradition was not drawn as much from the historical model of mainline churches but from its own newly formed ceremonies and rites. What was lacking was a truly Biblical fellowship that followed the model and instruction of Jesus on how God's people should operate in regards to servanthood and mission and the implications that has for discipleship and servant leadership.

This inward focus was limiting the church. It was in this context that leadership began a discipling group in January of 2006. We spent time in learning spiritual disciplines and healing. We looked at the historical elements of revival that include Bible study, prayer, personal piety, fellowship and evangelism (Lovelace 1979, 42) and began applying them to our individual and corporate lives.

After a year in this discipling process we found the weakest area of the five was evangelism. Concurrently we found ourselves without a church building. This caused us to relocate in a rented storefront where the church operates a teen center. It was through this relocation that we began a process of redefining our identity through a new worship service in our new surroundings and our mission context. It became the focus of our attention to create an interactive and missional worship service that would be meaningful for the unchurched with special emphasis on children.

My rationale for this project is derived from my personal experience and

journey into servant missions. I want to study the transformational affects of active missional servanthood on the attitudes and actions of the leadership team in order to help me to understand how to produce disciples in line with Jesus' example and teachings. It has been my passion for ten years to produce this type of church as a model of Biblical faithfulness to the intent of Jesus' mission for humanity on earth and the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer in John 17:18 that His people will be sent into the world as He was sent.

As I journey through this process I cannot help but be informed and transformed by the process. As a servant leader, there is no greater blessing or reward than to duplicate oneself in the discipleship of others. On the basis of this personal drive, I will now explore the Biblical issues that are relevant to this project.

Biblical

Two primary issues are at stake for this project. The first is servant leadership and the other is disinterested benevolence. I will limit my discussions to two specific Biblical characters and develop their teachings and how they modeled it. I want to focus on Jesus and Paul to clarify how they understood the topic of servant leadership and applied it in their own lives. I am aware that the Scriptures have more to say on this subject in both the Old and New Testaments, but I have chosen to limit my discussion for the sake of focus.

Jesus is the best example of servant leadership that the Bible gives us. He not only taught specifically on the topic but He openly modeled it to His

disciples. Jesus demonstrated first hand what it looked like through acts of disinterested benevolence. These two concepts seem to fit hand in hand in the ministry and teachings of Jesus. The Scriptural record of Christ's teachings on these matters is significant enough to give serious thought as to their implications for modern disciples.

Jesus understood His mission and goals and He related them in a synagogue reading found in Luke 4: 18, 19. Jesus said His mission was to free the oppressed, heal the blind and to preach good news to the poor. His goal was to bring about a radical transformation of society through the realization of the Jubilee. This was to create a level playing field raising up those who were socially and economically downtrodden. Since this was Christ's goal, it should also be the goal of Christians in the world today, wherever we live.

We will develop what Jesus taught regarding His primary mission of service. He says that He did not come to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28 NIV). His ultimate act of service was to be His death on the cross. In light of the root of all human sin and selfishness, Jesus came to live a life that was in harmony with the attitude of heaven, that of selfless service.

He taught these lessons in parables and by example. Other than the crucifixion, Jesus' greatest demonstration of servant leadership was the foot washing ceremony He instituted during the last supper. The Scripture explains it like this: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love" (John 13:1). In the foot washing ceremony Jesus demonstrated how servant leadership and disinterested benevolence come

together.

Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees by his own admission. Pharisees were well trained in the law and it was the Pharisees that continually contested with Jesus over his actions of setting human needs over that of human rules. Paul therefore could be thought of as not fully understanding the relationship of servant leadership and disinterested benevolence as Jesus taught.

But through Paul's writings we can find evidence that he did develop an understanding of what Jesus was trying to teach us. In Romans 15:1-3, Paul talks about bearing with the failings of the weak and pleasing the neighbor for his good as Christ did for us. This is a classic description of disinterested benevolence. What we do should not be for our own benefit, but to benefit others.

Not only did Paul teach that we should serve with disinterested benevolence, but that we should become a servant. Probably Paul's most famous statement regarding servanthood is found in Phil. 2:3-8. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ... but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant." Jesus did nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but came to serve. According to Paul, we should be like Jesus.

