

FACULTY'S DISTINGUISHED DISSERTATION AWARD
for
EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

May 20, 2001

At Commencement each year, the Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary grants a distinguished dissertation award to recognize and honor a Doctor of Ministry graduate who has submitted the outstanding dissertation-project for that year.

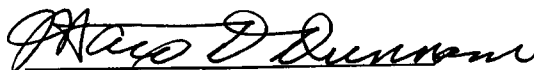
The recipient of the 2001 Distinguished Dissertation Award is **Joel P. Catlin**. Joel's dissertation, entitled "**Let Ralph Do It**" **A Bridge To The Unchurched**, sought to **produce a drama/media event designed to provide a bridge for experimental investigation of Christianity and to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral changes that participation in the event may have produced in those who attended.**

The criteria which governed the selection of this outstanding dissertation-project are:

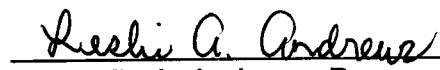
- ◆ Contributes in a substantial way to the Church's understanding of the nature and practice of ministry.
- ◆ Demonstrates potential for publication.
- ◆ Consistently follows standard research conventions.
- ◆ Conforms invariably to designated style guidelines in all respects.

The Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary commends Joel for his outstanding work and salutes Dr. Tuttle, his faculty adviser for his excellent mentoring of Joel.

Joel, we pray for your continued success in leading others to Christ and building them up in the faith.



Dr. Maxie D. Dunnam
President



Dr. Leslie A. Andrews, Dean
Doctor of Ministry Studies

ABSTRACT

“LET RALPH DO IT”

A BRIDGE TO THE UNCHURCHED

by

Joel P. Catlin

Churches need ways to bridge the gap between unchurched persons and exploratory opportunities to investigate the Christian faith. The purpose of this research was to produce a drama/media event designed to provide a bridge for experimental investigation of Christianity and to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral changes that participation in the event may have produced in those who attended. This was an evaluation study in the experimental mode that utilized a pre- and posttest design with no comparison group.

The bridge event created, described, and produced for this research was “Let Ralph Do It.” It sought to use some of the discoveries of church growth research by combining live drama and video into an attractive bridge to faith for unchurched persons. It was produced and evaluated in four central Illinois United Methodist congregations.

The highly reliable Francis and Stubb Attitude toward the Christian Faith Scale was used to measure the subjects’ attitudes toward the Christian faith. This scale and other researcher-designed questions were administered as a part of both the pre- and postproduction questionnaires. The 117 churched subjects demonstrated some statistically significant cognitive and, to a lesser degree, affective changes. The thirteen unchurched subjects did not. The churched subjects rated most elements on the questionnaires higher than the unchurched.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

“LET RALPH DO IT”

A BRIDGE TO THE UNCHURCHED

presented by


Joel P. Catlin

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

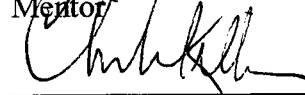
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**“LET RALPH DO IT”
A BRIDGE TO THE UNCHURCHED**

**A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary**

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

by

Joel P. Catlin

February 2001

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Joel Patrick Catlin

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The congregation I was serving immediately prior to my present appointment is somewhat unique. It is a vital, healthy congregation of 230 members in the midst of a decaying village of 489. The East Central Illinois village of Melvin is cast adrift in the sea of corn and beans from which it draws its life. It surrenders much of its resources to support the larger communities of Champaign, Urbana, and Gibson City, ten or more miles away. However, it receives little more than the commodities necessary to survive for its investment. The community is over thirty miles from any significant population center and offers little other than housing and a quiet, friendly place to live. In my opinion, the church is the best thing in town.

I love the people in this faithful body of believers and wanted to encourage their Christian courage and commitment. I wanted them to be the most effective disciples of Jesus Christ possible. In an effort to encourage them to be the best they could be, I tried to help them transition from a traditional program-based congregation to a cell-based church. A cell-based church's primary focus is small groups. These groups are specifically designed to reach new people and disciple them in the Christian faith. I believed this transition was the most effective way to reach new people and make disciples for Jesus Christ. We invited persons to try out the cell groups, but the pool of perspectives in this rural area was small. Few were willing to give such groups a try. As I listened to frustrated stories of those who invited their friends and neighbors to attend cell meetings, I observed a gap between those with a church home and those who had no church affiliation. The unchurched in that small community knew that the small groups

to which they were invited had something to do with the church, religion, or “those busy Methodists,” and that was enough to keep them away. Some had a negative experience with religion in the past. Some had preconceived ideas of what would be expected from them; some felt they were too busy; some felt they did not need such a group or were not yet ready. The cell-group members tried to bridge the gap through friendships, invitations, and the like, but were seldom effective. I suspected that other congregations in similar circumstances encountered the same gap. I tried to imagine effective ways that churches, especially smaller congregations with limited resources, could bridge this gap.

Background

I have a passion for Christian theater. Looking to the arts for a possible bridge was natural for me. I once made a living (meager though it was) presenting plays in churches. Since that time, drama has been an important part of the ministries of every congregation I have served. I have observed first hand the power of drama to reach people who would not normally darken a church door. I have seen old paradigms erased and new ones established in people, just because they came to a play. I have watched persons who were turned off by “the church” give their life to Jesus Christ as a result of coming to a live drama. I know drama can be an effective bridge to reach people who have not yet come to Christ.

There are many kinds of bridges, but they all provide the possibility of going from one place to another. My wife had an innate fear of bridges, especially those over large bodies of water. The longer and/or higher the bridge, the more frightened she would become. God has delivered her from that fear, but many unchurched persons still fear the bridges over which they must cross to even take a look at the landscape on the Christian

side of the river. The higher and/or longer the bridge, the more frightening it appears to those who are considering crossing. The worst experience my wife and I had crossing a bridge was when we crossed the very long bridge spanning the bay between Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida. This bridge went from pillion to pillion, stretching out into the ocean, with no end in sight. My wife found some short-lived relief when the bridge crossed over small islands.

The gap between the unchurched, postmodern American and those with a committed involvement in some form of Christian experience, such as cell group participation, is large. Drama may not be able to span the whole bay. The longer and higher one makes a bridge, the more resources needed to build and maintain it. Even if drama could span the whole bay, such a production might be out of the financial reach of the vast majority of North American churches. Imagine the fear of our unchurched friends as we invite them to take a ride with us on this huge dramatic bridge that spans out over the deep, seemingly without end. Negotiating a span of that length might seem frightening to the people whom we would like to have cross it. Most of our unchurched brothers and sisters want to know they can turn around and come back at any time, if they get uncomfortable with the ride. Those unchurched persons on the route to faith will feel more comfortable if the next island is visible from each point of departure. Christians need to build some islands along the way to Christianity where travelers can stop, get out, and look around, or even turn around, if they choose. Sometimes taking the pressure off puts the pressure on.

A person who risks traveling such a bridge to faith and has a bad experience will be harder to convince to try the journey again. My wife and I began an evangelical

theater ministry that performed in over two hundred churches. We saw many people start out on the bridge by responding to an invitation to Christian discipleship. I have wondered what kind of follow-up those folks received. John Wesley said, "I was more convinced than ever that preaching like an apostle without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer" (Parker 267). I sometimes think that through my work as a church dramatist, a church camp director, and even as a pastor, I have been guilty of not joining together those that were awakened and not training them up in the ways of God. My observation is that some people can have dramatic encounters with God through revivals, plays, cantatas, concerts, and special worship experiences. Many of these same people respond like the seeds Jesus spoke of in his "Parable of the Sower" which, when planted in rocky soil, sprang up quickly but soon died because they had no root (Matt. 13:5-6).

I want to sow seeds in good soil when possible. We cannot, however, always know where the good soil is. We must prepare the soil as best we can and to be ready to fertilize and water the plants that spring up. The awakened need to be fertilized. This includes surrounding them with a community of love and support where they can grow and reach the potential God has placed within them. The Word of God will be like water soaking into their roots and literally enabling this new life to flourish. Small groups, and especially cells, can be particularly effective in these areas (Cho 50-52; Slaughter 95-97; Easum 49; Galloway 28-29; Neighbour 94-95; Morris 183-190).

I suspect that drama can be a powerful tool for both preparing the soil and planting seeds. Drama also touches people's hearts. Drama creates an experience that can help persons consider new paradigms. Knowing this, I needed little encouragement

to try something involving drama in my dissertation. After a series of unique events that will be described in more detail in Chapter 3, I determined to write a drama that would be appealing and edifying to the unchurched. I believe such a drama might be used to help bridge the gap between the church and those who have no church home. As I considered this possibility, I began to realize that the gap, which I hoped a theatrical presentation could fill, was too great. People need an intermediate step where they could stop and survey the landscape before venturing further along the road to faith. Clearly the drama envisioned in this project would probably better serve as a bridge to an intermediate experience of faith exploration.

George Hunter identifies inviting people to make an experiment of faith as one of the ten ways that Apostolic churches communicate the Gospel (Church 167). The drama/media event used in this research was designed to be a non-threatening and inspirational experience. It concluded with an invitation for those unchurched persons in attendance to continue on the journey of faith to a place where they could experiment with Christianity in a user-friendly environment. Those who received the invitation were free to accept or reject it, without any pressure. It was designed with the hope that it would be an effective tool that a variety of churches could use to invite unchurched persons to take an intermediate, transitional step toward Christianity.

The Problem

The famous television and movie series Star Trek made much of “The Neutral Zone” between “good” Federation Space and the “evil” Romulan and Klingon empires. In order to avoid devastating intergalactic conflict, treaties were signed where all sides agreed not to go beyond “The Neutral Zone.” The great empires of this sector of the

galaxy agreed to leave “The Neutral Zone” free from any colonization or military build up. To pass through “The Neutral Zone” into someone else's space was to invite immediate attack and probable annihilation. In the Star Trek saga “The Neutral Zone” was often violated and became the place where the conflict between warring factions was most obvious (Star Trek II). A neutral zone seems to exist between the postmodern American and the Church.

Christianity meets the world in the neutral zone. For the secular person to cross beyond the final borders of modernity into the frontiers of Christianity is at least frightening and, at worst, boring. Unchurched persons must have compelling reasons to leave the safety of their homes and routines to enter the unfamiliar territory occupied by Christianity. The neutral zone consists of the places where the church and Christians coexist with postmodern Americans when both are not huddled away in protected zones such as our homes and cars. This zone is not neutral. It is the place where the conflicting world views of Christianity and secularism are most likely to clash and compete.

In his book, Faith Quakes, Leonard Sweet makes much of the phenomena of cocooning. This prevalent tendency to retreat to and remain in the safety and sanctity of our technologically laden homes, motor homes, and automobiles is observed throughout our society. The marketplace understands this. It is part of who we are (21-23). The neutral zone is the space between our cocoons. That space is where we do the work we cannot do at home and meet the occasional need that cannot be met in the cocoon. Both the Christian and the non-Christian are obliged to spend at least some of their lives in the neutral zone. Sweet indicts Christianity saying:

Instead of reaching people in their cocoons, the church itself is cocooning. Instead of making the church as comfortable as the home, the church is

itself constructing fragile fortresses. When the church goes into a cocoon, there is no telling what sort of creature will emerge from it. (34)

The Church of Jesus Christ sometimes serves as a cocoon where the world-damaged caterpillars of God's own likeness can find restoration, love, peace, forgiveness, hope, and a new self. The analogy breaks down at this point. Today's cocoons are limited in size. They are meant to protect and nurture an individual or family (Sweet 25). The Christian community dies if it does not continually reach out to and include others. The creatures in nature's cocoons die if their cocoons open prematurely. The church dies, if it does not continually open itself to the outside world. The purpose of nature's cocoons is to protect the moth, until it is able to escape. The Christian community is meant to be fluid, permeable, and alive, so that it may stretch and grow and seep into even the hardest places to reach. I believe God has designed his Church so people can come in and out easily and safely, until they decide for themselves that they want more. People, not structures, were meant to compose the Church:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, alive or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (1 Cor. 12:12-13, 15)

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I become like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. . . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Cor. 9:19-22)

Jesus, and later the apostles, adapted the gospel message to the culture into which they were born. Jesus' neutral zones included people's homes, the lakeshore, the mountainside, the temple steps, and anywhere in between where he encountered others.

He modeled, through his teaching, especially his parables, a culturally relevant way of ministry. He started with those to whom he was speaking. By relating to their everyday lives, he was able to reach many with his message (Morris 109). As Jesus tried to change the lives of those he taught, he found ways to speak to their hurts and needs. He constantly varied his message to the needs and backgrounds of the people he encountered. James F. Engle and Wilbert Norton assert, “Jesus was keenly aware that change will not occur without the presence of felt need” (37).

Saint Paul’s neutral zones were the highways and byways, the synagogues, public squares, and market places, not to mention prisons. He identified with the people of these places. He even says he assumed their sensitivities in order that he might reach some for the Gospel. He became one with them without giving up the tenets of his faith (1 Cor. 9:22).

Linus J. Morris reminds us that, “The greatest barrier to the gospel is not theology; it is culture” (108). The early church was immersed in the culture of its day. Morris says, “The primary appeal of the early church was its spiritual vitality, but people were also drawn to the church because it adapted its message and structures to the local culture” (109). The Body of Christ, from its inception, has grown and thrived on the willingness of God’s people to be an open, inviting body that gladly shares its space and life with others who are not yet a part of that body.

In The Celtic Way of Evangelism, George Hunter identifies the monastic communities of Saint Patrick and his followers in Ireland, and later in England, as the kind of Christian communities we are discussing. These communities were made up of believers who understood that the purpose of their community was not just to help them

walk the Christian walk. These enclaves of Christianity existed to be a two-way door that allowed outsiders to investigate Christianity, until they were able to “catch it” from the committed believers within the community (47-55).

My observation is that congregations can lose the open quality that Hunter describes and degenerate into places where only like-minded people gather. Sweet speaks of saloons. These are safe places where cronies can gather outside the cocoon but still be relatively protected from the world (26). The Christian community is not meant to be a cocoon or a saloon. The healthy Christian community may suggest periods of isolation for study and spiritual growth. The Celtic church encouraged time apart in isolated, natural settings. This did not take the place of being a part of the redemptive community but rather helped to enable it (Hunter, Celtic 38). Persons renewed by a time apart are often better able to face the struggle of being in the world but not of it. The Body of Christ exists in the world, in cultures and through people. The true Church must always struggle against the tendency to be a large cocoon or saloon. In struggling to break free of the cocoon, the waxy substance on the wings of a moth is worn off. This allows the moth’s wings to dry and harden so it can fly. Christ’s people are not created to snuggle in their cocoons lethargically. The Church is meant to help people to break free of their cocoons and fly. The struggle of those whose existence is focused on the cocoons of our day is not to get free of the cocoon so they can fly but to get inside and stay.

Jesus helped people break out of narrow mindedness, mental and physical illness, prejudice, and lack of faith and sin. The Christ-centered church of the twenty-first century is still about the business of helping people break out of their cocoons and fly.

Sweet is correct when he points out that when the church starts cocooning as the world is cocooning: it is in trouble (34, 35). The church cannot expect people to come to it. It must once again go to the people (26-27; Downs 25).

To reach the vast numbers of the lost and the hurting of our culture, the church must set up camp in the neutral zone and build lots of safe two-way bridges from the cocoon to the neutral zone and from the neutral zone to the community of faith. These bridges must allow persons to walk back and forth freely, until they accept or reject for themselves the faith that they are trying out.

Much of the arts and media exist within the neutral zone. The arts and media do not view this zone as an area of no hostile activity as the military might. The arts and media can and are used in aggressive ways for a variety of ends. They are the common language of all who move in and out of the neutral zone. They are expected and used by nearly everyone and for this reason they have the ability to reach into the cocoons of postmodern America and begin to effect paradigm shifts from the inside. This is demonstrated by the popularity of television shows such as Touched by an Angel and Promised Land. Both of these popular programs centered positively on spiritual themes. People are willing to be exposed to such themes if they are presented in a cultural vernacular that they can easily understand.

Engle and Norton were discussing the importance of speaking to people at their point of need and their point in the “spiritual decision process” twenty-five years ago.

They state:

The responsibility of the Christian communicator is to approach people where they are in terms of their spiritual position and, through an appropriate combination of message and media, to cause them to *progress in their decision process toward initial commitment and subsequent*

growth [original emphasis]. (45)

The media become the vehicles by which that exposure is brought directly into the cocoon. The arts and media can also provide sufficient stimulus to encourage an explorational excursion beyond the walls of the cocoon if the risks are not too high and, the appeal of the entertainment factor appears great enough.

Context

The context of this research is quite clear. I received a grant to produce a drama/media event in eight congregations within the bounds of the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The first four of the churches to host the drama/media event were the basis for this study. At the time of the study, the smallest of these congregations had less than one hundred in average attendance. The largest had about 150 in average attendance. The Illinois Great Rivers Conference covers about three-fourths of the state from Interstate 80 in the north, all the way to the southern tip of the state. The conference is very diverse. It contains both large urban centers and very isolated rural areas. Concerning theological issues, the conference is middle-of-the-road; however, its individual congregations reflect a wide range on the theological spectrum. The four churches that agreed to be a part of this research were the Winchester, Melvin, Chatsworth, and Savoy United Methodist Churches. Churches chosen to participate in the study were asked to contract to follow a fairly strict set of guidelines for preparation and publicity.

Assumptions

The American Church is struggling with the problem of reaching the unchurched majority of this country. This problem has no one answer. The research sought to test a

possible answer to one small segment of the problem. In doing so, it made three assumptions.

1. The drama/media event in this project might serve as an effective two-way bridge within the neutral zones of postmodern culture.
2. This drama/media event (if surrounded by thoughtful publicity and careful planning) might reach a targeted population of unchurched persons.
3. The persons attending this drama/media event could become more open to the Christian faith and more likely to accept an invitation to a follow-up program.

Discerning where craft ends and art begins is difficult. The purpose of this research was not to make that determination; therefore, this research also assumed that storytelling is a valid art form. Further, it assumed that the purpose of much of the art that exists in the world today is to tell a story or to stimulate the creation of stories.

This research also assumed that Scripture is authoritative and divinely inspired. As such, it presupposed that God is the creator of all human persons and that our innate love of stories is a part of God's design for us. It also presumed that most good drama necessitates a good story and that God has provided a plethora of good stories in Scripture and in the lives and experiences of the faithful.

This research embraced the Church Growth contention that God desires the lost to be found, and that is both a worthy and necessary enterprise in which to be engaged. Donald McGavran gives clear expression to this foundational tenet of the Church Growth movement.

Among other desires of God-in-Christ, he beyond question wills that lost persons be found—that is, be reconciled to himself. Most cordially admitting that God has other purposes, we should remember that we serve a God *who finds persons*. He has an overriding concern that men and

women should be redeemed. However we understand the word, biblical witness is clear that people are “lost.” The finding God wants them *found* [original emphasis]—that is, brought into a redemptive relationship to Jesus Christ where, baptized in his name, they become part of his household. He is not pleased when many findable sheep remain straggling on the mountain, shivering in the bitter wind. The more found, the better pleased is God. (McGavran 21)

Definitions

The “drama/media event” is a term coined to identify the independent variable of this study. For the purposes of this study, “drama/media event” is defined as an intentional, artistic blending of electronic and other media and technology into a full-scale, live theatrical production, and which includes all the effects this event has on the participants. This definition includes the production that the participants attend, its atmosphere, welcome, and so forth. It also involves all the elements of preparation and publicity for the experience. The drama/media event begins when a church contracts to have it produced in their setting.

Many terms are used somewhat interchangeably in church growth literature and sometimes without a precise definition. One term that requires definition for this study is “unchurched.” In his dissertation “Self-Expressed Reasons Why Unchurched Persons in a Rural Appalachian Community Do Not Participate in Local Churches,” Robert Gail Stoddard carefully defines “churched” and “unchurched” (5-6). He summarizes his conclusions in the following manner: “If a ‘churched person’ is any person who is active in a local church, then in contrast an ‘unchurched person’ is one who is not active in a local church” (6). For the purposes of this study, unchurched will be defined as those persons who identify themselves as not being affiliated with or active in any church.

This study envisions the drama/media event as one of many possible “bridges” or

“bridge events.” When the term “bridge” is used in this study, it is used as an abbreviation for a “bridge event.” Rick Warren, in The Purpose Driven Church, defines bridge events as events designed specifically to build a bridge between his church and its community (142). For the purposes of this research, the term “bridge” will refer to events or circumstances that make it easier for the unchurched to try an experiment of faith.

Hunter defines secularization “as the withdrawal of whole areas of life and thought from the Church’s influence” (Church 20). Morris offers several other definitions that give clarity to this study and help define the circumstance of many modern Americans.

- **Materialism:** Political and social decisions are not based on the will of God as revealed in the Bible, but on the basis of their economic effect and benefit. Things are measured monetarily. “What’s the bottom line?”
- **Skepticism:** The view that Christianity has been tried and did not work. (The Westerner is seldom enthusiast about anything except, perhaps, sports.) The good news of the gospel is considered neither good—nor newsworthy!
- **Individualism:** “I stand or fall alone;” “I am the master of my fate,” and “You have to look out for number one,” are common expressions that reveal the premises of the Westerner.
- **Relativism:** The axiom of the indifferent pluralistic society is that everything is relative. “It does not matter what you believe as long as you believe it sincerely.”
- **Pessimism:** Most people neither see any hope for the future nor think their

choices have meaning beyond the present. “It’s a dog-eat-dog world!”

- ***Uncertainty:*** Global realignment, political tension, ethnic strife, terrorism, and economic fluctuation cumulate in a growing anxiety about what the future holds.
- ***Post-Christian:*** Nature and humans are seen as purely physical machines and only scientific inquiry can be trusted to provide all the answers. People holding this view feel that Christianity does not belong to the present and the future but to the past. The image of being a Christian means returning to the Middle Ages, becoming intellectually dishonest, and denying a scientific worldview.
- ***Post-Modern:*** An emerging view and reaction to the post-Christian or secular, humanistic ideology. Here, there is no such thing as objective rationality. Objective reason is a myth. Nothing is ever proven, whether by science, history, or any other discipline. Reason, rationality and confidence in science are cultural biases. “Reality is in the mind of the beholder (31-32).”

Description of the Project

The drama/media experience, around which this project was conceived, is designed to be a bridge for unchurched persons. This bridge includes

- a. publicity intentionally designed to create the desire to know more;
- b. preparation;
- c. a thoughtful process for inviting (including a letter sent to all the members and constituents of the host congregations encouraging inviting unchurched friends, coworkers, family, and acquaintances);
- d. food;

- e. seating;
- f. table leaders;
- g. atmosphere, including music and décor;
- f. the intentional welcome of guests as they arrive;
- g. introductions and instructions;
- h. a packet of materials for those who attend;
- i. the production “Let Ralph Do It”;
- j. table discussions;
- k. the invitation to take a next step; and,
- l. follow-up.

The intent of the entire experience is to provide a bridge that makes it easier for the people in attendance to say “yes” to an invitation to the next step of faith exploration.

The drama/media event, “Let Ralph Do It,” needed to be appealing (including artistic and technical quality in all aspects of the production) (Bierly 73; Stewart 5; George 38-39). It also needed to be culturally relevant to be effective (Wagner, Leading 87-92; Morris 109-117; Easum 81; Hunter, Church 59-60). The production needed to scratch people where they itch—that is, deal with the felt needs of those attending (Hunter, Power 35; Church 205). The event had to be inspirational enough to make those in attendance want to make a difference and offer hope that (with Ralph’s help) they can. Morris clarifies the need for hope. “Christians are called to accept people where they are in their spiritual pilgrimages, while at the same time offering hope for growth through God’s power. This hope becomes a reality as the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to change people’s lives” (Morris 238).

In *Evangelism That Works*, George Barna identifies “having a clear purpose for living” to be a life condition that is very desirable to 71 percent of unchurched persons. Only “having good health” and “having close, personal friendships” had higher percentages (56-57). Sweet points out that people are once again taking up causes and they continue to be deeply involved in volunteering:

The most recent research on service, altruism, and volunteerism is that there is a self-referential and self-reinforcing component to helping others. Called the “helpers high” or the “Mother Teresa effect,” there accrues to people who help others measurable physical and mental benefits. When we do something about the problems of the world, instead of finding ourselves dragged down, we feel pumped up; people who help others are more exuberant, stress-free, and happier than those who don’t. (193)

People still seek meaning in their lives and find it by making a positive difference in the lives of others.

Drama is only one in a myriad of possible bridges. It may be one of the most appealing and easy to traverse for those outside the community of faith. Drama has the ability to tell stories well and stories are still important (Slaughter 58-60). Drama has a power to engage the participant in the story as they vicariously enter into the experience. It engages their fantasies. Post moderns are looking for this in order to find emotional relief from the pressures of life (Sweet 41). A well-done theatrical experience can offer them that opportunity. From the medieval morality play to improvisational street drama, to huge productions put on by churches, such as the Crystal Cathedral, drama can be used in a variety of ways to provide many bridges to faith. The production script for drama/media event “Let Ralph Do It” (see Appendix A) may not be the best of these bridges, but it offers another possible way to draw seekers toward Jesus Christ. The research will be the judge.

The technological capacities of twenty-first century cocoons bring a plethora of entertainment options right into our living rooms. Because the people who came to this drama/media event are constantly exposed to excellence in video and other media, the media elements of the production, as well as the dramatic elements, needed to be excellent to have the desired impact (Morris 256). The need for excellence in the drama/media event is clear. This does not mean the production presented in the appendixes assumes to be great theatre. The hope was that it would be good enough in its construction and excellent enough professionally, dramatically, and technically, to accomplish the goal for which it was designed. The production was specifically targeted for churches willing to provide some kind of experiment of faith as an intermediate step to aid unchurched persons in their journeys toward Christianity. The goal was to combine drama and electronic media to create a bridge that would make it easier for these persons to take the next step of faith exploration.

“Let Ralph Do It” tries to relate in a highly entertaining, humorous, fast-paced way, the story of an ordinary person whom God uses in extraordinary ways to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people. The message is that God can use anyone who is willing to make a difference. This message is presented subtly to avoid turning off the post-modern attendees who might be repulsed by what they sense to be preachy or overly religious. The cast of two persons interacts with video clips projected on a screen built into the set. The video element adds to the drama, the color, variety, and pacing that modern Americans are conditioned to expect. Slaughter is clear that the church cannot afford to ignore the power of the Media Reformation. “It might seem too strong to say that there is no alternative for the viability of the future Church, but I mean to be even

more bold in claiming that the Media Reformation is a life or death issue for the Church” (Slaughter 25).

The media element of the production also allows for the performance with only two actors and two technicians, who travel to the sites of each drama/media event. The set was easy to transport and assemble. All of these factors were intended to add up to a production that hopefully would be highly entertaining and appealing for a variety of persons, especially the unchurched. It also was designed to be cost effective for even the smallest groups and congregations.

The play is based on the real-life story of a man named Hobe Albright (all facts obtained through personal interviews; see Interviews). Hobe was a member of one my former congregations and a truly delightful person. Hobe’s wife, Polly, is an unusually gifted person as well. Many would identify Polly as the more dominant personality. On the surface, Hobe appeared to be a fairly ordinary person. He had some unique gifts and experiences, but these were not what made him special. His real claim to fame was that he made himself available to God, and God used him to make a significant difference in the world. According to Polly, Hobe was the first Protestant ever to attend the Roman Catholic Cursillo. He was on the team that brought Cursillo to the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship. He is credited by some for being the one who coined a rather famous slogan in Cursillo and Walk to Emmaus circles: “Let Ralph Do It.”

Hobe was one of two men who co-founded a now very large prison ministry, “Faith, Hope and Love Prison Ministry,” based out of Peoria, Illinois. Hobe also co-founded with his Cursillo friend, Gene Sleven, “The Heart of Illinois Harvest.” This ministry uses volunteers to transport good, unused food from grocery stores, wholesalers,

restaurants, nursing homes, hospitals, and the like, to over forty feeding stations to feed the hungry in the Peoria area. In the six years of its existence, "Harvest" has distributed over \$20,000,000 worth of food to the hungry.

Hobe also was a World War II fighter pilot ace. He flew in excess of eighty missions over Germany. He literally had his leg (and probably his life) saved by the Bible that was in the pocket of his flight pants. He seldom spoke of his military career. I had no idea about it until I began to do research for this project. He was also a loyal father and faithful churchman, sports enthusiast, and Cubs fan. He was not rich, although he could have been. He never knew a stranger and was ever willing to take on the most menial of tasks. God used him to help bring hundreds of people to Christ.

Hobe died five years ago but not until he had done some retirement traveling with his sweetheart, Polly. Polly says that in every city they visited, Hobe would try to get with some of the civic leaders to find out what they were doing to feed the hungry. If he did not think it was enough, he would work to get them to establish a "Harvest" chapter in that city. Hobe's demeanor and witness during his third and final bout with cancer resulted in the conversions of several of those who attended him in the hospital. If he were not so extraordinary, he would have been a pretty normal guy.

The script depicts Hobe bumping into James Chubb in the dark, as Hobe finds himself standing on the portals of heaven. James is also a non-fictional character. He lived in the latter part of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries. Chubb was a Methodist and a contemporary and friend of John and Charles Wesley. As an excise man for the British government, Chubb devoted much of his life to altruistic ministries, as did Hobe. James was one of the founders of the "Strangers Friend

Society,” which continues to minister to the needy in the area in and around Bristol, England.

The production is based on the premise that God has sent James to Hobe to help him make the transition from this world to the next. Hobe is not aware of who James is or where he is from. True to form, Hobe quickly makes friends with James, in spite of James’ strange attire and stiff British accent.

Throughout the play, the two actors interact with video clips of people who knew Hobe or reenacted scenes of Hobe’s life. The production tries to be fast-paced and funny. It is intended to tug on people’s heartstrings, without being preachy or syrupy. “Let Ralph Do It” does not claim to be able to reach all people or even all the people that might come to one of its performances.

The churches contracting to host the dramatic/media event, “Let Ralph Do It,” agreed to follow specific guidelines for all the elements of the production, from planning and preparation to publicity. The four churches chosen for the study also were encouraged to have a designated follow-up experience for the drama/media event.

The Alpha Class is a good example of a possible follow-up program. It is a relatively low commitment, short-term opportunity to explore the Christian faith. It involves ten weeks and fifteen sessions. At each weekly session, guests share a meal, and then a talk is given. The participants gather after the talk to share their thoughts and feelings about what they heard. Trained lay persons facilitate the discussions. Talks include topics such as:

1. Who is Jesus and why did He die?
2. Why and how should I pray?

3. Why and how should I read the Bible?
4. How does God guide us today?
5. How can I make the most of the rest of my life? (Hanna)

Hunter says the following concerning Alpha:

The Alpha course is reproductive, in part, because it “packages” much of what we have discovered in this generation. It embodies my own triad for “doing church” in a secular mission field: cultural relevance, small groups, and lay ministries. It embodies three features of Emerging Evangelism; hospitality, conversion, and sufficient time for a seeker to process the Possibility. Alpha effectively roots seekers and new believers in Christian belief and experience. Alpha produces, in time, more small groups and more laity for ministry and leadership than anything else going. The Alpha resources are excellent, making the Alpha courses in local churches very manageable. (Letter 1)

Unchurched persons were encouraged to attend the performances of “Let Ralph Do It” by redundant publicity and by personal invitations of members and friends of the host congregation through their kinship and friendship networks. A guideline was made available to those considering inviting unchurched friends.

A pre- and postproduction questionnaire was included in packets given to all those attending the drama/media event at the four test churches. From these questionnaires data concerning the impact of the production was gathered.

Purpose

Churches need ways to bridge the gap between the church and the unchurched with exploratory opportunities to investigate the Christian faith. The purpose of the research was to produce a drama/media event designed to provide a bridge for experimental investigation of Christianity and to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral changes that participation in the drama/media event might produce in those who attend.

The following research questions are proposed for this study.

Research Question #1

In what ways does this live drama influence a person's attitude toward the Christian faith?

Research Question #2

In what ways does this drama influence a person's attitude toward his or her ability to make a difference in the world?

Research Question #3

What was the person's overall impression of the event?

Research Question #4

What is the evidence that persons are more open to church involvement as a result of experiencing the drama/media event?

Methodology

The purpose of the research was to produce a drama/media event as a bridge between the unchurched and an experimental investigation of Christianity whereby they are more open to the Christian faith and church involvement. This was an evaluation study in the experimental mode that utilized a pre- and posttest design with no comparison group.

Subjects

The subjects of this study came from those who attended the performances of the live drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It," in four selected congregations. These congregations were within the boundaries of the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Variables

The independent variable in this research project is the live drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It." The dependent variables of this study are the behavioral and cognitive changes in relation to the Christian faith and the subjects' willingness to consider taking an experimental step toward Christianity.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

A partially researcher-designed questionnaire was the primary instrument used to measure the cognitive and behavioral changes, if any, in the subjects who participated in the drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It." The pre- and postproduction questionnaires were distributed in a packet along with other materials as people arrived for the production. The pre- and postproduction questionnaires were color coded and attached to each other by a staple. Pre- and postproduction questionnaires were clearly differentiated and explained, so the subjects would understand when to complete each one.

The questionnaire used before the production asked for some basic demographic data from the participants. It also recorded subjective responses based on a Likert Scale to provide a baseline concerning the subjects' attitudes toward the Christian faith and their desire and capacity to make a difference in the lives of others. The last question on the preproduction questionnaire asked the participant to indicate their willingness to attend a follow-up experience to learn about the beliefs of the Christian Faith. The postproduction questionnaire was completed after the performance of the production. It used the same questions as those on the second part of the preproduction questionnaire. The subjects' attitudes toward the Christian faith were measured by a twenty-four question scale developed by Francis and Stubb that has demonstrated a high degree of

reliability (Miller 80). The postproduction questionnaire also asked the participants to evaluate the various elements of the drama/media event. The postproduction questionnaire also asked the respondent to indicate their willingness to attend a follow-up experience to learn about the beliefs of the Christian faith. Finally, it asked the participant if, after participation in the drama/media event, they had more openness toward participation in the church.

The use of a code on the pre- and postproduction questionnaires enabled the researcher to differentiate the churches at which the questionnaires were filled out. A comparison of pre- and postproduction questionnaires filled out by the same person was also ensured by this procedure. The subjects' confidentiality was guaranteed because the pre- and postproduction questionnaires were filled out anonymously.

Short focus groups were held after the table discussions with the table leaders. Audio-tapes of focus groups provided an independent source of qualitative data to compare with the quantitative data provided by the questionnaires (Morgan, Focus 3).

Data concerning membership, giving, attendance, new members, and members received by confession of faith will be gathered for the years 1997 to 1999 for each of the four churches in the study. This information will be taken from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference Journal years 1998 to 2000.

The final source of data was response cards that participants were invited to fill out before they left for the evening. These cards allowed the participants to voluntarily provide their name and a means of contact if they were interested in further church involvement, having questions responded to, being visited by church staff, or if they were interested in a small group that would further investigate Christianity. These cards were

attached to the questionnaires, and each church kept separately. Pastors were then notified of any responses on these cards.

Generalizations

This research was inspired by the church's need for events that bridge the gap between the church and the unchurched by providing an event that will give them opportunity to explore the possibilities of Christianity. Many congregations would like to bridge this gap but lack resources and/or knowledge to do it. The researcher can assume similar results in congregations of the same general theological stance, attitude, motivation, health, and demographic makeup as those in the study.

Delimitations

The drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It," is the independent variable in this study. When producing something of this magnitude in a local church, a variety of confounding variables can obscure the effects of the independent variable. The term drama/media event would intend to cover the whole experience of the event, beginning with the publicity and concluding with the follow-up. By prescribing as much of the publicity, invitational style, pre- and post-show introductions, instructions, explanations, and atmosphere as possible, the concept of the drama/media event would seek to control as many confounding variables as possible. Even the individual communication abilities of the pastors of the churches in this study could be a confounding variable. A pastor who is a poor communicator could potentially destroy that special moment of receptivity that the drama/media event is designed to create. The pastor's comments were limited to introducing the researcher to help create a consistent experience for the subjects in the congregations being studied.

Congregations in this study were assumed to have a positive attitude toward and high motivation for reaching the unchurched. Congregations lacking in motivation or positive attitude would be unlikely to go to the work that required to be a part of this research. For these reasons, the attitude and motivation of the participating congregations were not variables studied in this research.

Overview of the Proposal

In Chapter 2 of this proposal, we will discuss the theological, church growth, and biblical underpinnings of this study. Chapter 3 further defines the research design and the theoretical model upon which the drama/media event is based. It also contains a description of how the drama/media event was conceived and designed. Chapter 4 presents the qualitative and quantitative data from the field research described in Chapters 1 and 3. This includes the results of the statistical tests. In Chapter 5, the data from the research is evaluated theologically and practically. Implications for further study and suggested improvements and applications for similar projects in the future are also included in this final chapter.

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENTS IN LITERATURE

Why in my day when a man felt like the Lord had called him to preach, instead of hunting up a college or a biblical Institute, he hunted up a rugged, hardy, pony of a horse and some traveling apparatus. And with his library in hand, namely: the Bible, the hymnbook, and the Discipline, he started out. And with a text that never wore out or grew stale he cried: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of this world."

In this manner he went through storms of wind, rain, hail, sleet and snow, climbed hills and mountains, traversed valleys, plunged through swamps, swam swollen streams and lay out all night, wet, weary and hungry, a saddle blanket for a bed, a saddle for a pillow and an old coat, if he had any, for a covering. He slept in the dirty cabins on earthen floors before the fire. And he ate the simplest of fare with the hardest of zest: roasting ears, deer meat, bear meat, wild turkey, buffalo and buttermilk. No matter where he was or what his circumstances, his text was always ready: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Such was the old-fashioned Methodist preacher's fare and fortune. Under such circumstances, who amongst us would now say, "Here am I Lord, send me!" Would you? (Motta 10)

Gary Motta, in his play "The Backwoods Preacher," summarizes a section of Peter Cartwright's autobiography in the above quote. The play is about Cartwright's life. He was a rough and tumble circuit rider of the early and mid nineteenth Century. Ruffians stood in awe of his brawny arm, and he sent terror into the ranks (10). He baptized nearly fifteen thousand people and received into the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church almost twelve thousand (46).

In Cartwright's day, the popular media of the culture was oratory. It often made use of relevant and humorous stories about the world in which he and his contemporaries lived. Entertaining "bridging events" were devised by circuit riders, such as camp meetings, tent meetings, revivals, brush arbors, field preaching, and even quarterly conferences that employed Cartwright's down-home oratorical preaching style. These events often resulted in conversions.

These bridging events also succeeded in creating an openness on the part of many who might consider attending an “experiment of faith.” In the Methodist tradition, this was participation in the class meeting. The circuit riders would travel from preaching point to preaching point. Whenever possible they trained leaders to lead class meetings where those newly converted or potential converts could learn the basics of the Christian faith and living. Here people could experience Christianity, try it out, and grow into faith. The bridges Cartwright and his contemporaries built, such as camp meetings and revivals, may not be as effective at reaching the unchurched in this new millennium as they once were, but the foundations upon which they were built are still there. These include cultural relevance, speaking the language of, and going to the people. The project envisioned in this study seeks to build on these same foundations, but using newer materials. The purpose of the proposed research is to produce a drama/media event to bridge the subjects to an experimental investigation of Christianity and to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral changes that participation in the drama/media event has on those who attend.

Theological Precedents

George Barna, in *Evangelism That Works*, tells a story about the following passage; “Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment” (Luke 16:27-28). Barna relates the anxiety he felt when his pastor, Bill Hybels, opened this passage to him in a Bible study:

To this day, more than a decade later, I recall that lesson and the horror that filled me as I realized, perhaps for the first time, how horrific a life in hell would be, how significant the death of Christ had been for me and just how imperative it is to use every resource available to share the real truth

about life, death, sin and grace with every person I know. (12)

The purpose of this research is not to justify evangelism or the Church growth perspective. That is done quite well by others (Wagner Strategies 35-53; McGavran 20-30). The above scenario, however, serves to focus the importance of the task. The chosen medium in this instance is the drama/media event. It fits under the category of the arts.

