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## **ABSTRACT**

### **BIBLICAL LITERACY AMONG BABY BUSTERS**

by

**David Clark Moenning**

The purpose of this study was to design, implement, and evaluate a customized approach to cultivating biblical literacy in Baby Busters not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic Bible study, taking into consideration the intellectual and emotional influences shaping the way they encounter, assimilate, and apply Scripture.

This study found that a narratively-organized, experientially-focused, and relationally-based approach was effective in beginning the process of cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters and in motivating them to stay committed to its development in their lives.

**DISSERTATION APPROVAL**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
**BIBLICAL LITERACY AMONG BABY BUSTERS**

presented by

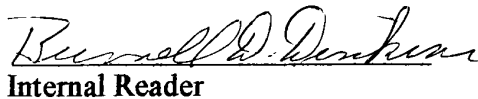
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**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY** degree at  
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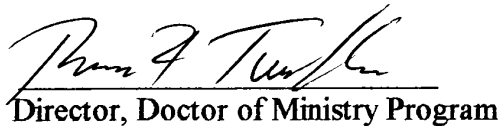
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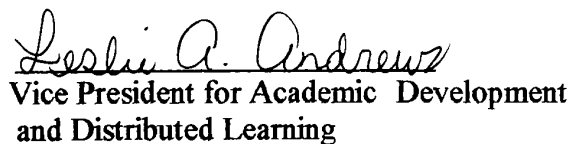
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**A Dissertation**

**Presented to the Faculty of  
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**In Partial Fulfillment**

**Of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Doctor of Ministry**

**by**

**David Clark Moenning**

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## CHAPTER 1

### UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

#### Methodology of the Study

Chris and Charlene, both in their mid-twenties, were newly married, new to the Christian faith, and new to the community in which they were living. At the invitation of a neighbor, they attended a new church meeting in a nearby middle school. Both came from dysfunctional homes and were still feeling the effects of their less-than-ideal upbringing. Their hunger to experience acceptance, belonging, and to make sense of their new faith in Christ caused their paths to cross with the church. The people were friendly and authentic, the music was upbeat and high quality, and they identified with the pastor and the messages he preached. They even began attending one of the church's small groups for Bible study in hopes of getting rooted and growing in their new faith. They felt like they had found a church home where they belonged. After several weeks in the small group, Chris and Charlene's enthusiasm began to wane and before long they stopped attending the small group Bible study. Naturally, their small group leader observed their spiritual "cooling off" and chose to ask them about it. What she discovered through her conversation with Chris and Charlene was that they were seeking a Bible study that would value their personal story and help them identify it with God's story and not simply be inspired by it. They were also longing for a Bible study that could take into account the intellectual and emotional influences and experiences that shaped their lives and that were relevant to them as members of the Baby Buster generation. These findings not only surprised her, but also challenged the church's approach to teaching the Bible and discipling other members of Chris and Charlene's generation.

The preceding scenario would excite and challenge me as the pastor of a new church. I would feel excited to have the opportunity of investing in the spiritual development of a generation of people like Chris and Charlene who are searching and hungering for spiritual purpose and community (Celek and Zander 84-85). I would be challenged by what Long and others have suggested, namely that “Baby Busters are a unique generation of individuals (approximately 46 million in the United States) requiring a different approach as well as specialized strategies and methodologies in order to develop them into biblically literate followers of Jesus Christ” (Generating Hope 183). Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen support this observation when they suggest that

much good can be said about the traditional, propositional approach to discipleship, and that while many churches and para-church organizations have succeeded in equipping their disciples with essential information for living the Christian life (i.e.—memorizing Bible verses, a daily quiet time, practical principles for prayer, and other features of propositional discipleship), we sense among Baby Busters today a searching and longing for something more than solely information-based discipleship.  
(27)

Therefore, the problem this study sought to address was how to customize a Bible study program specifically tailored to account for the intellectual and emotional influences that have shaped Baby Buster’s lives, and how to most effectively cultivate biblical literacy among a generation suggesting that truth is more experiential and subjective rather than absolute?