These two great teachers set the stage for the importance of servant leadership and the acts of disinterested benevolence. Through time, theologians have studied the scriptures and commented on them in such a way as to influence the church. I turn now to these theologians to find out what they have said that will inform our study.

Theological

In the theological rationale I will look at what theologians are saying in two specific areas related to this project. The first is Christian praxis and the second deals with an incarnational model and how it informs Christian praxis. In light of these two concepts I hope to get a better understanding of how Christian praxis impacts servant leadership and disinterested benevolence.

Praxis is defined as the action(s) that took place to achieve a goal or purpose. In Christian understanding, the ultimate goal of all praxis is the revelation of God in history and points toward the second coming of Christ (Anderson 2001, 103).

It has been said that among the three great monotheistic religions, Christianity is primarily orthodoxic while Judaism and Islam are primarily orthopraxic (Armstrong 2002, 66). With that being said, some modern theologians are looking closely at issues of praxis in the Christian church.

One theme being discussed by modern theologians regarding praxis deals with three areas within the church. Those areas are: divorce and remarriage, women in ministry and homosexuality in the clergy (Anderson 2001, 110-112). While those areas can clearly be defined as Christian praxis, it does little to help understand the role of the church in dealing with the poor, the damaged and the social outcasts.

The orthopraxy of Jesus as evidenced in Scripture was to fulfill the commission of Luke 4 as we discussed in the Biblical rationale above. There are

some theologians that talk about liberation theology referring to the poor and underclasses and I will look at what theologians are saying in regard to this.

The second area of consideration in this section deals with Christ's incarnational mission. There is some theological debate on the definition of the incarnational mission of Jesus and what it looks like and whether or not we can participate in it. One author reported a conversation with Raymond Fung, former Secretary for Evangelism at the World Council of Churches, who said: "he did not espouse incarnational missiology because the church can never even remotely resemble Christ, and needs constantly to point beyond itself to Jesus" (Langmead 2004, 4).

Theologians seem to spend a great deal of time on definitions. The principle of incarnational mission as modeled by Christ seems to be less about definition than about praxis. One clear definition that will be developed in this project is the theme that Christ entered into humanity and lived among us as a means of mission. He looked like us, ate and dressed like us and came physically near us. Jesus did not save us or call us from a distance (heaven), but left his abode to dwell among us.

Langmead defines Christ's mission as: "evangelism (involving at least 'saying the gospel') and social involvement (involving at least 'doing the gospel') are part of the one integrated mission" (Langmead 2004, 50). This connects orthopraxy and orthodoxy as Christ's methodology of mission. The significance of this is found in Christ's incarnational missiology of leaving heaven and becoming a servant to those He came to save. He not only preached to the lost,

but worked for their physical and personal wellbeing.

We will explore this area of theology more as we dig into what theologians say regarding these two concepts of orthodoxy informing our orthopraxy and Christ's incarnational missiology. From this we move onto the historical rationale for this project.

Historical

The historical context of servant leadership and disinterested benevolence ranges across the vast breadth of Christianity, but I want to focus on two specific streams which form the historical context of my ministry. First I want to review the Wesleyan history which demonstrated strong social gospel involvement. This stream significantly informed the early Adventist founders.

Secondly, I want to review the information from my own ecclesiastical tradition of Seventh-day Adventism. I want to develop an understanding of how early Adventist theology informed the orthopraxy of both the church as an institution and the members as individuals.

In looking at Wesley, his context and his teaching, I want to understand the role of servant leadership and disinterested benevolence in the Methodist movement. Wesley lived in a time of "ecclesiastical arrogance and truculence, the shallow retentions of Deism, the insincerity and debasement rampant in Church and state" (Bready 1938, 405). This sounds quite similar to the state of religion and the world today.

His revival was a spiritual revival but from Wesley's perspective, it was

also a wholistic revival. Any spirituality that was devoid of the love of others and did not demonstrate that love through social action could not be true religion according to Wesley. For Wesley orthopraxy was key in combination with orthodoxy as he understood the New Testament (Bready 1938, 405). This approach to Christian witness first turned 18th Century England upside down and soon afterward moved to the fledgling country in America.