In Theology and the Arts, David Harned reminds us that art can be both useful and dangerous:

Christians have never been able to ignore the arts, for music and liturgy are allied. Poetry and drama have provided opportunities to convey the gospel. Theology, whatever else it may be, is a literary discipline, and men must always be warned against the temptation to make art their religion.

But the traditional attitude of the church displayed a more or less constant rhythm. The arts were valued because they were useful. (Harned 11)

The potential of making art into religion or the object of worship (idolatry) is not a problem in this project. The art in question is a means, not an end. This research is focused on using the arts as a tool. Harned believes that the Church has valued the arts and artists as servants of the institution (11):

For Tillich, art is important because of the access it affords to the contemporary spiritual climate. It discloses the prevailing image of man, sometimes because the artist himself is unconsciously determined by it, sometimes in the context of a protest against its adequacy or truth. In either instance, art provides an opportunity to learn where people are. (13-14)

Art can reflect where people are. This is important to acknowledge but art is more than a mirror. It can help to shape society because it can help to shape the person. Ehrensperger makes this particularly clear in Religious Drama: Ends and Means:

The greatness of drama lies in its capacity to contribute to the spiritual growth of man. . . . The subject matter of the play and the content of the dramatic experience provide the bridge between the performer and the audience or between man and man. By the way of this bridge communication that is profound and relatively total takes place. . . . When one feels this is happening in a theatre, a school, a church, or under a tent, he can know he has experienced the miracle of drama. When drama communicates truth and results in spiritual growth, revelation and rediscovery of meanings and values in life are taking place. (26)

The Church has not lost this use for art. From the tabernacle, the mass, and the medieval morality play, to the most modern technically advanced dramatic Christian production, the arts have the ability to reach out and touch people's hearts, minds, and souls. Ehrensperger identifies the spectator as a participant in the drama who is "emotionally aroused and later intellectually able to rise above the passion to make a judgment." The director's role is to shape the verdict that will take place in the lives of the audience (23). The potential for good and evil are obvious here.

God seems to create many of us in such a way that the arts can reach us and even effect change. The Evil One is surely aware of this potential. As Tim Downs points out in Finding Common Ground, "The greatest attacks on Christianity now come through art, not science" (70). As was stated in Chapter 1, the arts are the common language of those who move in and out of the neutral zone and they are accepted and used by nearly everyone. This necessitates that Christians use the arts with vigor to counter the attack. They must, however, handle them carefully like an army would handle any new weapon. The arts have been known to backfire on occasion. They can also be rendered ineffective through improper use or mishandled in such a way as to be coercive.

A struggle exists between coercion and leading. Downs's reflection on the struggle between love and justice in witnessing is applicable at this point.

Love requires the Christian to ask questions like these:

1. What does this person most need from me right now?
2. How can I bring about the greatest possible good in their life?
3. What will be the short-term effect on him if I attempt to communicate in this way? What might be the long-term residual effect?

Justice has a different set of requirements. Justice requires the Christian to ask questions like these:

1. What does God expect of me in this situation?
2. What ought I to do or say?
3. What is the right thing for me to say, regardless of this person's response? (38)

These are the kind of questions the Christian artist, in using his or her art to witness to the lost, must ask to respect the radical freedom of choice that God gives all people.

God creates people as spiritual beings. Our spiritual nature is often linked to the part of us that strives to find meaning in the beautiful and the artistic. Cynthia Maus Pearl speaks of this in Christ and the Fine Arts. She reflects on our search for the beautiful:

“There is in every heart a love of the beautiful. We are made so that we respond to the ideal and the infinite even though we can not and do not fully comprehend either” (1).

Modern medical technology has discovered that music is processed in a whole different place in the brain than is the spoken word. Persons who have experienced strokes may still be able to sing when they cannot talk. If one understands that God created us, then it only makes sense that our artistic sensitivities are created within us for a reason. God must have some purpose for the power that art has over our emotions and souls.

Although many possible secondary reasons exist, the primary reason is undoubtedly to give glory to God. Through art we can experience the reality and majesty of Almighty God.

Prevenient Grace

In Sanctity Without Starch, Tuttle refers to prevenient grace as

that work of the Holy Spirit, supernaturally restoring all of us, by whatever means, to a measure of free-will by reminding us, convincing us, warning us, promising us, inviting us, waiting for us. *It is God's initiative guaranteeing the freedom of our own response* [original emphasis]. (48)

Tuttle also describes prevenient grace as “God’s Initiative in the Drama of Rescue” (41).

Many persons have come closer to Christ or even accepted him as Lord and Savior as a result of some encounter with Christian art, drama, or music. If the arts can help us find God or relate better to him, then they can also be a vehicle for God’s prevenient grace.

“Prevenient grace has been commonly referred to as that work of God in the life of the believer (or the potential believer) between conception and conversion” (43). For Tuttle the Holy Spirit “woos or prevents us from moving so far toward disobedience, that when we finally understand the claims of the gospel upon our lives, we are guaranteed the freedom to say yes” (40). The arts are one powerful tool God uses to woo us back to him.

Christian artists do well to remember that their art is only a conduit of the grace of God as prompted by the Holy Spirit. John Wesley was once under attack by some Calvinists for being “Pelagian,” that is “robbing God of His glory in man’s salvation.” Wesley countered with an insistence that he did not go as far with free will as his detractors (47). In Wesley’s Predestination Calmly Considered he makes his point:

Natural free-will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand: I

only assert, that there is a measure of free-will *supernaturally* [original emphasis] restored to every man, together with that *supernatural* [original emphasis] light which “enlightens every man that cometh into the world.” . . . God nevertheless may have all the glory. Why, the very power to “work together with him was from God.” (Jackson 10: 230)

Tuttle tells the story of leading a man to Christ. The evangelist was quite excited about the man’s newfound faith and rather proud of himself for his part in helping him to find it. Tuttle saw the man later, and that man said something that brought Tuttle back to reality. “I’ve been thinking. It seems to me that it takes an average of at least 25 different witnesses before any real encounter with God takes place and just because you were number 25, you think you did it all” (49).

God can do anything. Certainly the witnesses that participate in the progression of a soul toward conversion need not all be people. Can they not be circumstances, events and maybe animals or angels? The arts can obviously be one of the “twenty-five witnesses” for some. Barna reminds us of our role and God’s role in conversion:

We are called to take advantage of the opportunities to share our faith in Christ and to make the most of those opportunities. However, the act of converting a person from a condemned sinner to a forgiven and loved disciple is the job of the Holy Spirit. (*Evangelism* 27)

Biblical Precedents

Cartwright and his contemporaries understood that those who had a religious experience at one of their bridging events had to be rooted in the true vine, Jesus Christ. Only then could people experience the power, joy, and fruitfulness that a living relationship with Jesus entails. The following passage records Saint John’s account of Jesus’ marching orders to his disciples the night before he went to the cross:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because

of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If any one does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:1-8)

These words leave little doubt that the mission of the follower of Christ is to bear fruit. Fruit is that which bears both the seed and the nourishment for the seed to grow. It has the innate potential to become the same kind of plant as the plant that bore it. Today, bearing fruit is commonly understood by Christians to mean making disciples for Jesus Christ. Because humankind is inherently sinful, making disciples necessitates the conversion of the nonbeliever. The converted most often thrive and grow in soil that is already anchored by believers who are truly in "the vine." Such believers help anchor the soil of the unbelievers around them by living committed, consistent, faithful lives. Genuine conversion is never one-dimensional. It involves the whole person—heart, soul, and mind. That is why the whole life of the Christian seeking to bear fruit in the life of another is so important.

Affirming the totality of the person—heart, soul, and mind—has always been a part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Jesus crystallized this when he quoted a combination of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 18:19 as the greatest of all the commandments.

Jesus replied, "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.' All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt. 22:37-40)

Overtone of the Great Commandment may also be heard in the Great Commission.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt. 28:19-20)

The command to make disciples is clear and unavoidable. This call requires total love for Christ—heart, soul, and mind. The call is to baptize. Baptism communicates God's grace on all levels: the physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional. Adults who are baptized understand on an intellectual level (or at least they should) the historical and symbolic significance of baptism, the importance of making a public and obedient proclamation of their faith in Christ, and their desire to be a part of his Church. People being baptized physically feel the baptismal water and the hands of those performing the ritual. They usually are able to physically hear the words of that ritual. Baptism is often a result of and/or includes an emotional response to the grace and love of God that has led the person partaking in the sacrament to make this public commitment. Jesus' call to baptize is a call to convert persons at all levels of their being.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus also calls his followers to teach. Good teaching also involves all the levels of a person's being, even though learning is often viewed as primarily an intellectual exercise. This passage says Jesus' followers are to teach obedience to all that he has commanded. Obedience is mainly an act of the will. If faith is the primary motivation for a person to be obedient, the obedience also calls for trust. Trusting involves all our human faculties, but ultimately it boils down to a matter of the heart.

The Christian faith requires a total investment of the whole person in loving Christ. Efforts to evangelize people to this faith would be most effective if the efforts reach out to the whole person—heart, soul, and mind. The arts, by their very nature, tend

to engage people intellectually, often physically, and certainly emotionally.

For centuries, the arts have been used to help communicate religious truth to the heart and soul, as well as to the mind. Various forms of artistic expression have played a central role in the Judeo-Christian experience of God and salvation history since God filled Bezalel with his Spirit and “with skill, ability and knowledge.” God put Bezalel in charge of all the appointments for the tabernacle (Exod. 31:3-5). The psalmists helped formulate and articulate the faith of the people, and turn it into worship music. From that time forward, artists have been important in helping to usher worshipers’ hearts, minds, and souls into the presence of Almighty God.

Storytelling is among the oldest of arts (Pearl 14). Storytelling comprises a large part of the Scriptures and is also the underlying art form in this study. Today, drama and video are primary tools for telling stories. Good stories communicate to people on intellectual, physical, and emotional levels. Stories of faith also may communicate on a spiritual level. Good stories help us to relate and to understand. They make good bridges.

God is a great storyteller. If one assumes God’s Word is true and God does intervene in history for his purposes, one might imagine that God engineers some circumstances so they will make good stories.

The Holy Scriptures are one divine and continuous drama, from the story of how it all began in Genesis, to the story of the new beginning in the closing chapters of Revelation. Most Scripture is in story form. Good story is often easily dramatized because it contains elements that engage the senses, it touches people where they live, and it provides vibrant characterization, dramatic build, and memorably powerful

conclusions. The success of movies such as Out of Egypt (based on Moses' life from the book of Exodus) and The Omega Code (based on Revelation) and Broadway hits like Joseph and the Technicolor Dream Coat (based on the Joseph story in Genesis) and Godspell (based on the Gospel of Matthew) attest to the fact that Scripture still plays well. God inspired the biblical writers with the words to convey the stories of faith. These stories still engage the hearers' hearts, souls, minds, and emotions, helping Christians to incorporate the tenets of their belief into their everyday lives. Such stories can still be bridges for the unchurched to faith.

The Bible stories contain powerful sensual imagery. In the story of Noah, one is captured by the power and fear of forty days of flooding. One can feel the water:

They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. Every living thing that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. . . . Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. (Gen. 7:19-22, 23c)

When a story engages the imagination such as this one does, the hearer can feel the rain, the cold water, the desperation, and desolation.

The Bible is a gold mine for the Christian dramatist. Recall stories like those of Jacob—the sneaky, deceitful twin—a Momma's boy who tries to work everything to his advantage. Even his name figuratively means, "he deceives" (Thompson 27). Jacob deceives his older brother out of his birthright and blessing. As he escapes his brother's wrath, Jacob has a wild dream where God promises land, blessing, and a great number of descendants. He remains faithful to God, in spite of his negative characteristics. Fleeing to a far away land, he falls madly in love, and he agrees to work for seven years for the

hand of his beloved. Jacob meets his match in his father-in-law-to-be, Laban, who tricks him into marrying the wrong daughter. Laban requires Jacob to work another seven years for his one true love. Jacob and Rachel finally marry, and then he learns first hand about family problems and sibling rivalry. Before Jacob can return to the land of his father, he has to wrestle with God and face the brother he tricked out of his birthright and blessing. The two make up, in typically dramatic fashion. Some years later, Jacob loses his son, Joseph, and assumes he is dead. Near the end of Jacob's life, he dramatically discovers Joseph is not only alive but also the Prime Minister of the most powerful nation in the world at that time. His story ends much as it began, with the giving of the blessing. Jacob gives some harsh blessings and some good ones, and as might be suspected, he reverses the traditional order with his grandsons, giving the younger the greater blessing (Gen. 25:19-49:33). Such stories combine a richness of characterization and drama, which give them a timeless quality that invites retelling and dramatization.

The Bible is full of tremendous characters that beg to be dramatized and often are; these include tragic heroes like Samson (Judg. 13-16) and Saul (1 Sam. 9-31) and classic villains like Cain (Gen. 4:1-16) and Pharaoh (Exod. 1-14). The Bible even has the prototype of the bad-girl-turned-good in the character of Rahab the Harlot (Josh. 2:1-24, 6:17). The Bible is full of wonderfully human characters like Jonathon and David, Gideon, Elijah, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Samuel, Paul, Peter, Nathanael, Doubting Thomas, Zacchaeus, and Barnabas.

An abbreviated look at the stories of the birth, life, and death of Jesus confirms that these accounts were not only good news but also great drama. The story is cast in front of a backdrop of Messianic prophecy. Jesus' mother is betrothed but still a virgin.

An angel comes to tell her that she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:29-38). Her husband-to-be, Joseph, finds out about her pregnancy and is about to divorce her when the angel visits him. The child is born in a stable while the couple is on a trip to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7), which just happens to be where the prophet Micah has said the Messiah would be born (Matt. 2:3-6). A star and angels herald Jesus' birth. The angels tell humble shepherds of the event. The shepherds go to see the child and spread the word of his birth (Luke 2:8-18). Magi from the East follow the star to the child, bringing him gifts. They inadvertently tip off the local king of the new king's birth. The local king tried to have the baby killed, but the father is warned in a dream and the little family escaped into mysterious Egypt (Matt. 2:1-18). Ironically, the trip to Egypt was probably financed by the gifts of the Magi. After the local king in Israel dies, the family moves back to Israel to the town of Nazareth, as was foretold by the prophets (Matt. 2:19-23). Nothing is heard of the new messianic king until he begins his ministry, except for a festival trip to Jerusalem where he got left behind because he was talking with the teachers in the temple, amazing them with his knowledge (Luke 2:41-51).

Jesus' own cousin, John the Baptist, prepares the way for his ministry and baptizes him (Matt. 3:1-17). As one might expect, Jesus' ministry is filled with miracles, healings, and great teaching. Many come to love him, but he also disturbs the status quo. The drama builds to a climax when Jesus draws a great crowd as he rides a donkey into Jerusalem for the Passover feast (Matt. 21:1-11), and those in power seek to arrest him (Matt. 21:46). Jesus continues to befuddle the power brokers, and, eventually, priests and elders devise a plot to kill him (Matt. 26:3-5). They succeed in their efforts, and

Jesus is nailed to a cross where he dies a humiliating and tortured death (Matt. 27:32-50). All hope for Jesus' followers seems lost. Of course, the surprise ending is that Jesus did not stay dead but rose from the grave on the third day (Matt. 28:1-10).

This simplified summary omits many of the interesting and dramatic twists and turns of Jesus' life, but even in this brief synopsis, one can sense God's dramatic hand. The same God who created us is likely to be the one who gave us our thirst for story and the drama. This same Lord may have included them in Scripture to keep it interesting and alive. Downs points out God's intentional use of art in the Scriptures. "The art of the Bible is no accident. God wrapped His gift to us in a magnificent and alluring paper precisely because the power and persuasiveness of language come through art" (57). No one knows for sure why God created so many people with a thirst for story and drama. However, one could conjecture that God wants those spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to take advantage of these natural inclinations toward story and drama to reach out to the unchurched of his world.

Jesus was undoubtedly the greatest storyteller of all time. His stories, and especially his parables, are short but memorable. He takes commonplace events and circumstances, with which almost any listener could identify, and he uses them to make powerful comparisons. These comparisons often bring about a surprise conclusion that drives his message home.

Jesus' use of the parable as a technique of indirect communication allows the listeners to draw their own conclusions. According to Tim Downs, all forms of indirect communication include three common features:

First, there is no direct attempt to persuade—the real subject in question is often not even mentioned. Second, the attack is against the line of supply,

some underlying belief or attitude that is critical to the support of the primary belief. Third, the style of the communication is as attractive and enjoyable as possible. Art is the chief weapon of indirect attack. (69)

Indirect communication causes the recipient of the communication to think about the message. This generally creates more involvement on the part of the person communicated to and, therefore, they are more likely to retain the message once they perceive it. Jesus' parables are a good example of this. The memorable nature of the parables of Jesus is attested to by the fact that the average American can remember at least one of them. This is true even though many of these same folks know practically nothing about Jesus himself (Downs 69).

Downs believes indirect communication is a must if Christianity is to reach the unchurched. He quotes Peterson who believes that those looking for good examples of the power of indirect communication should first look to Jesus. "Jesus was the master of indirection. . . . The parables are subversive. His hyperbolas are indirect. There is a kind of outrageous quality to them that defies common sense, but later on the understanding comes" (57). Indirect communication is not limited to one individual telling a story.

Downs emphasizes that the chief means of attack in indirect communication is the arts. The Bible provides an ample supply of artistic fodder, whether the communication is intended to be direct or indirect. The inclusion of so much good drama in God's Word can hardly be considered accidental. Harold Ehrensperger refers to Aristotle's Poetics for six components of a good play. These components include (1) a worthy theme, (2) convincing characters, (3) a well-knit plot, (4) memorable diction, (5) contributing melody, and (6) attendant spectacle (29-30).

What more "worthy themes" could one find than the themes that run throughout

God's Word, such as the Lord's love, forgiveness, and grace for all humankind? The wonderful characterizations and well-knit plots in the Scriptures have already been illustrated in the discussions of Jacob's and Jesus' life (Ehrensperger 29). Of course, the tremendous stories, like the life of Jacob, contain complex "ins and outs" that keep the listener/reader's attention riveted to them (29-30). The story of Jacob's son Joseph is one of the finest examples of characterization and a well-knit plot in all of Scripture. The spoiled and arrogant brother Joseph finds himself sold into slavery by his angry brothers. Tempered by his hardships and faith, Joseph grows into a man of intellect, unswerving convictions, and faith. Through the hand of God, in incredibly ironic circumstances, he becomes not only prime minister of the most powerful nation on earth, but is also given total power over the life and death of the brothers that betrayed him. The Scripture develops Joseph's character clearly and the events of his life with as much captivating drama as the best Broadway script (Gen. 37, 39-48).

Aristotle's understanding of "memorable diction" has to do with language characteristic of the person being portrayed (Ehrensperger 30). Powerful language abounds in the Bible. When Israel (Jacob) was giving his blessing to Joseph's sons, Joseph tried to remove his father's hand from Ephraim, the younger son. Joseph intended to place it on his older son, Manasseh, saying, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn." Israel's six word response spoke characteristic volumes: "I know my son, I know" (Gen. 48:17-19).

"Contributing melody" could include the use of music to accompany the word, but it also could refer to the melody of the words themselves (Ehrensperger 30). Downs points out that the twenty-third Psalm is intentionally not a set of propositions (57). He

also quotes Peterson again. “It surprises me when pastor friends are indifferent or hostile to poets. More than half our scriptures were written by poets” (56).

The last of Aristotle’s components of a good play is “spectacle.” Spectacle is the show, the grandness of it all (Ehrensperger 30). The spectacle of God in the Bible is the grandest of all. Who can top the creation narrative, the stories of the flood, the tower of Babel, the Exodus, the passion of Christ, or the apocalypse of Revelation? One cannot escape the artistry woven throughout Scripture. It should inform us of the Almighty’s understanding of the importance of art, especially for communicating God’s great truths.

Bridges to Faith

In his paramount work, The Purpose Driven Church, Rick Warren identifies the levels of involvement of persons associated with this congregation. He defines five increasingly smaller levels of commitment in the local church. The first is the level he describes as “the community,” which represents those unchurched persons who occasionally (four times a year or more) register their attendance on the attendance cards or on an offering envelope. The second group he calls “the crowd,” those believers and nonbelievers who come regularly. “The congregation” is the third level Warren describes. These are the baptized members who have made a commitment to the church and see themselves as a part of the church family. The fourth strata of commitment he designates as “the committed.” The committed dedicate themselves to growing as disciples but have not yet gotten involved in ministry. The last or fifth level of commitment Warren calls “the core.” The smallest of the groups, the core includes those who are actively in ministry to others. In 1995 Warren identified over 31,000 people in the largest group, “the community.” Those are the people he calls his hottest prospects (131-134).

Turning from the mega church to the smaller congregations, Ron Crandall finds the conventional wisdom of starting new programs an effective way to reach new people, especially in changing communities (97-98). There are many types of new programs, but not all are effective at creating a bridge from total disassociation with the church to becoming what Warren refers to as “the community.” Not surprisingly, Warren labels such one-time programs or events designed to reach out to those beyond the doors of the church as “bridge events.” His list of such programs includes a Harvest Safe Party for community children on Halloween, community-wide Christmas Eve services, Western Day (near the fourth of July), concerts, and productions. Some of these programs Warren considers intentionally evangelistic; others he refers to as pre-evangelistic. The pre-evangelistic are primarily for the purpose of making people aware of his congregation (Warren 142). The Church needs to understand that its message is radical to nonbelievers and that the jump from their world to the Christian world is almost impossible to make in one leap. The Church will do well to create a growing arsenal of bridge events. A specialized play can be one of many tools employed to bridge that seemingly alligator-infested moat between most churches and the unchurched of their area.

Now Is the Time

Much can be said about the courage and commitment of the circuit riders of the nineteenth century. However, we sometimes replace admiration for emulation. That is, we admire the courage, tenacity, and love for God that the saints of the past have exhibited but assume our time is so different that little of relevance can be gleaned from their experiences. This is not true. For example, much as in the days of the circuit riders like Peter Cartwright, ours is a time of new beginnings, exploration, and spiritual hunger.

This age is an apostolic age where the potential for great growth in the number of Christian believers is clearly possible (Hunter, Church 23).

The American church is constantly looking more like its first century counterpart. As such, it can no longer claim to have a favored position in society (Downs 25). Hunter speaks of a growing number of secular people. He states they have “little or no Christian memory, background or vocabulary. Many don’t even know what we are talking about, and have little or no experience of ‘church’” (Church 20). Morris relates his childhood experience of Christian worship in vivid terms. He speaks of it being boring, irrelevant, and even painful (48-49). This is the experience too many have had in church.

To make matters worse, Barna calculates that there are 185 million Americans who have yet to accept Jesus as their Savior. This number would equal the fifth largest country in the world (Evangelism 22). Worse yet, one half of the people that are in Protestant pews are not yet Christian (38). To all of this is added a growing sense of resentment toward Christians (21).

A Window

Morris gives a clear wake up call to the church when he states, “as the church lost its sense of mission and purpose, it increasingly entrenched itself in patterns that distanced it from the people it is called to evangelize” (48). Despite the clear failure of the church to reach America, a window of opportunity exists. Barna goes on to say that surveys indicate that a growing number of Americans are dissatisfied and are looking for something. America is remarkably similar to Israel of AD 30. Barna lists no less than twenty ways the two cultures are parallel (Evangelism 26). He goes on to say, “Tens of millions of Americans are open to a set of spiritual truths that will set them free from the

shackles of worldliness” (22).

The Enlightenment Falls

A major contributing factor for this season of openness is the fact that the enlightenment and its assumptions have failed. These failed assumptions include the good of rationalistic thinking, natural religion, and science (Hunter, Church 21-23). Much as the first century turned its back on the Greek ideas of rationalism, idealism, and philosophy, post-moderns embrace feelings and not facts. Romanticism, spirituality, mystery, and the supernatural are in vogue (Slaughter 32-33). As Slaughter says, “Americans will go for about anything—as long as it’s not in the Bible” (32). “There is a search going on. People are looking to Fantasy Adventure for their next “good high” (Sweet 41). Sweet refers to the popular and successful social analyst Faith Popcorn to help him define what is taking place (15). He describes the phenomena as, “the Yearning-for-Yonder Syndrome that summons us, in Popcorn’s words, to ‘Escape physically into our cocoons looking for comfort and security and escape emotionally into our fantasies looking for release’” (41).

The Rise of Art and Entertainment

A new appreciation, and maybe even passion, for art parallels our culture’s search for experience. The post-modern’s rebellion is not aimed at art but science (Downs 54). “Art is no longer something one goes to museums to see or concerts to hear; art is not some commodity or activity. Art is the soul’s orientation to life. Art is something that comes to you and shapes your life” (Sweet 91). Downs says that if art is the way we communicate, then the power of art is greater than ever before because of the exploding amount of communication going on (53).

Americans are fascinated with art, and they are also becoming entertainment junkies. Television, radio, records, books, sports, and theme parks are but a few of the entertainment products being voraciously consumed in North America. In 1996 the average adult in the United States spent forty hours and thirty dollars per week on entertainment (Kallestad 8).

Kallestad proclaims entertainment as the most used medium in the world (8). If people are open to the arts and craving entertainment then now is the ideal time to employ the arts to reach men and women for Jesus. Kallestad asks the key question: “If entertainment is such a force in our world, why don’t we utilize this human and cultural vehicle and redeem it for the proclamation of the gospel” (8). He argues that substantial Christian entertainment can reach people deeply where traditional methods fail (21). He has found that the “old theology” plus new music can equal effective evangelism! (22). Kallestad urges us, the church, to seize this opportunity while it still can. “If the church is to be viable in the twenty-first century, we have no choice but to find new styles and forms for communicating the gospel. We need to find new bridges between the gospel and the secular mind-set. Entertainment can be one of those bridges” (Kallestad 23).

The Critical Importance of Cultural Relevance

“The greatest barrier to the gospel is not theology; it is culture” (Morris 108). Cartwright never claimed to be anything but cut of the same cloth as those he sought to evangelize. He adapted to his context. This circuit rider spoke the language of the people. Deeply familiar with the basics of Christianity, he kept the message simple. Not unlike Jesus, he illustrated his message vividly with colorful, humorous, entertaining, and captivating stories to which his audience could immediately relate. Perhaps most

important, Cartwright, like Wesley, the apostles, and Jesus, focused on the small group, as well as on the larger gatherings. These small groups enabled people on the fringes of faith to see Christianity in action in the daily lives of believers.

In Christianity Rediscovered, Father Vincent J. Donovan tells of his experience with evangelism while serving the Mission in Loliondo in east Africa. After about a year of living safely behind the walls of the mission and seeing none of the many Masai in the area come to Christ, Donovan asked permission to go daily to meet with these people. He requested to go to them with no gifts or gimmicks and talk only of God. The Bishop granted his request. For weeks and months he struggled to put all the basics of faith in cultural terms that the Masai could receive. He did not try to make the Masai fit his culture but rather respected theirs. By using the stories and beliefs of the people, he was able to illustrate themes and stories of the Christian faith. For instance, Donovan took the Masai's belief that their God Engai has a fierce and solitary love for them and likened it to God's love for the Hebrew people (43). He packaged the gospel in a way these proud people could receive. It was hard and took a long time, but eventually some understood and accepted the message (14-20). What Donovan did was not new but a reclaiming of the tradition of the early church. Those seminal evangelists spread the Gospel by going to the synagogues and preaching in the open air. They took the message to the people, adapting their techniques to the culture without diluting the message (Green 334). Scripture reveals that the early church adapted to the culture of the day to reach the unchurched in at least three ways:

1. Faith was shared in the context of temple worship and other traditional Jewish religious practices.

2. At Pentecost, people spoke in languages their hearers could understand.

3. The leadership chose seven Hellenistic Jews to oversee the distribution of food to the widows (Morris 109).

Paul intentionally adapted to the culture and style of the Athenians to reach them (Morris 110). He also continually maintained his working status that gave him an identity among the working class and contact with all kinds of people in the marketplace.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9:19-23)

Instead of following Paul's example of breaking down cultural barriers, the church has all too often retrenched and created barriers of its own. This has evoked the image in the minds of many unchurched people that the church is only a cut above the folk wisdom of the culture. The barriers created by the church are primarily cultural and social rather than theological and religious. These barriers help reinforce the prevalent notion amongst the unchurched that church is boring and irrelevant. Unchurched persons resist becoming a Christian because they "don't want to be like what they consider church people" (Hunter, Church 59). Hunter quotes one unchurched person: "Christians live in their own little world, in their private pious cliques, with their buzz words and their prescribed behaviors" (60). Christianity and Christians have a long way to go to reestablish credibility with many unchurched Americans. We are not starting at zero; in many cases we are starting at minus ten. If we are to communicate the good news of

Jesus Christ with any effectiveness at all, we must reestablish credibility. Hunter stresses this when he says, “More specifically, communicators do this by identifying with some people’s beliefs, attitudes, values, needs, issues, and struggles, and by speaking their language and communicating within their thought patterns” (Celtic 61).

James F. Engle and Wilbert H. Norton narrow the focus from the culture to the individual. They state that, “the Great Commission contains three corresponding but unique imperatives: (1) *to proclaim* the message; (2) *to persuade* the unbeliever; (3) *to cultivate* [original emphases] the believer” (44). Out of this came the development of what is commonly referred to as the “Engle Scale.” This scale indicates their understanding of the roles God and the human communicator play in various stages of the salvation and spiritual growth process. In this scale they “attempt to place these communication ministries in the perspective of the spiritual decision process that is followed as one becomes a believer in Jesus Christ and grows in faith” (45). The scale places conversion at the neutral point and includes levels from negative one to negative eight, prior to conversion, and levels one to five following conversion.

Engle and Norton are concerned with how people make decisions particularly in the context in which they find themselves. In “An ‘Engle Scale’ for Muslim Work,” David A. Fraser shares this same concern in a Muslim context. He proposes the possibility of an Engle Scale for Muslim work because it might be useful in targeting specific populations (173-4). He does express doubts about the scale in its present form, acknowledging that this scale may require adaptation for differences from culture to culture (164-71). In the editor’s note at the end of Fraser’s article, Don M. McCurry points out that the Engle Scale is vulnerable to criticism because it is based on the

Western marketing system. The scale does not seem to allow for people who come to Christ on the basis of healings and miracles, yet this appears to be a common situation in many places in the world. He notes that the scale does not fit well with cultural situations where whole people groups tend to convert to Christianity at once. Finally McCurry asserts that validating such a scale might require a vast system to gather data requiring many highly trained persons. He points out this problem would be multiplied because “the scale needs to be developed for each individual group of Muslims rather than just a general one” (178-9). The scale seems to put too many limitations on the human communicator’s role. It is rather rigid in its understanding of the communication process. It stresses proclamation until the individual passes from “No Effective Knowledge of the Gospel” (level -8) through “Initial Awareness of the Gospel” (level -7) all the way through “Personal Problem Recognition” (level -3) (175). Persuasion may be appropriate at any of these levels under the right circumstances. Not everyone goes through the same levels of decision making at the same time. A person could have a “Positive Attitude toward the Gospel” (level -4) before they reach an “Awareness of the Fundamentals of the Gospel” (level -6) such as in the case of those strongly influenced by miracles and healings. The Engle Scale limits God’s communication role to “General Revelation” and “Conviction” prior to conversion leaving no room for offering hope and comfort, which can be strong pre-conversion messages that God gives to the grieving, hurting, and marginalized. A final concern about the Engle Scale is that it is not only potentially limited to Western culture, it may well be out of date. Considering the fall of rationalism, the scale may not even reflect the way postmodern westerners make decisions. The Engle Scale is not immediately applicable to the specific findings of this research, but it

does represent an awareness of some very important factors. It recognizes that conversion and new life are a process and that positive steps toward conversion and spiritual growth are a needed and important part of this process. It focuses on targeting individuals or groups and having specific measurable goals (Engle and Norton 57). It recognizes the critical importance of beginning the communication process at the point where the person or peoples targeted find themselves without assuming any cultural or religious understandings on their part (44-57). Engle and Norton also emphasize the necessity of centering on the felt needs of those we seek to evangelize (37).

Modern efforts to reach the lost are indebted to those like Engle and Norton. From them we learn Christian evangelists must learn to “crawl into the skin” of those we seek to evangelize, without losing our faith in the process. Morris sums it all up with this reflection: “To carry out the Great Commission the church needs to keep the gospel biblical in content, yet culturally significant in form” (108).

The Value of the Drama/Media Event

George Barna has identified that cutting edge churches tend to use several events a year to draw in crowds. They vary the events, rotating out those that have lost their effectiveness. They use the events for pre-evangelism, soft-evangelism and heavy-evangelism (Evangelism 95). A well-done and well-publicized event can often draw out people. Unchurched persons seem to be drawn to events that are not specifically religious, but are of interest to them (94).

Storytelling

Hunter makes much of the Celtic Christians’ identification with those they were trying to evangelize. They were very aware of the importance of being imaginative in

communicating the gospel and became quite adept at engaging the imaginations of these barbaric people (Celtic 70). One of the ways they did this was through storytelling. Slaughter reflects on the importance of oral culture and reminds us that stories communicate on a different level than mere lecture saying, “In the oral tradition our world picture is formed through storytelling” (58-59). Some might consider storytelling as outdated. Perhaps some people assume this is true because traditional means of story telling are often overshadowed by the new technology of the current media. No matter what vehicle communicates the story, stories are essential to the transmission of culture.

Sweet emphasizes story’s place in post-modern America.

“Without a story, one is without a self, and without a community. Story is the beginning and continuum of community, for it is by adding voice upon voice to story upon story that communities are built. In fact, a ‘narrative culture’ is perhaps the most succinct definition of a “community.” (Sweet 109)

Many modern Americans are lonely and afraid. Story, according to Sweet, gives opportunity to begin to build relationships and form community (110). If this is true, then the importance of stories to the church cannot be understated. Telling and retelling the stories that bind the redemptive community together is critical. These stories must be told in ways that are relevant to those outside the community of faith. Sweet emphasizes that story is as important now as ever. “The push to narrate is as strong if not stronger, than it ever has been. Stories function in postmodern culture where “prepositional truths” once functioned in modern culture. The development of a moral life depends on one’s capacity to hear and tell significant stories” (110).

Hunter points out that Kierkegaard saw the importance of engaging the non-Christian’s imagination. He draws particular attention to stressing what a person’s life

can become—the possibility. He suggests that stories of the heroes of the faith should be told not to get the hearers to admire the heroes. Instead, these stories should help auditors see what his or her life might become (Hunter, Celtic 61-62). This is a key principle in the concept of the drama/media event. In the twenty-first century, as always, the Church must engage the imagination of the unchurched through whatever culturally appropriate means possible. The Church's need to employ the power of story is evident. How can the Church's stories be told so those outside the body of Christ can hear?

The Power of Electronic Media

John Wesley was quick to pick up and use the modern tools and technology of his day. He used the new technologies of printing and passing out or selling pamphlets. Wesley had no qualms about using something new if he believed it would help convict, convert, teach, train the unchurched, and multiply believers (Hunter, Power 55). The Church would do well to take his example to heart. The electronic media presents the greatest opportunity for the spreading of the gospel in the beginning of this new millennium. Sweet refers to the church's need to embrace these new technologies by saying, "To claim an electronic culture for Christ necessitates claiming of an electronic media for Christ" (52).

Syd Field, a distinguished teacher of screenplay writing, defines a screenplay simply as a story told with pictures (O'Driscoll 6-7). Of course, it is more than that. The electronic media make it possible for the picture, moving or still, to be altered and/or blended with music and special effects of all sorts to create a captivating media experience. Americans of this generation expect this. Children and adults are saturated with multi-sensory images to the point that they are the vernacular of our culture.

Slaughter says that the media and technology have shortened our ability to focus on one thing and the speed at which we process information, forever. He likens the effect of the electronic media of the twenty-first century to the Reformation caused by the printing press of the sixteenth century. Slaughter points out that two generations have grown up with television, and now we are adding the Internet. He says,

Personal focus on the screen has created a radical paradigm shift in the way “things make sense” to children, youth, and adults. A recent national study tried to determine the impact TV has had on the way college students learn.

- They expect to be entertained. Serious topics and serious discussions are viewed as boring.
- They are visually oriented. They relate more quickly to pictures than to words.
- They are not attentive to lecture-format presentations, which often lack motion, color, rapid changes, sound effects, visual effects, music, and drama.
- They become bored easily, unless information is fragmented and packaged according to the TV formula.
- They dislike history. TV does not deal with the historical facts effectively, nor does the TV generation.
- They dislike reading. Reading demands concentration and imagination. The reader must construct the scenes, sets, and characters. Reading is hard work, compared to watching TV. (24)

Slaughter declares that the new media reformation will speak the electronic language of the culture and use the same technology that is shaping society. He sees it as a life-and-death matter. In his words, “Multi-sensory experiences are mandatory” (22-25). This kind of creative combination of drama and electronic media is not new. It is now being done at churches like Slaughter’s Ginghamburg United Methodist Church with powerful results. This congregation grew from 1,220 to 3,100 in worship attendance in two and a half years after taking this approach (76). In this church, a team of technicians, artists, musicians, and multimedia experts meets with the senior pastor on Wednesday morning. They work together, and separately, over the next several days to

create a multi-media sermon and worship experience designed to touch upon real world needs of those they hope will attend (77-87).

The Church will be more effective in reaching the unchurched as it increases its use of electronic media to tell its stories. The electronic media is the vernacular of post-modern America. The church must learn to speak it well. Sweet drives home the importance of this when he says the following:

Let Robert Frost take the roads less traveled. The mission of the Church is be where people are, to take the road best traveled.

To accomplish its mission, religious leadership will use media to tell the stories of faith: creative leaders of the future will develop media literacy. . . . They must create their own films, videos, audios, and multimedia projects to become active producers of multimedia stories. . . .

Storytelling has been defined as “the symbolic transformation of experience into meaning.” The church needs postmodern storytellers. (110)

The Impact of Drama

Brain Medkeff-Rose, in The Play's the Thing, lists the ways drama may be used in the church. His list includes worship, education, entertainment, fund-raising, and celebrating seasons (8-11). Certainly he did not intend this list to be exhaustive. An addition to Medkeff-Rose's list could be the use of drama as a bridge between the unchurched and an experimental investigation of the Christian faith.

Religious drama has roots in many cultures and nearly every major civilization (Ehrensperger 77-96). It has been an important component in human self-understanding. Ehrensperger reminds us that we are the materials of drama. “Drama is also unique in that its substance is embodied in flesh, blood, bone and voice” (21). Perhaps this is why people so easily get caught up in live drama.

Ehrensperger identifies one of the key powers of drama when he says:

The capacity of drama as it comes alive in performance “to let human beings come out of their narrow selves” is one of its most important functions. . . . It is important to understand that significant or religious drama is characterized by its possibilities for *illuminating* [original emphasis] the private world of the spectator—illumination that allows him to come out of his narrow self. (74)

Drama necessitates a relationship, an unwritten contract agreed to between the actor and audience, that neither will break “the spell” that allows for both to become a part of the story. “The spectator ceases to be a spectator as the play gets under way, because he projects himself imaginatively into a participation with the destiny of the characters in the performance” (Ehrensperger 23). Stage actors love their craft because of the relationship between the actor and the one for whom they act. They will tell you that every audience is different and has a personality of its own—that no two performances are exactly alike. This relationship produces an unshackling of the imagination that allows the audience member to consider new paradigms that might have hitherto been outside the grasp of the audience. “The spectator is so much a participant that he is emotionally aroused and later intellectually able to rise above passion to make a judgment” (23). Drama can be used by the Christian community to help illuminate the private world of the spectator, so he or she can gently be enabled to come out of “the narrow self” and be opened to considering the unlimited possibilities he or she could have as a child of God.

The potential for drama to be used to reach the unchurched has been explored. Barna’s research puts the evangelistic potential for drama in the mid-range when compared to other typical church-sponsored events. I would project the use of drama as the type of bridging event defined in this research to have a much greater than average potential to reach unchurched people. This is because drama creates a relationship

between the participant and the actor. This relationship and the message of the drama can be carefully crafted to scratch where the unchurched people are likely to be itching. Drama creates the possibility of new paradigms without forcing them. This type of use for drama could be crafted to be a non-threatening, fun, entertaining experience that might encourage unchurched persons in attendance to consider further faith exploration.