Developing biblical literacy in Baby Busters is a way of being faithful to Jesus’ command: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20a). Such intentional discipling will aid in the healthy development of a Baby Buster’s new faith. According to George

Barna, Baby Busters are the second largest generation numerically in America, and as such they exceed the national population of all but eleven nations on the face of this earth (Invisible Generation 18). Based on their potential for influence, Baby Busters must be reached for Christ. If after they have been reached they are nurtured in their faith through a program of biblical literacy and developed into committed followers of Jesus Christ, they will be well equipped to carry the banner of Christ into the new millennium.

Customizing an approach to developing biblical literacy among Baby Busters that effectively communicates with them in a relevant fashion must take into account the following factors:

1. Many Baby Busters possess a confused understanding of orthodox Christianity as a result of taking bits and pieces of different worldviews and combining them to create an inaccurate patchwork concept of Christianity. According to Barna

A majority of Baby Busters report at least a nominal Christian upbringing, and as such they feel as though they know what it is all about. Yet, they do not have a deep enough grasp of the faith to mentally piece together the big picture of Christianity, and what that faith might do for them... Consequently, they take bits and pieces of various faiths and blend them together in a personalized, customized brand of religion. They may call it Christianity, but it is not an orthodox brand of the faith (Invisible Generation 30, 176).

Barna also suggests in an interview with Good News magazine that “the churches that have been most effective in combating biblical illiteracy are those that offer ‘systematic theological education’ and not ‘random bits of biblical truth’ that go in one ear and out the other” (35-36). This observation, combined with an intentional effort to take into account the influences that have shaped Baby Busters’ lives (i.e., postmodernism) may contribute significantly to cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters.

2. Many Baby Busters possess a limited “trivial pursuit” knowledge of the Bible.



A survey conducted by Ravitch and Finn on the biblical knowledge of Baby Busters supports this statement (Invisible Generation 160). The research showed that

- 80 percent knew that the biblical account of creation could be found in the book of Genesis;
- 78 percent knew the basic theme of the story of David and Goliath;
- 70 percent knew that Judas was the person who betrayed Jesus Christ;
- 67 percent were able to choose the basic theme of the story of Cain and Abel;
- 61 percent associated Solomon with wisdom;
- 60 percent knew the basic theme of the story of Jonah and the fish;
- 57 percent correctly identified the general content of the tale about the prodigal son;
- 37 percent associated Job with patience; and,
- 33 percent knew the significance of Sodom and Gomorrah.

While this survey indicates that Baby Busters possess a nominal degree of Bible knowledge, it does not mean they know how such Bible knowledge relates to the whole of Scripture.

3. The values and philosophies of Baby Busters have been uniquely shaped by intellectual forces (e.g., postmodernism) and emotional forces (e.g., dysfunctional families). The basic premise of postmodernism is that objective, absolute truth does not exist. Rather, “truth” exists only as a subjective construct based on an individual’s experience. One person’s understanding of what constitutes truth and reality is considered no more valid than another person’s understanding. Several factors constitute

the emotional influence of dysfunctional families on Baby Busters. These would include divorce (between 1960 and 1979 the American divorce rate tripled, and by 1986 the United States had the highest divorce rate in the Western world), blended families as a result of remarriages, abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal), and a decrease in traditional two parent families from 66 percent in 1970, to 57 percent in 1980, to 50 percent in 1991 (Generating Hope 43).

### Background to the Study

In June 1997 I was appointed to the DeLand District in the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church to plant a new church in Deltona, Florida. The name of the church is Pine Ridge Fellowship United Methodist Church (PRF). Deltona is located thirty miles northeast of Orlando, and thirty miles southwest of Daytona Beach. It is a bedroom community to Orlando with a present population of 69,543 people and a projected population growth to 91,945 by the year 2007. The community of Deltona is 97 percent white, with other ethnic groups comprising the remaining 3 percent of the population. The median age of residents is 36.2 years old with one-third of the population being under eighteen years old. PRF is a contemporary, seeker-sensitive church comprised of 345 active participants with a membership of 150. One-third of the congregation is eighteen years old and under, with the remaining two-thirds under the age of sixty with the exception of a few senior adults. Sixty-five percent of those attending PRF were previously unchurched, while 35 percent have come from other denominations. Since the official launch date of the church on 1 February 1998, one-third of the recorded decisions for Christ have been among Baby Busters, amounting to approximately fifty individuals. Of those fifty individuals, less than ten are currently

connected and committed to a consistent Bible study program. This has resulted in Baby Busters who are spiritually malnourished and undeveloped, affecting both the personal spiritual life of the Baby Buster as well as the corporate spiritual life of the PRF faith community. The premise of this study is that our experience at PRF reflects a larger dilemma facing other faith communities as well. Up until September 2001 PRF offered only generic information-based small groups for prayer and Bible study, not customized in method or content to account for the distinctives or diversity of the Baby Buster generation.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to design, implement, and evaluate a customized approach to cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic Bible study program.