A sound combination of social action and the Gospel was the key to the success of Wesley and the revival attributed to him. A thorough understanding of this concept needs to be applied to our modern situation.

Seventh-day Adventism arose during the second great awakening in North American history. It is out of that context that the church's identity, ecclesiology and practice arose. One of the primary founders of Adventism was Ellen G. White. It is accepted by most Adventists that Mrs. White had the gift of prophecy and an influential writer and thought leader of the developing church.

It is through her writings and the practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that we will find a significant rationale for servant leadership and disinterested benevolence. In fact, Mrs. White used the term "disinterested benevolence" 121 times in her writings. In one of those statements she relates the following:

I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God's test of our character. If we have the true religion of the Bible, we shall feel that a debt of love, kindness,

and interest is due to Christ in behalf of His brethren; and we can do no less than to show our gratitude for His immeasurable love to us while we were sinners unworthy of His grace, by having a deep interest and unselfish love for those who are our brethren, and who are less fortunate than ourselves. (White 1942, 511)

It was with the intensity of statements like this one that the Seventh-day Adventist church became active in issues such as antislavery, prohibition, women's suffrage and taking care of the poor. The church has an official branch called Adventist Community Services (ACS) which distributes clothing, household goods and food to the needy, as well as coordinates many types of community development projects. Another official entity sponsored by the church is an organization called Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). ADRA works on an international level helping not only the developmentally marginal people groups but also works in international disaster relief.

With an understanding of the modern history of evangelical and Adventist practice in regards to servant leadership and disinterested benevolence we move forward to look at current conditions in the church. What conditions in the world and the church require us to look at these issues today?

Contemporary

There are two issues that can help us better understand the contemporary context of this project. First, the world is changing and the Western church as a whole isn't adapting to meet the changes. Secondly, there are some churches that are doing creative things today and show real potential to meet the needs of the postmodern Western world. I will look at both of these issues in this section.

One of the contemporary realities of the modern church in the West is the dismal condition that it is in. One author writes that there is an imminent demise forecasted for the church because of the culture of institutionalism and civic religion that it has become (McNeal 2003, 1). He isn't the only author to predict gloom and doom for the modern church if something isn't done to change it.

The world is changing more rapidly than at any time in earth's history. We live in a time where the nuclear family has disintegrated, sexuality is confused and relationships are conducted through a mouse or text messaging. We live in a post-modern culture that has a global worldview. All of the previous assumptions and belief systems have been questioned or changed. A back to basics approach seems to be the only common denominator that will reach through the noise and confusion that the world is now living in.

One concept that the modern church must come to grips with is the incarnational approach to ministry. Hirsch tells us: "Our very lives are our messages, and we cannot take ourselves out of the equation of mission" (Hirsch 2006, 133). He goes on to relate that servanthood and humility are commitments we must make with one another and the world (Hirsch 2006, 134). Going back to the basics, or old ways, includes becoming incarnated as a missional Christian in the world; not calling the world to come to see what we have to offer.

With this context in mind, we must explore the basic issues that will help the church reach today's culture. What activities or attitudes on the part of the church will impact the world for Christ in a significant way? What seems to be a missing element in much of the Western world today but touches the world in a

meaningful way when it is present?

There are some creative people performing disinterested benevolence in North America today. One example is Steve Sjogren in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has developed and modeled a whole church program based on servant evangelism that he describes as “low risk, high grace” (Sjogren 1993, 53). His approach is simple: give freely without any expectation of return. His church regularly does simple service activities for the community to show them that God loves them. His is an interesting case since he is working in a community that is middle to upper class.

Probably the most common form of disinterested benevolence is that to the poor and destitute. The Salvation Army has been doing this sort of ministry from 1865 until today. They are constantly upgrading and modifying their activities based on the needs of the day. The Salvation Army web site makes this statement:

Salvation Army social service programs meet the basic needs of daily life for those without the resources to do so themselves. Often, the programs provide food, shelter, clothing, financial assistance to pay utilities, and other necessities based on the need. (Salvation Army Services)

The third movement to be explored is my own denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Beginning with local churches providing ACS services to their local communities all the way to the denomination’s support of ADRA, Adventism still has a focus on disinterested benevolence.