The Christian community has often used drama. It has the potential of combining all the arts in a way that engages the senses and more: the whole person—heart, soul, and mind. People will amazingly choose to suspend their disbelief for live drama, especially when it is done well. Drama can be a highly effective tool for indirect communication. In a world full of people who are starving for God and don't even know it, drama could have a powerful role in helping people on their way to discovering the only relationship that can ensure them eternal life.

The Price of Success

The market place understands the crucial importance of finding a felt need of the consumer and meeting it. Hunter has pointed out the importance for churches to identify with the felt needs of the people outside their congregations (Spread 35). Slaughter speaks of the members of our post-modern culture as being stressed, worn out, and looking for something better in spirituality, angles, relationships, and the like. The only way for the church to connect with such people is to speak to real life issues according to Slaughter. He says that this requires listening, identifying the felt needs and relevant life issues, developing a strategy to bridge God's solution to felt needs, and effectively communicating that solution (2). Unchurched persons are most likely to be open to religion if it meets a need or addresses a pressing problem (Barna, Evangelism 54).

Whatever or whoever's story is presented in any production aimed at reaching unchurched persons should speak directly to the needs of the targeted population. One cannot assume that the needs of the church-going population presenting the production are the same as those they are trying to reach. As has been identified earlier in this chapter, the need for a meaningful life that makes a difference is one that permeates a culture. Productions focused at reaching the unchurched would do well to explore this theme.

O'Driscoll puts his focus on the secular production. He believes people are turned off by what they perceive as "goody-goody" messages being presented to them through Christian media. His point is that a secular film with the gospel message woven into it has a greater opportunity to reach the unchurched than any other instrument. He cites Chariots of Fire as a good example of this (42-45). I do not doubt that O'Driscoll is correct in assuming that such films reach a lot of unchurched. They could certainly be a part of the process by which unchurched persons can be opened to exploring the possibility of the Christian faith. Because such films do not call for an immediate or measurable response, their impact is hard to measure.

A problem inherent in producing full-scale secular productions with an implicitly Christian message woven into them is that they are prohibitively expensive for many groups to produce. The underlying wisdom of O'Driscoll's thoughts could be captured and incorporated into less expensive media presentations targeted at reaching unchurched persons. Such productions should be made to feel as close to a secular film as possible to increase the comfort level of those attending. Every effort should be made to be sure these productions do not come off as being judgmental. Downs amplifies this concern

when he says, “Modern Americans believe more deeply and passionately than ever that no one has a monopoly on truth” (27). Any appearance of having all the answers in a church-production would be a definite turn-off for unchurched persons.

The church production successful at reaching the unchurched will touch upon the felt needs of its target population. Success also depends on artistic and technical excellence. Steve Bierly asserts that Baby Boomers and Generation Xers demand quality from the bulletin to the nursery, from the welcome to music, to groups offered, and even to drama. He continues to point out that they are not very patient when they do not get it (73). Barbara Stewart of Willow Creek Community Church echoes that sentiment and adds that if we are to get “Unchurched Harry’s” and “Unchurched Mary’s” attention, our communication must be excellent, verbally and non-verbally, or he will perceive the message as not important (5). Unchurched persons will judge such productions by the world’s standards for artistic excellence. These unchurched persons are constantly exposed to professional entertainment through various forms of electronic media. Imagine going through the struggle of writing and producing such an event; consider the hours of work, the practices, the equipment, costumes, lights, sound, special effects, the communication, and publicity. What would it be like to get “unchurched Harry and Mary” to the production only to have them turned off because the whole thing failed to hit the mark of excellence that they have come to expect? Would they ever return?

This drama/media event should contain all the elements of good production, including quality lighting, sets, costumes, makeup, acting, and directing. The video element also needs to be high quality, and it should be clearly visible to the entire audience. The dialogue in the video and the drama must be lucid, easily understood, and

avoid church or insider language that makes no sense to the audience (Downs 70).

Unchurched persons do not trust institutional religion. This type of event calls for dialogue that avoids as many denominational references as possible (Sweet 183-184).

The writing need not be Shakespeare, but it should be of high quality. Despite their busy lives, post-moderns do have a sense of humor. With the stress they are undergoing, the lighter and funnier the event the better. The plot must be good enough to keep the participants' interest. The production should be entertaining, performed well, and not too long. Some dramatic tension in the plot is needed to maintain the audiences' interest and for it to be believable. The drama/media event will have less credibility, if everything is "sewn up" neatly. The unchurched person will not buy the message of the production if there are no loose ends left to unravel (Downs 70).

Unchurched persons do not want to be patronized. The setting, greeters, and background music at such a production should be welcoming and friendly, but not phony. Every effort should be made to avoid anything that could be construed as being pushy (Hunter, Church 97-99). Carefully chosen secular music can have a helpful effect both in the sound track of the production and in the background at other times (Celtic 61).

Unchurched guests should be escorted by someone, rather than coming alone, for them to have the best possible experience (Downs 140).

Hunter presents an interesting discussion of how Celtic Christianity communicated the gospel. He speaks about communication theory dating back to Aristotle. Some of the aspects of good communication that Hunter identifies are particularly applicable to characters in productions such as those being discussed. These include believability and trust. To be believed, the speakers must be perceived as

informed, knowledgeable, and competent in regards to their subject. They must also be viewed as having good reasoning, sound judgment, and wisdom. To be trusted, speakers should be understood as being persons of honesty, virtue, and integrity (Celtic 58-59).

Hunter also mentions the importance of the identification hearers have with the speaker. This refers to the closeness the hearers perceive between themselves and the one delivering the message. Two questions that might be asked by the receptors about the speaker are “Is this person for us?” and “Are they with us?” (Celtic 60). Actors in the kind of production under discussion communicate more effectively if they are able to convince the audience that that they are both for and with them. The participants need to feel an association with those on stage. Hunter suggests this is possible by “identifying with some of the people’s beliefs, attitudes, values, needs, issues, and struggles, and by speaking their language and communicating within their thought patterns” (61).

Downs applies the same kind of logic to the discussion of planting the seeds of the gospel among the unchurched. He identifies the following four messages that one who is sowing the gospel would do well to reinforce: (1) “We’re not so different,” (2) “We have similar values,” (3) “We have the same concerns and interests,” and (4) “We have the same needs” (135-137). If ways are found to reinforce these messages in the drama/media event, they may increase the overall positive response.

Hunter describes what Paul Heibert has coined as “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle.” The basic thought behind the flaw of the excluded middle is that the top level of life has to do with the ultimate issues, those things we are too busy to think about. The bottom level is the level of sensual perception, science, the everyday level. The excluded middle has to do with what lies close ahead but is not quite here, things we cannot

control, present crises, and so forth. Folk religion, shamans, witchcraft, and the like, have dealt with this middle, but the church has typically failed to provide help and meaning in this part of life (Heibert 189-201). If a production can take this into account and provide some hope for the excluded middle, it may be more effective in reaching unchurched persons.

The drama/media event extends through a discussion period following the performance. Downs lists four types of questions that are generally non-threatening and help to facilitate dialogue and to build relationships. This list would be a good guide for formulating the table questions to be discussed after the presentation. The list is comprised of the following categories: (a) questions about the listener's background, (b) questions asking the listener's opinion or advice, (c) questions that involve the listener's imagination, and (d) questions that ask for the listener's emotions (131-132).

The drama/media event must be exciting, media intensive, culturally relevant, and identify with its target population. It must meet the felt needs of those to whom it is reaching out, especially those needs that lie within the excluded middle. Success will require avoiding being moralistic, churchy, and judgmental with consistent quality throughout.

Marketing the Event

Beyond the play itself, a marketing strategy should be developed to promote the drama/media event. Slaughter counters the notion that marketing strategies exist to take advantage of people. Marketing is necessary to reach unchurched persons. He points out that, "a marketing orientation to ministry presumes that the people of God cannot surprise or exceed the expectations of those who are not yet a part of God's people, unless we

understand their needs and the language they speak” (37).

As was discussed under “What Price Success?” determining the felt needs of the target population is critical in order to construct a drama/media event production that will be effective in reaching the unchurched. Likewise, understanding the felt needs of the target audience is essential in preparing the market strategy (Slaughter 37). For example, if country and western music is big in the area where the production is to be undertaken, maybe the event should be surrounded with a country western motif, and the dinner before the production should be a barbecue. Country western music, and maybe even a country western band, could be playing as people walked in.

Excellence in publicity is a must. The principle of creative redundancy should be practiced (Hunter, Celtic 208-209). In other words, as many creative publicity tactics need to be employed as possible. Barna says that the most effective strategy is often one that combines several media to reach the desired audience (Marketing 208). For instance, a combination of flyers, TV, radio, and newspaper ads might be effective in reaching the unchurched people the drama/media event is targeting.

Barna emphasizes that churches should not overlook free media such as word-of-mouth strategies. He says these often have the greatest credibility (Marketing 197). These work by employing the social networks of friends, relatives, neighbors, and colleagues of those already involved. One possibility is to get committed church members to fill a table for the meal or dessert element of the production and use these networks to be sure at least half of all those they get to come are unchurched (Hunter, Power 35). The details of a marketing plan can be worked out using Barna’s guide, Church Marketing. Like churches, the drama/media event has a life of its own and needs

a marketing plan. One would not want to hire a contractor to build a house that had no plans (163). Building bridges to faith and marketing them to target audiences requires planning.

The Strategic Importance of Prayer

Barna identifies prayer as one of the evangelistic truths that still apply saying, “Effective outreach always involves sincere and fervent prayer that God will bless those efforts” (Evangelism 27). Hunter is correct to identify prayer as a mega strategy in church growth (Power 35). Long before anything of the magnitude of a drama/media event designed to create a bridge for unchurched between their current status and faith exploration is undertaken, it needs to be tried, tested, and, if approved, surrounded in prayer. This is perhaps the most important thing of all.

The Church in the Book of Acts was born out of prayer and persisted in prayer. Prayer is the main ingredient in the vitality of the Church (Morris 77). Every great church intentionally makes prayer a priority (Kallestad 90). In Evangelism That Works, Barna asserts, “Every great revival in the history of the modern world has been grounded in an explosion of prayer and evangelism” (21). Prayer is not an option; it is the foundation. Barna cites lack of prayer as the number one obstacle to effective evangelism. He states, “A church that strives to evangelize its community without saturating its efforts in prayer is like a racecar driver that jumps into his car at the starting line and discovers the tank has not been filled with gasoline” (128).

Congregations hosting programs such as a drama/media event will want to establish a prayer team to pray daily for the event. The team could be asked to pray specifically by name for unchurched persons to come. They could be asked to pray for

others during the preparation phase of the project. The role of the prayer team could be to immerse the whole event from beginning to end in prayer.

The Brave New Frontier

Hunter identifies ten ways apostolic churches communicate the Gospel. Number ten on that list is “They invite an ‘Experiment of Faith’” (Church 167). Modern media and technology are two of the most promising and threatening brave new frontiers of this apostolic age. Michael Slaughter emphasizes the need for the church to do what Cartwright and Wesley did: go to where the people are, both emotionally and physically (62-3).

Cartwright went to the people on the back of a horse, while the churches that are reaching the unchurched of the third millennium are doing it on the back of modern technology. Cartwright preached a message of forgiveness, hope, and love, and so are these congregations. He shared his biblical message in a culturally relevant way. If people were to become true disciples, he knew he had to get them into some type of cell groups. He understood he had to entertain people as he shared his message, or he would lose their interest. Cartwright knew that the gospel has to penetrate the heart, soul, and mind (the whole person) if conversion were to be real and lasting. Most effective congregations of this brave new post modern century understand this as well. Cartwright reached numbers of mega church proportions, and he did it without modern transportation or media. Such numbers are within the reach of those who will learn from his example in this time of new frontiers.

The arts have been effective tools for reaching people for Jesus Christ for centuries. Successful churches all around the country are retooling drama to fit the felt

needs of this post-modern world. Combining the power of live drama with the impact of modern media and technology holds tremendous promise for reaching the unchurched. The traditional packaging of the Christian message does little to pique the interest of most unchurched people. Technology and the arts will play critical parts in the repackaging of this message to keep it in front of a fickle and quickly changing world. Will we pay the price that Peter Cartwright and other evangelicals paid in apostolic ages of the past? Will we make the commitment? Will we go to the people? Will we share the truth in a culturally relevant and receivable way? Will we bind people into cell groups where they can grow into effective disciples of Jesus? Will we use drama, the media, technology, and other modern tools for communicating the gospel, as long as it does not compromise the message? Most likely, the successful churches of this new millennium will find a way, while, most likely, those that do not will fade away.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The current literature indicates a need for bridge events that lead to opportunities for unchurched persons to take an exploratory look at Christianity. Many types of bridging experiences are possible. My suspicion is that the drama/media event proposed in this study offers a unique combination of potentially positive ways to bridge the gap between the unchurched and the church.

Research Questions

Churches need ways to bridge the gap between the Church and the unchurched with exploratory opportunities to investigate the Christian faith. The purpose of the proposed research is to produce a drama/media event designed to provide a bridge for experimental investigation of Christianity and to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral changes that participation in the drama/media event may produce in those who attend.

The following research questions are proposed for this study.

Research Question #1

In what ways does this live drama influence a person's attitude toward the Christian faith?

This question examines the possible impact of the independent variable, the drama/media event, on the subjects' attitudes toward Christianity. Unchurched persons may possess a negative, or at least, cautious attitude toward the Christian faith. Subjects may not have the same attitude toward Christianity. A person may or may not have a favorable disposition toward Christianity prior to the introduction of the independent variable. This person's initial disposition toward Christianity could have an impact on

their experience of the drama/media event. Determining the subjects' attitudes toward Christianity immediately prior to and following the event will be essential to gaining an understanding of the true effectiveness of the drama/media event. Positive attitude changes toward Christianity, if any occur as a result of the event, could conceivably be one of a varied series of circumstances that eventually lead to openness on the part of the subjects for further faith exploration. This makes such changes worth noting. Research Question #1 allows for this research to gather data concerning the subjects' attitudes toward Christianity prior to and immediately following the application of the independent variable.

Research Question #2

In what ways does this drama influence a person's attitude toward his or her ability to make a difference in the world?

One of the assumptions of this study is that most unchurched persons want their lives to have a positive impact on others and the world. The independent variable, the drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It," was written about a fairly ordinary person who was touched by God in such a way that his life did make a strong, positive impact on the lives of others and the world. A goal of the production is to make contact with unchurched persons at the point of God's possibilities for them, hopefully encouraging them to consider the prospect that their lives can make a difference. Because of varied personalities and experiences, subjects may display a wide diversity in the perception of their ability to make a positive impact.

This research makes no attempt to measure long-term cognitive or behavioral changes. It assumes positive changes created by the introduction of independent

variables, if there are any, may be a contributing factor in the subjects' future willingness to try further exploration of the Christian faith. Therefore, these changes are worth noting. Question #3 allows for this research to examine changes, if there are any, that may occur in the subjects' perceptions of their ability to make a positive difference in the world.

Research Question #3

What was the person's overall impression of the event?

Because the intervening variable of the drama media event, "Let Ralph Do It," has so many elements this research, and further attempts to create bridge events, must gain an understanding of the impact of the major elements of the drama/media event. For the purposes of this study, these major elements will include the following:

- a. The subjects' attitudes toward Christianity immediately prior to experiencing the independent variable (research question #1),
- b. The subjects' attitudes toward Christianity immediately after experiencing the independent variable (research question #1),
- c. The subjects' perceptions of their ability to make positive changes immediately prior to experiencing the independent variable (research question #2),
- d. the publicity,
- e. the welcome,
- f. atmosphere,
- g. acting,
- h. lighting,

- i. makeup,
- j. the video component,
- k. staging,
- l. costumes,
- m. music, and
- n. post show discussions.

This question allows for the measurement of the impact, if there is any, of the major elements of the bridging event on the subjects' perceptions of the overall production. It also allows for the comparison of the possible impact of any of the previously listed major elements that the drama/media event might have to the subjects' possible cognitive and behavioral changes, as a result of having participated in the event.

Research Question #4

What is the evidence that persons are more open to church involvement as a result of experiencing the drama/media event?

The changes in attitudes referred to in research questions #1 and #2 are essential in determining the impact of the intervening variable. The purpose of the proposed research is to produce a drama/media event as a bridge for the unchurched to an experimental investigation of Christianity whereby they are more open to the Christian faith and church involvement. This question allows for the examination of the impact, if there is any, of the intervening variable on the subjects' increased openness to church involvement.

Subjects

The subjects of this study are those who attend the performances of the live

drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It," who agree to fill out the pre- and postproduction questionnaires in the four congregations selected to participate in this research. These subjects represent a larger population of persons who might attend the same type of events in similar congregations to those in this study. These persons will be encouraged to attend the production by the preproduction publicity and personal invitations. The members and constituents of the host congregations will be encouraged to invite unchurched friends through bulletin and newsletter announcements and a personal letter sent to each of their homes. This letter will explain how the caring, thoughtful invitation of the church members and constituents could make an eternal difference for those they invite. The letter also will contain suggestions on how to invite, how to follow up on the invitation, and how to be a good host, if the invitation is accepted.

The focus of the study is the impact of the independent variable on the unchurched persons who attend the drama/media event. The purpose for including the church members who attend the event in the study is to maintain the anonymity of the unchurched persons. Subjects will be asked on the first section of their questionnaires to identify if they do or do not consider themselves active in a local church.

Variables and Controls

The independent variable in this research project is the live drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It." The dependent variables of this study are the cognitive and behavioral changes in relation to the Christian faith that participation in the drama/media event may produce in those who attend.

Many potential confounding variables could possibly obscure the effects of the independent variable of this study. This is due to the subjective nature of people's

response to art, including the drama/media event envisioned in this project. It is also due to the fact that in any production involving live performances, an infinite number of things can go wrong. To help control for the possible confounding variable of a production that does not meet the quality necessary to accomplish the goals for which it is designed, a professional director will direct the production. Also, a dress rehearsal will be presented a few days before the first actual performance for a group of friends and relatives of cast and crew members and some of their unchurched friends. Those attending this rehearsal will be invited to write down suggestions for improvement. The suggestions that the director deems appropriate and practical will be incorporated into the production.

A poorly conceived and written script could be a confounding variable because it would not have the desired impact on the unchurched subjects of the study. This was controlled for by writing the rough draft of "Let Ralph Do It" under the supervision of Dr. Charles Killian, as an independent study course. This course was completed in the fall 1998, as a part of the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. Dr. Killian is widely recognized for his expertise in the field of Christian drama and as an accomplished playwright and actor. He made constructive comments on the rough draft of the production. Dr. Killian's suggestions were incorporated into further drafts. No further controls for this will be attempted.

Richard O'Driscoll's dissertation, "The Development of the Screenplay: A Time to Mourn A Time to Dance" was used as a guide and template for the video component. The video component of "Let Ralph Do It" was also strengthened by the employment of Bruce Wieman, the chair of Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference of the United

Methodist Church's media team. Wieman has vast experience in video production and is responsible for the production of many videos used by hundreds of churches. Wieman was present at and directed the video taping section of all the video segments that will be used in the production. As a consultant on the video portion of the script, Wieman provided expert technical assistance in the use of proper terminology. Wieman's constructive comments were incorporated into the production.

The dependent variable for this study is the response of the subjects to the drama/media event in question. The unchurched subjects in this study may be among those who are more favorably disposed toward Christianity than the general unchurched population. No attempt to control for this possibility was made.

The administrative (publicity, preparation, etc.) elements of the event can function as confounding variables because they may affect people's attendance and attitudes. Asking each church in the study to follow a strict set of guidelines controlled for the administrative variables. These guidelines included a check-off timeline for the publicity, preparation, and presentation of the event. Subjects were also asked in the questionnaire to evaluate the impact of some of these variables. No further controls for the administrative variables were attempted.

Because host pastors normally have some part in events such as the one envisioned in this project, their effectiveness as communicators can also be a confounding variable. Varying degrees of communicative effectiveness of the host pastors were controlled for by limiting the opportunities for them to speak and by giving them scripts to follow.

Some other potentially confounding variables included gender, age, and gross

household income. These were controlled for by their inclusion on the preproduction questionnaire and will be discussed as a part of the evaluation of the data.

Instrumentation

A partially researcher-designed questionnaire was the instrument used to measure the cognitive and behavioral changes in the subjects who participated in the drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It." The preproduction and postproduction questionnaires were distributed in a packet along with other materials as people arrived for the production (see Appendix B). The pre- and postproduction questionnaires were attached to each other by means of a paper clip. They were color coded to ensure that they could not be confused. Clear explanations that employ the same directions in each setting in which the study is conducted ensured the subjects understood when and how to complete each questionnaire.

Pre- and postproduction questionnaires had matching four character codes. The first character of the code was a letter that corresponded to the congregation where the questionnaire was completed. This allowed for comparisons between congregations. Each set of pre- and postproduction questionnaires were consecutively numbered starting with one hundred. These numbers comprised the last three characters in the code and enabled the identification of pre- and postproduction questionnaires completed by the same individual.

The preproduction questionnaire asked for some basic demographic data from the participants. They also recorded subjective responses based on a Likert Scale to provide a baseline concerning the subjects' attitudes toward the Christian faith and their desire and capacity to make a difference in the lives of others. The last question on the

preproduction questionnaire asked the participant to indicate his or her willingness to attend a ten-week, experimental and obligation free, investigation of Christianity. The postproduction questionnaire was completed after the performance of the production. It employed the same questions as those on the second part of the preproduction questionnaire. It also included a question asking the subjects to indicate if they were more willing to be involved in a church after participating in "Let Ralph Do It," than they were before they came. The subject's attitudes toward the Christian faith was measured by a twenty-four question scale developed by Francis and Stubb that has demonstrated a high degree of reliability (Hill and Wood 80-1). Francis is numbered among those who believe that attitudes can predict behaviors when they both are measured in like ways with like degrees of specificity (80).

The attitude toward Christianity scale was designed to determine people's perception of the Christian religion. This scale measures attitudes of both children and adults. It consists of twenty-four (Likert Type) statements. The subjects respond on a five-point scale that ranges from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly." Eight of the questions are reversed scored because of negative phrasing. The scale requires no special administration skills. It has been used on over five thousand people varying in ages from eight to sixty-four (Hill and Wood 80).

The adult version of the attitude toward Christianity scale was used in this study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for this version have ranged from 0.95 to 0.98. This suggests the scale has a high degree of reliability. The item-to-rest-of-test correlation coefficients ranged from 0.42 to point 0.92 supporting the instrument's unidimensionality and homogeneity (Hill and Wood 81).

The postproduction questionnaire also asked the participants to evaluate the various elements of the drama/media event. Finally, the questionnaire invited the respondent to indicate his or her willingness to attend a ten-week, experimental and obligation free, investigation of Christianity and his/her degree of openness to church involvement.

The questionnaires were pretested at a dress rehearsal of the production on Saturday, 19 August 2000. Because the video editor was unable to complete the video section of the production by this time and the portion of the tape that was completed did not arrive until noon of the same day, the final dress rehearsal had to be rescheduled three hours later. Those who had been invited to attend were notified of the technical problem and the resultant time change. Several were not able to or chose not to attend. Several who could not be reached came at the original time. The situation was explained, and about six stayed to watch the rough rehearsal. About six more attended the dress rehearsal later in the evening. The situation was explained again. Those in attendance included friends and family of the cast and crew of the production and members of the Winchester United Methodist Church. Each of the participants was given a packet containing a "Let Ralph Do It" pencil, the introduction and thank you letter, the questionnaires, a card for them to return if they wanted a one-page summary of the results of this study, and a response card. The contents were explained, and the questionnaires were completed at the appropriate times. Several people needed to leave before they were able to complete both of the questionnaires. Six persons did complete both questionnaires correctly. Five people stayed after the questionnaires were completed and shared their comments about the production and questionnaire. Respondents generally

felt that the questionnaires were rather long. The director explained that they had a proven reliability and shortening them might change that important factor. Respondents did mention a problem with some of the wording on the response cards and everyone present agreed that more explanation of them would take care of the problem rather than reprinting them. The table group discussions were also tested and found to generate positive discussion.

Data Collection

The primary means of gathering data will be the partially researcher-designed questionnaire. Subjects were asked to complete and turn in the preproduction and postproduction questionnaires before and after the drama. Information about each congregation's community, attendance, giving, membership, new members, and members received by confession of faith will be gathered for the years 1997, 1998, and 1999. This data will be taken from the conference journals of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. The data gathered from these journals gave a picture of the type and status of the congregations in the study.

Short focus groups were held with the table leaders after the table discussions. These provided qualitative data to compare against the quantitative data collected by other means (Morgan, Qualitative 17). Normal focus groups would last from ninety minutes to two hours (61). Because these groups were held immediately after the table discussions they were kept to approximately twenty minutes. Four questions designed to elicit responses to issues pertinent to this research were presented in each of the four focus groups. A high level moderator was used to keep the discussion centered on the questions and to accommodate the short time span (46, 48).

The table leaders were trained before the production with the exception of Savoy United Methodist Church where table leaders had not been recruited. The training included instructions on how to run the discussions, how to handle persons who might try to dominate conversation, and an explanation of the questions used. The number of questions was reduced after the initial production because the discussions took too long and people were eager to leave. Table group leaders were also reminded that they were to stay for the focus group following the table discussions. The Table Group Leaders Protocol is printed in Appendix C.

The protocol and questions for the focus groups are found in Appendix D. The focus groups were designed and conducted with the following factors in mind:

- A. Clarity of purpose,
- B. Appropriate environment,
- C. Sufficient resources,
- D. Appropriate participants,
- E. Skillful moderator,
- F. Effective questions,
- G. Careful data handling,
- H. Systematic and verifiable analysis,
- I. Appropriate presentation, and
- J. Honoring the participant, client, and method (67).

The analysis of the focus groups in this study understands that the small number of participants in these groups and the fact that they were composed of active church persons introduces the possibility of bias (35). Because the questions posed in these

groups requested the participants in the focus groups to report on the production and table discussions they had just experienced, these focus groups still provide a valuable source of secondary data.

Each of the focus groups was recorded on audiotape, and a professional typist was hired to transcribe the tapes. Responses were coded for each of the groups, and careful accounts of how many times each response was made were recorded (61). This information was put into a grid format to systematically summarize the content of each group's discussion and responses to individual questions (59). Statistical tests were not considered necessary to validate this secondary source of data (61).

Three basic factors influenced the emphasis a specific topic received as the data from the focus groups were analyzed. These included how many individuals mentioned the topic, how many groups mentioned the topic, and how much energy or enthusiasm was generated by the participants for the topic. Validation resulting from a constant level of energy among a consistent proportion of the participants across nearly all the groups or group-to-group validation, was considered the most significant validation for the focus group data (63).

Response cards that participants were invited to fill out before leaving for the evening were the final source of data. These cards allowed the participants to voluntarily provide their name and a means of contact if they are interested in further church involvement, having questions responded to, being visited by church staff, or if they are interested in a small group that would further investigate Christianity. These cards were stapled to the postproduction questionnaire, collected, and recorded after each production. The information from the cards was passed on to the pastors within a few

days of the performance at their church so they could respond quickly to the questions and desires recorded on the cards.

Generalizations

This research was inspired by the church's need for events that bridge the gap between the church and the unchurched by providing an event to give them an opportunity to explore the possibilities of Christianity. Many congregations would like to bridge this gap but lack resources and/or knowledge to do it. The researcher can assume similar results in congregations of the same general theological stance, attitude, motivation, health, and demographic makeup as those in the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Each participant was given a packet as they entered on the day of the event. This packet contained a letter explaining the study and thanking them for considering participation and guaranteeing confidentiality. The packet also contained the coded pre- and postproduction questionnaires. The questionnaires did not have a space for the names, or any distinguishing characteristics that could identify the respondent. These questionnaires were collected immediately after they were completed. The subjects' confidentiality was guaranteed because the pre- and postproduction questionnaires did not ask for names. They also had no distinguishable characteristics that could identify the respondent.

Data Analysis

The data from the pre- and postproduction questionnaire was coded for each congregation. It was also evaluated on the basis of the age, gender, household income, and churched or unchurched status of the subjects. Results on the attitude toward

Christianity scale were compared to the results of the impact the major elements of the production of "Let Ralph Do It" scales and subjects' responses to the production itself. The behavioral scale was compared to the attitude scale and major element impact scale. The impact of the drama/media event on the subjects was compared on the basis of the church where the subjects completed the form, age, gender, household income, and church involvement.

Procedures for analysis of this data were t-Tests (Wiersma 373-5). This analysis was done under the direction of Dr. Charles Smith, a professor of statistics at MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois.

Detailed Project Description

The churches contracting to have the dramatic/media event, "Let Ralph Do It," agreed to follow specific guidelines for the preparation, publicity, and presentation of the drama/media event. The four churches chosen for the study also covenanted to follow all the procedures and use the materials in a preproduction kit that was sent to them. The kit included: sample printed ads, chancel announcements, skits, flyers, posters, and information on how to get a word-of-mouth campaign started. The specific use of these items was stipulated in a check-off list included in the kit. Each church was sent the eight-week protocol including all the publicity pieces. All they needed to do was fill in the appropriate blanks, duplicate, and disperse the publicity as prescribed in the protocol. Each church agreed to make a high priority of attracting unchurched persons to attend this production. Those who belong to the church or who are active constituents were encouraged to invite their unchurched friends, neighbors, and co-workers to the event. They were encouraged to consider bringing such persons to be their ticket for attending

the performance.

The Winchester Congregation was the only one that fulfilled all of the things they agreed to do. The Chatsworth congregation did most of the preproduction publicity but did not have a designated follow-up experience. Personal contacts reported that Melvin and Savoy did some of the publicity, but neither followed the protocol, and neither had a designated follow-up experience planned. Melvin made little attempt to focus on the unchurched.

Letters were to be sent to the members and constituents of each church in the study; however, only two churches followed through on this part of their covenant. This letter explained how their caring, thoughtful invitation could make an eternal difference for those they invited. It also contained suggestions on how to invite and how to follow up on the invitation, as well as how to be a good host if the invitation was accepted. Preprinted invitations were also sent to each congregation so anyone wishing to use them to invite their relatives, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances were welcome to take as many as they needed.

The unchurched guests were to be treated as guests at the drama/media event. Those bringing unchurched guests were encouraged to pick them up before the production. Greeters were to be there to welcome the guests and attend to their needs. As the guests arrived, appropriate non-church music was played in the background. The decor and lighting was warm and friendly.

Each person attending the production was given a packet that included an embossed "Let Ralph Do It" pencil, a letter thanking the people for their participation, a brief explanation of the project, and a promise the confidentiality of the participants. The

packets also contained the pre- and post-questionnaires and a card for the participants to drop in the mail if they desire a one-page summary of the results of the research. The pre- and postproduction questionnaires were numerically coded to enable later comparisons and color-coded so the respondents would be sure to fill out the correct questionnaire at the appropriate time. A program for the play was also given to each participant.

On the day of the production, the host pastor greeted as many people personally as possible. I was introduced as the author, director, and producer of the production “Let Ralph Do It.” I then told them that the production we were presenting was new, and we would like to learn how we can improve it and make it more effective. I explained that they could be of tremendous help to us by giving their own honest evaluations on the questionnaires contained in their packet at the appropriate time. Next, I went through the contents of the packet with those present, starting with the first letter. I thanked the congregation, pastor, and guests for their participation in this event and reiterated the promise of confidentiality. I highlighted the fact that no one was asked to sign the surveys and that there would be no follow-up without his or her expressed written request. Participants were also asked to keep the same packet throughout the evening.

I next gave simple and clear instructions on how to fill out the questionnaires and response cards. At this point I invited the participants to complete the preproduction questionnaire with the pencil they had been given. A second thank you to all those present and an introduction to “Let Ralph Do It” concluded my opening remarks.

The churches that contracted for the drama/media event agreed to serve dessert at the conclusion of the production. The dessert was served to table groups of about eight.

The church hosting the production also agreed to provide table leaders. The table leaders were trained at a prearranged time prior to the play, with the exception of Savoy UMC. Table leaders were instructed how to lead a fifteen-minute discussion while the participants enjoyed their dessert. The discussion was based on a few carefully prepared questions. These questions encouraged the participants to review and eventually apply some of the messages of the production to their lives. The training and the groups followed the protocol listed in Appendix C. The table discussion period was followed by the introduction of the actors. They briefly interacted with the participants by trying to answer their questions. This format has worked well in the several congregations throughout the Midwest, where it has been used after various dramas. It allowed for a focusing and reinforcing of the key messages of the production. It also provided a greater potential for those messages to be remembered and assimilated, because the participant had the opportunity to experience them from several different perspectives.

At Chatsworth UMC the participants were asked to fill out the postproduction questionnaire after everything else was completed. Many of the people were eager to leave by this point. Many left without completing the second questionnaire. At Melvin UMC, Winchester UMC, and Savoy UMC, the participants filled out the questionnaires while they waited for their dessert to be served. This meant they could not answer the questions about the food and the discussion, but the focus groups presumably would cover the discussion adequately and the quality of the food was not as important as getting people to complete the questionnaires. After the table discussions were completed and the actors introduced, I again thanked everyone present for his or her participation and told them they were free to go unless they were table leaders. Short

focus groups were then held with the table leaders. The protocol and questions used in these focus groups are found in Appendix D.

The Creation of the Event

The theological framework for this project is brought out in Chapter 2 under the section “Theological Precedents.” The theoretical model is researcher-created and is based on Scripture and the findings of the Church Growth movement as presented in the literature review.

The Theoretical Model

The field of Church Growth is constantly invested in researching the needs, wants, perspectives, opinions, problems, and life situations of the unchurched. Such study is critical if Christianity is to help bridge the gap between the unchurched and the church. The project in question seeks to create a bridge from the secular world to a short-term investigation of the Christian faith. The theoretical model behind this project is to use the best of current Church Growth research to inform the creation of a drama/media event that would be effective in speaking the language of and meeting the felt needs of the unchurched persons who attend this event.

The History

I love Christian drama. I have spent much of my adult life pursuing this form of ministry. In January 1998 Dr. Robert Tuttle suggested to me to do something with drama in my dissertation. I needed little encouragement.

A few months before Dr. Tuttle’s suggestion, Thomas Albin promised to send me a diary of a very interesting eighteenth century Methodist layman named James Chubb. Albin believed this diary would make an excellent basis for a drama. The eight hundred-

page diary was photocopied while Albin was doing doctoral work in England.

I decided to create a drama that would appeal to the unchurched based on the diary of James Chubb. Chubb was an exciseman in service to the King of England. He was an active Methodist most of his life. He had a great concern for the poor and invested much of his later years in ministry to others. I hoped to use Chubb as the basis for the envisioned drama. As I prayed and studied, I began to wonder if unchurched Americans could relate to this eighteenth century English Methodist.

Albin sent me the disks that contained the rough transcription of Chubb's diary. It was transcribed by student assistants and was fairly complete. Some sections or words were not transcribed. I went to work with Albin at Dubuque Theological Seminary, where he was employed at the time. There, I was given the original photocopies of the diary. As I studied the entire diary, I realized that Chubb's life, although fascinating to this life-long Methodist, was not exciting or culturally relevant enough to reach the unchurched I hoped to touch with this drama. This was somewhat disheartening, as I had already spent many hours in this pursuit.

As I considered what God would like me to do in this situation, I kept being reminded of Hobe Albright, whose life and influence are mentioned in Chapter 1. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that Hobe's life had the elements I was looking for in this drama. He was a person who made a positive difference in the world. He was ordinary enough that almost everyone could relate to him. He was not perfect. His life contained lots of drama and humor and made a good story. His faith in God had a transforming effect on him. He was full of God's love. He was not phony or super sweet.

As I drove home from Dubuque, I became convinced that Hobe's life should be the main subject of the drama. I soon realized that Chubb, a typically stiff Englishman, would make a perfect straight man against Hobe's euphemisms, positivism, joking, and boundless energy. Eventually, I decided that Hobe and Chubb would be the only live characters, and they would interact with video clips projected on a large back screen built into the stage.

The summer 1998 Doctor of Ministry Class I was scheduled to take was cancelled, so I decided to use the time for an independent study to do the research for and write the first draft of the production. With the help of Dr. Charles Killian, I was able to do that. In June 1998, I went to Florida and spent four days interviewing Hobe's widow Polly, their daughter Sue, and several other of their Florida friends. Many hours of audio tape interviews were recorded, along with numerous pages of notes. Polly was able to take me through Hobe's life. She graciously gave me copies of pictures, articles, and the like. Many of these items are now included in the video portion of the production. Polly also gave me her audio tapes of Hobe's funeral in Peoria, Illinois and his memorial service in Tampa, Florida.

I went to Peoria later that summer and interviewed other friends and acquaintances of Hobe. I also made many phone calls to those I could not reach in person. The continuing revelation of Hobe's life exposed more drama and humor.

The first draft of the production was completed for an independent study course for the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary in the fall 1998. Several revisions have been made since that time. I followed the format of Richard O'Driscoll's dissertation screenplay, "A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance," in the

writing of the screenplay of the production (1993). Bruce Wieman helped me understand the technical video terms and to properly script the video scenes.

A \$1,500 grant was secured in early spring 1999 to produce the production. This grant requires that the drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It," be performed in at least eight of the congregations of the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, four performances of which shall be the focus of this study. With the grant money, I was able to fund a search for an actor to play Hobe. James McCleary, the actor I was I was able to hire, is a retired pastor. I was also able to hire Bruce Wieman to do the videotaping and Chris Gates from Asbury Theological Seminary's media department to do the editing.

At the time of the proposal hearing, about two-thirds of the rough videotaping of "Let Ralph Do It" was completed. Polly acts as a narrator of sorts in the video portion of the production. She was able to visit Peoria in late spring 1999. I was able to use the home of Jane and Wayne Miller, Polly's daughter and son-in-law, as a base for video taping during Polly's visit and for other subsequent taping sessions. The video taping was partially completed on three different days in the spring and fall 1999. We were blessed to be able to use the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference's video equipment for the taping, which provided us with fairly high quality footage for a project of this sort.

Larry Hembrough agreed to fill the role of James Chubb in February 2000. Rehearsals began with the two actors and director shortly thereafter in either Winchester or Savoy. The set was designed, and work on the other technical aspects of the program began.

Congregations who expressed a desire to host the production were contacted, and

four agreed to be part of the study. Each agreed to fulfill the conditions required for this research. The four productions were scheduled for late August 2000.

Dr. Charles Smith, a statistics professor at MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois, agreed to over see the data analysis. He willingly explained the process to me, and helped set up the data entry into the spread sheet program to be able to conduct the necessary statistical tests.

After the dissertation proposal was approved, the rest of the video taping was completed and rehearsal schedules with the two actors were greatly intensified. The video taping included dozens of volunteer actors. Many did an excellent job, and much of the tape is quite good, but financial considerations prohibited producing a video the quality of which most people are used to seeing on television.

The publicity packets were completed and sent to each congregation that agreed to host the production. The first three weeks of the publicity protocol was given to each church in mid-June. The whole packet was sent in July. Covenant letters were given to the pastors at the same time as the first three weeks of the publicity protocol. These letters were signed and returned by the pastors agreeing to follow the guidelines for preparation that they received. Two of the pastors had to be called and reminded to return their letters. Sets, costumes, lights, background music, special effects, and technical arrangements for audio and video were worked on throughout the summer. Literally thousands of hours went into the preparation for these events. Two more grants were subsequently received that helped offset the over six thousand dollar cost to produce the original four productions.

The original video editor, Chris Gates, accepted a job as the video editor for

Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church and was unable to do the editing. A new video editor was hired, Paul Clifford, from the Asbury Seminary media department.

The video editor was unable to finish the videotape editing by the deadline two weeks before the final dress rehearsal in Winchester, Illinois. We did not receive any video from him until noon on the day of the 4:00 p.m. final rehearsal. The tape we received was only for the second act, and it was not finished. The dress rehearsal that day was to serve as an opportunity to pretest the questionnaires, response cards, and experience as a whole. The official time for this dress rehearsal was moved back to 7:00 p.m. at the last minute to allow us to at least see what video we did have. This made it impossible for some of the targeted group to attend. We still had a half dozen people show up at the four o'clock time. The situation was explained and some decided to stay and watch us rehearse at this time. They did complete the questionnaires and give feedback. A few choose to come back at seven o'clock. The total of those in attendance at the seven o'clock rehearsal was about fifteen. These friends and family members also completed the necessary pretesting. This was a Saturday night with the first production on Monday evening two-and-a-half-hours away in Chatsworth, Illinois. I was forced to drive from west central Illinois to Louisville, Kentucky after church the next day to retrieve the rest of the video tape from the editor. The editing was still not finished, but I was able to get all the original tapes. We did the best we could at the first performance on Monday night with an uncompleted tape with which the actors had never been able to work. The result was not of the quality of production suggested in Chapters 1 and 2. Rev. Bruce Weiman was able to edit the tape with me before the next performance. I also edited a few things out of the script. We were able to reduce the total time of the

production from nearly two hours to one hour and fifteen minutes. The actors did an incredible job of adjusting to the cuts and the new tape with only one rehearsal. The next production at Melvin was satisfactory as were each of the others.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Not all churches are concerned about people outside their doors. Churches that exhibit such leanings may not have an understanding of how to interact with and reach out to the unchurched. If they do try to reach out, they will most certainly encounter a growing gap between the people who are already a part of the faith community and those who are not. Many churches that are successful in reaching people who have no church home include bridge events in their various strategies. These events include dramas, pageants, musicals, concerts, seminars, parties, hosting well-known guest speakers and other major activities that are not just for those who are presently involved in the congregation. Some growing congregations seem to intuitively grasp the need for bridge events. They trust God to create further bridges to church involvement for those unchurched persons who might attend such events. Other growing congregations understand bridge events to be an integral part of a total plan for reaching and discipling the lost. This research is focused on a hybrid event that combines live theater with video, or the drama/media event. The purpose of the research was to produce a drama/media event designed to provide a bridge for experimental investigation of Christianity and to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral changes that participation in the drama/media event might produce in those who attend.

This study is based on four research questions. In what ways does this live drama influence a person's attitude toward the Christian faith? In what ways does this drama influence a person's attitude toward his or her ability to make a difference in the world? What was the person's overall impression of the event? What is the evidence that

persons are more open to church involvement as a result of experiencing the drama/media event?

Reliability

A partially researcher-designed questionnaire was administered before and after the production of "Let Ralph Do It." The preproduction questionnaire contained specific demographic questions and the "Attitude Toward Christianity Scale" developed by Francis and Stubb. The postproduction questionnaire contained the Francis and Stubb scale and specific questions relating to the elements of the production. Both questionnaires contained questions that asked the subjects to rate their self-perception of their ability to make a difference and their willingness to consider attending some sort of follow-up to investigate the Christian faith. The Francis and Stubbs "Attitude Toward Christianity Scale" has demonstrated a high degree of reliability (Hill and Wood 80). The scale was designed to determine people's perception of the Christian religion. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for this version have ranged from 0.95 to 0.98. This suggests the scale has a high degree of reliability. The item-to-rest-of-test correlation coefficients ranged from 0.42 to point 0.92, supporting the instrument's unidimensionality and homogeneity (81).

Confounding Variables

The hope that those who attended the productions would complete a questionnaire before and after the production was clearly stated in the publicity. The questionnaires were still problematic. My subjective analysis (as well as that of those in the cast and crew of the productions) was that those attending were put off by the questionnaires. They exhibited a lot of confusion and some complained audibly. Some subjects

completed part or none of the questionnaires. This was particularly true of the unchurched persons in attendance. Out of an estimated total of over thirty unchurched who participated in one of the four productions, only thirteen who designated themselves as unchurched completed enough of the questionnaires to be included in this study. Quite a few subjects left out part or all of the demographic section on the preproduction questionnaire. The responses of these subjects were identified and recorded separately under the heading of undesignated. Several comments were made by those in the cast and crew and by those attending the production that indicated the questionnaires were antithetical to theatrical experience both before and after the production.

This research was designed to evaluate a consistent intervention, the drama/media event. Live theatre is always subject to many variables. Some confounding variables can be controlled, and some cannot. I was not able to control some of the variables surrounding this production as well as I hoped and believed I could.

Two weeks before the dress rehearsal, the actors were as ready as they could be to do their job without the video taped segments of the production. Due to circumstances beyond my control, the video editor did not complete the video editing by the agreed upon date. Only a partially completed tape of the second act was available for the dress rehearsal. Our schedule included a minimum of two weeks of rehearsal with the tape before the dress rehearsal. After many failed promises, out of desperation, I drove to Louisville from west central Illinois and met with the editor the night before the first actual production. I was able to get the rest of the partially done tapes and all of the rough-cut video I had given to him. We did what we could with these poor quality tapes, but the first production at the Chatsworth United Methodist Church was a technical

nightmare. For that reason, the results from Chatsworth are being recorded separately from the other three performances. Chatsworth was treated as a dress rehearsal and base the research primarily on the other three congregations.

The drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It," had never been done with all the video element before Chatsworth, so we could not determine the actual length of the performance. Besides the obvious problems of an inadequate video, the production also turned out to be too long. The video producer, Bruce Wieman, and I worked late into the night to cut and re-edit all the video in about two days following the Chatsworth performance. The cast, crew, and I also worked feverishly to incorporate the cuts and revised video into the production in the five days between Chatsworth and the next performance at Melvin. We were able to cut a half-hour out of the total production making it one hour and fifteen minutes long.

The other three performances were acceptable, but varied greatly from one another. The performance at Melvin had technical problems, particularly with the wireless microphones, as did Winchester. The production in Winchester came on the Tuesday after the Sunday performance in Melvin. The main character was ill the evening "Let Ralph do It" was produced in Winchester. His illness, coupled with a variety of technical problems, made it by far the worst performance, with the exception of Chatsworth.

I also discovered at Chatsworth that people were reluctant to fill out the second questionnaire after the dessert and discussion period following the production. Most were eager to leave after the discussions. For this reason, the postproduction questionnaires were administered immediately following the last three productions. This

rendered the two questions about the quality of the food and the quality of the table discussions impossible to answer. I decided that having a larger sampling of more willing subjects would be more helpful than having the data from those two questions. I was certain that the quality of the food would be good in the three remaining churches. The quality of the table group discussions is covered in the focus group data.

The focus groups were shorter and more narrowly circumscribed than is normally the case for focus groups. Each pastor of the congregations in the study agreed in writing to follow the preparation and publicity protocol that was sent to them. The pastor at Savoy forgot to assign table leaders and/or tell them that a part of their responsibility was to attend the focus group after the table discussions. This minister was able to commandeer some faithful members as they arrived to fill in as table leaders. These table leaders did not have the training the table leaders did at the other congregations. Because of a conflicting event in the Melvin community, some of the table group leaders did not arrive in time to receive the training. The focus group evaluation of the table group discussion seems to reflect this.

A final confounding variable could be the degree to which each congregation followed the preparation and publicity protocol that was sent to them. Although I have no statistical measure for this, the pastors and/or acquaintances in each congregation gave me some idea of their faithfulness to the covenant they made. The Winchester congregation was the only church to provide a specific follow-up experience that the signed covenant clearly required. The Winchester congregation followed the preparation and publicity almost to the letter. The Chatsworth congregation followed most of the publicity protocol. The Melvin and Savoy congregations began the publicity later than

the eight weeks prior to the event that the protocol required. Neither completed all the protocol, and the Melvin church did not put the emphasis on inviting unchurched persons as required.

Profile of the Subjects

The first section of the preproduction questionnaire asked the respondents to designate whether they considered themselves active in or affiliated with any church. It also asked them to indicate their gender, the period in which they were born, and their income range. Some persons completing most or all of the questionnaires did not complete all or some of the demographic data section of the preproduction questionnaire.

Table 4.1

Profile of Subjects—Chatsworth United Methodist Church

	n	Male	Female	Birth date	Income
Churched/Total	8	1	7	Before 1946	\$0.00-\$25,000

No data are available in the unchurched or undesignated categories for Chatsworth. Only eight churched persons completed the demographic section. One of these persons was male and the other seven were female. The mean of the age range was 1.63 indicating that most of the respondents were born before 1946. The mean of the income was 1, therefore all the respondents were in the \$0-\$25,000 annual income range.

Table 4.2

Profile of Subjects—Melvin United Methodist Church

	n	Male	Female	Birth date	Income
Churched	36	10	26	Before 1946	\$25,001-\$45,000
Unchurched	3	1	2	1981-present	\$65,000+
Undesignated	5	3	2	Before 1946	\$25,001-\$45,000
Total	44	14	30	Before 1946	\$25,001-\$45,000

The sample at Melvin was forty-four. Fourteen of the persons responding to this section were male, and thirty were female. The mean age range was 1.77. The majority

of those who completed this section of the questionnaire were born before 1946. The mean income of participants that responded to this section fell between \$25,001 and \$45,000 as recorded on the scale at 2.22. The three unchurched persons at Melvin that responded to this portion of the questionnaire were all born after 1981.

Table 4.3

Profile of Subjects–Winchester United Methodist Church

	n	Male	Female	Birth date	Income
Churched	37	11	26	1946-1960	\$25,001-\$45,000
Unchurched	6	1	5	1946-1960	\$25,001-\$45,000
Undesignated	1	1	-	1961-1981	\$45,001-\$65,000
Total	44	13	31	1946-1980	\$25,001-\$65,000

The sample at Winchester for this section of preproduction questionnaire was forty-four. Thirteen were male and thirty-one female. The mean birth date range was between 1946-60, or as reported on the scale at 2.11. This indicated the mean birth date at the Winchester church to be younger than the other churches. The mean annual income range was 2.39, or between \$25,001-\$45,000. The mean of the age range of the unchurched was similar to the other categories at 2.14, indicating a birth date in between 1946-60. The mean income range of the unchurched was slightly higher at 2.6 than the churched at 2.41.

Table 4.4

Profile of Subjects–Savoy United Methodist Church

	n	Male	Female	Birth date	Income
Churched	42	13	29	Before 1946	\$25,001-\$45,000
Unchurched	2	1	1	1946-1960	\$45,001-\$65,000
Undesignated	2	2	-	1946-1960	\$25,001-\$65,000
Total	46	16	30	Before 1946	\$25,000-\$65,000

The sample from the Savoy congregation was forty-six. Sixteen were male, and thirty female. The age range was very consistent for each category of respondents varying from 1.98 to 2. The income range was consistently higher at Savoy, except for

the mean of the two persons in the undesignated category. Their mean was 2, or in the \$25,000-\$45 range. The churched person's mean income range was 2.9, indicating they were in the high end of the same range as the undesignated. The mean income range for the unchurched respondents at Savoy was 3.33 indicating an income in the \$45,001-\$65,000 range. The mean income range for all the respondents at Savoy was 2.94, or the high end of the \$25,000-\$45,000 range.

Table 4.5

Profile of Subjects–Melvin, Winchester, Savoy United Methodist Churches

	n	Male	Female	Birth date	Income
Churched	115	34	81	Before 1946	\$25,000-\$45,000
Unchurched	11	3	8	1946-1960	\$45,001-\$65,000
Undesignated	8	6	2	Before 1946	\$25,001-\$45,000
Total	134	43	91	Before 1946	\$25,001-\$45,000

The total sample of those who completed all or part of the demographic section was 134. There were forty-three males and ninety-one females. This reflects eleven unchurched respondents, including three males and eleven females. Most of the undesignated persons did not fill out any of the demographic section of the preproduction questionnaire. The sample of those who did is eight, with six males and two females. The mean of the birth date range for all those that responded to this section is 1.96, or in the upper limits of the before 1946 category. The mean birth date of the unchurched respondents is 2.54 or in the middle of the 1946-60 range. The mean annual income of all those who responded to this section of the preproduction questionnaire is 2.43, or in the middle of \$25,001-\$45,000 class. The mean income range for the eleven unchurched persons is 3, indicating they were primarily in the \$45,001-\$65,000 group.

Profile of the Churches in the Study

The data in this section are reported from the Conference Journals of the Illinois

Great Rivers Annual Conference and represents the figures for the year prior to the printing of the journals. The years listed on horizontal columns of the following charts represent the figures for that year but are taken from the next year's journal.

I am familiar with each of the congregations in the study. As the current pastor of the Winchester church and the former pastor of the Melvin congregation, I am intimately aware of the history and circumstances of these two congregations. Chatsworth was only twelve miles from Melvin, and I was acquainted with both the present and former pastors of the United Methodist Church there. The pastor of the Savoy United Methodist Church is the son of the lead character in the production and a personal friend. We held several of our rehearsals there, and I had the opportunity to become fairly familiar with the history and status of that congregation.

The first production in this study was on Monday, 19 August 2000, in the Chatsworth United Methodist Church. Chatsworth is a small community of about six hundred located in east central Illinois. It is twenty miles from any community over four thousand. Its major industry is agriculture. The church has been blessed with good financial support over the years. It also received some large gifts that enabled the building of a new and exceptionally nice facility for a church of its size and location. The pastor there is in his third year. He reports an increase in church attendance of about 15 percent in the year 2000 that is not recorded in the following chart.

Table 4.6

Profile—Chatsworth United Methodist Church

Chatsworth	Total Expenditures	Membership	Confirmation	Total Members Received	Average Worship Attendance
1997	108,318	231	0	1	86
1998	88,168	238	12	2	103
1999	93,703	224	3	6	103

The drop in total church expenditures reported in the above chart after 1998 was probably due to a near split resultant from a conflict over the previous pastor, who was accused of misconduct, and a very poor farm economy in that region for that year. The pastor’s report of an average worship attendance of 115 through July 2000 would make it appear that the congregation is growing in attendance from 1998 and is stable, if not growing, in other areas.

The Melvin congregation is not unlike Chatsworth, with some significant differences. The businesses in Melvin have not fared as well as those of Chatsworth. Melvin is also losing its school as a result of school consolidation. The Melvin community shows signs of economic and social depression. The Melvin church has a good financial base, but it has not received the large gifts that the Chatsworth congregation has. The Melvin church has a good and usable building completed in the early fifties. It is not as large, usable, and attractive as Chatsworth, nor does it sit at the intersection of two main thoroughfares as Chatsworth does. The Melvin church has been a leader in the area in terms of United Methodism and ecumenical activities. It is a church that has taken some significant risks over the last ten years to develop programs to reach out to lost and hurting persons.

Table 4.7
Profile–Melvin United Methodist Church

Melvin	Total Expenditures	Membership	Confirmation	Total Members Received	Average Worship Attendance
1997	105,028	227	5	7	99
1998	94,588	231	9	11	89
1999	101,140	230	0	0	89

Melvin United Methodist Church’s giving reflected the same agriculturally related economic stress in 1998 as its neighbor, Chatsworth. Its overall health seems to

be on the same slightly downward trend as the community in which it resides.

The Winchester United Methodist Church is a middle-sized congregation of unusual activity. It vies with the nearby American Baptist congregation for the honor of being the largest church in the smallest county in Illinois. Winchester is a community of seventeen hundred, with its own school system, library, park, county fairgrounds, swimming pool and various businesses. The nearest larger community is a town of twenty thousand about seventeen miles away. Winchester is a popular place to live. Housing is expensive and hard to find. The Winchester United Methodist Church is welcoming, loving, mission-minded, progressive, and busy. It struggles with the growing pains, staff conflicts, and turf issues typical in a growing church of its size. It has a beautiful ten year old worship and office complex and a very usable forty year old fellowship hall.

Table 4.8

Winchester United Methodist Church–Winchester, Illinois

Winchester	Total Expenditures	Membership	Confirmation	Total Members Received	Average Worship Attendance
1997	296,697	252	13	16	140
1998	130,327	249	2	2	130
1999	169,998	233	10	15	140

The spikes in expenditures represent major payments of building debt that were enabled by a very large gift. The decrease in membership is the result of purging the membership role, completed in 1999. The church is in stable condition and primed for growth if it can resolve some of its internal conflicts.

The Savoy congregation is the most unusual of all the churches in the study. Savoy was a small town church thirty years ago. Now the community of Savoy is a suburb of the Champaign/Urbana metropolitan area. In 2000, Savoy contains shopping

centers, large apartment complexes, new subdivisions, and new businesses. The population in the area continues to grow at a fast pace. Land prices in the region are high. The church is located right on the edge of old Savoy and some of the new growth. Ironically, the pastor at Savoy is a former pastor of Winchester. He was sent there because he was perceived as the one who could help the church take advantage of the opportunity before them. He is a passionate and able pastor. He has helped the congregation grow some, but not without great difficulty. The church built a new and fairly contemporary structure a few years before the present pastor came. Many of those present felt that this achievement was a final destination. They built their new, small building on a fairly small parcel of land that is blocked in by roads and a park. No other adjacent land is available. The present acreage and structure leave little room to expand and certainly not enough to take advantage of the potential the church could have. It also is on a side road that has very little traffic and offers almost no visibility to the thousands that pass by on the major highway only a few blocks away. The pastor has been successful in doing many of the kinds of ministries that could appeal to those thousands of potential people who are literally within an easy walking distance of the church. A good spirit exists in the church, but some conflict is evident between those who would press forward and those who still retain a small church and small town mindset.

Table 4.9

Savoy United Methodist Church–Savoy, Illinois

Savoy	Total Expenditures	Membership	Confirmation	Total Members Received	Average Worship Attendance
1997	75,911	132	4	16	86
1998	92,202	134	0	4	91
1999	134,503	140	6	16	104

As the chart indicates, the Savoy United Methodist Church is definitely healthy

and growing. The question is, will it seize all, or just a portion, of the opportunity that lies before it?

Research Questions

The data relating to the research questions are presented one question at a time. These figures are also displayed by congregation. The results from each church are exhibited by the subcategories of churched, unchurched, undesignated, and total. The composite results from the Melvin, Winchester, and Savoy congregations are also displayed by the subcategories of churched, unchurched, undesignated, and total. The $p \leq 0.05$ is assumed in this research, however, in this type of research it is possible to use a $p \leq 0.1$ (Brykit, 367).

Research Question #1

The first research question asks: “In what ways does this live drama influence a person’s attitude toward the Christian faith?” This is answered by determining if there is any statistically significant increase in the subject’s scores on questions one through twenty-four of post-performance questionnaire (The Francis and Stubbs “Attitude Toward Christianity Scale”) and the same questions on the pre-performance questionnaire (Hill and Wood 82).

Table 4.10

Chatsworth United Methodist Church—Statistical Analysis of the Comparison between Questions 1-24 of the Pre- and Postproduction Questionnaires

Measurements							
		Pre-Test Q1-24		Post-Test Q1-24			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p \leq .05
Churched	8	4.6	.46	4.75	.24	1.89	.14
Unchurched	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Undesignated	3	4.53	.42	4.47	.50	2.92	.26
Total	11	4.58	.43	4.67	.33	1.81	.18

None of the seven or so unchurched persons who came to the Chatsworth performance of “Let Ralph Do It” completed both questionnaires. No statistical significance appeared in the data gathered from the questionnaires from the churched and undesignated persons at this production.

Table 4.11

Melvin United Methodist Church—Statistical Analysis of the Comparison between Questions 1-24 of the Pre- and Postproduction Questionnaires

Measurements							
		Pre-Test Q1-24		Post-Test Q1-24			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p≤.05
Churched	36	4.71	.28	4.74	.31	1.69	.26
Unchurched	3	3.43	.59	3.31	.63	2.92	.32
Undesignated	16	4.45	.39	4.69	.39	1.75	.22
Total	55	4.62	.43	4.65	.47	1.67	.24

No statistical significance was shown in the comparisons for this congregation relating to research question #1.

Table 4.12

Winchester United Methodist Church—Statistical Analysis of the Comparison between Questions 1-24 of the Pre- and Postproduction Questionnaires

Measurements							
		Pre-Test Q1-24		Post-Test Q1-24			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p≤.05
Churched	39	4.43	.66	4.53	.55	1.69	.02 *
Unchurched	7	4.31	.77	4.36	.63	1.94	.38
Undesignated	5	4.37	.40	4.41	.67	2.13	.43
Total	51	4.41	.64	4.50	.56	1.68	.02*

** indicates statistical significance*

The data relating to Research Question #1 for the Winchester United Methodist Church showed statistical significance in two categories. The first of these was the churched category. The change score was 0.1 ($p \leq .02$). The standard deviation decreased by 0.11.

The second category that reflected a statistically significant change was the total score for the churched, unchurched, and undesignated. The composite change score for all three groups was 0.9 ($p \leq .02$). The standard deviation decreased by 0.08.

Table 4.13

Savoy United Methodist Church—Statistical Analysis of the Comparison between Questions 1-24 of the Pre- and Postproduction Questionnaires

Measurements							
		Pre-Test Q1-24		Post-Test Q1-24			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p \leq .05
Churched	42	4.63	.39	4.68	.38	1.68	.07
Unchurched	3	3.93	.46	3.99	.30	2.92	.36
Undesignated	12	4.42	.45	4.49	.49	1.80	.06
Total	57	4.55	.43	4.60	.43	1.67	.02*

* indicates statistical significance

No statistical significance was found in the data from the categories of churched, unchurched, and undesignated although each did show increases in the change scores. The change score for the churched was 0.05 ($p \leq .07$). The standard deviation decreased by 0.01. The change score for the undesignated was 0.07 ($p \leq .06$). The standard deviation increased by 0.04. The change scores of both the churched and undesignated would be considered of positive significance if $p \leq 0.01$ was the criterion for this research.

Data showed a statistical significance for the combined totals for Research Question #1 at Savoy. The change score was 0.05 ($p \leq .02$). The standard deviation remained constant at 0.43.

Table 4.14

Composite–Melvin, Winchester and Savoy United Methodist Churches
Statistical Analysis of the Comparison between
1-24 of the Pre- and Postproduction Questionnaires

Measurements							
		<u>Pre-Test Q1-24</u>		<u>Post-Test Q1-24</u>			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	P≤.05
Churched	117	4.59	.48	4.65	.43	1.66	.006*
Unchurched	13	4.02	.73	4.03	.69	1.78	.450
Undesignated	33	4.52	.42	4.58	.47	1.69	.100
Total	163	4.53	.52	4.58	.49	1.65	.004*

* indicates statistical significance

Statistical significance for the churched category of the composite results of questions 1-24 for all three churches was noted. The change score was 0.06 ($p < .006$). The standard deviation decreased 0.05. The combined totals of all three categories for research question #1 do indicate statistical significance. The change score was 0.05 ($p \leq .004$). The standard deviation decreased by 0.03. Again, if a $p \leq 0.1$ was the criterion for this research the undesignated category would also be considered statistically significant with a change score of 0.06 ($p \leq 0.100$).

Research Question #2

The second research question is: “In what ways does this drama influence a person’s attitude toward his or her ability to make a difference in the world?” The data relating to this question come from a comparison of questions twenty-five on the pre- and postperformance questionnaires and twenty-six on the pre- and postperformance questionnaires.

The data for this question revealed no statistical significance for either comparison in any of the churches, with the exception of the comparison between the two questions twenty-five at the Savoy Church.

Table 4.15

**Savoy United Methodist Church–Statistical Analysis of the Comparison between
Questions Twenty-five on the Pre- and Postproduction Questionnaires**

Measurements							
		<u>Pre-Test Q25</u>		<u>Post-Test Q25</u>			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p≤.05
Churched	42	4.74	.45	4.33	.58	1.68	.05*
Unchurched	3	4.33	.58	4.34	.58	-	-
Undesignated	12	4.75	.45	4.67	.49	1.79	.17
Total	57	4.72	.45	4.63	.49	1.67	.03*

** indicates statistical significance*

Statistical significance was shown in the differences between the comparisons of the churched in questions twenty-five in the data from Savoy. The change score was -0.41 ($p \leq .05$). The standard deviation increased 0.16. The comparison of the totals for this congregation also revealed statistical significance. The change score was -0.09 ($p \leq .03$). The standard deviation increased 0.04. Two important things to note here are that both of the statistically significant differences between pre- and postproduction questionnaires question twenty-five were negative. Question twenty-five asked the respondents to rate their desire to make a difference in the lives of others. This indicates the person's perception of their desire to make a difference in the lives of others actually went down as a result in participating in the production of "Let Ralph Do It."

Table 4.16

**Composite Melvin, Winchester and Savoy United Methodist Churches
Statistical Analysis of the Comparison between
Questions Twenty-five on the Pre- and Postproduction Questionnaires**

Measurements							
		<u>Pre-Test Q25</u>		<u>Post-Test Q25</u>			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p≤.05
Churched	116	4.76	.49	4.70	.53	1.66	.06
Unchurched	13	4.62	.65	4.38	.87	1.78	.19
Undesignated	32	4.75	.44	4.81	.40	1.70	.16
Total	161	4.75	.49	4.70	.55	1.65	.09

** indicates statistical significance*

The totals of all who responded to both questions twenty-five do not show statistical significance although the mean does decrease in every instance except among the undesignated. The totals for the churched and the overall totals would indicate statistical significance if $p \leq 0.1$. This significance would be negative in both instances. For the churched the change score was -0.06 ($p \leq .06$). The standard deviation increased 0.04. The change score for the total was -0.05 ($p \leq .09$). In this instance the standard deviation increased 0.06. These totals also show that the people attending the production began with a high desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

Many of the churched people did indicate to me a desire to make more of a difference after seeing the production. A man from Savoy who was nominally involved in that congregation told his friend, the actor who played Hobe, that he was quite touched by the performance, especially the fact that Hobe was not perfect. He was impressed by Hobe's ability to get involved in mission in spite of his faults. He wanted to get more involved to help the Savoy church be in service and mission.

Research Question #3

This question asked: “What was the person’s overall impression of the event?” The data are not from comparisons between the pre- and postproduction questionnaires but rather rankings of different elements of the production and of the overall production based on a special section in the postproduction questionnaire. Question twenty-seven on the preproduction questionnaire asked the respondent to evaluate his or her enjoyment of live theatre. This ranking offered a baseline to compare against the respondent’s evaluation of the elements of the drama/media event (postproduction questions A-U) and postproduction questions twenty-seven and twenty-eight. Postproduction question twenty-seven requested that the respondent evaluate his or her ability to make a difference in the lives of others. Question twenty-eight on the postproduction questionnaire invited those who answered it to evaluate the relevance of “Let Ralph Do It” to their lives.

Table 4.17

Composite–Preproduction Question Twenty-seven

	Melvin		Winchester		Savoy		Totals		Chatsworth	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Churched	36	4.31	36	4.53	42	4.36	114	4.39	7	4.43
Unchurched	3	3.33	7	4.71	3	3.67	13	4.15	-	-
Undesignated	15	4.60	5	4.20	12	4.58	32	4.53	3	4.00
Total	54	4.33	48	4.52	57	4.37	159	4.40	10	4.30

These comparisons reveal that, with the exception of those who responded from Winchester, the unchurched persons who attended the production enjoyed live theatre less than the churched persons. A point of note is that other than the six unchurched respondents from Melvin and Savoy, the lowest score on enjoyment of live theatre was 4.2. The audience for all the productions started with a consistently positive attitude

toward live theatre.

Table 4.18
Composite–Postproduction Question A #1

	Melvin		Winchester		Savoy		Totals		Chatsworth	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Churched	10	4.70	9	4.56	7	4.57	26	4.62	3	4.33
Unchurched	-	-	1	4.00	1	4.00	2	4.00	-	-
Undesignated	4	4.50	-	-	5	4.60	9	4.56	1	5.00
Total	14	4.64	10	4.50	13	4.54	37	4.57	4	4.50

Question one on the front side of the postproduction questionnaire asked the respondents to evaluate the whole production of “Let Ralph Do It.” The overall rating of the production was positive. The lowest score the production received from those in the churched and undesignated categories was 4.5. The four unchurched persons who completed this question averaged 4.0. The average ranking of the unchurched was positive, but lower than the ratings from those of any other category.

Table 4.19
Composite–Postproduction Questions A-U

	Melvin		Winchester		Savoy		Totals		Chatsworth	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Churched	35	4.43	37	4.34	40	4.48	112	4.42	7	3.91
Unchurched	3	3.63	7	4.31	3	3.90	13	4.10	-	-
Undesignated	15	4.36	5	4.39	11	4.30	31	4.34	3	4.04
Total	53	4.37	49	4.34	54	4.41	156	4.37	10	3.90

These questions asked the respondent to evaluate the various individual elements of the production. Nothing of significance was found in the results of the individual questions. They were reflective of the totals.

The composite scores of the postproduction questionnaire’s questions A-U revealed Church B, which had the terrible technical performance, naturally ranked the technical elements of the production the lowest. In this congregation the church people,

on average, rated the technical aspects a whole point lower than those who were undesignated. Most of the other results hovered around 4.3 with the notable exception of the unchurched persons from Melvin and Savoy. The unchurched respondents from Melvin and Savoy averaged nearly a .5 lower rating of the technical aspects of “Let Ralph Do It” than the other persons who participated in the same production.

Table 4.20

Composite–Postproduction Question 27

	Melvin		Winchester		Savoy		Totals		Chatsworth	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Churched	35	4.29	37	4.3	40	4.23	112	4.27	6	3.67
Unchurched	3	4.00	7	3.86	3	3.33	13	3.77	-	-
Undesignated	15	4.47	4	3.75	12	3.83	31	4.13	3	4.00
Total	53	4.32	148	4.19	55	4.10	156	4.20	9	3.78

When asked to rate the relevance of the production to their lives, the churched persons ranked the relevance fairly high, ranging from a 4.23 to 4.3 with the exception of Chatsworth’s churched persons who were quite a bit lower at 3.67. The unchurched persons were lower than the churched persons in every instance. In the case of the three unchurched at Savoy that responded to this question, the mean of their ratings was 3.3, nearly an entire point lower than the churched persons. The range of unchurched responses was from 3.33-4.00. At Melvin, the undesignated persons had the highest rank for relevance among those who participated in the performance. The undesignated at Winchester gave the second lowest rating for relevance among those that completed questionnaires there, with a 3.75. The undesignated at Savoy also had a low rating for relevance at 3.83.

Table 4.21
Composite–Postproduction Question 28

	Melvin		Winchester		Savoy		Totals		Chatsworth	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Churched	35	4.49	37	4.54	42	4.50	114	4.51	8	3.88
Unchurched	3	4.00	6	4.17	3	4.00	12	4.08	3	4.67
Undesignated	15	4.60	5	4.40	12	4.58	32	4.56	3	4.67
Total	53	4.49	48	4.48	57	4.49	158	4.49	11	4.18

When attendees were asked to rate how well they understood the production, the overall responses were very close to 4.5, with the exception of Chatsworth. The unchurched persons rated their understanding nearly one-half point lower than did the churched and undesignated respondents in almost every category.

In a postproduction discussion with the actor that portrayed Hobe, Jim McClarey, recounted the story a friend of his that attended the Savoy performance. The man reported that while he was driving home from “Let Ralph Do It” he had a cell phone conversation with a friend. The friend asked him how the production was. His response was basically that it was good but not life changing. After he returned home some key lines from the play and the overall message of the play kept coming back to him. Eventually he called his friend back to say that the message of the production was getting inside of him, and he had to call back and tell him his initial response was wrong. “Let Ralph Do It,” was life changing at least in one instance.

An active member of the Winchester congregation who works at a federally funded, low income, high-rise housing project brought a van load of about ten persons to the see “Let Ralph Do It.” Most of these people did not attend a church regularly, but many were Christian. Most of those who came from the high rise would go to Christian worship services or Bible studies that various individuals or groups would hold at the

housing complex. The group from the high rise produced one notable exception. He is a Chinese-American who sought asylum in the United States. He received asylum in the United States because he had been ostracized and mistreated in China due to his anti-Communist sentiments. He lost his wife and daughter because of his actions. In America he changed from being a physicist to a student of world history. He earned his Ph.D. in this field and now teaches in a local college. He went through a failed marriage with an American woman. He is now nearing retirement and is afflicted with Parkinson's disease. He is terribly lonely and definitely seeking answers and hope.

The individual who brought the group from the high-rise was one of the people who attended the training to lead the Alpha Class follow-up at Winchester. She decided to lead a class at the high-rise. Her supervisor told her she could not lead it because she was a federal employee and that would be a violation of federal law. She told me she had at least eight people who were planning to attend including the Chinese-American professor. I decided to teach the class so this opportunity would not be lost. About nineteen different persons have attended at least one of the sessions to date. We have boiled down to about eight faithful attendees including the professor. I have had the privilege of striking up a friendship with this intelligent, kind, gentle, and principled person who is truly seeking hope and truth. He has not yet completely embraced Christianity, but his responses in class and in our personal discussions indicate that he is giving it serious consideration. "Let Ralph Do It" was the first of several bridges which allowed me to build a relationship with this genuine seeker.

Research Question #4

Research question #4 asks: "What is the evidence that persons are more open to

church involvement as a result of experiencing the drama/media event?" The data related to this question are gathered from postproduction question thirty which asked the respondents to rate their openness to church involvement as a result of participating in "Let Ralph Do It" and from a comparison of preproduction questionnaire question twenty-eight and a similar question on the postproduction questionnaire. Question twenty-eight on the preproduction questionnaire asked the respondents to rate their agreement with the following statement: "I would consider attending a ten-week, fifteen session, obligation free, exploration of the Christian Faith."

The results from Chatsworth and Winchester from comparing preproduction question twenty-eight and postproduction twenty-nine yielded no statistically significant information for this question. The results from Melvin and Savoy did.

Table 4.22
Melvin United Methodist Church Comparison of
Preproduction Question 28 and Postproduction Question 29

Measurements							
		<u>Pre-Test Q28</u>		<u>Post-Test Q29</u>			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p<.05
Churched	31	3.68	.91	4.00	.77	1.70	.005*
Unchurched	3	2.67	.58	3.00	1.00	2.92	.210
Undesignated	13	4.00	1.00	3.92	.86	1.78	.410
Total	47	3.70	.95	3.91	.83	1.68	.040*

** indicates statistical significance*

The data from Melvin church relating to this comparison showed statistical significance in two categories. The positive change score for the churched people of Melvin was 0.32 ($p \geq .005$). The standard deviation decreased 0.14. The totals for the Melvin church showed a positive change score of 0.21 ($p \leq .04$). The standard deviation decreased 0.14.

Table 4.23

Savoy United Methodist Church

Comparison of Preproduction Question 28 and Postproduction Question 29

Measurements							
		Pre-Test Q1-24		Post-Test Q1-24			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p ≤ .05
Churched	39	3.23	.87	3.64	.93	1.69	.001*
Unchurched	3	1.67	.58	2.00	1.00	2.92	.210
Undesignated	11	3.27	1.00	3.45	.69	1.81	.220
Total	53	3.15	.95	3.51	.95	1.67	.001*

** indicates statistical significance*

Statistical significance was found in the churched and total categories. For the churched people from Savoy responding to this question the change score was 0.41 ($p \leq .001$). The standard deviation increased by 0.06. The change score for the totals was 0.36 ($p \leq .001$). The standard deviation remained constant at 0.95.

Table 4.24

Composite–Melvin, Winchester and Savoy United Methodist Church

Comparison of Preproduction Question 28 and Postproduction Question 29

Measurements							
		Pre-Test Q1-24		Post-Test Q1-24			
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t critical	p ≤ .05
Churched	100	3.56	1.04	3.92	.91	1.66	.0001*
Unchurched	13	2.85	.99	3.08	.95	1.78	.1000
Undesignated	27	3.70	1.03	3.74	.81	1.71	.4200
Total	140	3.52	1.05	3.81	.92	1.66	.0002*

** indicates statistical significance*

The totals of Melvin, Winchester, and Savoy revealed statistical significance in the churched and total categories. The change score for the churched is 0.32 ($p \leq .005$). The standard deviation decreased by 0.14. The change score for the totals was 0.29 ($p \leq .0002$). The standard deviation decreased 0.13. If $p \leq .10$, statistical significance would be indicated for the unchurched as well. The change score was 0.23 ($p \leq .10$) and

standard deviation decreased 0.04.

Table 4.25

Postproduction Questionnaire Question 30

	Melvin		Winchester		Savoy		Totals		Chatsworth	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Churched	35	4.20	31	4.10	41	3.90	108	4.02	5	3.60
Unchurched	3	3.00	7	3.43	3	1.67	13	2.92	-	-
Undesignated	13	3.92	3	3.67	12	3.25	28	3.61	3	3.67
Total	51	4.06	41	3.95	56	3.64	148	3.87	8	3.63

Postproduction questionnaire question thirty asked the respondents if they were more open to being involved in a church than before participating in "Let Ralph Do It." The overall results indicated a positive response to this question. This was not the case with the thirteen unchurched persons who completed this question. Their responses ranged from a high at Winchester of 3.43 to a low at Savoy of 1.67. Their mean score was 2.92, or slightly less than neutral.

The final source of data for Research Question #4 is the number of signed cards returned that indicated a willingness to attend a follow-up group to investigate Christianity. A total of six cards were returned. A man who drove with his wife over twenty miles from Pontiac, Illinois to attend the Chatsworth performance returned a card indicating a desire to attend a follow-up group and to be phoned by one of the church staff. Subsequent calls to the pastor to find out what transpired after this have not been returned. One longtime active member of Melvin who often gets confused returned a card. The card only had a first name, address, and phone number; nothing was checked. Two persons returned cards at Winchester with at least complete names on them. They also had nothing checked. Both were church members. A third participant in the Winchester church returned a card with a name, address and phone number. This person

indicated that she had questions she would like to have responded to, that she would like to be more involved in church activities, and that she would be interested in a small group which would do a follow up investigation of Christianity. This individual did not return calls. When we were finally able to talk about this she said she had been very busy. She did not respond to an invitation to attend the Alpha Class that was the designated follow-up at Winchester. She has become more involved and more regular in her church attendance. She will be invited to participate in the next Alpha Class. One church person at Savoy did return a card indicating an interest in a small group follow up investigation of Christianity. A call to the pastor indicated no follow-up had been made to date.

Focus Group Data

The data gathered from the focus groups give a different type of information and perspective. They also help solidify some of the outcomes of the estimates of attendance. The strongest focus group data is group-to-group validation. This means validation as a result of subjects or comments being repeated in each of the focus groups. The following chart indicates not only the topics and the groups in which a topic was mentioned, but the number of times to which it was referred in a group by different persons. With the exception of the total attendance for the productions, the data for the Chatsworth performance is not recorded in the totals for the focus groups.

Table 4.26

Focus Group Results—Chatsworth, Melvin, Winchester, and Savoy

United Methodist Churches

Church	Chatsworth	Melvin	Winchester	Savoy	Total
Moderator (J=Joel, D=Donna)	J	D	J	D	
Total attendance at production	35	100	136	85	356
Unchurched	7/2	4	20	4	28
Men in focus groups	2	1	6	3	10

Women in focus groups	1	6	9	4	19
Total participants in focus groups (minus moderator)	3	7	15	7	29
**Average rating of table discussions (1-10 10=highest)	5	3.63	5.6	3.1	
KEY RESPONSES:					
1. Positive identification with main character, Hobe. Admiration of various characteristics (want to be like him, admiration of him, his love, his desire & ability to make a difference, liked him ...)	3	3	5	6	14*
2. People showing an increased desire to, or belief they could, make a difference.	1	2	4	8	14*
3. Problems with Chubb—technically.	-	3	1	-	4
4. Problems with Chubb—character development.	1	2	3	2	7*
5. Positive response to production.	3	2	8	3	13*
6. Faith in God/Used by God/Cooperating with God.	-	6	1	2	9*
7. Lifted up theme of “love”/caring.	-	2	1	3	6*
8. Negative responses to production (mostly length).	2	-	-	-	-
**9. Relating to others they know who make a difference.	1	1	2	-	3
10. Related to characters’ imperfection/humanness/ “1 of us.”	2	5	-	1	6
11. Negative comments on questionnaire.	1	-	4	-	4
**12. Positive effect of video segments.	1	-	6	1	7
**13. Positive response to humor.	1	1	-	2	3
**14. Publicity.	-	-	3	-	3

The numbers for the focus groups do not include the moderator. I was the moderator for the focus group at Chatsworth. This group had two other men and one woman for a total of three. The Rev. Donna B. Catlin was the moderator for the focus group at Melvin. This group had one man and six women for a total of seven. I moderated the focus group at Winchester. It consisted of six men and nine women for a total of fifteen. Rev. Donna B. Catlin moderated the focus group at Savoy. It had three men and four women for a total of seven. A total of ten men and nineteen women, or twenty-nine persons, participated in the focus groups. With the aide of the focus groups, I was able to estimate the performance attendance at Chatsworth to be thirty-five, Melvin one hundred, Winchester 136, and Savoy eighty-five. The total estimated attendance for the four performances was 356. The estimates of unchurched persons in attendance are Chatsworth seven, Melvin four, Winchester twenty, and Savoy four. The estimate of the total unchurched persons attending one of the four performances is thirty-four.