The development of these contemporary issues along with the Biblical, theological and historical rationales will inform the project and help to analyze the

data. With this in place we move to the local context where the project will be conducted and data gathered.

Context

Walk of Faith Fellowship was a type “A” church plant that originated in February 1997. Type “A” means that it was a cold start without a core group. My wife, two children and I were sent into the West side of Cleveland to start a church from scratch. The target area was identified and a demographic study was done prior to my arrival and I was to take this area and plant a church there. Since there wasn’t a core group, mailers were sent out for Bible studies and door to door work was done. There was limited success with this approach in the area for several reasons. First I, as the church planter, was not culturally aware of the context; secondly there was not a building to operate out of except my home and people were cautious about newcomers and going to the home of a newcomer.

What eventually got the church off the ground was a group of twelve-fifteen Seventh-day Adventist young adults that were disgruntled with their church experience. They were intrigued by the desire to build a culturally relevant church using small groups as the core design and utilizing a contemporary worship format. This was very rare in the Adventist Church which tends to be rather traditional in its theology and practices.

Within a year we were seeing forty-fifty in worship attendance in a home church with four functioning small groups. Most of the people attending were either Seventh-day Adventists or their friends. Among those attending, no one,

except my family, lived in the target area. A very traditional Adventist evangelistic campaign was held that was primarily cognitive in style and focus, and little was done to deal with relational or social issues. The event was held in the target area and about 20 individuals from the community started attending worship and the small groups. Less than five remain in the church today from this evangelistic event.

Today, it appears that the congregation is in a holding pattern. Small groups have basically disappeared from the life of the church. The weekly worship service is the center of the life of the church with the community teen center as its primary mission outreach program. Less than 10 people have any involvement in this mission to the community.

One problem from the beginning of the church plant was that those who joined the church did not have a missional outlook, but were focused on self interest. The members are predominately young, single, post moderns who crave relationships with one another but are often unstable in their lives and worldview. This creates a very inward focused group that makes decisions primarily based on their wants and needs; not from the perspective of God's kingdom. This perspective continues to this day in the general operation of the church in how things are done in worship and service to the community.

Significant Terms

Altruism: Webster's ninth new collegiate dictionary defines this word as:

unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others. This term is neither used

frequently today nor a concept that is publicly and routinely practiced. In the context of this paper, this term is used to describe the Christian's duty of practicing unconditional love.

Disinterested benevolence: This term is not used much in our vocabulary but was used frequently a century ago to describe the actions of altruistic attitudes. In other words, demonstrating love in actions without regard for a return on the investment. Giving of one's time, talents and efforts without any expectation or hope of a return is how this term is being used for this discussion.

Incarnational: In theological terms, the word incarnation refers to Christ's entering into our world by becoming one of us; the word became flesh. For the purposes of this dissertation, incarnational refers to believers entering into the lives of those to whom we are called to minister. Mingling with the lost and hurting in order to better understand their circumstances and their needs and be able to serve them better because of that relationship.

Missional: This term was first coined in the book: *Missional church: a vision for the sending of the church in North America* and later explained by Alan Roxburgh. He explains the term like this:

The word missional was coined to express the conviction that North America and Europe are now primary "mission fields" themselves. Missional also expressed that God's mission is that which shapes and defines all that the church is and does, as opposed to expecting church to be the ultimate self-help group for meeting our own needs and finding fulfillment in our individual lives. (Roxburgh 2005, 12)

Orthodoxy: Right thinking

Orthopraxy: Right doing.

Servant leadership: Jesus was a radical leader who changed the human understanding of leadership. Jesus taught His disciples the significance of giving (Matt. 10:8) and He taught that the first shall be last and the last shall be first (Matt. 19:30). It is with this basic understanding that a leader in the kingdom of God is not one who lords it over others, but serves with humility as Christ did. Servant leadership stands against the norms of human understanding that leaders must dominate. Jesus teaches that the model of heaven is to be in submission.

Project Goals

The purpose of this project is to discover how specific changes in the local mission of the church impacts the overall development of servant leadership of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio. The goals for this project are:

1. To determine what, if any emotions were felt by the leaders in the process of changes regarding servant ministry.
2. To determine what, if any spiritual improvement took place with the leaders as they were involved in servant ministry.
3. To determine how the leaders think about servant ministry as a result of the changes they experienced.
4. To determine if the changes made any difference in the interpersonal relationships experienced by the leaders.