The table group leaders rated their table discussions on the low side, ranging from a high of 5.6 to a low of 3.1. Some of the participants at Savoy may not have understood that ten was the high score because they seemed to speak fairly highly of their table group discussions in the focus group.

An important factor to remember is that the focus groups were comprised of active church participants. Two of the three groups had comments that related to the imperfections or humanity of the lead character, Hobe. This comment was made five times in one group and one time in another. Two groups mentioned the effect of the video segments a total of seven times. It was mentioned on six occasions at Winchester and one time at Savoy. These comments were positive in nature.

The first responses to indicate group-to-group validation were those references to the themes of love or caring. These were mentioned at least once in each group for a total of six times. Problems with the character, especially the character development of James Chubb was the second subject that demonstrated group-to-group validation. This issue was mentioned at two times in two groups and three times in the other, for a total of seven times. The third instance of group-to-group validation were the comments that referred to faith in God, being used by God, or cooperating with God (all of which are examples of faith). The theme of faith was in some way brought up in each group at least once for a total of nine references. Again, these references were positive in nature.

Positive references to the production were another instance of group-to-group validation. Such references numbered thirteen including two at Melvin, eight at Winchester and three at Savoy. The fact that I am the pastor of Winchester Church, wrote and directed the production, and moderated this group (Rev. Donna B. Catlin was

ill and unable to moderate this group) may have had an effect on this category, especially for the focus group at Winchester.

Fourteen positive comments were made concerning the main character of Hobe (the person the play was about, not the actor or the acting). These included three at Melvin, five at Winchester, and six at Savoy. Positive comments related to the desire or belief that those making the remark could make a difference also numbered fourteen. This was mentioned two times at Melvin, four at Winchester, and seven times at Savoy.

Summary of Significant Findings

1. The Winchester church followed the protocol most completely of all the congregations in the study. That church had the highest attendance and most unchurched persons in attendance at their production of "Let Ralph Do It." The Chatsworth church followed the publicity portion of the protocol much more closely than Savoy and Melvin and had the lowest total attendance but the second highest number of unchurched and the highest percentage of unchurched.

2. Although the sample of unchurched persons was small, they tended to be younger and have higher incomes.

3. The scores of the church people and the totals at Winchester on The Francis and Stubb Scale indicate a statistically significant positive change in attitude toward Christianity as a result of the participation in the production. The totals at Savoy also reflect a statistically significant increase on the same scale.

4. The participants all began with a fairly high desire to make a difference. Data showed no statistically significant increase in this desire as a result of attending the production. The churched and total categories from Savoy registered a statistically

significant negative effect on this desire.

5. The production received fairly high reviews in almost every area. These positive reviews were consistent from church to church and category to category.

6. With the exception of Winchester, the unchurched persons tended to enjoy live theatre less than the churched and undesignated participants.

7. The unchurched tended to give the production lower ratings than the churched and undesignated.

8. The unchurched did not see the production as relevant to their lives and significantly less relevant than the other categories of respondents.

9. The unchurched registered greater difficulty understanding “Let Ralph Do It” than the churched or the undesignated.

10. The churched and the totals at Melvin and Savoy indicated a statistically significant increase in willingness to attend a follow up group to investigate the Christian faith. The results of the unchurched in this area showed no statistical significance.

11. The unchurched tended to register a neutral or negative response to the idea of being more willing to be involved in a church as result of participating in the production.

12. Only 3 cards were returned that indicated a desire to attend the follow-up and only one of those from an unchurched person.

13. One unchurched person is attending an Alpha Class partially as a result of attending the production, even though he did not return a card.

14. The data from the focus groups, which were all composed of churched persons, indicates the production had a positive impact, particularly in the areas of faith development and desire to make a difference.

CHAPTER 5

MAJOR FINDINGS

In the production of the “Backwoods Preacher,” Peter Cartwright often says, “Our business is to save souls” (Motta 10). John Wesley is noted for having said, “We have nothing to do but save souls” (Jackson, 8:310) This has never been an easy task. As the gap between the church and the average North American widens that gap becomes increasingly difficult to bridge. This research is born out of a burning desire to reach the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a growing awareness that the church must find ways to bridge the gap.

The purpose of the research was to produce a drama/media event designed to provide a bridge for experimental investigation of Christianity and to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral changes that participation in the drama/media event might produce in those who attend. The drama/media event conceived, written, produced, and evaluated for this study was “Let Ralph Do It.”

“Let Ralph Do It” was well received by the majority of those who completed the pre- and postproduction questionnaires. This research was looking for more than a positive reception to the drama/media event. It was based on the possibility that such a production could be one of many potential tools to bridge the gap between the church and the unchurched. Approximately thirty-five unchurched persons were among the over 350 people who attended one of the four performances reviewed in this study.

The data presented in Chapter 4 indicates that only eight persons can be identified clearly as being involved in a follow up investigation of the Christian faith, to date. All of these persons came on a van from the Beecher High-Rise in Jacksonville, Illinois to

the Winchester performance. They currently attend the Alpha Class that I am leading there. The circumstances of my involvement with that class were covered in detail in Chapter 4.

Dozens of people spent thousands of hours to help create the production of “Let Ralph Do It” as described in this research. The financial expenditures for this study were in excess of ten thousand dollars. One most certainly cannot place a value on the opportunities “Let Ralph Do It” has created for unchurched persons to attend a small group that provides an experimental investigation of the Christian faith. At the same time, one cannot help but wonder if the same expenditure of time, talent, and money could have been more productive and, if so, why and how?

The following analysis of the data provides information pertinent to the previous question. It also clarifies the immediate cognitive and behavioral changes that the subjects indicated. Accurate interpretation of the data requires that the weaknesses of the study will be described at this point.

Weaknesses of the Study

This study deals with individual’s responses to art. Art is often interpreted on a subjective or emotional level rather than a rational one. Such responses are more difficult to measure. Ehrensperger points out that the fruits of a participation in a drama may not appear until hours or days after exposure to the art (23). Such was the case of the man described in Chapter 4 who called his friend back to tell him that “Let Ralph Do It” was life changing after all. Most of the forms of data collection used in this research measured immediate responses. This study provided no way to measure the increase or decrease in the cognitive and behavioral changes that might occur in the subjects over the

course of time.

The intervention used in this study was a very fluid type of art. Every effort was made to keep the intervention consistent. In spite of this, as reported in Chapter 4, the four productions of “Let Ralph Do It” described in this study varied greatly in quality. This could be responsible for different results from church to church. Even so, the total scores from most congregations were fairly consistent. Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are not patient when they do not receive quality (Bierly 73). If Willow Creek’s “Unchurched Harry” had attended the production at Chatsworth, he would have left and been unlikely to return (Stewart 5).

A key factor in this study was the follow up investigation of Christianity. Only the Winchester congregation offered such a follow-up. I may have underplayed this opportunity, even at Winchester, in an effort to avoid being pushy. Perhaps those who attended would have been more willing to attend a small group follow up investigation of the Christian faith if the opportunity were presented with greater clarity and consistency.

The main tools used to gather data were the pre- and postproduction questionnaires and the focus groups. The negative response to the questionnaires was discussed in Chapter 4. The questionnaires themselves became an uncontrolled confounding variable. The focus groups were limited to churched persons, and therefore their responses were obviously skewed toward a churched perspective.

The results of the study indicate that about thirty-three of the subjects did not designate if they were active in or affiliated with a local congregation. Some of these same persons did not fill out any of the demographic section. This may have been by oversight or by choice. One can only speculate why this is so. Had the undesigned

subjects identified their status as unchurched or churched, the results might have changed.

None of the unchurched results indicated statistical significance. Just over one-third of the unchurched in attendance completed enough of both questionnaires to be included in the study. The total was thirteen. This sample was small enough that it cannot be considered to be statistically similar to the general unchurched population. The small size of the sample also made determining statistical significance difficult.

The similarities between the churches in this study are striking. Because of the small number of performances and like circumstances of the congregations where the drama/media event was tested, generalizations of the results of this study should be limited to congregations of nearly similar size and circumstance.

Data Analysis

Data was gathered from the 163 subjects who filled out enough of the pre- and post-performance questionnaires to be included in the study. About thirteen of these subjects designated themselves as unchurched, thirty-three indicated no designation, and 117 indicated they were either affiliated with or active in a local church. The percentage of questions responded to decreased between the pre- and postproduction questionnaire. Many subjects did not fill out one side or the other of the postproduction questionnaire.

Cognitive Results

The comparisons of the Francis and Stubb's Attitude Toward Christianity Scale (pre- and post-questionnaire questions 1-24) showed statistical significance in five categories. Undoubtedly the strong positive change of the churched persons at Winchester and the near significant changes at Savoy accounted for the strong

significance of the totals in this regard. The production did have a positive impact on the attitudes of the churched persons toward Christianity. Because of the preponderance of churched subjects, their impact may have been disproportionate to the total population, especially when one considers that more unchurched persons live in America than churched. One might expect churched persons to have a somewhat fixed attitude toward Christianity. Indeed, the churched persons' initial mean score on the five point Likert type scale on questions 1-24 of the preproduction was 4.59. This is quite positive. I found it interesting that that mean increased a statistically significant 0.06 to 4.65 on the postproduction questions 1-24. "Let Ralph Do It" presents Christianity in a very positive light. People like to feel good about themselves. Backing the home team is easier when it is winning. What is equally important here is that no statistical significance in the unchurched or undesignated categories was shown. The church persons were more likely to be invested in the outcome of the project and probably more concerned with my feelings than were the unchurched. The unchurched had no reason to embellish the positive aspects of the production. Hunter points out that unchurched North Americans tend to have a negative view of the church and church people. The data for this study does not contradict that notion. "Let Ralph Do It" succeeded in making the churched people feel better about Christianity. The attitudes of the unchurched toward Christianity did not demonstrate a positive change as a result of participating in the production.

The data also indicates no statistically significant reason to surmise that the respondents believed they could make a greater difference in the lives of others after participating in the production than before. The respondents generally began with a high (4.75) feeling that they could make a difference. This left little room to go anywhere but

down. The information gathered from the focus groups seems to contradict the questionnaire data at this point, at least as far as the churched persons were concerned. The focus groups had fourteen separate responses that indicated an increased desire to, or belief they could, make a difference. Group-to-group validation was also indicated. Several stories recorded in Chapter 4 also indicate that some people were encouraged to make a difference in the lives of others because of attending "Let Ralph Do It." Several persons, particularly from Winchester, verbally indicated an increased desire to make a difference. Apparently, the production did increase for some subjects the belief they could make a difference and/or the desire to make a difference and decreased it for others. The focus groups came later in the evening. The possibility that positive changes might occur in time does not overcome the fact that the production did not have the hoped for cognitive impact on the unchurched in this study. Part of the reason for this may be that the production did not achieve the high degree of quality needed to reach sophisticated unchurched persons.

The overall impression of the production was positive but less so among the unchurched. The unchurched started with a less positive view of live theatre than the churched. The data do indicate that those who started out with a positive view of live theatre tended to enjoy the production more than those who did not. My wife does not like to fish. I could take her fishing, and we could have a tremendous outing from my perspective but she still would not enjoy it. The lower enjoyment of live theatre that the unchurched persons exhibited may have affected their overall enjoyment of the production. The unchurched persons very likely had no reason to be anything but brutally honest in their evaluation of the performance and its quality. Due to the small

sample of unchurched persons, determining any difference in the general populations of church and unchurched persons' attitudes toward live drama and the arts in general is impossible. The low scores at Melvin and Savoy and the lower total mean for the unchurched does raise the likelihood that some groups of unchurched persons (and church persons) have different preferences than others with regard to things like live theatre. The younger unchurched audiences tended to give the production lower ratings than did the older unchurched audience. The older unchurched also started with a high enjoyment of live theatre as compared to some of the lowest ratings of enjoyment for the younger unchurched audiences. The younger audience gives the impression of being more discerning and harder to impress. The size of the sample of unchurched is not large enough to generalize to a larger population. With some qualifications, the quality of the production was not good enough to have the desired impact. The unchurched have no reason to compare a production such as "Let Ralph Do It" with anything but the quality of what they see at home or at the movies or other semi-professional and professional productions they might attend. "Let Ralph Do It" was good, but not good enough!

The data about relevance may be even more important than the data about quality. Unchurched and church persons will enjoy a pretty bad school play or recital if their child is involved. Personal involvement creates a type of instant relevancy. When asked to rate the relevance of the production to their lives, the total mean of all respondents to this question is 4.20. For the thirteen unchurched persons, it was 3.77. This 0.43 difference was not tested statistically, but it may be the most telling datum of all. These figures indicate the production missed its target of reaching the unchurched. Great efforts were made to make the production appealing to an unchurched audience. This points to

the difficulty of reaching unchurched persons, especially for those congregations and individuals that are steeped in the church and its traditions and prejudices. Attempts to reach unchurched persons can be well intended and still not be effective.

A man from Savoy reported to Jim McClarey that the production was life changing, so for him it was certainly relevant. Other persons (mostly church people) made casual comments about the encouragement the drama/media event gave them to make a difference. The overall response to the production was positive, but it was not particularly relevant to the unchurched, especially those in the Melvin and Winchester congregations. Part or all of the reason the difference may have been that the unchurched at Melvin and Savoy were younger than the unchurched who attended the Winchester production. The production's lack of relevancy to the unchurched subjects is probably the main reason it produced little affective results among this group.

A key factor in the production's failure to be relevant to the unchurched, especially the younger unchurched subjects, was that the target was not small enough. Younger unchurched persons have many different likes and needs than those from older generations. Economic and social differences can also come into play here. The production was about two dead church persons. Both of the live characters in the production were middle-aged or older. Younger people had no real point of reference. The importance of cultural relevance, identifying with and meeting the felt needs of those outside the community cannot be overstated (Slaughter 2; Engle and Norton 37; Green 334; Hunter, Celtic 61; Power 35). One production cannot easily be culturally relevant and effectively speak to the felt needs of both the Generation Xers and those born before 1946.

In many ways, “Let Ralph Do It” became what it was not intended to be.

Originally it was intended to be a bridge to the unchurched. It was designed to involve the whole church community in preparing for and participating in the living organism that a good theatrical experience should be. The tremendous expenditures involved with producing the video and the play at several churches created a need to seek funding. Somehow in the process of funding and producing the play for a varied audience, the focus was widened more than it should have been. Engle and Norton were some of the first authors to recognize the importance of meeting felt needs (37) and the critical value of reaching out to persons at their point of receptivity (44). Instead of targeting a specific, receptive segment of the unchurched community, the target became all unchurched people. When one considers that approximately 60 percent of North America is functionally unchurched, that is a rather broad target.

The production was also too religious. Unchurched persons are not likely to come to church for events that they do not perceive as religious. “Let Ralph Do It” did touch on themes that the unchurched care about, but it was probably a little too “religious” to be comfortable for many unchurched persons. Even though I tried to look at this from the perspective of an unchurched person and eliminate my own religious preconceptions, prejudices, church lingo, and so forth, I realize now I could have done a better job in this regard. I had a passion for the subject matter of the production. I believe I allowed this to blind me to the inappropriateness of it to the task for which it was applied. The production was not about unchurched people, it had no unchurched characters except in the video segments, and it did not contain enough points of reference, particularly for the younger unchurched person.

The Winchester and Savoy congregations clearly had the advantage of positive momentum going into the study. They both demonstrated statistical significance in terms of changed attitudes towards Christianity (pre- and postproduction questions 1-24) for their totals. Winchester demonstrated statistical significance for the churched. Savoy showed statistical significance for the churched and unchurched. There is not enough data to make a definitive judgement but upward momentum may be a helpful precursor to positive attitude change.

Affective Results

The affective results showed the churched persons might be somewhat more open to church involvement as a result of participation in drama/media event. The unchurched responses to this inquiry were negative. Perhaps the subjects, including the unchurched subjects, had a fairly high initial motivation to be involved in the church. That may be part of the reason they came. If this were the case, as was mentioned concerning the data relating to the desire to make a difference, respondents may not have perceived much room for an increase. This indicates there was a problem with the wording of the question. One person in Winchester told me that she was already highly motivated to be more involved in the church when she came. Because of this, she marked this question strongly disagree, even though she found the production inspiring and motivating. This data is interesting but not as significant as the comparisons of preproduction questionnaire questions having to do with the willingness of the subjects to attend a follow up group to explore the Christian faith.

An underlying assumption of this work was a one-time bridge event most likely would be a part of a series of events and/or relationships that help an unchurched person

make a serious investigation of Christianity (Tuttle 49). The drama/media event would accomplish its purpose if it helped move someone closer to this investigation even if they were not, immediately after the point of exposure to the intervention, willing to make that step. The data showed that church persons were more likely to be open to attending a small group follow-up to investigate the Christian faith as a result of participating in “Let Ralph Do It.” This was also true of unchurched persons, but the increase was only statistically significant in the case of the church members. The composite totals for each category showed a statistically significant increase as well.

A total of one card from an unchurched person was returned. That card indicated a willingness to attend a group to investigate the Christian faith. Two such cards were returned from church people. This is hardly overwhelming, but it is not a total failure either, particularly when seen in light of all the evidence.

Melvin did not show positive momentum but Savoy did. Both indicated statistical significance in relationship to the unchurched’ and the total’s willingness to attend a follow up investigation of the Christian Faith. Winchester showed positive momentum but did not demonstrate a statistically significant willingness to attend a follow up. The technical quality of the production at Winchester was lower than at Savoy or Melvin. This may or may not have been a limiting factor in regards to their lack of desire to attend a follow up. Ironically, Winchester was the only congregation to offer such a group and therefore the only congregation that had any of the production attendees involved in a follow up investigation. Momentum did not appear to be a factor in the willingness to attend a follow up investigation of the Christian Faith, but willingness to provide one obviously was.

An Overview

The focus group data reinforces the impression that the drama/media event was successful in entertaining all the participants and improving the attitudes of church persons toward their faith, motivating them to greater church involvement and, to some degree, further investigating their faith. In general, the production had the desired effect on the church. The questionnaire and focus group data do not support this conclusion for the unchurched.

The technically unchurched individuals from the Beecher High-Rise who are now part of an Alpha Class must be considered. All the factors that went into each of their choices to attend Alpha cannot be known. What is known is that, no matter how small or large the impact, attending "Let Ralph Do It" was one of the steps in their making that decision. One of the people in this Alpha Class is truly an unchurched seeker. His investigation of Christianity is authentic and thorough. In this one case, the drama/media event did reach its intended goal. We cannot evaluate if such opportunities might have come up in the other congregations in the study since none of them had any organized follow-up. The possibility exists that God blesses Christians who reach out with the Gospel with opportunities to touch the lives of potential converts, even when their efforts are off base and far from perfect. Certainly, if no path to faith is cleared for the unchurched, they will be far less likely to find their way.

The concept of the drama/media event was not a failure. The drama/media event "Let Ralph Do It" did not have a specific enough target. For various reasons, it was not particularly relevant to many of the unchurched persons who participated in it. It was not about unchurched persons, and no unchurched persons were in the production. In spite of

the cost in time and dollars and the failure of “Let Ralph Do It” to have the hoped for impact on the unchurched, as much was learned by the failures as the successes.

Unexpected Results

The video element of the production was designed to have an impact on all the participants in the drama/media event, especially the unchurched. The quality of the video was good but not what people view on television daily. One interesting focus group observation was that the unchurched person’s attention picked up during the video segments. This was somewhat surprising since the actors were right there and the video was less than optimal. This observation was shared with the Congregational Reflection Team at Winchester, and team members echoed the same thought. The need to claim the video and the electronic media for the sharing of the Gospel has already been demonstrated (Slaughter 22-25; Sweet 52). Perhaps even relatively poor quality video is more engaging for some unchurched people than live actors. Maybe the effects of television have hampered our imaginations to the point where some people find it difficult to enter into the willing suspension of disbelief that live theatre requires (Slaughter 24). Our culture may have become so cocooned that some find it difficult to engage in the kind of personal interaction that is a part of live drama (Sweet 21-23).

All the congregations were expected to follow the preproduction protocol as they agreed in writing to do. This was not the case. Interestingly, the two churches that did follow the publicity protocol had a fairly significant number of unchurched persons at their performances. This included seven at Chatsworth and about twenty at Winchester. The other two congregations had only four apiece.

The overall attendance at Chatsworth was low compared to the other

congregations. This was surprising because that congregation did do a lot of publicity. Two factors may have contributed to this. The first is that the word of the trouble with the video for production and the possibility of having to cancel became known at Chatsworth. The second factor is that all of the other congregations had close ties with at least one person associated with the production. Experience indicates that those personally involved with productions bring their friends, family, and acquaintances. This is a critically important result. People are much more likely to have a positive response to something in which they have a personal investment.

A final and somewhat disappointing surprise is the lack of commitment the pastors showed to the written covenant made to follow the preproduction protocol and to provide some kind of follow up experience to the drama/media event. One might expect pastors to follow through on a signed covenant.

The four pastors of the congregations in the study had tentatively agreed to host the drama/media event based on the outcome of the proposal hearing. The proposal for this dissertation needed to be approved before the publicity protocol could be completed. The final shape of the project and the expectations of the host churches hinged on the outcome of the proposal hearing. The short time between the proposal approval and the production of the drama/media events left little lead time to complete the thirty pages of protocol for the churches. The importance of following the protocol was explained to each pastor. Each pastor had the first three weeks of the eight-week protocol in time to begin the publicity. They received the rest of the protocol in time to continue the process. One pastor told his congregation that he had not received any material from me when I had personally given the first three weeks of the protocol to him over a month before he

said that. Little publicity would have taken place in that congregation, except that I had an incidental conversation with a member of that church. I happened to ask how the publicity for the play was going over. Their response was, "What publicity?" The church people eventually did what they could to publicize the event beginning about four weeks before the production date. Conversations with parishioners from another congregation indicated that their pastor also started publicity late. Both of these pastors had to be called and reminded to send back their signed covenant letter after the deadline.

I do not know why the pastors did not follow through on their commitments. Obviously, I did not complete my commitment to Chatsworth to present a professional quality drama/media event. The pastor at Chatsworth did follow through on most of his commitment. Had we not communicated about the difficulties we were having with the video, he might have provided a follow-up. We discussed the possibility of canceling the day before the event. Perhaps committing to a follow-up seemed premature to him since the production itself was in doubt.

My desire to produce the play at Melvin was to fulfill my commitment to the people of that church. I had not expected to be moved just as I was beginning this dissertation. In my denomination we are subject to moves at the discretion of the resident bishop. Several drafts of the production and some of the video scenes were already completed when I found out I was moving. Perhaps the pastor at Melvin was not personally committed to the project but did not know how to refuse it. His congregation had heavily supported my doctoral work while I was there. Many of the people had looked forward to seeing the production. He may have felt obligated to host the event. Having the former pastor back to present a major program, such as "Let Ralph Do It,"

may have understandably made him uncomfortable. Many times the beginning of the second year of any pastorate is difficult enough without having a past pastor around to encourage the sort of unkind comparisons church persons often make. He may have seen himself as trapped into spending his time helping the “former pastor” complete his doctorate. He may have had other priorities. For whatever reasons, the pastor at Melvin was not committed to the rigorous preparations required in the protocol, to reaching the unchurched, or to providing follow-up.

The pastor at Savoy tends to be rather spontaneous. He undoubtedly was committed to the idea of having the production at his church because his father, a retired minister and active participant in the Savoy congregation, had the lead role. He also has a concern for reaching the unchurched. He did push the church to try to bring unchurched to the production, but vacations and other concerns pushed the starting of the fulfillment of the protocol into the background until it was too late to do all it required. The pastors of both Savoy and Melvin signed a very explicit covenant letter indicating they would follow the protocol. In spite of this, they tended to treat the protocol as a list of suggestions rather than the terms of a covenant they agreed to follow.

Because “Let Ralph Do It” was not a proven product, I was trading on my reputation as a dramatist. I probably conveyed to the pastors of the congregations in the study that they were doing me a favor by their participation. Perhaps this allowed them to feel that they did not need to take the covenant as seriously as they might have otherwise.

In my new setting, I was not able to build the kind of relationships that would have allowed me to delegate more of the production elements to local persons as I had

intended to do before I moved. I found myself being responsible for final rewrites, video production, publicity, directing the production, designing and building the stage, doing the makeup, and being the producer as well as being the researcher. I took off more than I could effectively chew. I certainly did not do all those jobs as well as I had hoped. Had I been able to keep closer contact with pastors of the churches in the study, I might have been able to encourage better adherence to the covenant.

Practical Implications

Of practical concern is the commitment level of local church pastors who might consider hosting a drama/media event. Pastors may not follow through on covenants that they make. One way to ensure that pastors take the covenant seriously is to require a contract signed by the pastor and the chair of that congregation's governing body, which includes the following:

1. An agreement for the church to pay a substantial fee to host a drama/media event (fees could be pro-rated on the basis of the average worship attendance of a congregation and adjustments could be made for special circumstances);
2. A covenant letter for the pastor to copy and give to members of the congregation's governing bodies;
3. A requirement for written approval of governing bodies before entering into the covenant (hence the leaders' signature);
4. A design to have a lay person serve as the team leader for the preparation task force, rather than the pastor;
5. Well-defined job descriptions for the pastor, team leader, publicity chair, food chair, hospitality chair, child care supervisor and any other needed leaders and

- time lines for their accomplishment;
6. A plan for leaders to form teams of their own;
 7. A schedule that includes the leadership team and the task forces meet weekly to check on each other's progress in fulfilling the protocol;
 8. A requirement that the leadership team report to the church's governing body at regularly scheduled intervals; and,
 9. Encouragement toward the use of the talents of as many lay persons as possible in preparation for the event.

A second practical concern is the importance of cultural relevance. Focusing a production on themes that are perceived to have general cultural relevance does not mean that the production will automatically be relevant to a specific group of unchurched persons. Research needs to target the felt needs of particular groups of unchurched persons. Drama/media events need to be written that touch upon the unique felt needs of the various groups.

A practical consideration that arises from the need to be as relevant as possible is the importance of involving unchurched persons in the cast and crews of the drama/media events. Persons support what they produce. A wise design for drama/media events would include unchurched persons and/or their children in the production. Unchurched people who are part of the production are more likely to bring their unchurched family and friends to the event. The family and friends who attend already have a point of personal reference. Involving unchurched persons in the cast and crew of the drama/media event could increase the numbers of the unchurched that attend, and help to create a stronger bond between the congregation and unchurched attendees. This would

magnify the positive effects of the production.

The cost of producing the video element is a major practical consideration of the drama/media event. Because the cost is high, the video element should be used to its greatest effectiveness. Indications were that the video element aroused the interest of the unchurched to some extent. The percentage of the video element compared to the live drama could probably be increased to speak to contemporary unchurched persons without losing some of the advantages of live drama. The live drama/video split of “Let Ralph Do It” was about half-and-half. The video element could be 60 or 70 percent of the total production. The issue of quality is particularly important where video is considered. Ways must be found to produce the quality of video people are used to seeing on television for regular use in the local church. This is especially true of any large event, such as “Let Ralph Do It,” that would make use of video. Anything less makes the church appear cheap and out of date.

Theological Considerations

An often-used phrase says something to the effect of, “We have met the enemy, and they are us.” Sweet talks about the church cocooning, that is, retreating into itself, isolating itself, and becoming immersed in its own needs and desires (34). This is not necessarily a recent phenomenon. For centuries Christianity has had to fight the tendency to cloister itself from the real world of hurting, needy, and lost persons.

Hunter points out the Celtic church’s focus on reaching out to the barbarians around them with love, accepting them where they were and finding ways to connect with their culture (Celtic 47-55). This group of Christians allowed those around them to become a part of the community before they believed. Nearly every group that falls

under the umbrella of Christianity pays lip service to evangelism, but the church of Jesus Christ must recapture the primacy of evangelism, whatever it takes, as its theological heartbeat. The good church members of Winchester struggled with inviting unchurched people to “Let Ralph Do It,” not because they were unwilling but because their acquaintances with the unchurched were so limited. This struggle created a positive awareness of the somewhat silent majority of unchurched in the Winchester community. Church members are becoming aware that merely accepting the unchurched when they happen through the doors is not fulfilling the Great Commission. They are realizing that they have a personal role to play in evangelism, even if it may be no more than befriending and inviting. The culture of many churches has grown inward. Even so-called evangelical churches will need to time, dedication, and good teaching to reverse that trend. One of the best benefits of events like “Let Ralph Do It” is that they help church people to see the importance of reaching out, and they give them a vehicle to do it.

The issue of stewardship is of critical theological importance. If “Let Ralph Do It” were an end in itself, undoubtedly more financially efficient and time conserving ways of reaching people could be found. The shortcomings of “Let Ralph Do It” centered on its failure to target a definite group of unchurched people, speak their language, and address their specific felt needs. The church has never been successful in reaching unchurched persons without speaking the language of those it sought to evangelize. Learning to speak the language and meeting the felt needs of persons has never been more expensive and time consuming for the church than it is in the West today. The electronic media is the vernacular of the people. If the Christian community is to fulfill

the great commission, it must accept the challenge of adapting to the culture around it. Christianity must pay the price, as in periods of successful outreach in the past, to be leaders in speaking the language of the people and developing culturally relevant forms of communication and art relevant to the cultures in which it exists, much as the Celtic church did. This price will include sacrificing much of the time and dollars that go into institutional maintenance in order to do whatever it takes to reach out to the vast numbers of unchurched persons in the world.

Contributions to Research Methodology

The researcher is not aware of any baselines for the attitudes of persons who might attend a bridge event. This research gives a helpful starting point for the study of bridge events and their importance to church growth. It also shows some of the dangers of using a pre- and posttest design to gather data on a live theatrical performance. Other means of gathering data might be preferable, such as much shorter and simpler questionnaires and/or longer focus groups that are more representative of the population being studied.

Implications for Further Study

Some of the data in this study points to the possibility that people are increasingly limited in their ability to function in relationships as a result of the influence of the electronic media and the tendency to cocoon. More study on the ability of people to function in relationships is indicated. If it is found that persons in North America today are having an increasingly difficult time functioning in relationships, further study on how that will impact the transmission of a Gospel based on a relationship with Christ will be needed.

Some of the focus group participants mentioned that the unchurched persons around them during the production displayed more attention during the video segments. During a postproduction meeting of the Winchester reading reflection team, several of the members indicated that they had observed the same thing. A study of the impact of video on unchurched persons would be helpful. This study might compare the impact of video with that of various art forms, including live drama.

More studies on bridge events as they relate to church growth are indicated. Information to find out what it is that makes some bridge events effective would be helpful. Another important inquiry would be to compare the effectiveness with cost, both in terms of dollars and staff or volunteer time.

The three churches where members had personal identification with some of the cast or crew had higher attendance than the church that had no friend or family member involved in the production. This brings up a good possibility that the persons in plays, pageants, productions, and so forth are valuable for marketing the event. Barna has done a good job providing churches with marketing information. He speaks of the importance of word of mouth strategies (Marketing 197). Further study of the marketing value of cast and crewmembers would help local churches as they develop their own marketing strategies.

More research on the culture and felt needs of unchurched persons is imperative. The church must be aware of these factors. Such factors are in constant flux so the study must be unending. Detailed studies on various sub groups of the unchurched population will be helpful for local congregations that desire to target specific populations for outreach. Particular attention should be given to those groups of unchurched persons

who demonstrate potential receptivity to the gospel.

Research is also needed to further clarify what is required to effect positive change in the attitudes of the various groups of unchurched people toward Christianity. Churches need this kind of information in order to distribute their resources where they will do the most good.

Recommendations

The church must expand its vision to include mastering and maintaining mastery in the electronic media or whatever other vernaculars the future holds, regardless of cost. Local churches must learn to think small in order to grow big. Local churches should focus on meeting the felt needs of specific groups of unchurched people. The Church of Jesus Christ needs to think bigger so that it can provide churches with economical ways to enter the electronic age. This includes providing economical opportunities to purchase quality computer and video equipment, link ups, and videos that can be helpful in the local church's ministries. Denominations could provide these and other resources to churches to help them reach specifically defined and targeted groups of unchurched persons.

The church can ensure that the kinds of studies previously suggested take place. These could be of tremendous benefit to local congregations that are trying to reach out with limited resources. Denominational bodies could seize upon the concept of a drama/media event, targeting such events for specific groups of unchurched persons who are potentially receptive to the gospel.

Larger church bodies could have quality scripts written that are culturally relevant and address the felt needs of the group in question. The scripts should be designed for a

fairly large cast from a local church to interact with a production quality video and soundtrack produced by the larger denominational body.

Publicity packets and preproduction protocols of even higher quality than the one in Appendix F of this study could be produced. Retired persons with special gifts could be trained to lead, oversee, and direct drama/media events. These persons could also build the groundwork for a follow-up such as the Alpha Class. Most importantly, these gifted individuals could train the people of the congregations hosting the drama/media event how to reach out to the unchurched. If denominations would invest themselves in such ventures, it could help reverse the gap between the church and the unchurched and result in many people coming to Christ.

The most important recommendation of all is that productions and/or drama/media events produced in local churches should be written to include unchurched persons. This is especially true if the unchurched persons are children. Parents, family, and friends follow their children's activities and they bring their friends with them. Involving unchurched people, especially children, creates automatic interest and relevance for other unchurched persons. Doing productions well almost always creates a short-term community amongst those in the cast and crew of the productions. In my years as co-founder and director of Christian Theatre, our major goal was to make the cast experience a microcosm of the ideal Christian community. We tried to create within the cast and crew of each production a community of acceptance, love, grace, kindness, and accountability that pulled together to accomplish a shared goal. It worked. It can work for local churches as a way of exposing the unchurched to a bridge experience to faith. The unchurched in the production may, as in the case of the Celtic church, become

a part of the community before they become Christian. Certainly the effects of this community experience will spill over onto those who come to see the production. The unchurched in the cast and crew will themselves be natural bridges to faith exploration for their unchurched friends and family. If the production is good, wholesome, and entertaining it may not always need to have specifically religious content. Some of the productions could be secular in content (as long as the content is not antithetical to Christianity) in order to attract the participation of the unchurched. The cast experience of Christian community may be more important than the content of productions. Participation in such productions may be an ideal bridge to further faith exploration opportunities such as the Alpha Class.

A mystical aura envelops the cast and crew of a production when they gather in a circle on an empty stage to say goodbye to each other and goodbye to the story and community they have jointly created. One can envision them all arms around each other, and see the tears in their eyes as they all realize this chapter of each of their lives is over. For those with a little imagination, the director's voice can be heard giving that last speech to this group of people that they have grown to love:

“We have created something wonderful together, both on stage and off. I can feel the love we all have for each other, and I know you can too. This community will change and grow, and never be quite the same after this moment; but the love that we have for each other can last forever. I believe the love we have experienced is just a sample of the love that God has for you. If you would like to know what this love is about and how you can experience it all the time, there is a no obligation course called the Alpha Class that will teach you all you need to get started. I want to personally invite

each of you.”

The drama/media event and other similar applications of the arts and media can be powerful tools to reach a cynical and cocooned society. The high price required will include a passionate love for and understanding of those we seek to reach, ever fresh approaches, and the very best we have. The gospel of Jesus Christ deserves nothing less.

APPENDIX A**“Let Ralph Do It”**

by

Joel P. Catlin

This production is designed as an entry point for seekers as well as to be edifying to believers. Ideally, it should be staged as a dinner or dessert theatre. Having table captains who are responsible to fill each table will help attendance. Further, each table captain should strive to fill his or her table with persons who currently have no church home or church members and constituents who bring an unchurched, friend, neighbor, relative, co-worker, or acquaintance.

If there is a meal, it should be served beforehand; dessert should be served after the play. The table captain should appoint a trusted church member from their table, in advance, to get the dessert tray and take dessert orders, starting with the guests first. This is good hospitality and facilitates the ease of the discussion. Some questions that could follow introductions might include:

1. How would you compare and contrast Hobe and James?
2. How did they make a difference?
3. What characteristics of either man would you like to incorporate in your life?

Why?

4. Would you like your life to make a difference and if so, how?

The stage consists of two sturdy vertical poles, a couple of benches, and lots of cloth. The cloth is draped around the set and over the benches to give a fluid, luxurious ambiance. The poles stand up about ten feet apart along the upcenter stage of the acting

area. At the base of each pole and in the space between them are enclosures containing more cloth. Each pole has ropes and pulleys suspended from the top which are attached to a lightweight, but strong pillar crown. As the ropes are pulled up they draw up the crown with them. Cloth is attached to the underneath side of the crown in the shape of the exterior circumference of a pillar. When the cloth is pulled up and stretched, it looks like a column because the cloth is attached in this shape at the bottom as well as the top. Pulling the ropes also raises a horizontal pole between the two columns. The horizontal pole is encased in a tight cloth sleeve. The sleeve has semi-transparent scrim-like material attached to it. This scrim material is secured at the bottom. As the rope is pulled, this scrim forms an eight foot by eight foot back screen upon which a hidden video projector projects video images at various points during the production. This stage is light and portable to facilitate easy touring as a two-man show. It may be set up in almost any space with at least ten-foot high ceilings. Platforms may be required in order for the actors to be seen over the dinner tables or other obstacles.

PROLOGUE

THE STAGE is as described above before the ropes have been pulled tight. The audience sees bare poles, cloths, and A couple benches. HOUSE LIGHTS are used at this point. UPBEAT, "NON-CHURCH" MUSIC is playing as people enter.

MUSIC CHANGES TO late 18th century period music in the background. JAMES CHUBB ENTERS IN A WHITE COSTUME of a late 18th century British businessman, FOLLOWED BY HOBE who appears from behind the columns, DRESSED IN WHITE SLACKS AND POLO SHIRT. They cross into brighter light with Hobe standing upstage and to the side of James. JAMES SPEAKS WITH A CORNISH ACCENT unaware of Hobe's presence.

JAMES

It greatly refreshes my soul to be in this splendid place with you good people of _____. I am James Chubb, a humble employee of the Excise Service during the reign of King George III

MUSIC HALTS abruptly as Hobe interrupts–POSSIBLE “SCRATCH”

HOBE INTERRUPTS; James stands with mouth open totally aghast

HOBE

(Hobe very deadpan with a slight smile.)

Don't buy the humble routine. It's all an act. Well, he is sort of humble, in a strange British sort of a way.

JAMES

Hobe Albright, what are you doing here? You're not even supposed to be on stage yet.

HOBE

Hey, I always did have a unique way of doing things.

MUSIC BEGINS again as James straightens himself out to begin again

JAMES

(Scowling in frustration)

As I said, I was a humble exciseman in the service to King George III.

PAUSE MUSIC

HOBE

(Interrupting)

He was a bean counter for the government.

JAMES

(James tries to go on as if nothing happened)

... As you can see, I am a real flesh and blood man who walked, albeit sometime past, upon this earth. We are in heaven, at least on the outskirts, but that realization has not yet dawned on Mr. Albright. Being a seasoned veteran of the celestial, the angel Gabriel himself has summoned me to walk with my good brother as he adjusts to his new home. It is an arduous task for one who has so long been in the embrace of the eternal, but I am sure the Heavenly Host chose wisely a man of patience and longsuffering.

HOBE

(Interrupting again)

Do you see what I mean about the humility thing? I think the big guy couldn't stand it any more and he sent MO here for me to loosen him up a little.

MUSIC CONTINUES

JAMES

(Extremely frustrated but not losing it yet)

... My time on earth was like yours. Great changes were taking place. Inventions such as the steam machine, the thermometer, the spinning mill, the water turbine, the cotton gin and such were turning society upside down much as computers have in your day. Many were looking to the cities and the coalmines to find an honest living. The lives of the humble poor were but of little value to those of station and means. Justice was available ... to them who could afford it.

HOBE

(Knowingly)

Some things never change.

JAMES

... Some rebelled and the rebellion in places like France was particularly bloody. Wars cropped up on every side. Peace was short lived and the Empire constantly threatened.

These were times that stretched one's soul and mind. Such have fallen on you as well. We come tonight to invite you to stretch just one bit further in hopes that we may find some meaning in all this great confusion. To this end I would like to introduce to my friend, Hobe.

(Chubb moves to the backside of one the poles)

APPLAUSE SOUND

HOBE

(Hobe takes center stage.)

Hi there, I'm Hobe Albright, born on April 6, 1922 in Danville, Illinois on the same kitchen table as my mother was, and which we ate on, so to speak. I am a child of the great depression, World War II vet, Cubs, Bears and Illinois fan, husband, father, insurance man, and all that good stuff. Now, I know that all that doesn't amount to a hill of beans to you, at least, not just yet. But, with your help, I believe, no, I know, we can make some sense out of this mess. OK?

JAMES

(James sticks his head out from behind pole,)
Fat Chance.

HOBE

What's that?

JAMES

I said, "... That's the stance!" You tell them Hobe.

HOBE

Sure you did. Well, I guess I deserved that. If you can't have a little fun in heaven...

Now, here is what you need to do: Just for a little while, turn off that old part of your noodle.

JAMES

(Interrupting)

You are certainly the expert in that department.

HOBE

Darn Brits. They never can let go of something once they get started. Anyway, turn off that part of your noodle that figures out all those "cant's." Next, put all that extra juice, if you will, in the part of your brain that works on the "cans." Just for now, be optimistic.

JAMES

(Interrupting again)

There is a difference between optimism and fantasy.

HOBE

(Loving the chance to correct James)

Not really, they are both a part of the same thing. Anything is possible. Next, Friends, you have to use the second greatest power in the universe next to the Big Guy Himself, your imagination.

HOBE AND JAMES EXTEND POLES AND RAISE BACKDROP, WHICH stretches the columns into place. THE LIGHTS DIM AS THE BACKGROUND MUSIC FROM "HE HOLDS THE KEYS" BEGINS.

Obviously, these poles and cloth and lights and stuff aren't what we are going to ask you to believe they are. But I

believe in you. I believe you are going to use your imagination to help us tell you this story, and together we can come up with something bigger than all of us. You can bet on it. (Pause) Now, let's go back a little bit, to before I knew brother Cub here. It may be quite a ride, so hang on—here we go.

JAMES

(Peeking out from behind the set.)

Hobe? Hobe? Do you believe in me, as well?

HOBE

Yes, I believe in you.

(Aside)

But I used to believe in Dracula when I was a kid, too!

LIGHTS GO COMPLETELY OUT AS HOBE AND JAMES DISAPPEAR
BACKSTAGE – MUSIC CONTINUES TO UNDERSCORE

ACT 1

SOFT BLUE LIGHTS wash the mysterious scene. MUSIC FADES into background but still heard.

FADE IN

(1/1) EXT. MOSSVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

CUT TO

(2) INT. MELVIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, camera is trained on casket and funeral director in the front of the sanctuary as the funeral director finishes closing the lid.

CUT TO

(3) POLLY ALBRIGHT AND FAMILY being seated in the front right pews of the sanctuary.

CUT TO

(4) REV. KATHY MCCAFFERTY delivers segment of eulogy.

REV. MCCAFFERTY

... Hobe embraced me from the first day. He presented me

with a gift, a little book called, Prison to Praise, which I have come to understand really represents Hobe's way of thinking about life.

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(5) CAMERA PANNING congregation during speech

MCCAFFERTY

It starts out with 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

CUT TO

(6) MCCAFFERTY continuing

MCCAFFERTY

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances."

(Music continues under)

CUT TO

(7) INT. MELVIN UMC funeral, Gene Slevin reading poem "My Friend Hobe."

GENE SLEVIN

The day arrived, it was Hobe's turn
To receive the rewards—so justly earned.
So let us rejoice, 'tis no time to be grim,
As we assemble today, to honor him.

CUT TO

(8) INT. GENE SLEVIN'S LIVING ROOM, Gene is talking about his friend.

GENE

After Hobe retired I saw him nearly every day. We had a compatibility of spirits. Our spirits could join and dance even without talking.

DISSOLVE TO

(9) FUNERAL, GENE reading poem again.

GENE

Hobe's life was built on service to others.
All he met were either sisters or brothers.
Hobe was our leader, showing us the way.
"Enjoy the moment, Heaven begins today."

DISSOLVE TO

(10) FUNERAL, Bob Baietto retired principal and football coach and friend and co-worker of Hobe's in Heart of Illinois Harvest

MUSIC fade out

BOB BAIETTO

... It all started when I first met him. I introduced myself and ten minutes later he forgot my name. I thought, "This is my kind of guy."

At that point, I still had a good memory. But you talk about impact and impressions—over the next few encounters, I found out Hobe couldn't remember his own name.

CUT TO

(11) INT. FUNERAL, HOBE'S FRIEND BILL LERVAG EULOGIZING

BILL LERVAG

He called me "MO" too. Especially when he wanted me to do something. The other thing he called people was "friend."

CUT TO

(12) INT. FUNERAL, BOB BAIETTO

BOB

MO was all right, better than a lot of things I've been called.

... We were again talking away, solving world's problems, and I look up and see all these cars coming at us. (Telling story, as if talking to Hobe)

"Hobe, you are going the wrong way on a one-way street." He said, "MO, the Lord is with us." I said, "What about the cars coming toward us?" He said, "You worry too much." "Hobe, you were a fighter pilot?"

(14) DISSOLVE TO

BOB

... I found out quickly not to use the words "Maybe," "I might," "I don't know," or "can't." This was a red flag for Hobe to charge on.

FADE OUT

MUSIC BEGINS "If You Could See Me Now"

LIGHTS FADE. FOG RISES. HOBE begins to wander around in the dark.

HOBE

Holy smokes Toto, were not in Kansas any more.

IN DARKNESS, JAMES ENTERS from rear of stage. LIGHTS come up enough to barely see Hobe and James as they run into each other and both fall down. Hobe stands up with bounce and extends hand to help James who is just a little stunned.

HOBE

Are you OK?

(Helps James to his feet.)

Hobe Albright. It's nice running into you.

JAMES

(Shaking Hobe's hand.)

James Chubb. I seem to be in order. How are you feeling, Mr. Albright?

HOBE

Fantastic! By golly, I haven't felt this good in a long time. Our little dance must have knocked something loose.

JAMES

Splendid!

CUT TO

(15) VIDEO COLLAGE OF PICTURES OF HOBE'S YOUTH (C - K)

POLLY ALBRIGHT

(Voice over video)

Everyone loved him, he had such a sweet disposition, even then.

COLLAGE CONTINUES ON SCREEN BEHIND FOLLOWING SPEECHES

JAMES

Mr. Albright, would you happen to know who these people are and what this is all about?

HOBE

Hey friend, everybody calls me Hobe. It's short for (whispers) Hobart.

JAMES

Hobart? Is that German?

HOBE

All the way, but, me and the family are tried and true Americans.

JAMES

(Dry humor)

I will try not to hold that against you.

HOBE

(With a congenial chuckle)

Thanks pal. And you are James Shrub?

JAMES

No, it is Chubb.

HOBE

Yes, I'm your chum, too. Glad to get to know you, friend.

JAMES

No, no, the name is Chubb.

HOBE

Oh!! Chubb, Chubb, er-a-yeh... As for those pictures, they were me. That lovely voice belongs to my angel wife. What this is all about friend, I haven't got a clue. But I'm sure it's nothing you and I and the Big Guy can't handle. We'll just have to let Ralph do it.

JAMES

Ralph? Who is Ralph?

HOBE

Are you up for a good story?

JAMES

I believe I have all the time in the world at my disposal.
(Chubb sits on bench)

HOBE

(Walking in behind Chubb

sharing a very animated version of story)

Hey, fantastic. I had the privilege of going to a weekend retreat for men called Cursillo. The food was out of this world. Now, it was not some trumped up deal. Men, real men, shared their stories. They helped me refocus my life. People demonstrated for me the way it was meant to be. People all over the world were putting in a good word with the man upstairs for us all through that weekend. Man, it changed my life! Doggone it, Ralph became so real after that I could taste Him. Wow! I wanted to share this good news with everybody.

JAMES

I know exactly how you feel. I've shared similar urgings in my life as well.

HOBE

I got the chance to work with a team of other men to do a Cursillo for a bunch of big shot church leaders. This was an opportunity to open up the Cursillo to hundreds of thousands of new folks. Well, we had a break and this team got together to talk. It didn't seem like things were going well. We felt like we just weren't able to reach these big wigs.

JAMES

I didn't realize men still wore wigs in your day.

HOBE

That was just a figure of speech.

JAMES

I see. Like "by golly," "no kidding" and "holy cow?"

HOBE

Sure shooting!

JAMES

You are certainly blessed with a plethora of these "figures of speech." One almost needs an interpreter to understand

your unique usage of the King's English. It must have been quite a responsibility to try to help these "big wigs" see the power of your Cursillio.

HOBE

You bet it was!

JAMES

Another colorful figure of speech?

HOBE

Hang in there, you'll get used to it. We were struggling with how to reach these "big wigs." We tried to figure out what to do when, low and behold, we looked across the street at a cleaning and tailoring shop. Have you ever seen an electric light?

JAMES

(Looking puzzled and shaking head no)

Am I to understand that within 200 years after my time humanity learned to harness electricity to make electric lights?

FADE IN

(16) PICTURE (28b) "Let Ralph Do It" Sign

HOBE

(Over video)

That is not the half of it. Imagine lights much brighter than a lantern flashing on and off. This tailor's name was Ralph, and he had an electric sign that flashed on and off, "Let Ralph Do It." Are you with me?

(James nods yes.)

Shucks darn, we decided to "let Ralph do it." We realized we were trying too hard to do this on our own. We had to 'let go and let the Big Guy take charge, if you will. From then on my name for my friend has been Ralph. That was the beginnings of the "Walk to Emmaus." The man upstairs took over. Since that time nearly a half a million folks have gone through the Walk to Emmaus.

FADE OUT

JAMES

I see, so you now call The Almighty, Ralph?

HOBE

I hope you don't find that offensive.

JAMES

On the contrary. Ralph and I have been good friends for some time.

HOBE

That's the way I read it, pal.

FADE IN

(17) INT. INTERVIEWER IS INTERVIEWING HOBE'S DAUGHTER SUE IN HER LIVING ROOM.

INTERVIEWER

You said earlier that your time with your dad changed your feelings about your faith. How was that so?

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE

(Over video. Noticing screen is on, sits on bench opposite Chubb to watch.)
Hey, that's my daughter, Sue. What's she doing?

JAMES

(Over video, Chubb stands and moves to behind Hobe)
I am not certain. Looks like Sue is being interviewed. I bet someone is trying to dig up some dirt so he can write one of those sleazy "tell all" novels like "Mommy, Dearest."
Hum... "Hobey, Dearest."

HOBE

How is it you know about "Mommy, Dearest" but you have never heard of an electric light?

JAMES

One must keep abreast of that which is truly important.

HOBE

I'll be a monkey's uncle.

JAMES

(Still joking)

What, another colorful "figure of speech?" and one which

takes such liberties at the expense of your poor nephew?

CUT TO

(18) INT. INTERVIEWER AND SUE continuing at a later time

SUE

... Garry and I were out driving, and the car mysteriously turned in to the mobile home park where they were living. We were heading for their motor home. For some reason the car just headed to the pool instead, and there they were. It was the last time I saw him alive.

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE

(Over video)

Hey kid, you'll see me again, you can bank on it.

RESUME VIDEO

SUE

There were two people sitting over by the pool. I have never seen them before or since. To this day I believe they were his angels watching over him.

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE

(Over video)

You know honey, I thought those guys looked awfully familiar, even though I could not remember ever seeing them before.

RESUME VIDEO

SUE

I got to talk to Dad alone. I was able to tell him how much I love him and I asked him if there was any way he could, to please let me know he was OK. He said if he could, he sure would.

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE
(Over video)

Sue, darling, if you could only know how I prayed to have that time alone with you. Thank you for all your love. You're the greatest ... and honey, ... remember the pennies.

RESUME VIDEO

SUE

I arrived in time to help take care of him. We got his clothes changed and him onto the bed. Mom was in the other room talking to the pastor. Then I was given another gift.

FREEZE FRAME

(MUSIC, "If You Could See Me Now" comes on in background)

HOBE
(Over video)

I remember this. It was like I was there but not there.

RESUME VIDEO

SUE

I saw a yellow body of Dad rise up from his physical body and he had the biggest smile on his face. I just treasure that moment. The pastor called my name and I looked away—when I looked back he was still there sitting up smiling. Then they told me I was needed in the other room and it was over. But, when we went back in, there was the biggest smile on Dad's face that was not there before.

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE

Why wouldn't I smile. I am going to see Ralph and the whole team, if you will, first hand.

RESUME VIDEO

(19) INT. INTERVIEWER AND SUE

SUE

... been picking up pennies. Whenever he would find

them, he would put them in a baggie for the girls. I had some very difficult times after Dad's death, and whenever I would have a really bad day I would find a penny.

FREEZE FRAME

(Hobe smiles and bends over to pick up a preset penny. He flips it up in the air and puts it in his pocket without saying a word.)

FADE TO BLACK

JAMES

Perhaps we are allowed such experiences to encourage those left behind. I have always been fascinated with the supernatural. I heard an account of a man. His son married without his consent. The father was so enraged that he, "wished his right arm might burn off, if ever he gave or left that son sixpence."

HOBE

I can't imagine any man treating their child like that.

JAMES

(Paces around Hobe as he gives a very animated version of the following story.)
The gentleman must have changed his mind as well, in March 1757, being taken ill, he made his will, and left the son all his estate. The same evening he died. On Thursday 10, his widow laying her hand on his back found him warm. In the evening those who were with him went into the next room to take a little refreshment. As they were eating, they observed a disagreeable smell, but could find nothing in the room to cause it. Returning into the room where the deceased lay, they found it full of smoke. Removing the sheet which covered the body, they found the body so burnt, that the entrails were bare and might be seen through the ribs. His right arm was nearly burnt off. His head so burnt that the brains appeared and smoke came out of the crown of his head like the steam of boiling water.

HOBE

Holy smoke! That's a hot story. I think I like Sue's better, though.

JAMES

I as well, good brother, I as well.

CUT TO

(20) INT. INTERVIEWER AND HOBE'S WIFE POLLY IN POLLY'S LIVING ROOM

POLLY

It is so good you're here. Now tell me all about it.

HOBE

(Over video)

Hey, there's my gal!

INTERVIEWER

Polly, I don't have to tell you what an unusual man Hobe was and how he touched so many lives.

DISSOLVE TO

INTERVIEWER

I think his story deserves, no, needs to be told.

JAMES

He wants to tell your story Hobe!

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

(Over video)

So that is what all this is all about. He surely could have found someone better than me. (Pause) But, if there is a chance my story could help others.

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(21) PICTURE OF HOBE'S PARENTS (P)

(22)

POLLY

(Tape over Video)

Hobe came from a really wonderful family.

HOBE
(Over video)

The very best!

POLLY
(Tape over video)

Hobe's mother and father met at an ice cream parlor where Morris pulled the chair out from under her. My, how they laughed about that. They were married when he was 18 and she was 17. They laughed their way through life.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE
(Over video)

Friend Chop?

JAMES
(Over video)

That's Chubb. James Chubb. Please refer to me as James.

HOBE
(Over video)

Sure, Jim. Friend, I had a wonderful childhood and tremendous parents.

JAMES
(Over video)

I am sure you did. Let us hope some of their virtue continues through you.

AUDIO SPLIT

FADE IN

(22) PICTURE OF HOBE'S FATHER (Q)

POLLY
(Over video)

Hobe's father was very engineering minded and eventually he went to the University of Illinois. He actually helped build the football stadium. This was an exciting time. They did not have a car, just an old Harley Davidson motorcycle with a sidecar.

CUT TO

(22) INT. POLLY AND INTERVIEWER IN DINING ROOM

POLLY

When Hobe was a baby, they used to put him in the toe of that sidecar. My, how we laughed about that.

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE

(Over video)

My Dad was just about the best.

CUT TO

(23) POLLY & INTERVIEWER IN DINING ROOM

POLLY

He was a truly remarkable man. Hobe loved his Dad. Once when he was being interviewed for a job, the man asked Hobe who he thought were the three greatest men in history...

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

(Over video, Remembering picks up Que.)

I said, "Shucks, that's easy. Jesus Christ, Lou Gehrig and my ol' man. Not necessarily in that order." ... I got the job.

JAMES

(Over video)

Lou Gehrig?

HOBE

(Over video)

He was the greatest baseball player that ever lived.

JAMES

(Over video)

Baseball?

HOBE

(Over video)

You mean you know about “Mommy Dearest” and not baseball?

CUT TO

(24) POLLY & INTERVIEWER IN DINING ROOM

INTERVIEWER

What was Hobe like as a child?

POLLY

Hobe was always generous. He came home one day in the late fall or early winter of his first grade year. His mother was very upset with him.

CUT TO

(25) EXT. HOBE, AGE 7 AND MOTHER as HOBE comes up steps after school without his coat.

MOTHER

Hobart Max Albright, where is that new coat?

HOBE

I’m sorry, Mom. I met a boy, who didn’t have a coat, so I gave it to him.

CUT TO

(26) INTERVIEWER AND POLLY STILL IN DINING ROOM

POLLY

... he met a boy who didn’t have a coat so he gave him his.

HOBE

(Over video, to James)

So what’s the big deal?

DISSOLVE TO BLACK

AUDIO SPLIT

DISSOLVE TO

(27) PICTURE YOUNG HOBE AND DON (R)

DON

(Over video)

Hobe liked to play tricks on me.

CUT TO

(28) PICTURE OF HOBE'S FAMILY (S)

HOBE

(Over video)

Hey that's my super brother, Don—the greatest athlete I ever saw.

DISSOLVE TO

(29) COLLAGE PICTURES OF HOBE AND DON (T-W)

DON

(Over video)

We were pretty competitive. Hobe was six years older than I was and he loved to tease me. We used to race eating ice cream cones, and then when I was done, he would pull his out from behind his back and lick it real slow right in front of me.

JAMES

(Over video, kidding)

Shame on you, Hobart. I do not know what an ice cream cone is, but being a younger brother myself I'm sure what you did was hardly kind.

HOBE

(Over video)

You've never had an ice cream cone?

(Aside)

Maybe this isn't heaven.

(Back to James)

By Golly, We've got to get you an ice cream cone.

FADE TO BLACK WHEN COLLAGE FINISHED

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(30) PICTURE OF KIDS ON FARM (Y)

DON

(Over video)

We had some great times as kids. Going down to the farm from Chicago to visit our cousins. Milking the cows, feeding the pigs, playing football with our cousins in the evening with fireflies.

HOBE

(Over video)

Don, I still think you're the greatest.

DISSOLVE TO

(31) INT. INTERVIEWER AND POLLY SEATED AT KITCHEN TABLE WITH CUP OF COFFEE

POLLY

Hobe used to be picked on when he was young because he was so small.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

Yea, I had to learn to talk my way out of fights or I would have been dead by the time I was ten.

JAMES

Yes, I was a much better lover than a fighter, as well.

HOBE

I learned to think on my feet. I suppose that is why I loved sales so. It came natural to me.

JAMES

Yes, I can see that.

HOBE

You're right. This whole deal, whatever has been going on has been about me. You have hardly got a word in edgewise. Why don't you tell me about you.

JAMES

Brother, your words have been a great refreshing to me.

HOBE

Well, thank you. I think. Still, I would like to hear more about you.

JAMES

There is so little to tell. As you know, I come from humble roots. I was blessed with a steady employment, even if it made me hated by many a man. I was a humble exciseman in service to His Majesty, George III.

HOBE

Hated? Pardon my asking, but what is an exciseman?

JAMES

A tax collector.

HOBE

Some things never change.

CUT TO

(32) POLLY & INTERVIEWER IN KITCHEN

POLLY

Even Hobe's extended family was wonderful. His Aunt Mid was very important in his conversion. Hobe had a natural curiosity about everything. He would ask Aunt Mid all sorts of questions, and they would have these deep discussions.

CUT TO

(33) EXT. HOBE AND AUNT MID PLAYING CATCH IN PARK . Take to a wide establishing shot of park. Pan left and zoom in on AUNT MID'S arm as she throws ball.

CUT TO

(34) BALL FLYING THROUGH AIR

CUT TO

(35) YOUNG HOBE DIVING UNDER TREE TO MAKE CATCH

CUT TO

(36) CLOSEUP, HOBE DAZED UNDER TREE

AUNT MID

(Moving into frame)

Hobie, are you all right?

YOUNG HOBE

Aunt Mid, what is heaven like?

AUNT MID

(Taking seat beside Hobe)

That is hardly the response I expected. Where did it come from?

HOBE

(Sitting up)

When I dived for the ball I ended up rolling over on my back and I looked up and saw the beautiful sky and it made me think of heaven.

AUNT MID

Of course, that makes perfect sense. That answer would tell me you have no serious damage from your fantastic catch.

YOUNG HOBE

I'm fine, Aunt Mid, really.

CUT TO

(37) CLOSE UP OF AUNT MID

AUNT MID

(Pretending to pick and take a bite out of an apple)

Hobie, heaven is like an apple tree with beautiful apples on it that are just perfectly ripe to eat. The instant you pick one, another takes its place. You never run out of anything. It is so beautiful Hobe.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL HOBE RIVITTED ON AUNT MID

YOUNG HOBE

Please, tell me more.

AUNT MID

One of the best parts is you never get tired so no one has to take a nap or go to bed. God's glory and love fills the whole city.

YOUNG HOBE

I want to go there.

AUNT MID

Hobe, that is up to you.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

(Over video)

On Oct 4, 1931, I went with one my buddies, was baptized, the whole nine yards, if you will.

JAMES

(Over video, comes and sits by Hobe)

Hobe, we truly are brothers. The Cornwall parish was quite large but religion was little thought of. As I advanced in years I followed most of the vices; cockfighting, cudgels, heels, cards, dancing and sometimes famous for swearing. But, as I got drunk but seldom, I thought myself a tolerable good Christian. In 1769 a pious woman, Elizth Miller came to our town, and she showed us the errors of our ways. A few of us form'd a society. Persecution ensued. Our lives were in danger. I was once hunted down by my own brother John. We were pelted with eggs and so forth. My brother Richard, a butcher, supplied the mob with blood which they spouted on the poor followers of the lamb slain to save sinners but this did not hinder the melting of my heart. In 1774, at the quarterly meeting held in December at St. Austel, Cornwall, my long distressed soul was set at liberty!

(James begins to dance as he sings
an early Methodist praise hymn.
He soon involves Hobe in the dance.)

HOBE

I thought you early followers were not allowed to dance.

JAMES

King David did. Besides, we can do a lot of things here that we couldn't before.

HOBE

I can feel the love in you, friend.

(Hobe and James embrace.)

The day my soul was set at liberty, the minister gave me a Bible.

CUT TO

(38) REV. DESKINS, HOBE AND FRIEND

REV. DESKINS
(Hands Hobe a Bible)

Hobe, I am so glad you want to be baptized and feel clean like your mother, but I want to give you a little advice. Read something out of this book every day.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE
You know what? I did. It works.

JAMES
Indeed it does, Brother Hobe! I was once greatly grieved in spirit for not attending daily to God's Word, but with the help of scripture cards and a challenge from a preacher helped me gain the victory.

HOBE
What challenge was that brother?

JAMES
He said the Bible could be read at one time in 46 hours and I was determined to find him out.

HOBE
Were you actually able to read the whole Bible in 46 hours?

JAMES
With my wife's encouragement, I completed the challenge in less than 44 hours.

HOBE
Heck fire! That is amazing!

CUT TO

(39) INT. INTERVIEWER AND POLLY BACK IN HER LIVING ROOM

POLLY
Hobe did not close his eyes at night without reading Psalm 23, Psalm 139 and Matthew 25:35 & 36: "For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and

you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.” And you know what? Hobe lived it.

CUT TO

(40) INT. MRS. JOHNSON – PLAIN BACKGROUND

MRS. JOHNSON

Hobe was a real friend to my son but I never told just how good a friend. Hobe noticed our family was having a difficult time financially there near the end of the depression. He came by one day and gave me his paper route money and made me promise not to tell my son. I don't know how we would have eaten that week were it not for Hobe.

AUDIO SPLIT

DISSOLVE TO

(41) PICTURE OF HOBE in front of car with sign, “Colorado or Bust” (Z)

POLLY

He decided to go to college at the University of Colorado.

CUT TO

(42) EXT. HOBE AND FATHER standing on porch as Hobe leaves for college.

MAURICE ALBRIGHT

Well son, we a very proud of you. We are always here to help you and you'll always be welcome here at home, but, starting today, you are on your own. You are a man now. By the way, successful men wear a tie with their suit. Don't you think you ought to have one on now?

HOBE

I don't think I packed any. I like the one you are wearing. It will do fine.

(Hobe reaches over and takes off his Dad's tie
and throws it around his neck.
His father smiles and shakes his son hand)

FREEZE FRAME

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(43) EXT. PICTURE OF HOBE ON BI-WING (AA)

POLLY

(Over video, voice only)

Hobe's studies at the University of Colorado were,
however, interrupted by World War II.

FADE TO BLACK

JAMES

(Over video)

I find war frightening. It all seems of little value when
compared to the great number of souls that loosed their
lives! And, many, I fear, their souls.

HOBE

(Over video)

Amen to that.

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(41) HOBE AND FELLOW AIRMEN CLUSTERED ON AND AROUND P47 (BB)

POLLY

(Over video, voice only)

He became a P47 pilot and flew 88 missions.

JAMES

(Over video)

Does she mean fly as a bird flies?

HOBE

(Over video)

In my day we developed powerful machines that allowed
us to fly as birds fly. I loved to fly.

JAMES

(Over video)

The great inventions and machines of my time amazed me.
But, a machine that allows man to fly? Oh, the glorious

wonders, will they ever cease?

CUT TO

(42) INT. RALPH GRIFFEY

RALPH GRIFFY

Hobe always wanted to fly under the Leaning Tower of Piza, but he never got around to that one. We had fun, but we also knew when to be serious.

I remember the time Hobe had a fire in his footlocker. All the contents were totally destroyed except for that Bible he carried and his picture of his mother and father.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

On one mission, I had that Bible in my leg pocket and a bullet scuffed the Bible, saving my leg and probably my life. I had stomach trouble for two years after that lousy war.

Once one of my best buddies, saw the enemy coming and he got between them and me. He didn't make it back. I saw three planes and pilots blow up in front of me in less than ten seconds.

FADE IN

(43) INT. HOBE'S AIRFORCE BARRACKS IN ENGLAND DURING WWII.
HOBE has been drinking and playing cards with some of the other pilots. Camera pans room and tightens in on Hobe.

MID 40S POP TUNES playing in background.

HOBE

(Showing the effects of the British Brew)

Please deal me out. Thank you, gentlemen, for your money. It's time for this old soldier to hit the sack.

TAKE TO

(44) CLOSE UP OF PILOT 1

PILOT 1

Yea, that's about like you, Albright, to take our money and

then run for cover.

TAKE TO

(45) PILOT 2

PILOT 2

Look, Hobie. It's only fair to give us a chance to get a few bucks back.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

(46) HOBE AND DISPATCHER who enters from behind Hobe

HOBE

I am really sorry pals, but I have had one too many and
(Dispatcher enters)
I can hardly keep my eyes open.

DISPATCHER

Albright?

HOBE

Yes?

DISPATCHER

We've got a new mission and your number's come up.

HOBE

When do we go?

DISPATCHER

(As he exits)

You've got thirty minutes, Flyboy. I suggest you get ready.

ZOOM BACK ON HOBE

HOBE

Where's a pot of coffee when you need it?

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

(47) SMITH AND HOBE

SMITH

Look Albright, I'll take this trip for you.

HOBE

Smitty, I can't let you do that.

SMITH

Sure you can, you'd do it for me if the tables were turned.
Besides, this game's a little too rich for my blood.

HOBE

Smith, there's no way I am going to let you take my ...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

(48) PILOT 2, 1 AND HOBE

SMITH

Hobe, you've got no business flying a plane in your
condition. You can pick it up for me the next time it is my
turn. Meanwhile, I suggest you take it a little easier on the
British brew...

(MUSIC FADES OUT)

DISSOLVE TO

(49) HOBE'S BUNKROOM, Hobe is asleep in bed as dispatcher enters

DISPATCHER

Alright, I need to talk to you.

HOBE

Yes. What is it Sam?

DISPATCHER

It's not good news, Hobe. I wanted to be the one to tell
you.

ZOOM IN ON HOBE'S FACE

HOBE

What? Go on, spill it.

AUDIO SPLIT

MUSIC, "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree," fades in

DISPATCHER

It's Smith, Hobe. He didn't make it back ...

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

(50) INT. INTERVIEWER AND POLLY in dining room

POLLY

They played bridge. Hobe was a wonderful bridge player and they played for money. He sent a lot of money home. Hobe said it was to start a business with after the war. His mother always said that his card money would do him no good since he got it by gambling.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

Mom was right; the business I started with the card money totally flopped. Friend, I never told anyone but Polly this. Without a doubt, I felt like I had to live for three people: myself and the two guys, who took my number, dying in my place.

“AMAZING GRACE” comes on softly in the background.

JAMES

Brother Hobe, if we could merit heaven by our works, which we cannot, who in his senses wo'd not wish to spend three score years and ten on his knees or in Sackcloth and ashes to escape damnation with Devils for that time. These things are not required that the redeemed may enjoy the good things that are needful in our earthly life.

HOBE

Say friend, would you mind running that by me again in English?

JAMES

We cannot earn the Almighty's love. It is rather, supplied in abundance. We are forgiven and loved just the way we are.

When we come dead against our failures, then we must “let Ralph do it.”

HOBE

Well said, well said.

("Amazing Grace" gets louder and lights fade to blue as Hobe and Chubb walk off stage pretending to visit as they go.)

ACT 2

LATE FORTIES DANCE TUNE fades in under scene

FADE IN

(2/1) INT. INTERVIEWER AND POLLY in dining room

POLLY

I did not know Hobe all this time, but I had heard about him. I was working as his father's secretary and I became quite close to his parents, like a daughter.

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(2/2) PICTURE OF POLLY WITH DAD ALBRIGHT

RESUME VIDEO

POLLY

By 1948 I had earned enough money for my dream of going to college at the University of Colorado to come true. Hobe happened to be working in Colorado at the time. He had heard about me from his parents, and on October 22, 1948 he came to visit me.

CUT TO

(2/3) EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT OF COLLEGE CAMPUS. PULL BACK to reveal a beautiful college campus and YOUNG HOBE about 75 yards away as he turns and starts to walk directly toward the camera.

CUT TO

(2/4) EXT. POLLY AND GIRL STANDING ON PORCH OF DORM. POLLY is wearing a brown striped dress and brown and white spectators. One girl stands on either

side of Polly.

ZOOM IN ON POLLY

GIRL

Do you think that could be him?

POLLY

I hope so.

GIRL

You didn't tell us he was so handsome.

POLLY

I didn't know. Not for sure.

GIRL

He's a dreamboat.

POLLY

Don't stand there gawking.

CUT TO

(2/5) EXT. OVER HOBE'S SHOULDER AS HE WALKS UP TO GIRLS, HOBE in a casual and relaxed manner places right foot on first step.

CUT TO

(2/6) EXT. SIDE VIEW OF GIRLS AND HOBE FOCUSING FIRST ON HOBE

HOBE

Hi, I am Hobe Albright and I am looking for a young lady named Polly Liston.

PAN RIGHT AND ZOOM IN ON POLLY

POLLY

(Girls push Polly forward, she introduces herself with shyness but determination)

I am Polly Liston. Nice to meet you, Mr. Albright.

PULL BACK TO INCLUDE HOBE IN FRAME

HOBE

Just call me Hobe. It's nice to meet you ma'am ...

CUT TO

(2/7) EXT. CLOSEUP OF TWO GIRLS who are reacting excitedly to the interaction between Hobe and Polly.

HOBE

(Continuing)

My folks told me what a great gal you are, but they didn't tell me that you were so good looking.

CUT TO

(2/8) EXT. DORM STEPS, POLLY FROM OPPOSITE SIDE

POLLY

I bet you say that to all the girls.

CUT TO

(2/9) EXT. TAKE BACK TO HOBE

HOBE

No, Miss Liston, just the pretty ones.

CUT TO

(2/10) EXT. TAKE BACK TO OPPOSITE SIDE WHICH HAS WIDENED TO INCLUDE HOBE AND POLLY

POLLY

Mr. and Mrs. Albright did not tell me you were such a smooth talker.

HOBE

Say, I love football. I thought, if it is all right, we might go to the game this afternoon. That would give us a chance to get to know each other.

POLLY

Sure, that would be wonderful ...

FADE TO BLACK

(2/11) INT. INTERVIEWER AND POLLY in dining room, continuation of former scene

HOBE

(Over video)

Love at first sight. It was the brown striped dress and the white and brown spectators that did it. We went out dancing afterwards and we really cut a rug.

CUT TO

(2/12) INT. SAME DAY, HOBE AND POLLY AT A DANCE CLUB DANCING A SWINGING BEE-BOP.

(Over video, live Hobe snaps fingers and moves in time with music)

CUT TO

(2/13) INT. CUT TO CLOSE UP HOBE AND POLLY

HOBE

You are quite a dancer, Miss Liston.

POLLY

You're not so bad yourself, Mr. War Hero.

(Dance ends, live Hobe, over video, exhales a joyful "yah!")

DISSOLVE TO

(2/14) INT. HOBE AND POLLY slow dancing to late forties tune

HOBE

You know, Polly, my folks told me what a fine young lady you are, but I guess I thought you would be, well, like a younger sister or something.

POLLY

Oh, just what am I like, Mr. Albright?

HOBE

I guess what I am trying to say is that this evening has really been special.

POLLY

Well, thank you.

HOBE

Could I see you again?

POLLY

I certainly hope ...

(Catches herself.)

... Well, yes, that would be fine.

(Hobe watches off to the side at first.
Toward the end of the song he joins in dancing
with an imaginary Polly until song ends.)

CUT TO

(2/15) EXT. NIGHTTIME, HOBE AND POLLY sit in window well of Polly's dorm

HOBE

Thank you, Polly, for a wonderful time.

POLLY

Thank you, Hobe.

HOBE

I hate to say goodnight.

(He looks into her eyes and they kiss.)

CUT TO

(2/16) INT. GIRL'S DORM, Polly's friends question her about her date with Hobe.

GIRL

Well, how was it? How did it go?

POLLY

It was OK.

GIRL

Did he get to first base?

(Polly's friend giggles, Polly does not
honor question with a response.)

CUT TO

(2/17) POLLY KNEELS IN PRAYER in the corner of her dorm room

POLLY
(Kneeling in prayer)

Thank you, God! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you for Hobe!

MUSIC "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" is playing softly in background

CUT TO

(2/18) INT. INTERVIEWER AND POLLY in dining room

POLLY
We were both hopelessly in love. You know what? I never fell out of love with Hobe. He tried to tell me ...

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE
(Over video)
... to date around. I did not want to steal the fun of college from her ...

RESUME VIDEO

POLLY
... but it was no use. He had been in Sigma Chi, so I was a "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi."

FADE OUT

HOBE
Man, she is something, isn't she? Wow! How blessed can one man be?

JAMES
A good wife is one of the greatest blessings bestowed upon any man. My dear wife stood by me, nursed me through illness, bore me ten children and raised eight to adulthood. A blessing indeed.

HOBE
Holy smokes! Ten Children! What did you do in your spare time, Mo?

CUT TO

(2/19) INT. INTERVIEWER AND POLLY in kitchen

POLLY

Of course Hobe was not perfect.

FREEZE FRAME

JAMES

(Over video, kidding)

I am so disappointed. All this time I thought you were perfect, Hobart.

RESUME VIDEO

POLLY

He was mechanically challenged. He couldn't fix anything. His old car had a broken windshield wiper that he tried to fix with a coat hanger. It did not work. I can still see him hanging out the window trying to wipe off the rain and snow on the windshield. Needless to say, I did all the handy work around the house.

But his faults were small when compared to being married to the sweetest, kindest man in the world.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

(Over video)

See, Chubby, I'm not so bad.

JAMES

(Over video)

Let's strike a bargain. I will not call you "Hobie" if you will not call me "Chubby."

HOBE

(Over video)

Done.

JAMES

(Over video)

Done.

AUDIO SPLIT

DISSOLVE TO

(2/20) PICTURE OF HOBE AND POLLY'S WEDDING

THE "WEDDING MARCH" is playing in the background

POLLY

(Over video)

We were married on August 4, 1951. Oh, we had a wonderful life together.

CUT TO

(2/21) POLLY AND INTERVIEWER in kitchen still in good clothes as if they just got home from church

POLLY

(Continuing)

... Hobe did quite well becoming a manager, owning his own agency and becoming state president of the Chartered Life Underwriter's Association. But, it wasn't his success in business that touched people, it was the acts of love he did for them on the way. Big or small, it made no difference, Hobe loved everybody.

DISSOLVE TO (passage of time)

(2/22) INTERVIEWER AND POLLY in kitchen

POLLY

We moved around a bit, but eventually landed in Peoria for good. Hobe worked very hard. We had a cottage on Lake Michigan. I would take the kids up there during the summers and Hobe would come up on the weekends. It was his relaxation.

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE

(Over video)

Jim, I'm telling you, I loved that place. I could play golf with Dad, and there is where Mark first learned to play.

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(2/23) HOBE & POLLY walking in yard

POLLY

(Over video)

Every summer, around the Fourth of July, Hobe would dress up in whatever he could find, even if it were his mother's old robe swimming suit and balloons and he would come out as "Sandy Paws."

CUT TO

(2/24) HOBE WALKING UP TO GATHERED FAMILY AS "SANDY PAWS", dressed as described with various little toys and odds and ends for the good little girls and boys.

ZOOM IN ON HOBE as he approaches

HOBE

Ho, Ho, Ho, it's Sandy Pause, and I'm here to give presents to all the good little girls and boys.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL HOBE STANDING BESIDE POLLY

HOBE

(He goes first to POLLY and gives her a big diaper safety pen.)

Here little Mrs. Albright. You'll need this to hold this swimming suit together once I get out of it.

CHILDREN

(Talking all at once as Hobe passes out presents.)

Here. Me. Me. Where's mine?

(He gives Jerrod an old golf ball.)

This is your father's lucky golf ball, Jerrod. I hope it works better for you than it did for Dad.

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(2/25) PICTURE OF POLLY, MARK AND JANE on beach (BC)

POLLY

Oh! It was so much fun! When Hobe died, he wanted some of his ashes buried there on the beach. Several of us rented a cabin on the beach for a week and followed his instructions.

DISSOLVE TO

(2/26) PICTURE OF WAYNE, JANE, AND BOYS silhouetted by sunset (BD)

FADE TO BLACK AFTER 3 SECONDS

HOBE

(Over video)

It sure is great of The Big Guy to let me see this.

One of the best things that happened to our family was when we were inspired to form a tribe. Janey beat the drum and called the tribe together. Once in a while you wanted to say how do I get out of this lousy tribe. But, you know we talked over some of the important things of life every Sunday night eating popcorn.

CUT TO

(2/27) INT. POLLY AND INTERVIEWER in living room

POLLY

He got excited and involved in so many things: One of the most important was "Faith, Hope and Love" prison ministry.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

(Over video)

Judge John Holzman and I had gotten involved in prison ministry. We realized that many of the men whose lives were changed by the work being done in prison had no help or encouragement after they got out, and many ended up back behind bars. We, if you will, had a dream of a halfway house for men who had just been released, right in Peoria. It took a lot of prayer, sweat, and pleading but finally, it became a reality. Hundreds of former prisoners have had an opportunity for help with food, shelter, finding a job and spiritual support as they try to build a new life.

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

POLLY

He also started going on Walk to Emmaus prison weekends where they were locked in with the prisoners.

(2/28) PICTURE OF GO CART

POLLY

Another way he changed was he did not seem to worry about things as much, you know, business things ...