Design and Procedure

The research question for the project is: "In what ways have changes in local mission transformed the leaders of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland

Ohio regarding their view of servant leadership?” The design of the project is to look at the role orthopraxis has in the life and ministry of a Christian as informed by his or her orthodoxy. This question has implications on discipleship as well as mission. The project will follow this outline.

1. I will examine the teachings and practice of Jesus and Paul to determine a Biblical context and reality of orthopraxy in relationship to orthodoxy.
2. I will look at the historical context of the Wesleyan movement and my own denominational history to determine the role that orthopraxy plays in the context of ministry and mission.
3. I will also look at the contemporary North American church to see how the modern Western church sees the role of orthopraxy in mission and ministry.
4. After six months of operating of Walk of Faith Fellowship in a storefront with the emphasis less on our own worship experience and more on disinterested benevolence, I will survey the leaders of the church to see what impact this mission of compassion has had on their spirituality, attitudes toward the lost and their interpersonal relationships with other church members.
5. The surveys will be compiled and the data analyzed to determine what if any impact this ministry has had on the leadership of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio.

Assessment Strategy

The purpose of this project is to discover how specific changes in the local mission of the church impacts the overall development of servant leadership of Walk of Faith Fellowship in Cleveland, Ohio. The assessment strategy is to discover the relevant attitudes and thoughts of specific leaders by using open and closed ended questions in a survey to determine their views and the

relevance of their answers to the project goals.

The four goals of this project deal with the affective, spiritual, cognitive and relational aspects of their lives. Questions will be developed to measure each of these areas and to assess if there were any noticeable changes that took place.

Questions may include the following samples:

- On a scale of 1-5 with five being the strongest, how positive are your feelings when you are participating in servant ministry?
- On a scale of 1-5 with five being the strongest, how have the changes in mission focus of the church improved your relationships with others in the church?
- On a scale of 1-5 with five being the strongest, has your devotional life been positively affected?
- On a scale of 1-5 with five being the strongest, how much has your thinking changed in a positive manner toward mission?

Along with this type of closed ended questions there will be some open ended questions asked along the same lines; questions such as: What has personally impacted you the most during this time of transition to a missional outreach ministry?

These questions will form the basis of understanding of how the goals were met. The answers to the questions will be compiled and analyzed to find patterns that may be helpful in future advances in ministry.

Personal Goals

I serve as a missional pastor in front line inner city ministry and this church is the only professional ministry I have known. I have desired to reproduce

myself as a disciple of Christ and a servant leader. I also desire to further the Kingdom of God. I have experienced both joy and frustration in attempting to fulfill my call.

In the past ten years I have learned more about what I don't know and understand than what I thought I knew. My introduction into the professional ministry and my training was highly cognitive and theological in orientation. When I entered into the field work, I found little impact that training had on the people to whom I ministered.

It is my desire to continue my spiritual growth through the praxis of my life and to make the theoretical more real. In order to continue in this growth journey I anticipate that this project will fulfill the following personal goals:

1. I hope to more clearly understand the relationship of servanthood to mission in the role of a Christian leader.
2. I hope to better understand the relationship of servant leadership in the discipling process.
3. I hope to become a better servant leader.

Calendar

October 2007	Attend DM914 Proposal class
November 2007	Confirm core team and support team
December 2007	Submit project proposal
January 2008	Project approval
May 2008	Distribute qualitative and quantitative surveys
August 2008	First draft of chapter 2

September 2008	Surveys collected and analyzed
October 2008	First draft of chapter 4-5
December 2008	First draft of chapter 3
February 2009	First draft of chapter 6
May 2009	First draft of chapter 1
August 2009	Final draft of Final Paper
November 2009	Defense

Core Team

Advisor

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Monte Sahlin, MCMH
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Support Team

Dr. Shelvan Arunan, Pastor of Warren Seventh-day Adventist Church
 Mike Fortune, Pastor of Toledo Seventh-day Adventist Church
 Dean Cinquemani, Pastor of Christ Our Righteousness Seventh-day
 Adventist Church

Patricia Kuehmichel, wife of the author
Karli Kuehmichel, daughter of the author

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APPENDIX 2

Christian Service Survey

Dear participant,

This survey is a part of my Doctor of Ministry project and will be the most significant tool used to assess changes at Walk of Faith Fellowship over the last year. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions on this survey. Your absolute honest answers are imperative for the success of the project. Please do not answer in the way you think I want you to, but answer from your own personal perspective.