CUT TO

(2/29) INT. TAKE BACK TO INTERVIEWER AND POLLY IN LIVING ROOM

POLLY

(Continuing)

Not that he ever worried about money. Money did not really matter to him. I used to get frustrated and say, "You'd give me away, if it was legal ..."

HOBE

(Over video)

Ouch. Sorry Pal.

DISSOLVE TO

(2/30) INT. POLLY & INTERVIEWER in living room

INTERVIEWER

How did you feel about the changes in Hobe?

POLLY

He was gone so much, leaving me to go to the kids' activities alone and so forth. We had always done things together. I had a real hard time with that. That is one of the reasons it took me several years before I went to Cursillio.

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE

(Over video)

I guess I did get a little carried away sometimes. But she finally did go ...

RESUME VIDEO

POLLY

I was really blessed by the fellowship that Cursillio provided between people of all different kinds of faith

backgrounds.

DISSOLVE TO BLACK

JAMES

Yes, Yes, Good Sister! In my time there was much conflict between rival sects within Christianity, yet I found God's blessing in many types of meetings. I often attended Quaker, Baptist, Independent and even Jumpers, as well as Methodist, and God was in them all.

HOBE

Jumpers?

JAMES

Their enthusiasm was so extreme that it often was expressed physically.

HOBE

I must confess my involvement in so many things took me away from my family too much. I felt a real loss when Sue left home so I got more involved with Jane and Mark.

CUT TO

(2/31) JANEY on porch

JANEY

I love horses. Mom and Dad got me my first horse, Ginger. Dad got a horse trailer and we all loaded up to go with her to fairs and horse shows on the weekends. What fun we had!

(Ad-lib)

We had a horse that would not go into the trailer. Dad would not give up. He got a book about horses. It suggested some horses didn't like dark places and to paint their quarters in light colors. Dad got some white paint and one Saturday we painted the whole trailer. She went right in. Dad was so proud of himself for figuring that out and fixing it.

(Ad-lib about "cowboy boots")

CUT TO

(2/33) INT. (1970'S) JANEY AND HOBE in barn. CAMERA FOCUSES IN ON JANE AS SHE BENDS OVER TO PICK UP FEED BUCKET

JANEY

Dad, could we talk?

PULL BACK TO REVEAL HOBE

HOBE

Sure, Doll, what about?

JANEY

(Sheepishly)

Dad, I think it is really cool that you are your own person. I mean, not everyone could feel comfortable wearing those orange tennis shoes like you do ...

CUT TO

(2/34) INT. BARN, CHEST SHOT OF HOBE

HOBE

Oh baby, I get what you're driving at. I have been embarrassing you wearing these tennis shoes around all the cowboys at the horse shows. I am so sorry. Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me. I'll take care of it right away.

CUT TO

(2/35) JANEY on porch

JANEY

At the next horse show, Dad was wearing cowboy boots.

CUT TO

(2/36) POLLY AND INTERVIEWER OUTDOORS

POLLY

We so enjoyed the kids. But, we enjoyed it when they left, too. We did everything together.

QUICK FADE TO BLACK

(2/37) QUICK FADE IN of Hobe preaching UPS sermon at MOSSVILLE UMC

HOBE

(Over video)

We had kind of an ideal life. Then I found out I had cancer.

HOBE

(Over video)

Now wait a minute. That's me! I'm giving the sermon at the United Prayer Service back in Mossville, October 15, 1988.

CUT TO

(2/38) VIDEO OF HOBE PREACHING UPS SERMON AT MOSSVILLE UMC

HOBE

(On video)

... but I'm witnessing the fact that I believe what I believe and I know what I know, and that is what makes miracles! Because eleven months ago today, at forty-five minutes past, I went into the men's necessity room, which we do, and there I had a new challenge to test my Christianity. Holy Mackerel, I spit up blood! Now, I'd been working on this moment for forty-seven ding-dong years. I probably worked harder on lung cancer thing than anybody in Peoria County. To prove it, I smoked one million, two hundred thousand and some odd cigarettes, and my friends, I'll tell you this: I loved every one of them.

DISSOLVE TO BLACK

HOBE

(Picking up the line live and going on)

But, the Lord planted a little seed, if you will: "Hobe, friend, you've got it. Cut those things out. I'll take away the desire. I'll help you through this thing. You and I can lick, your problem." Next day, had the exams. I knew what it was. You know, they told me this and that and the other thing. Now one doc got a little out of line and told Polly, "Holy smokes, Ma'am, your old man's got it bad, hasn't got a year to live." He shouldn't have said that. He shouldn't have said that. Now I didn't know this for about four months. Ok, but when he told my friend, Jesus, that, Jesus said, "Hey, no way." Hobe's plan wasn't over yet ...

(holding up a worn copy of From Prison to Praise.)

This book reminds us what the Good Book, that is the

Bible, if you will, says: "... rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks." And I mean in everything. You know, if somehow life gives us a lemon, a lousy day, an event that we think would kill us. And, I'm not stupid enough to say, my friends, to realize, that even though, at this moment I say I have licked cancer. The doc says to go ahead and say it, "I can't find any." But I also am not stupid enough to know that if the Lord wants me home next Tuesday at High Noon, I'm going. And I'll wait for you! OK? In the meantime, I'm going to take all the lemons that God dumps on my lap, call grandma or somebody, and get a good recipe for lemonade. It'll sell. It'll sell. OK? It simply says that in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ concerning you.

CUT TO

(2/39) INTERVIEWER AND POLLY still outdoors

POLLY

Hobe heard about a Doctor Bernie Siegel ...

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(2/40) PEORIA JOURNAL STAR ARTICLE AND PICTURE (BH) "Cancer Patient Treated His Illness with Faith"

POLLY

(Over video)

... who works with cancer patients to help them heal themselves. We just never gave up. We got involved in the Cansurmout, a program at Methodist Hospital where we called on other patients who had cancer.

FADE OUT

HOBE

I believe in healing through faith. I've seen many miracles over the years. When you observe these things, getting well and healing yourself is no big thing. Of course, I had to let Ralph do it.

JAMES

I too know what it is to face illness and trials. I was plagued with horrible fevers, off and on throughout my life. Once, I nearly died due to a horrible stage coach accident which left me broken for many a month. My children did not recognize me when we were finally reunited. They told me of their poor sick father. How I was refreshed by the love and visits of my Christian brothers and sisters during these dark hours. I am certain it was their prayers that saved this wretched life and brought about my healing.

HOBE

Amen!

JAMES

The Lord God used my illness to sharpen this poor arrow. Some friends and I began an association. We dedicated several hours of time each week to visiting the sick, those less fortunate, and them who was in the Almshouse. Eventually two of us drew up new rules and were commissioned by John Wesley the first stewards of the Strangers Friend Society in Bristol. I am given to understand that it continues to share blessings now as it did two hundred years ago and that the stewards still meet monthly in the New Room.

HOBE

Fantastic! I can't imagine something I helped to start still helping people 200 years later.

CUT TO

(2/40) INT. INTERVIEWER AND POLLY in white room

POLLY

Still, we were not done with trials. First Hobe experienced some light strokes.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

(Over video)

Man, I hated that. I must have had the first one on the bus on the way back from a men's conference in Indianapolis. I could hardly find my way out of the parking lot after we got back to Peoria. The darned things affected my

memory, mathematical ability, and physical dexterity.

CUT TO

(2/41) POLLY AND INTERVIEWER in living room

POLLY

Next we found out he needed carotid artery surgery, since one side was completely blocked. He made it through all of this OK and then ...

CUT TO

(2/41) INT. HOBE AND POLLY in doctor's office, SHOT IS FROM BEHIND AND OVER THE DOCTOR'S SHOULDER.

HOBE

Well Doc, What's the verdict?

DOCTOR

I am afraid it is not good news.

ZOOM IN ON HOBE, CHEST SHOT

HOBE

Let's hear it.

DOCTOR

Well, you definitely have prostate cancer. Your PSA is 224.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL POLLY

POLLY

What is normal?

DOCTOR

Around 10.

HOBE

Well, how are you and God going to heal me?

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

Yep, surgery again ...

FADE IN

(2/42) INT. POLLY AND INTERVIEWER back to white room

POLLY

It worked. His PSA went down to 4. Healed again! That is when Hobe really got going. One great source of encouragement for Hobe in all this was the movie "Rudy." It was about a young man, Rudy, whose dream was to play football for Notre Dame. He faced all kinds of obstacles, but he wouldn't quit. Finally they let him walk on, but all he did was serve as someone for the scholarship players to practice against.

CUT TO

(2/43) CUTTING FROM "RUDY" MOVIE

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

I loved that movie.

(Hobe points to his "Rudy" hat.)

He never played in one game until the very last contest of his senior year. He got in for the last few plays before the time ran out and he made two tackles and recovered a fumble. Now that is my kind of guy! Never give up!

CUT TO

POLLY

Shortly after his second bout with cancer we were watching Robert Schuller, and his guest that day was a man from ...

(2/45) CLIP FROM "THE HOUR OF POWER" where Dr. Schuller introduces STAN CURTIS, the founder of USA HARVEST. (This video gives a strong introduction to the harvest concept.)

CUT TO

(2/46) INT. HOBE IN TV ROOM

HOBE

(As he turns off TV)

If they can do it in Louisville, we can do it in Peoria.

FADE TO BLACK

HOBE

(James gets white cordless phone
from preset location and hands it to Hobe
who relives the following phone conversation.)

Yes, Mr. Curtis, Hobe Albright from Peoria, Illinois. I
caught you on Schuller yesterday. It sounds like you've
got a heck of a deal going there. I think Peoria is ripe to
start feeding the hungry. What do you think?

(Pause as he listens ...)

You used to work here, fantastic! Well, how do we get
started? Come there? You bet. I'll catch the first plane I
can.

CUT TO

(2/47) INT. POLLY AND INTERVIEWER in office

POLLY

Hobe flew down to Louisville. He and Mr. Curtis hit it off
so well that Stan asked him to be on his national board of
directors for USA Harvest. When Hobe came back he was
on fire. He got together with his buddy, Gene Slevin ...

CUT TO

(2/48) INT. HOBE'S HOUSE, HOBE discussing Harvest with GENE SLEVIN

HOBE

I am telling you this thing will work in Peoria. We can do
it.

GENE

Then let's get a meeting of all the top leaders in the area.

CUT TO

(2/49) INT. POLLY AND INTERVIEWER in white room

POLLY

They got fifty top leaders in Peoria County together and
flew Stan Curtis in.

FADE OUT

JAMES SETS PODIUM AND HOBE re-enacts his delivering of the speech

HOBE

... the concept is so simple, that is what makes it so beautiful. Volunteers pick up unused or slightly outdated, but still good, nutritious food, from stores, restaurants, nursing homes, hospitals and the like and take that perfectly good food to shelters and various agencies where it can be used to feed the hungry. You with me? It sure beats throwing it in the dumpster and paying our good money to have it hauled past hundreds of hungry people to the city dump. Sorry Stan, but, if they can do it Louisville, Kentucky, we can do it in Peoria. Imagine, if you will, Peoria, Illinois, a hunger free zone ...

CUT TO

(2/50) JYL KRAUSE

JYL KRAUSE

(Voice only)

Within the first year we topped 1.9 million pounds of food delivered and over thirty local ...

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

VICTORIOUS MUSIC fades in under next speech and slowly gets louder

food pantries and feeding stations were being serviced. It was incredible! We also won the Governor's Hometown Award for Peoria in the spring of 1994. Hundreds of people were already involved.

MUSIC BEGINS TO FADE OUT

DISSOLVE TO

(2/51) EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOOT OF SIGN, "East Side Headstart Center"

WOMAN 1

Where do all these bananas come from, anyway?

PULL BACK TO REVEAL TO VOLUNTEERS unloading banana boxes out of a van

WOMAN 2

I would imagine the local vendor missed their guess and gassed too many bananas. In this instance, 240 cases too many. They are just perfect to eat right now, but too ripe to sell in the supermarket. That is why it is urgent that we can get them out where they can be used right away.

AS THEY SPEAK A CROWD OF YOUNG PEOPLE BEGIN TO GATHER, a girl, about 10 years old steps forward

GIRL

Hey, what are you doing with all those bananas?

WOMAN 2

We are giving them away to the Summer Head Start lunch program.

GIRL

Could I have one?

WOMAN 2

Sure, I don't see why not.

GIRL

Hey, thanks a lot.

THE OTHER KIDS NOW GATHER AROUND and ask for a banana, which the women are more than happy to give them. After the initial group leaves a boy about 10 years old comes up.

BOY

Say, can I have one of those yellow things?

MAN 1

Sure thing, partner.

WOMAN 1 GIVES THE BOY THE BANANA, but he just stands there and looks at it.

BOY

How do you eat one of these things?

MAN 1

Haven't you ever seen a banana before?

THE BOY shakes his head "NO.")

MAN 1

(Kindly showing him how to peel the banana.)

Like this son ...

CUT TO

(2/52) MIDDLE CLOSE OF BOY eating his banana

CUT TO

(2/53) WOMAN 2 AND WOMAN 1 SMILING as they watch the boy go

WOMAN 2

Now I know why I volunteer for this.

CUT TO

(2/54) BOB BAIETTO in front at funeral

BOB

... Hobe and I are out soliciting donors. We are looking in dumpsters prior to going in and telling the manager of the store about the Heart of Illinois Harvest. Some of them would tell us that they don't throw away food. Little did they know that we had already checked the dumpster. Hobe said, "Let's boycott the place. Let's go get banners. Let's form a human chain and not let anybody in this store." I looked at him and said, "Are you crazy?" He looked back at me and said, "Hey, you know the Chief of Police and the Sheriff, and we'll talk our way out of this."

HOBE

The last I heard, the total dollar amount of food delivered by these unsung volunteers is over 20 million!

CUT TO

(2/55) POLLY AND INTERVIEWER on deck

POLLY

When I retired and we traveled, Hobe talked to people everywhere we went in the nation about feeding the hungry. Even after we moved to Florida, he helped get pickups started in a major food chain there in Tampa.

FREEZE FRAME

JAMES

Brother Hobe, I truly am impressed.

HOBE

Don't be. All I did was sit back and let Ralph do it.

RESUME VIDEO

POLLY

Eventually we settled in at a trailer court in Tampa near our daughter Sue. That is when more cancer was discovered. Even that last battle was a victory. The nurses all loved Hobe, he had such a positive attitude.

CUT TO

(2/56) HOBE'S NURSE, D. J. REEM on couch

D. J.

I have been in this chemotherapy business for many years, and the patients all have good days and bad days. He knew that the Scripture promises God will never give us more than we can handle. He would say, "When I feel like it is more than I can take, I sit down and talk with God and then he gives me the strength I need." Usually it is my job to keep the patients up, but Hobe reversed that.

CUT TO

(2/57) MIDDLE CLOSE UP OF SAD LOOKING WOMAN IN D.J.'S chemo waiting room as Hobe steps into frame.

HOBE

(As he sits)

Hi, neighbor, I am Hobe Albright. It's a great day we're having, isn't it?

LADY

I am not having such a great day. I am in here for chemotherapy.

HOBE

You're in here for chemo? Me, too.

LADY

Your cancer must not be too bad or else you wouldn't be so

cheery.

HOBE

Doc says it is going to get me, probably sooner than later.

LADY

How can you be so happy?

HOBE

The Good Book says to rejoice in all things.

LADY

But how can you buy that religion stuff?

HOBE

It's simple. Would you like me to show you how?

CUT TO

(2/58) INT. CLOSEUP OF LADY, HOBE AND BIBLE

CUT TO

(2/59) D. J. on couch

D. J.

They would usually end up hugging before he was through.

CUT TO

(2/60) MARC on couch

MARC

I believe that a person's real convictions are revealed during the hard times. Dad's convictions really stood that test. He was not afraid to die. His greatest concern was how he could help someone else. He wanted to show other people how to die.

FADE TO BLACK

(2/61) EXT. POLLY AND INTERVIEWER on deck

POLLY

Hobe's dear friend, Gene Slevin, is on the Board of Directors for the booster club at Notre Dame, and he

became a friend with the real Rudy. He was able to get the hat for Hobe and even had Rudy sign it on the underneath side of the bill. All through those last months, Hobe always wore his "Rudy" hat. He almost slept in the thing.

CUT TO

(2/62) INT. ANN ANDERSON

ANNE

The first time I laid eyes on him, his gentleness immediately put you at ease. The first day we moved in next to Hobe and Polly at the trailer park, my husband and I were out trying to get everything set up. He came over and said, "Hi, neighbor, how can I help?" Even the last week before he died, he and Polly helped us wallpaper our new house. It's great that they got to dance together just a few days before he died.

FADE TO BLACK

(2/63) EXT. POLLY AND INTERVIEWER on deck

HOBE

The day before I died was unbelievable. We turned on Schuller. We were so disappointed when he wasn't there, until they brought out the guest speaker for the day.

FADE IN

(2/64) CUTTING FROM "THE HOUR OF POWER" where the guest of the day is introduced. It is none other than the real RUDY.

DISSOLVE TO

(2/65) EXT. POLLY AND INTERVIEWER on deck

POLLY

The next day when he died, he died in my arms, just as I had prayed he would.

FADE TO BLACK

MUSIC comes on softly underneath the following speeches.

JAMES

Brother Hobe, you have been very patient through all this.

HOBE

Well, I have never done this dance before, so I decided it would be a good time to let Ralph lead. But, I am curious. At first, I kind of figured we were in this together, but as things went on, it became pretty obvious you are a part of the plan. Are you an angel?

JAMES

I am not an angel, but, "I am sent by God."

HOBE

So, Mo, are you some kind of guide?

JAMES

You are already home. You have everything you need to see that. I am not a guide, just a friend, like hundreds of old friends you have known for a long time, and millions more whom you will know forever. I am a kindred spirit come to walk alongside you, not to lead.

HOBE

But what's it all about?

JAMES

You already know what it is about, Hobe.

HOBE

It's all about love, isn't it.

JAMES

Love for friends, neighbor, family, your love for God, and most importantly, God's love for you.

(HOBE AND JAMES WALK OFF STAGE arm in arm. DURING THE NEXT FEW SPEECHES THE VIDEO WILL DEPICT THE SPEAKER EITHER THROUGH STILLS OR VIDEO CLIPS. These speeches should move very quickly.)

MUSIC "Thank You" (Ray Boltz) is playing in the background.

CUT TO

(2/67) MARC on couch

MARC

He told me once his number one goal every day was to help somebody. He would just seem to know who needed him. He would go and shoot the breeze, and then, after he'd listened for a long time (he was a great listener) he'd say; "What can I do for you today?" One day while I was student teaching, I was so fed up I was ready to quit.

CUT TO

(2/68) EXT. WIDE VIEW OF A SCHOOL PARKING LOT, late one afternoon.

CUT TO

(2/69) EXT. HOBE, IN A TRENCH COAT AND HAT, is approaching Marc as he is getting into his car.

TIGHTEN ON HOBE AND MARC

MARC

Dad, it is forty-five miles from home. What are you doing here?

HOBE

I didn't think your ol' man needed a reason to come and see how you were doing.

CUT TO

(2/70) EXT. MIDDLE CLOSE UP ON MARC

MARC

The truth is I'm doing terrible. The one thing I'm pretty certain of is this teaching deal is not for me.

HOBE

Tell me about it.

DISSOLVE TO

(2/71) OPPOSITE ANGLE ON HOBE with his arm around Marc

HOBE

I believe in you son, and I believe God has His hand on you. You hang in there. I know you will do the right thing.

CUT TO

(2/72) INT. MARC on couch

MARC

I was in the middle of a crisis he couldn't possibly have known about. He listened and then said exactly what I needed to hear.

CUT TO

(2/79) BOB BAIETTO in front of GREEN SCREEN

BOB BAIETTO

He did not need to preach. I hold him in the highest esteem of any individual I have ever known..

CUT TO

(2/80a) JYL KRAUSE

JYL

Every time I go to work I think of Hobe and his vision for "healing hunger." His desire was to pay the price, whatever it cost.

(2/80) GENE SLEVIN in front of GREEN SCREEN

GENE SLEVIN

We shared dreams together. He was the kind of man who could put wings to those dreams.

CUT TO

(2/86) ERNIE PRESSER in front of GREEN SCREEN

ERNIE PRESSER

He always made you feel wanted.

CUT TO

(2/81) POLLY in front of GREEN SCREEN

POLLY

It was the little things he did that made all the difference.

MUSIC begins to swell

CUT TO

(2/8) BOB BAIETTO in sanctuary

BOB

I can tell you if there were twenty-five more Hobe Albrights, whoever they would be, there would be a lot less human suffering and problems because of what this man stood for.

CUT TO

(2/89) ERIN GUTGESELL

ERIN

He had an unbelievable character that shined through in every aspect of his life. He was strong, strong enough to always put others ahead of himself. No matter how bad he felt he always found the strength to ask my sister and me about the things that were important to us. He had a remarkable sense of humor and was the most caring man I have ever known. That is why my grandfather is my hero.

FREEZE FRAME

HOBE

(Voice on tape)

Now that's a lot of Mos.

EPILOGUE

AUDIO SPLIT

CUT TO

(2/90) BRIGHT SWIRLING COLORS

JAMES

(Voice only)

Now, brother Hobe ...

GOD

(Voice only)

Come into the Kingdom that was prepared for you from the beginning of time.

HOBE IS NOW SILOHOUETTED BEHIND SCREEN BY LIGHTS

HOBE

(Voice only)

Wow!

DISSOLVE TO

(2/91) HOBE AND LOU GEHRIG in a beautiful park setting but very fuzzy background especially around the edges of the frame

HOBE

(Hobe take off Rudy hat and hands to Gehrig)

Holy cow! It's Lou Gehrig! Hey, could you sign my hat?

GEHRIG

(As he takes and signs hat)

Sure thing, buddy. I have been waiting a long time for you to get here. Your Dad has told me all about you.

HOBE

(Pointing beyond the camera's frame)

Pardon my asking, but what is this line that is forming over here?

GEHRIG

Why don't you ask them?

CUT TO

(2/92) EXT. SAME SETTING. CAMERA PICKS UP MAN COMING UP TO HOBE

MAN

No need asking. We're all here to say, "thank you" for what you did in your life.

HOBE

There must be some mistake, I can't even see the end of the line. Maybe they've got me confused with someone else.

MAN

There are no mistakes here. You don't remember me, but I was one of those guys who sat at the back of the room

during one of your prison weekends and tried to look like I didn't care. The truth is, your talk really got to me. I couldn't get it out of my mind.

DISSOLVE TO

MAN

I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you.

CUT TO

(2/93) EXT. SAME SETTING. BOY APPROACHES HOBE

BOY

We never met, but because you started Heart of Illinois Harvest, the Peoria Salvation Army was able to put more money into their youth program, and I was reached with the love of Jesus. I gave my heart to Him just a few weeks before I died of an asthma attack. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for you.

DISSOLVE TO

(2/94) SWIRLING COLORS AGAIN

AUDIO SPLIT

HOBE

(Voice only)

Holy Smokes, you are Mother Teresa! What could you want to tell me?

MOTHER TERESA

(Voice only)

I want to tell you, "thank you." Thank you for bringing food to my nuns in their little kitchen in the heart of Peoria. There are people alive because you were faithful. God bless you.

HOBE

(Voice only)

God bless you!

DISSOLVE BACK TO

(2/95) EXT. BEAUTIFUL GARDEN SETTING. A tottering old man with a cane and covered in a worn cowl and robe feebly walks across the background

HOBE

Say, who is that gentleman over there? He looks like he could use a little help.

(As Hobe starts to head toward him the man in the robe falls. The background music stops suddenly. Hobe rushes to his aid. Hobe gently helps him to his feet.)

DISSOLVE TO

(2/96) CLOSE UP OF HOBE AND MAN

HOBE

Say, I'm sorry to meet like this, but I'm Hobe Albright. If there is any way I could help you, I would consider it my pleasure. What is your name, friend?

(The man pulls back the cowl of his robe revealing that he is really a handsome, healthy, vigorous, youthful individual. He looks directly at Hobe with radiant smiling eyes.)

PULL BACK TO REVEAL BOTH HOBE AND MAN

MAN

I go by many names, but some of my best friends call me Ralph.

(Hobe instantly falls to his knees)

BACKGROUND GETS FUZZIER AND LIGHTER

MUSIC of Carman singing "Glory to the Lamb" comes in under scene

HOBE

I am so sorry. I knew you seemed familiar. I should have recognized you.

(The King of Kings takes Hobe's hands and gently raises him now to his feet.)

MUSIC blends into Ray Boltz's "Thank You" softly in background.)

GOD

Hobe. You never need to be sorry for anything again. No more sorry or pain or crying or tears any more. I'm here to

say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, Hobe,
for using the life I gave you to make a difference."

DISSOLVE TO

(2/102) HOBE AND GOD in beautiful garden scene again. The background is very bright now

GOD

There are hundreds of others. Someday there will be thousands and then millions—Like a ripple in a pond, the difference just keeps spreading out and getting bigger and bigger. Thank you Hobe, thank you for making a difference.

HOBE

(Hobe gently taking God's arms so they are both profile)
Say Lord, do you think we could possibly wrangle up an ice cream cone for my pal, Cub, here? He's never had one, you know.

DISSOLVE TO

(2/103) CUTTING FROM RAY BOLTZ'S MUSIC VIDEO "THANK YOU"

THE BEGINNING

APPENDIX B

Pre- and Postproduction Questionnaires

PREPRODUCTION QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please put an "X" beside that which best describes you.)

1. Gender Male Female
2. I was born in the period
 Before 1946 1946-1960 1961-1981 1981-present
3. Household Gross income per year
 \$.00-\$25,000 \$25,001-45,000 \$45,001-\$65,000 \$65,000+
4. Are you currently active in or affiliated with any church? yes no

INSTRUCTIONS

Read the sentence carefully and think, "Do I agree with it?"

If you agree strongly, put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
If you agree, put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
If you are not certain, put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
If you disagree, put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
If you strongly disagree, put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
(* = reverse scored)					
1. I find it boring to listen to the Bible.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
2. I know that Jesus helps me.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
3. Saying my prayers helps me a lot.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
4. The church is very important to me	AS	A	NC	D	DS
5. I think going to church is a waste of my time.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
6. I want to love Jesus.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
7. I think church services are boring.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
8. I think people who pray are stupid.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
9. God helps me to lead a better life.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
10. I like to learn about God very much	AS	A	NC	D	DS
11. God means a lot to me	AS	A	NC	D	DS
12. I believe that God helps people	AS	A	NC	D	DS
13. Prayer helps me a lot	AS	A	NC	D	DS
14. I know that Jesus is very close to me.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
15. I think praying is a good thing	AS	A	NC	D	DS
16. I think the Bible is out of date.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
17. I believe that God listens to my prayers.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
18. Jesus doesn't mean anything to me.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
19. God is very real to me.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
20. I think saying prayers does no good.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
21. The idea of God means much to me	AS	A	NC	D	DS
22. I believe that Jesus still helps people	AS	A	NC	D	DS
23. I know that God helps me.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
24. I find it hard to believe in God.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
25. I would like my life to make a difference in the lives of	AS	A	NC	D	DS
26. I do not believe I can make a difference in the lives of	AS	A	NC	D	DS
27. I do not enjoy live theatre.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
28. I would consider attending a ten-week, fifteen session, obligation free, exploration of the Christian faith.	AS	A	NC	D	DS

POSTPRODUCTION QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS

Read the sentence carefully and circle the appropriate response.

If you think it was a very good part, put a ring around	<input checked="" type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
If you think it was good, put a ring around	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input checked="" type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
If you don't know, put a ring around.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input checked="" type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
If you think it was bad, put a ring around	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> D	<input checked="" type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
If you think it was very bad, put a ring around	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> B	<input checked="" type="radio"/> VB
(* = reversed scored)					
1. I thought the whole production of "Let Ralph Do It" was	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
(Please rate the following elements of your experience of "Let Ralph Do It.")					
A. The lighting was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
B. The story was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
C. The acting was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
D. The costumes were	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
E. The stage was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
F. The directing was	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
G. The video parts of the production were.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
H. The music used in the production was	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
I. The special effects were.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
J. The length of the production was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
K. The pre-event publicity was	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
L. The invitation I received was	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
M. The welcome I received was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
N. The atmosphere was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
O. The background music was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
P. The food was	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
Q. The information packets were.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
R. The instructions given were.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
S. The post-performance discussion was.	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
T. The welcome I received at this event was	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB
U. The pacing (speed) of the production was	<input type="radio"/> VG	<input type="radio"/> G	<input type="radio"/> DK	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> VB

INSTRUCTIONS

“Post” – pg. 2

Read the sentence carefully and think, “Do I agree with it?”

If you <u>agree strongly</u> , put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
If you <u>agree</u> , put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
If you are <u>not certain</u> , put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
If you <u>disagree</u> , put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
If you <u>strongly disagree</u> , put a ring around	AS	A	NC	D	DS
1. I find it boring to listen to the Bible.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
2. I know that Jesus helps me.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
3. Saying my prayers helps me a lot.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
4. The church is very important to me	AS	A	NC	D	DS
5. I think going to church is a waste of my time.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
6. I want to love Jesus.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
7. I think church services are boring.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
8. I think people who pray are stupid.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
9. God helps me to lead a better life.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
10. I like to learn about God very much	AS	A	NC	D	DS
11. God means a lot to lead a better life.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
12. I believe that God helps people	AS	A	NC	D	DS
13. Prayer helps me a lot	AS	A	NC	D	DS
14. I know that Jesus is very close to me.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
15. I think praying is a good thing	AS	A	NC	D	DS
16. I think the Bible is out of date.*.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
17. I believe that God listens to my prayers.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
18. Jesus doesn't mean anything to me.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
19. God is very real to me.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
20. I think saying prayers does no good.*	AS	A	NC	D	DS
21. The idea of God means much to me	AS	A	NC	D	DS
22. I believe that Jesus still helps people	AS	A	NC	D	DS
23. I know that God helps me.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
24. I find it hard to believe in God.*.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
25. I would like my life to make a difference in the lives of	AS	A	NC	D	DS
26. I do not believe I can make a difference in the lives of	AS	A	NC	D	DS
27. The production of “Let Ralph Do It” was relevant to my	AS	A	NC	D	DS
28. I understood the production of “Let Ralph Do It.”	AS	A	NC	D	DS
29. If there were no obligations involved I would be willing to attend a short-term group to learn about the beliefs	AS	A	NC	D	DS
30. the Christian Faith.					
30. I am now more open to being involved in a church than before	AS	A	NC	D	DS

APPENDIX C**Table Group Discussion Protocol**

- I. The table leaders will be trained by the researcher in a prearranged fifteen-minute session before the production. The training will include the following:
 - A. A stress on the importance of following this protocol and moving the discussion so it can be drawn to a close in twenty minutes;
 - B. A brief explanation of the questions and why it is important to ask all of them in the order they are presented; and,
 - C. A stress on being welcoming and friendly but not pushy or overbearing. People who do not wish to give their name or participate should not be coerced in any way.
 - D. Suggestions on how to tactfully divert the discussion from a domineering individual and how to draw out quieter persons without embarrassing them.
 - E. An emphasis on following the agenda.
- II. Agenda:
 - A. The table leader should personally welcome those who sit at their table;
 - B. One of the table leaders or a member of the church that the table leader delegates will get the desserts and drinks;
 - C. The table leader will say, "We have a few discussion starters to help us visit a little bit while we enjoy our desserts."
 - D. The table leader will try to illicit responses from the following in the order they are presented:

1. Let's begin by each of us who is willing sharing our first name and then tell how you first heard about "Let Ralph Do It" and why you came.
 2. How would you compare and contrast Hobe and James men?
 3. What characteristics of either man would you like to incorporate in your life? Why?
 4. Would you like your life to make a difference and if so, how?
- E. The table discussions will end when time is called by the researcher.

APPENDIX D**Table Group Leaders Focus Group Protocol**

- I. Because of the short time and specific nature of this focus group, it will require a high level of moderation. The moderator will either be the researcher or preferably someone trained to follow this protocol. The moderator will need to understand that they will guide the discussion with the goal of helping the group members feel responsible for generating and sustaining their own discussion (Morgan, Focus 49). The moderator will need to keep the group free from domination by one overbearing individual and seek in nonthreatening ways to draw out the quieter person's opinions. The moderator will need to move the group quickly through the discussion questions in order to finish within the half-hour time limit.
- II. The focus groups will be audio taped. It will be important to use quality taping devices and bring extra batteries and tapes in case a problem arises. This will help insure that the group not be derailed by technical problems. The moderator will also need to check the tape by recording each participant as they say their name and count to three. The tape will then be played back. This will provide for adjustments to be made, if needed, so all the responses of the participants will be clearly audible on the tape (55).
- III. Agenda:
 - A. The moderator will welcome each of the table leaders and thank them for the very important part they have played in this event.
 - B. The moderator will briefly explain that this discussion group is a further

- means of evaluating the effectiveness of this event.
- C. The moderator will assure everyone that their privacy will be strictly guarded and that no participant's name will be used in any written or verbal evaluations of the discussion.
 - D. The moderator will explain that the discussion will be taped so all the participant's responses will be recorded, and nothing will be lost. The moderator will also state that it would be helpful for group members to give their first name each time they speak so that it will be easy to identify the speaker on the audiotape.
 - E. The moderator will explain that this discussion will be limited to one half hour or less.
 - F. The moderator will explain that this is a discussion and not a debate and, everyone's input is important. The moderator will next read the following ground rules for the discussion.
 - 1. Only one person should speak at a time.
 - 2. No side conversations among neighbors.
 - 3. Everyone will be participating and no one person dominating (49).
 - G. The moderator will next start the tape and ask each participant to give their name and count to three. After this is done the moderator will rewind the tape and play it back. After making any needed adjustments the moderator will begin the discussion.
 - H. The moderator will move through the following at a pace that will allow for the discussion to end in one half hour or less.

1. One being high and ten being low, rate your table discussion. (The moderator will ask each participant to respond to this initial question.)
2. We are really interested in the context and quality of your table discussions. What can you tell us about your table group discussions?
3. What kind of comments did you receive?
4. What kind of questions were raised?
5. Were there people around your table who you did not recognize as being a part of this congregation?
6. In light of the goal of creating a bridge for unchurched people to further faith exploration, what do you feel or think was the most important thing we have talked about discussed in this group?

APPENDIX E

Preparation Check-Off List for "Let Ralph Do It"

: 8th Sunday Before the Production

- Pastor; read through entire "Check-Off List" and fill in the dates of the Sundays before the Production.
- Be sure to keep all of this positive and have fun!
- Pastor; decide how much help you will need and recruit a preparation team to complete the various tasks on the Check-Off List.
- Pastor; have a meeting of the preparation team.
 - A. Send out the description of the production ahead of time or summarize it at the meeting.
 - B. Work through the Preparation Check-Off List and who will be responsible to see each item is completed. (This may take more than one meeting.)
 - C. Ask members of the preparation team to keep the exact nature of this special event until week # 5.
- Recruit a prayer team to pray for at least five minutes every day for this event as directed by bulletin announcements and direct mail letters sent to team members. (You may wish to invite people to sign up at church to be on an eight week prayer team for a special outreach event designed specifically to welcome people to "our" church who have no church home. It is more important to have committed persons on this team than to have a great number of people. The key is that they pray every day for the eight weeks of preparation.)
- Choose the follow-up program you would like your congregation to use to invite interested unchurched persons to who attend the production. (The Alpha Course is excellent choice. There is a training event for this wonderful program in Chicago on August 3rd and 4th.)
- List possible table leaders. They should be persons who can lead a discussion but not dominate it. They will need to come one hour before the production for a 15-minute training session and stay for a debriefing session for about a half hour after the production. They should be persons who are committed to bringing an unchurched person to the event.
- Be sure the newsletter announcement (PP#1) gets in the newsletter 2 months prior to the event. (See Publicity Piece #1, that is PP#1, in the enclosed Publicity Packet.)
- Be sure bulletin announcement (PP#2) is in the bulletins the eighth Sunday before the event.
- Be sure flyers (PP#3) are prominently displayed throughout the community.
- Identify persons in the congregation who are good at spreading information.

- Pastor; share pulpit announcement (PP#4) in all worship services the eighth week before the event.
- Include prayer team sign up card in the bulletins. Those willing to be a part of the eight-week prayer team may put their signed cards in the offering plate.
- Be sure this event is prayed for at every worship service this week.

: 7th Sunday Before the Production

- Try again to recruit volunteers for the prayer team. Prayer team sign up cards may be available from the ushers during worship. Encourage people to invite unchurched to come to special surprise evening. Remind those inviting to be a friend first. (See PP#6 & PP#11.)
- Put bulletin announcement (PP#6) for 7th week before the event in bulletins.
- Share pulpit announcement (PP#11) at all worship service the 7th week before the event.
- Put prayer team instructions for week 7 (PP#8) in bulletins.
- Share secret (PP#9) with the persons identified as good information spreaders. This should be done subtly by the members of the preparation team.
- Put first press release (PP#10) in local paper(s). (Press releases may be supplemented or replaced by direct mailings and/or putting flyers in doors of persons in the community surrounding the church.)
- Be sure flyer (PP#7) is prominently displayed throughout the community.
- Be sure this event is prayed for at every worship service this week.

: 6th Sunday Before the Production

- Have people in worship fill out two identical slips of paper with 3 or 4 names of unchurched persons they are planning to invite to the event. They would keep one slip with the names on it with their Bibles so they would remember to pray daily for God to guide them about how and when to offer the invitation. The second slip of paper with the same names would be put in the offering plate so the names could be referred to the prayer team for more prayer. (See PP#15.)
- Send out a prayer letter (PP#12) to all members of the prayer team with the names of those unchurched people that church members and friends are planning to invite to the event so the prayer team can be praying for these people as well.
- Include bulletin announcement (PP#6) in the bulletins again this week.
- Include "Let Ralph Do It" somewhere in this week's bulletin(s).
- Be sure flyer (PP#13) is prominently displayed throughout the community.

- Read pulpit announcement (PP#14) in worship this week.
- Be sure this event is prayed for at every worship service this week.

; 5th Sunday Before the Production

- Recruit greeters for event. There should be two for every major entrance to the room the production is to be held in. You should have one extra available to answer questions and give directions if you have a large facility. The greeters should dress casually. They will need to arrive early so they can hand out the packets to all in attendance and help people in any other way that is needed. Greeters should be outgoing and sensitive persons who will make as positive an impression as possible on your unchurched guests of honor.
- Recruit people to be in charge of desserts after the play. These people will need to set up the tables so each table will have approximately eight persons at them. Tablecloths and decorations at the tables would be a nice touch. They will also need to secure volunteers to bring desserts. The desserts should be of high quality. Remind the dessert crew that their job is very important because the quality of the discussion period is the memory with which your unchurched guests of honor will leave. Be sure they plan for extra. It would be far better to have too much than too little.
- Recruit someone to be in charge of child care. Children under the age of 12 may not find the play interesting. Be sure the child care is very good. Child care is very important to unchurched persons. You will need to make the quality of child care very clear to the unchurched persons who are invited. You may need to plan a variety of activities for a variety of ages.
- Ask worship attendees to turn in the names of any more people they are intending to invite to the production. Have more slips (PP#13) available.
- During worship the pastor should have everyone who has invited an unchurched person to the event stand and be recognized. The pastor should say a special thank you to these persons.
- Put newsletter announcement (PP#16) in church paper with details of the production.
- Put in bulletin announcement (PP#17) in bulletin(s).
- Be sure flyer (PP#18) is prominently displayed throughout the community.
- Put prayer team instructions (PP# 19) in the bulletins.
- Send out letter (PP#20) to all local members and constituents explaining the drama/media event "Let Ralph Do It."
- Have the skit (PP#21) at all worship services this week.
- Be sure this event is prayed for at every worship service this week.

; 4th Sunday Before the Production

- Send letter (PP#22) to prayer team including any new names of persons who are being invited to the event.
- Make invitations available. These invitations will be sent as soon as they are printed. Those sending out the invitations will need to fill in the appropriate blanks.
- Make sure bulletin announcement (PP#23) is in the bulletin(s) this week.
- Make sure prayer team instructions (PP#25) are in the bulletin(s) this week.
- Be sure flyer (PP#24) is prominently displayed throughout the community.
- Be sure to send anonymous postcard (PP#26) to key information spreaders.
- Do skit (PP#27) in all worship services this week. You may wish to involve your youth and musicians in this. It should be fun for the whole congregation.
- Be sure this event is prayed for at every worship service this week.