You are not being asked to give your name and the surveys will be kept in strict confidence. Even I will not be aware of who answered the question or what those answers are.

The purpose of this survey is to determine what, if any, personal changes have occurred as a response to the corporate changes in the ministry context and focus of Walk of Faith Fellowship. For the questions that ask for a written response, do not worry about spelling or incomplete sentences; just give you best answer.

I want to thank you in advance for your honesty and your willingness to help with this project.

Sincerely, Pastor Kevin Kuehmichel

1. Out of the last four Sabbaths, how many times did you attend church? (circle)

1 2 3 4

2. Do you currently have a volunteer role as part of this church or some related group? (circle)

Yes No

3. Have you served in one or more of the following areas:

- ☐ Teen Esteem drop-in center.
- ☐ Community service activities (i.e., food bank, clothing give-away).
- ☐ Volunteered for community service organization other than church.
- ☐ Belong to a civic group or service club.

4. Over the last year, how much have you grown in your faith?

- ☐ No real growth
- ☐ Some growth
- ☐ Much growth

5. As an attendee at Walk of Faith Fellowship, have you been involved in service to others in the church and the community?

Yes

No

If you answered yes to the above question, the following 16 statements are designed to determine to what extent your involvement in service impacted you. Please check the response that best describes your feelings for each of the following statements that involve service. In order to accurately complete the following section, I need to define the word “serve” in the context of this survey. To serve means to give of your time, talents and/or money for the benefit of others with no expectation of reward. If you aren’t involved in any service, please skip to number 24.

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
6. I feel good about myself when I serve.	5	4	3	2	1
7. My prayer life has improved.	5	4	3	2	1
8. My confidence has been positively affected.	5	4	3	2	1
9. My relationships with others I work with has improved.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I feel good about those I serve.	5	4	3	2	1
11. My Bible study has improved.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I consciously think about those whom I serve.	5	4	3	2	1
13. My relationships with those I serve have improved.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I feel my spiritual growth has improved.	5	4	3	2	1
15. My closeness to God has improved.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I think more about how my behavior affects others.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I am closer to others on our spiritual journey.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I feel like I am more focused spiritually.	5	4	3	2	1
19. I think about others more than I used to.	5	4	3	2	1
20. My relationship with Christ has improved.	5	4	3	2	1
21. I better understand the character of God.	5	4	3	2	1

22. Compared to three years ago, would you say you spend more, fewer or about the same number of hours on volunteer work today as you did three years ago?

- ☐ More
- ☐ Same
- ☐ Fewer
- ☐ Don't know

23. Which of these reasons best describes why you haven't volunteered more in the past 12 months? Check only one.

- ☐ Personal Schedule too full
- ☐ May be unable to honor the volunteer commitment
- ☐ Health problems, physically unable
- ☐ No interest
- ☐ Don't know how to become involved
- ☐ I already volunteer as much as I can
- ☐ My age
- ☐ Don't have necessary skills
- ☐ Don't have transportation
- ☐ People should be paid for their work
- ☐ No organization contacted me and asked me to volunteer
- ☐ My time is too valuable
- ☐ Other (specify: _____)
- ☐ Don't know

24. Which of these reasons best describes why you haven't been a volunteer in the past 12 months? Check only one.

- ☐ Personal Schedule too full
- ☐ May be unable to honor the volunteer commitment
- ☐ Health problems, physically unable
- ☐ No interest
- ☐ Don't know how to become involved
- ☐ I already volunteer as much as I can
- ☐ My age
- ☐ Don't have necessary skills
- ☐ Don't have transportation
- ☐ People should be paid for their work
- ☐ No organization contacted me and asked me to volunteer
- ☐ My time is too valuable
- ☐ Other (specify: _____)
- ☐ Don't know

25. If you have done volunteering work before or are current volunteering, I would like to ask your reasons for volunteering. If you have not volunteered before, I'd like to know what reasons for volunteering would be important to you. Please indicate as far as you are concerned, how important it is.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not too Important	Not at all Important	Don't Know
<input type="radio"/> Volunteering makes me feel needed.	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/> I feel compassion toward people in need.	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/> I can make new contacts that might help my business or career.	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/> Volunteering is an important activity to the people I respect.	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/> Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things.	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/> Volunteering helps me to deal with some of my own personal problems.	5	4	3	2	1

26. Were you asked to volunteer in the last year?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

27. People help other people in ways besides giving time to organized groups. Sometimes people help need people directly. In the past 12 months, did you give some of your time to help ...

- ☐ Relatives, including children and parents, or friends who don't live with you?
- ☐ The homeless or street people?
- ☐ A needy neighbor?
- ☐ Other needy persons?

28. Did you or members of your family or household give money, food or clothing to any of the following types of people?

- ☐ Relatives, including children and parents, or friends who don't live with you?
- ☐ The homeless or street people?
- ☐ A needy neighbor?
- ☐ Other needy persons?

29. Please indicate by selecting a number of your responses to the following statements.

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
● The need for charitable organizations is greater now than five years ago.	5	4	3	2	1
● Charitable organizations are more effective now in providing services than five years ago.	5	4	3	2	1
● Most charitable organizations are honest in their use of donated funds.	5	4	3	2	1
● Generally, charitable organizations play a major role in making our communities better places to live.	5	4	3	2	1
● Charitable organizations play an important role in speaking out on important issues.	5	4	3	2	1
● The government has a basic responsibility to take care of people who can't take care of themselves.	5	4	3	2	1
● We all have the right to concern ourselves with our own goals first and foremost, rather than the problems of other people.	5	4	3	2	1
● It is in my power to do things that improve the welfare of others.	5	4	3	2	1

30. Generally speaking, how would you classify people when it comes to trust?

- ☐ Most people can be trusted.
- ☐ Can't be too careful with people.
- ☐ Other, depends.
- ☐ Don't know.
- ☐ No answer.

For statistical purposes, please answer the following demographic questions:

31. Check the statement that is true for you:

- ☐ I am **not** a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church.
- ☐ I was raised as a child by an Adventist parent or parents or grandparents.
- ☐ I **am** a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church not raised by Adventist parents or grandparents.

32. **If you are a member**, how long since you were baptized?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than five years | <input type="radio"/> 11 to 20 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 5-10 years | <input type="radio"/> More than 20 years |

33. What is your marital status?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Now married | <input type="radio"/> Separated |
| <input type="radio"/> Divorced | <input type="radio"/> Widowed |
| <input type="radio"/> Never Married | |

34. What year were you born? _____

35. What is your primary ethnic background?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> African American | <input type="radio"/> Middle Eastern |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian or Pacific Islander | <input type="radio"/> Multi-ethnic |
| <input type="radio"/> Hispanic | <input type="radio"/> Other |
| <input type="radio"/> White (Not Hispanic) | |

36. Were you born an American citizen? Yes No

37. What was the last level of school that you have completed?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Elementary school | <input type="radio"/> Certificate or Associates degree |
| <input type="radio"/> Some High school | <input type="radio"/> Graduated from college |
| <input type="radio"/> High school diploma | <input type="radio"/> Post college degree |
| <input type="radio"/> Some college | |

38. Please check the category nearest to your yearly family income:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Under \$10,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$50,000-\$74,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$10,000-\$24,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$75,000-\$99,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$25,000-\$49,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$100,000 or more |

39. Please circle your gender? Male Female

40. What occupation group do you fall into?

- ☐ Professional or managerial
- ☐ Technical
- ☐ Clerical or sales
- ☐ Services
- ☐ Skilled artisan
- ☐ Construction, manufacturing or transportation
- ☐ Agriculture, forestry or fishing
- ☐ Other

For the following questions, please give a brief response where applicable.

41. What has been the most significant change in your attitude regarding serving others?

42. What has been the most difficult change that you have had to deal with in the changes that have occurred in the church in the past year?

43. What single change has most affected your spirituality?

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