; 3rd Sunday Before the Production

- Check on all previously assigned tasks and make sure everything is on schedule.
- Recruit table leaders. If at all possible these people should be amongst those who are bringing an unchurched person to the production. Table leaders will need to meet with the director of the production one hour before it begins for a fifteen minute training session and for a half hour debriefing following the event. They should be persons who can follow the guidelines given, lead the discussion without dominating it, help others to talk but not force them if they are uncomfortable doing so, listen well and be friendly without being overbearing. In general they should be good hosts.
- Be sure bulletin announcement (PP#28) are in the bulletin(s) for this week.
- Be sure flyer (PP#29) is prominently displayed throughout the community.
- Make sure prayer team instructions (PP#30) are in the bulletin(s) this week
- Be sure the second press release (PP#31) gets into the local paper(s) this week.
- Be sure half page informational bulletin insert (PP#32) are in bulletin(s) this week.
- The pastor should read pulpit announcement (PP#33) in all worship services this week.
- Have a prayer time at the altar for this event at some time during worship this week.

; 2nd Sunday Before the Production

- Check on all previously assigned tasks and make sure everything is on schedule.
- Send out prayer card (PP#34) to prayer team members.
- Include flyer (PP#35) in this week's bulletins.
- Make sure flyer (PP#35) is prominently displayed throughout the community.
- Make sure prayer team instructions (PP#36) are in the bulletin(s) this week.
- Do skit (PP#37) in all worship services this week.
- Be sure this event is prayed for during each worship service this week.

; The Last Sunday Before the Production

- Check on all previously assigned tasks and make sure all details are in place.
- Expect the cast and crew of "Let Ralph Do It" to begin arriving at least four hours before the production. Anyone wishing to help set up would be greatly appreciated. It would be helpful if everything that is moveable would already be removed from the chancel area.
- Be sure half page informational bulletin insert (PP#32) are in bulletin(s) this week.
- Make sure prayer team instructions (PP#38) are in the bulletin(s) this week.
- Be sure pastor leads the church in a special altar time (PP#39) for this event at worship service this week.
- Be sure to thank all the people for their support and hard work and urge them to keep on praying and inviting.
- Any evaluations of the event will be welcome.
- Consider holding a post event celebration in the next week's worship services. Why not celebrate what you learned and experienced as well as numbers?

APPENDIX F

PUBLICITY PACKET

The following items are numbered consecutively beginning with PP#1. They should be used as indicated in the Preparation Check-Off List. This will help insure maximum participation in the event. It is also important to follow this as closely as possible so that the preparation for each of the churches in the study is comparable. You may do more than what is indicated but omitting certain elements of publicity or preparation may obscure the results of the study and make it less valuable to yourselves and other congregations who might benefit from this information.

Feel free to make direct copies of these pages or take them off the enclosed computer disk so you can add in your dates and times.

PP#1

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: MARK YOUR CALENDARS: MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

Do you want your unchurched friends, co-workers, neighbors, relatives and acquaintances to be in heaven with you? Do you find it hard to share your faith with them? Our church is hosting a special, inspirational, fun, and entertaining event designed to reach unchurched people. It is a friendly, sensitive, fun evening of entertainment and refreshments that will hopefully inspire our unchurched guests of honor to want to explore Christianity a little bit further. The evening will be relevant to the world the unchurched live in and avoid some of the “churchy” things that so often make them feel uncomfortable. There will be no hard sells or altar calls. No one will be pushed to do anything at all but enjoy the evening. Because we want to help improve this experience, everyone present will be invited to complete a questionnaire as the evening begins and concludes. A follow-up will be offered but only those who expressly indicate a desire will be contacted. The evening will include a hearty welcome, understanding, love, entertainment, inspiration, an opportunity to share responses to the program, if participants so desire, and some of our world famous desserts.

You could help make an eternal difference in the life of a loved one, friend, co-worker, or acquaintance. All you have to do is get them to come. You can assure those who come that the theme of the evening is how you can have a life that makes a difference in the lives of others. There will be a lot of good entertainment with no gimmicks, no pressure, just a fun, inspirational evening.

You will enjoy this evening, too, but we are so serious about this being for those who identify themselves as not affiliated with or active in any church that your ticket to get in is to bring an unchurched person with you. **Make a list of people you might invite and start praying for them now. The only effective way to get unchurched people to this event is for you to invite them. You can make the difference!**

**YOUR UNCHURCHED FRIENDS, FAMILY, CO-
WORKERS, NEIGHBORS, AND ACQUAINTANCES
WILL BE OUR GUESTS OF HONOR!**

PP#2

(Bulletin announcement eighth week before event)

(Put date and time of production here.) **SAVE THIS TIME
AND DATE. MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!**

Our church is planning a special surprise event for your unchurched neighbors, friends, loved ones, and acquaintances. It will be a fun and inspirational, hassle and pressure free evening of entertainment complete with some of our famous desserts. You will not want to miss this great time. Your ticket to get in is to bring a person who identifies himself or herself as not identified with or active in any local church. Start praying and asking God to show you whom to invite now.

PP#3

Rawls?

PP#4

(Pulpit announcement–eighth week before event)

Be sure to save (insert date and time of event). In case you have not heard, we will be holding a special surprise event where your unchurched friends, loved ones, neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances will be the guests of honor. Start praying now about whom God would like you to invite. If you are willing to commit to praying for this event for five minutes a day for the next eight weeks, please put the “Prayer Team Commitment Card” found in your bulletins in the offering plate. Thank you for making Jesus happy by reaching out to those who are not yet a part of His Kingdom.

PP#5

(Prayer Team Commitment Card)

I am willing to pray for five minutes each day for the next eight weeks for a special event for unchurched persons as directed by bulletin announcements and letters.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ - _____

PP#6

(Bulletin announcement 7th week before event)

(Put date and time of production here.)

DO NOT MISS THIS GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO INVITE YOUR UNCHURCHED FRIENDS TO A SPECIAL EVENING JUST FOR THEM.

Our church is planning a special surprise event for your unchurched neighbors, friends, loved ones, and acquaintances. It will be a fun and inspirational, hassle and pressure free evening of entertainment complete with some of our famous desserts. You will not want to miss this great time. Your ticket to get in is to bring a person who identifies him or herself as not identified with or active in any local church. Start praying and asking God to show you whom to invite now. If you have not signed up to be on the prayer team for this event, just ask the usher for a sign-up card, complete it, and put it in the offering plate. Prayer is the key to this wonderful opportunity.

PP#7

**Who's
supper?**

PP#8

(Prayer team instructions for bulletin 7th Sunday)

Prayer Team Instructions for week 7: Please pray for our church members to have a passion for those who have no church home and for all of us to invite our unchurched friends, neighbors, loved ones, co-workers, and acquaintances.

PP#9

(Secret for preparation team to leak to key information sharers. Those sharing this secret should do it in ways so that it will be spread. It is important for them to create a curiosity in the mind of the hearer.)

The secret is; **“Ralph is coming to our church.”**

(If people want to know more, keep them in suspense for a couple of weeks and share a little more information later.)

PP#10

(1st Press Release, week 7)

Are you looking for a way your life could be more meaningful and make a difference in the lives of others? Would you enjoy a free, no hassle, no pressure evening of entertainment, inspiration and fun, topped off with a great homemade dessert? Are you currently not a part of or active in a church? If your answer to all three of the above questions is “yes,” you would enjoy the special surprise evening at the _____ Church, _____ (address), _____ (time) on _____ (date). We would like you to come and be our guest of honor. Watch the paper, look for flyers, listen to your friends, or call the church at _____ (phone number) for more details. Call the church if you need babysitting for the evening.

PP#11

(Pulpit announcement 7th Sunday before the event.)

It is not too late to sign up to be on the prayer team for the surprise event we are having for unchurched people. Your prayers will make the difference in how many people are reached by this exciting evening of fun and inspiration. No matter how old, active, or involved you are, you can be a prayer team member. All it requires is a willingness to pray five minutes a day for the next seven weeks. All of us can do that. Just ask the usher for a sign-up card if you do not have one.

We all can start praying right now for God to give us guidance over whom He wants us to invite to this surprise evening. The unchurched person you invite to this surprise evening will be a lot more likely to come if you have built a trusting relationship with him or her first. Most people need to see our faith works for us before they are willing to hear about it.

PP#12
(First prayer team letter, week 6)

Date

Re: "Your opportunity to pray"

Dear _____, (Prayer Team Member)

Friend, you have volunteered to pray for the success of our church's effort to reach unchurched people through a special event at _____ (time) on _____ (date). Your prayers and the invitations of our people are the most important elements of our successfully reaching out to persons through this surprise evening of fun, dessert, entertainment, and inspiration. You have agreed to be on the front lines by praying for this event for five minutes a day for the last two and the next six weeks. Please continue to pray daily for more people to invite unchurched persons to come and for those invited.

We have enclosed the names of those unchurched friends, loved ones, co-workers, neighbors, and acquaintances of church people indicating they are planning to be our guests of honor at our special event for them. Please pick a few of these names each day and pray that God will remove any obstacles to their attendance, that they might say yes to the invitation, that they would be blessed for attending, and that they would want to make deeper exploration of the Christian faith. (List of names of unchurched persons.)

Your prayers are of critical importance to the success of this event. Continue praying as you are directed by the bulletin announcements, upcoming letters, and as the Spirit leads you. You are already making a difference. Thank you again.

In the name of and for the glory of Jesus Christ,

(Signed by pastor(s) and preparation team members)

PP#13

***Let Ralph
Do It!***

PP#14

(Pulpit Announcement 6th Sunday before event)

Today you will find a slip of paper with numbers on both halves. Beside these numbers we would like you to put the names of your unchurched friends, co-workers, loved ones, neighbors, and acquaintances whom you feel God is calling you to invite to be our guests of honor at an event just for them. Please write the same names on both sides of your slip of paper, tear it where it says "tear," put one in the collection plate, and keep the other with your Bible or where you do your daily devotions so you remember to pray for these folks. Remember this evening of fun, entertainment, and inspiration will be _____ (time) on _____ (date).

PP#15
(Invitation prayer slips for bulletin on the 6th Sunday)

I intend to pray for and invite
the following unchurched persons
to be my guest at our special
event in their honor.

(tear here)
.
.
.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

I intend to pray for and invite
the following unchurched persons
to be my guest at our special
event in their honor.

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4
-

PP#16
(Second Newsletter Announcement)

News Flash!

The big news is that our special event for unchurched people on _____ (date) at _____ (time) is a video interactive drama entitled "Let Ralph Do It." This production is the story of Hobe Albright. Hobe was a normal man whom God used in extraordinary ways. He was a World War II pilot who flew 88 missions over Germany. God spared him when many of his comrades were lost. He always felt a need for his life to make a difference because of that experience. Not so much because of talents or gifts, but because of a caring and willing spirit, he was used to help start the Walk to Emmaus, prison and feeding ministries, and to help thousands of people in ways that touched their lives forever. The play features James McClarey, Sr. playing Hobe and Larry Hembrough as James Chubb an eighteenth century Englishman whom God has sent to meet Hobe at the gates of heaven. The two interact with vignettes from Hobe's life. The drama/media event is written and being produced as a part of a doctoral thesis on reaching unchurched persons. All those in attendance will be invited to fill out a questionnaire before and after the production. The performance is designed to be funny, inspirational, entertaining, and appealing to the unchurched without including anything that would exclude or turn off the unchurched guests of honor. It will conclude with a discussion and dessert time featuring a table discussion and a question and answer period with the actors and some of our world famous homemade desserts. It is hoped that attendance at this event will encourage the unchurched guests of honor to take a further look at the possibility of the Christian faith.

You will not want to miss this great experience. Your ticket to get in is to bring an unchurched friend with you. You could make an eternal difference for your unchurched friends simply by inviting them to come to the evening designed just for them.

PP#17
(Bulletin Announcement 5th Sunday Before Event)

RALPH'S COMING HERE!

PP#18

**RALPH'S
COMING!**

(PUT DATE IN BIG LETTERS HERE)

PP#19

Prayer Team Instructions for week 7: Please continue to pray for the names you were sent this week.

PP#20

(Church Wide Mailing To Be Sent After 5th Sunday Before Event.)

Church Heading

Date

Dear _____,

You probably already know that our church is hosting a video interactive play especially designed for unchurched persons on _____ (date) at _____ (time). Have you ever wanted to invite someone you know to church but were afraid it just wouldn't be relevant to them? Research tells us that people who do not have a church home still care about having a life that makes a difference. "Let Ralph do It" is the story of Hobe Albright. Hobe was a normal man whom God used in extraordinary ways to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people. He was a World War II pilot who flew 88 missions over Germany. God spared him when many of his comrades were lost. He always felt a need for his life to make a difference because of that experience. Hobe was not overwhelmingly talented, but because of a caring and willing spirit he was used to help start the Walk to Emmaus, prison and feeding ministries, and to help thousands of people in ways that touched their lives forever. The whole event is designed to make unchurched people feel comfortable and welcome and to avoid things that would turn them off. Those in attendance will not be asked to come to an altar, give their names, make a donation, or do anything they do not want to do. It will be a fun and inspirational evening capped off with a discussion period and some great desserts. The unchurched persons who attend this event will be our guests of honor.

Unchurched people are not very likely to come to this event unless someone that they know, like you, invites them. Jesus loves our unchurched friends as much as He does us. He literally died so they might come to know Him as Lord and Savior. The truth is those outside the church are not likely to come to any one event and instantly become a Christian. This event is designed to be the critical first step for some. Our church will offer _____ (give a brief description of the follow-up program the church has chosen) as a follow-up for those who expressly indicate an interest. Their anonymity will be carefully preserved. All those in attendance will be invited to fill out an anonymous questionnaire before and after the production to help us evaluate the effectiveness of this program and make improvements.

You will not want to miss this great experience. Your ticket to get in is to bring an unchurched friend with you. You could make an eternal difference for your unchurched friends simply by inviting them to come to the evening designed just for them. For the last several weeks you have been asked to pray for God to bring to your mind someone to invite to this event. The people you invite are a lot more likely to come if you have already shown them you are truly interested in them. As you pray about the persons God wants you to invite, here are some things you will want to do.

- Be their friend first.
- Be interested in them and listen to them. Do not be a salesperson, be a friend.
- Find points of common interest.
- Be willing to be a part of their world, even if it means giving up something you would rather do. (Remember Jesus)
- Genuinely care about them.
- Commit to being their friend and caring for the long haul.
- Pray for them on a daily basis.
- Do not be pushy about your faith. Pray for God to make you sensitive to the right moment to invite them to “Let Ralph Do It” or to share your faith. Do not be in a hurry.
- Know and live what you believe. Nothing turns off unchurched people more than phonies.

- ❑ Continue to be a friend no matter what.
- ❑ Send the person you invite one of the personalized invitations provided by the church.

Be sure those you invite know there will be good child care if they need it. Be sure they understand you will be going with them and staying with them throughout the evening. If at all possible, pick them up and have them over for supper or take them out before the event. Give yourself plenty of time to be at the church early. Be honest. Let them know they will be asked to fill out a questionnaire before and after the event to help us evaluate the event so we can improve in the future. Let them know this night is for them, and it is a privilege for you to be their host. Make it light and fun. Enjoy it yourself. Make him or her your priority just like someone once did for you.

Thank you for your participation. You are the salt of the earth. We are going to have a great time together on _____ (date). Please send in or call the number you intend to bring (including yourself) so we have an idea how many desserts to prepare. We also need the number and ages of those requiring child care. Thank you again.

Yours in Christ's Service,

(Pastor's name and hand signed signature.)

PP#21 (Skit for 5th Sunday before Event)

“What's This All About?”

(This skit is designed for the church chancel. The only set is an easel or music stand with the flyer “Ralph's Coming!” taped on it so the congregation can see. Madge, who is carrying a shopping bag, stops to look at the flyer. Sue, also carrying a shopping bag, spies Madge and stops to visit. The impact of the skit will be much greater if the actors memorize their parts and practice them together. The roles in the skit can be changed to men or a man and a woman.)

Pastor: There are all kinds of rumors going around about Ralph. Let's listen in and see if we can find out what the word is on the street.

Sue: Madge, how good to see you. What are you doing?

Madge: Oh, I was shopping, and I just stopped to look at this flyer. Do you know anything about this Ralph stuff? I keep seeing these flyers, and I guess it has really got my curiosity going.

Sue: As a matter of fact I do. You do not go to church anywhere do you?

Madge: No, as if that had anything to do with the price of beans in China.

Sue: I'm sorry. I did not mean that to sound like an accusation. It is just that our church decided we wanted to do a better job at reaching out to people like you who do not have a church home. We decided to do something about it, so we invited Ralph to come.

Madge: I should have known it would be some religious deal. Nothing really exciting ever happens in this town.

Sue: Actually I think it is pretty exciting. We decided to invite people like you to be our guests of honor at a special video interactive play, "Let Ralph Do It," where two live actors respond to video clips. It is meant to be a fun, entertaining, no hassle, no pressure evening. The play is the story of a man named Hobe Albright and his best friend, Ralph. It has some religion in it but its main point is that your life can make a difference. You want your life to make a difference, don't you, Madge?

Madge: I just want to survive.

Sue: Yeah, me too! But when it is all said and done, I would like the obituary to say something more than, "Here lies Sue. She survived, until now." Really, Madge, it is going to be a fun evening. There is no cost and you remember Mabel's pie you like so well at the fair last year? I have it on good authority she is making a half dozen of them for the dessert time afterwards. I am going to be honest with you. We are hoping everyone who comes will fill out an unsigned questionnaire before and after the play to help us evaluate the event but other than that we aren't asking for anything. Why don't you and Bill come over to our place for supper that night and go with us? We had so much fun the last time we got together. The church has babysitters all lined up. I promise there will not be any pressure to join the church or anything like that.

Madge: I don't know ...

Sue: You are coming over to work on ceramics Tuesday. You think about it and talk to Bill. We'll discuss it more then. But remember how are you going to know who Ralph is unless you come?

(Madge shakes her head and smiles and the two ladies walk off together.)

Pastor: Well! Now you know the secret! We want to encourage you to keep praying and inviting to our drama/media event “Let Ralph do It.” We are very excited to have this professional production coming to our church and even more excited to have an opportunity to reach out to the unchurched of our area. Remember that there may be someone out there that only you can get to come. Ask God to show you who that person might be. Pray for God to open the door for just the right moment to invite him or her and then go for it.

PP#22
(Second Prayer team letter, week 4)

Date _____

Re: “Continued need for your prayers”

Dear _____, (Prayer Team Member)

Thank you for your prayers for the success of “Let Ralph Do It.” Enclosed are names of more people that our members and friends intend to invite to this important event. Please add these to the list you already have and continue to pray for some by name each day that God will open them to say “yes” to attending this event if the time is right for them. Also, please persist in prayer for our people to be encouraged and willing to continue to invite their unchurched friends, neighbors, co-workers, family, and acquaintances. Ask God to help everyone inviting to follow the suggestions in the letter that was sent to all our local members and friends. Remember in prayer the cast and crew of the production—Jim McClarey, Larry Hembrough, Joel and Donna Catlin, and their equipment and vehicles as they will be doing four productions in four days. Finally pray for an especially warm and loving atmosphere to permeate our church throughout the production and its preparation period.

In the name of and for the glory of Jesus Christ,

(Signed by pastor(s) and preparation team members)

PP#23
(Bulletin Announcement 4th Sunday before Event)

WHAT DOES RALPH DO?

PP#24

WHAT
DOES
RALPH
DO?

DATE _____ TIME _____

AT _____

PP#25
**(Prayer Team Instructions for
 4th Sunday before Event)**

Prayer Team Instructions for week 7: Please continue to pray for the names you have been sent. Plead with God for our people to take the opportunity they have to invite people to “Let Ralph Do It.” Entreat God to help those inviting to know when and how to share the invitation.

PP#26
**(Anonymous Postcard for Key Information Spreaders
 4th Week before Event)**

**RALPH MAKES A
 DIFFERENCE!**

PP#27
(Skit for 5th Sunday before Event)

(Before the skit a small table or TV tray should be preset at which the pastor will sit. Cards and pencils should be preset for him or her to throw at appropriate times. It will be good to get the youth group involved in doing this. The parts can be read but will have more impact if they are memorized. Rehearsing the skit several times will make it go more quickly and increase its effectiveness.)

Pastor: Many of you have been inviting people to come to our production of “Let Ralph Do It.” Could we have everyone who has invited someone to this stand, please? (People stand.) Let’s give them all a round of applause. Your invitations may just be the first step in some of your friends, neighbors, co-workers, family, and acquaintances coming to know Christ as their Lord and Savior. You can make a difference! We all have an awesome opportunity to keep on praying, believing, and inviting. Of course some modes of invitation are much more effective than others. (Pastor moves to table and takes the role of TV talk show host.) Our top ten list

tonight is ... (Looks at organist or keyboard player.) Pauline (or Paul if a man) could you give us a little intro please?

(Musician provides a little uptake.)

Pastor: Our top ten list tonight is ... The top ten ways not to invite someone to “Let Ralph Do It.” Here we go ... Top ten ways not to invite someone to “Let Ralph Do It.” NUMBER 10 ...

(Musical Ad-lib) (The numbers can be presented by anyone. One person may read more than one but the more people and the greater variety in age, gender, etc. the better) (Ad-libs or changes are OK in this skit. Make it creative and fun!)

Number 10: If you don’t come I am going to tell my mommy on you.

Pastor: (Throws card, crashing noise if possible) Woo ... bringing out the big guns already ... NUMBER 9 ...

(Musical ad-lib)

Number 9: Hey, if you come, I’ll give you \$20 bucks.

Pastor: Big money for the big show, here we go ... NUMBER 8 ... (Organist or keyboard player has fallen asleep.) Hey, Paul (or Pauline) you haven’t got that new show on the Turner network yet. Let’s get with it!

(Musical ad-lib)

Number 8: (Singing badly) I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together, please come to the play and we will be ... (stumbling, speaking) ah, ah, happy, (singing) forever. (Number 8 stands there and keeps taking bows)

Pastor: No substitute for talent is there. And that includes you. (Throws pencil ... crashing sound if possible. Turns to Ushers.) OK, get them out of here ... (Ushers come and take off Number 8.) Let’s see if we can’t pick it up a bit now. NUMBER 7 ...

(Musical ad-lib)

Number 7: Please, please, pretty please, you just gotta, please, come on, please, pretty please. If you don’t come, I’ll hold my breath until I turn blue ...

Pastor: The old ‘hold your breath until you turn blue’ trick. It works for me. How do you think I got the big money. Melts those Staff Parish Teams every time ... OK Paul (or Pauline) ... NUMBER 6 ...

(Musical ad-lib)

Number 6: Hey, if you come you might win the raffle for an all expense paid vacation to beautiful Branson, Missouri where you will be our guests at ... (Pastor interrupts.)

Pastor: Not in the United Methodist Church, friend! (Throws card—crashing sound.) No raffles, get it? And now for NUMBER 5 ...

(Musical ad-lib)

Number 5: Come on. The only way I can get in is if I bring an unchurched person and all the other unchurched people I know said no.

Pastor: Nothing like tact. (Throws pencil – nothing happens – gives musician dirty look – late sound effect) Moving right along ... NUMBER 4 ...

Number 4: Yes really, one more notch on my Bible, and I get a BINGO ...

Pastor: OK ... NUMBER 3 ...

Number 3: The flames of Hell will burn forever, a fire from which no one can escape and that is where you are going if you don't come to the play ...

Pastor: Ouch! (Throws pencil—spooky musical adlib) We are about there ... NUMBER 2 ...

Number 2: If you come I will give you my brand new Bass Boat.

Pastor: Where do I sign up. Here it is folks, the #1 way NOT to invite someone to "Let Ralph Do It." NUMBER 1 ...

Number 1: (Big, strong looking person points finger and yells.) This is your last chance. Come to the play or die ...

Pastor: (stands and moves toward the congregation) Well, you probably won't die if you don't come to "Let Ralph Do It," but your invitation to a loved one or a friend may be the one thing that can start them on the path towards Jesus Christ and everlasting life. That is why this is so important. Is there anyone who has invited an unchurched person to the event and they actually have already said "yes?" (If anyone says they have, ask them the following question.) Could you tell us how you invited them? (After they respond, ask the congregation.) What are some of the things you should do before you invite someone? (You are looking for things from the letter like, "be their friend, listen, commit to care no matter what, plan to pick them up and take them to dinner if possible," etc.) What might you want to do no matter

how they respond? (You are looking for things like “continue to pray for them, be their friend, be there for them, do not give up on them, trust God to open the right door at the right time.”) Finally, what are some appropriate ways we might bring up attending “Let Ralph Do It” with our unchurched neighbors, friends, acquaintances, co-workers and family? (Allow the congregation to brainstorm on this for a minute or two.)

PP#28

(Bulletin Announcement 3rd Sunday before Event)

WHAT DID RALPH DO FOR HOBE?

(Include date, time, & location)

Please call (church ph #) for reservations including those needing child care.

PP#29

HOW DID

RALPH HELP

HOBE MAKE A

DIFFERENCE?

FIND OUT: DATE: TIME:

LOCATION:

PP#30

(Prayer Team Instructions for 3rd Sunday before Event)

Prayer Team Instructions for week 7: Please continue to pray for the names you have been sent. Pray for all the technical aspects of the production and for the preparations for the event. Ask that more of our people will be led to invite someone to “Let Ralph Do It.” Entreat God to help those inviting to know when and how to share the invitation.

PP#31

(2nd Press Release, week 3)

RALPH IS COMING!

Are you wondering who RALPH is and how he can help your life make a difference? Would you enjoy a free, no hassle, no pressure evening of entertainment, inspiration, and fun, topped off with a great homemade dessert? Are you currently not a part of or active in a church? If your answer to all three of the above questions was “yes,” you would enjoy the special evening where you are the guest of honor at the _____ Church, _____ (address), _____ (time) on _____ (date).

The entertainment for the evening will be the video interactive play “Let Ralph Do It.” This production is the true story of Hobe Albright. Hobe was a normal man who made a big difference in a lot of people’s lives. As a World War II pilot Hobe who flew 88 missions over Germany. One night when he was drunk, a friend took his bombing raid for him. The friend never came home. Hobe always felt a need for his life to make a difference because of that experience. Not so much because of talents or gifts, but because of a secret Hobe discovered, he was able to touch the lives of thousands. Even though he is dead, his life goes on making a difference. This professional video interactive drama features two live actors creatively interacting with video clips. James McClarey portrays Hobe, and Larry Hembrough is James Chubb. Together these two fine actors will make you laugh and cry as they tell you the story of Hobe’s life and his best friend Ralph. Who is Ralph? You will have to come to the play to find out. Those in attendance will be invited (but not required) to fill out an unsigned questionnaire before and after the production to help evaluate it and make improvements in future efforts. The experience will conclude with a discussion and dessert time featuring a table discussion, a question and answer period with the actors, and some world class homemade desserts.

You will not want to miss this great experience. Please call the church at _____ to reserve a seat and let us know the names and ages of those for whom you need free child care. No hassles, no gimmicks, just a special evening where you are the guest honor.

PP#32

(Bulletin Insert for 3rd and Last Sundays before Event)

Let Ralph Do It

The big news is that our special event for unchurched people on _____ (date) at _____ (time) is a video interactive drama entitled “Let Ralph Do It.” This production is the story of Hobe Albright. Hobe was a normal man who God used in extraordinary ways. He was a World War II pilot who flew 88 missions over Germany. God spared him when many of his comrades were lost. He always felt a need for his life to make a difference because of that experience. Not so much because of talents or gifts, but because of a caring and willing spirit, he was used to help start the Walk to Emmaus, prison and feeding ministries, and to help thousands of people in ways that touched their lives forever. The play features James McClarey, Sr. playing Hobe and Larry Hembrough as James Chubb, an eighteenth century Englishman whom God has sent to meet Hobe at the gates of heaven. The two interact with vignettes from Hobe’s life. The drama/media event is written and being produced as a part of a doctoral thesis on reaching unchurched persons. All those in attendance will be invited to fill out a questionnaire before and after the production. The performance is designed to be funny, inspirational, entertaining, and appealing to the unchurched without including anything that would exclude or turn off the unchurched guests of honor. It will conclude with a

discussion and dessert time featuring a table discussion and a question and answer period with the actors and some of our world famous homed desserts. It is hoped that attendance at this event will encourage the unchurched guests of honor to take a further look at the possibility of the Christian faith. Please be sure to call in your reservations to the church ahead of time so we can have excellent child care and lots of desserts for everyone.

You will not want to miss this great experience. Your ticket to get in is to bring an unchurched friend with you. Please be praying for the person you have invited or God is leading you to invite. It is not too late! You could make an eternal difference for your unchurched friends simply by inviting them to come to the evening designed just for them.

PP#33

(Pulpit Announcement for 3rd Week before Event)

“Let Ralph Do It” is almost here. In case you have missed the articles, flyers, skits, letters, announcements, and other publicity about this incredible opportunity to invite your unchurched friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and family to be a guest of honor at an

evening just for them, we have included a detailed flyer in this morning's bulletin. Check it out! Remember, your ticket to the professional video interactive drama "Let Ralph Do It" is to bring an unchurched friend. Everyone who has invited someone to this program, please stand. (People stand.) Let's give them a big round of applause. For sure folks, they are not likely to come unless you invite them. It is not too late. It will be a great evening for all of us and perhaps a new beginning for someone you care about. Do not forget to call in your reservations.

PP#34

(Card for Prayer Team Members 2nd Week before Event)

Dear _____,

Thank you for your dedication to praying for “Let Ralph Do It.” We are in the home stretch of this very important race. Do not quit now. Please keep praying for all the names we have sent you and anyone else you can think of. Also pray for the cast and crew of the production, those setting up, cooking, greeting, ushering and all the details and technical aspects of the preparation and production. Please pray for people to keep inviting and especially pray for God’s Spirit to be on all of this that it may all be for the glory of the Lord.

In Christ,

(Prep team members and pastor’s signature)

PP#35

How can Ralph

help you make a

difference?

COME & SEE—

Date:

Time:

Place:

PP#36

(Prayer Team Instructions for 2nd Sunday before Event)

Prayer Team Instructions for week 7: Please continue to pray for the names you have been sent. Pray for all the technical aspects of the production and for the preparations for the event. Ask that more of our people will be led to invite someone to “Let Ralph Do It.” Entreat God to help those inviting to know when and how to share the invitation. Pray that we make a strong finish and that God will be honored by our efforts.

PP#37

(Skit for Worship 2nd Sunday before Event)

(The effectiveness of this skit will be greatly increased if the lines are memorized, and it is well rehearsed.)

Pastor: “Let Ralph Do It” is almost here. It would be easy to let off or give up but remember your invitation to an unchurched friend, neighbor, co-worker, family member, or acquaintance could make all the difference. Let’s listen in to Sue and Sam as they have just gotten home from church today.

(Sam is sitting in a chair reading the Sunday paper, and Sue is looking through the bulletin.)

Sue: Well, the play “Let Ralph Do It” is coming next week. I wonder if it really will make a difference?

Sam: Yeah, the pastor and the preparation team have sure put a lot of effort into it. I hope it’s not costing too much.

Sue: Actually the play doesn’t cost the church anything; they are funded by a grant or something. The church’s biggest expense is the time and effort we have put it into preparing for it.

Sam: Good!

Sue: I guess it’s up to us.

Sam: (Not paying attention—still reading paper) Uh, huh.

Sue: Up to us to do our part by inviting those we can who don’t go to church. I got Madge to come, even though Bill said no. Bill is your best friend. Did you ever ask him to come yourself?

Sam: We have been through that before. Bill is a great guy but I have invited him to

church and he is just not interested. He is not really opposed to Jesus or the basics of Christianity but he was turned off by church as a little kid and he does not want to be preached to.

Sue: Bill is a great guy. Do you think being a great guy is enough to get him into heaven?

Sam: You are trying to trap me.

Sue: Not really, but what would it hurt if you gave him a call and asked him to come? He probably doesn't realize that this is an evening of fun and inspiration, designed for people just like him. Yes, the Christian message will be presented, but in a very subtle and non-preachy way and he loves Mabel's pie. You know what a huge difference it made for us and our marriage when we trusted our lives to Jesus. This could be a first step for Bill and Madge.

Sam: You are trying to trap me ... and I think it's working. I guess it couldn't hurt to give Bill a call. I mean the worst thing that could happen is that he will say no. Could you hand me the phone? (Sue hands Sam the cordless.)

Sam: (Dials phone) Hey Bill,... I am fine, how are you?... Look Bill, I was wondering if I could talk you into going with Madge and Sue and I to this play at church.... I know you don't like church but this play isn't real churchy. I mean I am sure it will talk about Jesus and stuff like that, but the main theme is that our lives can make a difference. All of us want a life that means something, that makes a difference, right? ... Sure you do Bill, look at the way you are with your kids, you are making a difference right now. The church ladies are serving Mabel's pie afterwards.... No, it's free.... No altar calls or anything like that. The only thing we are asking is that you fill out a questionnaire before and after the play to help us evaluate what we are doing, and you don't even have to do that if you don't want.... Look, you and the family come on over to our house at 5:15 on (date of your performance), and Sue will fix your favorite ham and beans. Don't worry about the kids, there is child care at the church.... Sure, they will have somebody there to watch the baby. Bill junior is twelve he would probably enjoy the play.... We will call and let the church know how many kids to prepare for.... Not a problem, Thank you ... See you (day of production). (Sam hangs up phone and speaks to Sue.) Well, that wasn't so bad after all....

Pastor: Now imagine it is (date of production) and Sam and Sue have just gotten home from "Let Ralph Do It."

Sue: Thank you, Honey, for going to this tonight. I am so glad I am married to you.

Sam: Thank you, Babe. I am the blessed one to have a wife like you. That play was great. I don't know how those two guys remembered all those lines and the

way they interacted with the video was really cool. I have to admit I was touched. With Ralph's help maybe even I can make a difference, and I can hardly believe that without any pressure Bill and Madge chose to sign up for the follow up program the church is offering.

Sue: Sam, you are already making a difference. We don't know for sure, but wouldn't it be neat if this is the first step for Madge and Bill? How would you feel if Bill came up to you one day in heaven and said, "You know I wouldn't be here if you hadn't invited me to that play?" I am proud of you.

Pastor: That did not seem difficult did it? It's not too late. You can make a difference. Why not invite someone to "Let Ralph Do It" today?

PP#38

(Prayer Team Instructions for Last Sunday before Event)

Prayer Team Instructions for week 7: This is it! The finish line is in sight. Please keep praying as you have been. Remember especially to pray for God to be glorified and for lasting fruit from our efforts.

PP#39
(Suggested Outline for Closing Altar Time
the Last Sunday before the Event)

1. Pastor asks all the people who are able that have invited someone to “Let Ralph Do It” to come forward.
2. Pastor thanks them and tells them that what they have done is extremely important and to not worry if they do not see any immediate fruit. God has a way of letting one plant seeds, another water, and another harvest.
3. Pastor thanks everyone for all their help to bring us to this point.
4. Pastor invites all people that are willing to come to the altar and pray for “Let Ralph Do It.”
5. Pastor asks people to thank God for all his blessings bringing us this far.
6. Pray for actors and crew of the production.
7. Pray for child care givers, the ushers, the preparation team, those responsible for set up and desserts and anyone else that is helping.
8. Pray for a blessing on all those who are inviting or have invited people to come.
9. Pray for those invited to come.
10. Pray for God to bring to all our minds anyone else that we should be inviting (pause).
11. Pray for God to give us the courage and wisdom to know just how to offer the invitations.
12. Pray for the follow up event the church has chosen.
13. Pray for a great harvest.
14. Pray for God to be glorified through all our efforts.

APPENDIX G

Pastor's Letter

July 7, 2000

Re: "Let Ralph Do It"

Dear Rev. _____,

Thank you for your willingness to have your congregation be a part of the test group for the drama/media event, "Let Ralph Do It." A description of the entire event is enclosed with this letter. This drama/media event was conceived and is being produced in partial fulfillment of the dissertation requirements of the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary.

"Let Ralph Do It" is designed to be a tool for churches to use to attract unchurched persons. The focus is on those outside the church and not those inside. The unchurched persons who attend the production should be treated as guests of honor. Church members and constituents will need to be trained and encouraged to invite their unchurched friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances. The "ticket" for church members and constituents to attend the production will be bringing an unchurched person with them.

The production comes to your congregation free of charge, but each church in the study is asked to follow the enclosed guidelines. Adherence to these guidelines will help ensure two very important things. The first is the best possible turn out and response for your congregation, and the second is consistency of preparation between the churches in the study. This consistency will allow for valid comparisons between the congregations in the study. The hope is that these comparisons will enable the findings to be helpful to many congregations who desire to better reach the unchurched.

The enclosed guidelines ask each church in the study to offer desserts for those in attendance after the production. The desserts will be shared during a discussion time to be held in small table groupings of about eight. Each table grouping will have a leader provided by the host church to facilitate the discussion. These table leaders should come from those who are committed to bring an unchurched guest. I will train the table leaders in a short meeting that will begin about an hour before the production starts. This will allow participants to enjoy some of those wonderful Methodist delights and a follow up discussion in pleasant surroundings. As a part of the requirements for my dissertation I will need to meet with the table leaders for about one half hour after the production.

Churches in the study are asked to follow a weekly countdown for the various elements of the production. The countdown is also included with this letter. The timeline contains instructions for a "word of mouth" publicity campaign, sample press releases, flyers, skits, pulpit, newsletter and bulletin announcements, and a church-wide mailing. This is included in a hard copy and on disk for your convenience.

Each church in the study should understand that all non-cast and crew members that attend the event will be invited to fill out questionnaires before and after the production. This will be the primary source for the data that will be evaluated in this research.

The churches that host this production are also asked to help create a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere for the unchurched persons who attend the event. One part of this will be providing outdoor and indoor greeters to welcome the guests as they arrive. Another way churches can help their unchurched guests feel at home is to have secular music playing softly in the background as they arrive and while they complete their questionnaires.

Your church is also asked to recruit volunteers to be a part of a prayer team who will commit to pray daily for this event. This group will not need to be large, but their faithful prayers will likely be a key factor in the success of this event in your congregation.

No one event is likely to instantly turn an unchurched person into a committed follower of Christ and an active church member. The distance between the church and the world most people live in is too far. Many steps are needed along the way for people outside the community of faith to become involved in the Body of Christ. This event is designed to be one of many possible steps in this process. Because the thrust of the production is to help the unchurched consider making a further experiment with Christianity, your church is asked to provide some kind of follow-up for the unchurched persons who demonstrate an interest. A very good follow-up would be the Alpha class. Material about this class is also included with this letter. There is a training event in Chicago in early August if your church is interested.

It is extremely important that unchurched persons who attend events such as “Let Ralph Do It” do not feel manipulated or taken advantage of. One important part of this is guaranteeing their confidentiality. The research in this study will not take any names or in any way breach the anonymity of those who attend the performance or complete the questionnaires. For the same reasons, it will be important that your church only record the names of those who of their own free will expressly indicate a desire to attend the follow-up you are providing. You only need to request a phone number or address and a first name. No pressure should be exerted on those in attendance to behave or respond in any special way.

Thank you for your willingness to be a part of this study. Please know that its intent is to bring more people into the kingdom and thereby glorify our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You are tentatively scheduled for your production at (time) on (date). We will arrive at approximately 1:30-2:00 p.m. to set up the stage, lights, and sound system, and make other preparations. I would like to meet with the table leaders briefly one hour before the starting time of the production. It would be helpful, but is not necessary, to have a light meal for the cast and crew (about 7 persons) approximately two hours before the production. If this is a hardship, let me know, and we will bring food with us. Please use the enclosed self-addressed and stamped envelope to return one of the copies of this letter

with your signature and the date to indicate that you agree with the arrangements outlined in this letter and that the dates and times are correct.

Thank you again for your participation. If you have any questions please call me at (phone numbers inserted here). May it all be for the glory of God.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Joel P. Catlin
11 N. Maple
Winchester, IL 62694

Signature _____ Date _____

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