The implementation phase of the project occurred over a nine-week period in order to test the design. The nine-week project could only provide the foundation for beginning what is a lifelong journey of encountering the Bible with one's mind and allowing the Bible to encounter one's heart and soul as well. Biblical literacy is not a short-term goal quickly accomplished. Instead it is a steady journey to be embraced and enjoyed over the course of a lifetime.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the research of the study.

#### **Research Question 1**

Did the subjects demonstrate a change in informational literacy over the nine-week Bible study?

### Research Question 2

Did the subjects demonstrate a change in formational literacy over the nine-week Bible study?

### Research Question 3

Did the subjects develop a change in their commitment to participate in an ongoing Bible study program?

### Definition of Terms

Five terms were central to this study: biblical literacy, Bible basics, Baby Busters, postmodern, and postmodernism.

#### **Biblical Literacy**

Mulholland, in Shaped by the Word, distinguishes between two approaches to reading the Bible. Those approaches are informational and formational. Informational reading is focused on the mind and the pursuit of biblical information, while formational reading is focused on the heart and allows the Scripture to shape one's character. While Mulholland distinguishes between the two, he also points out the interplay and balance that must take place between the two approaches. The interplay between the informational and formational approaches to reading the Bible constitute the best definition of biblical literacy; therefore, for the purpose of this study, biblical literacy is the result of a sustained process in which a person encounters Scripture in both an informational (mind-content) and formational (heart-character) respect. The two operate together as an overall developmental process, resulting in persons who can understand Old and New Testament Bible basics, comprehend the biblical narrative, experience how

their individual narrative is associated with it and how it is making a difference in their life.

### **Bible Basics**

Ray Ticknor and Roger Carstensen in their manual, Help Stamp Out Biblical Illiteracy, define Bible basics as knowing the books of the Bible, Old and New Testament personalities, themes associated with the biblical texts, as well as the history and geography of the Bible (7-8). In addition to these, one could also add the structures, genres, contexts and texts. The informational dimension of biblical literacy in this study will be limited to an understanding of these Bible basics as they are related to selected biblical themes and texts.

### **Baby Busters**

According to Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, in their book Inside the Soul of a New Generation, Baby Busters comprise a generation of 46,000,000 Americans ranging in age from eighteen to thirty-six. The term “Buster” not only describes the post-Boomer demographic reality but also describes the attitude of this particular generation. “They feel angry, alone, abandoned, and alienated” (21).

Many Busters have gotten to the point where they feel they can trust only themselves. They feel like they have been cheated by the government, by the economy, by their families, and by previous generations. As a result, they don’t have a lot of faith in institutions: political, religious, or financial (26).

The specific target group of this study was Baby Busters possessing a worldview influenced by postmodernism, and not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic discipling program.

## **Postmodern**

The term “postmodern” primarily refers to time rather than a distinct ideology, according to Gene Edward Veith in Postmodern Times. Most scholars associate the shift from the modern era to the postmodern era with the counterculture of the 1960s, during which time people began to seek freedom from the moral and rational constraints of modernism and be drawn more to the romantic and existential philosophies inherent in postmodernism. Other scholars, such as Thomas Oden, suggest that the shift occurred with the fall of the Berlin wall which, according to Oden, functioned as a symbol of the modern worldview (39-41). Regardless of when the shift actually took place, at the turn of the twenty-first century, all of society is living in a postmodern age. However, not all generations of people living in the postmodern age ascribe to the tenets of postmodernism.

## **Postmodernism**

In contrast to the Enlightenment thinking of modernism, postmodernism is the ideology or philosophy of life which denies the existence of absolute truth, meaning, and individual identity, identifying these as nothing more than social constructs. While postmodern thought represents a major shift from the philosophical basis of modernism, the philosophies of Romanticism and Existentialism (arising out of the Enlightenment thinking of modernism) significantly shape the ideology associated with the postmodern age. According to postmodern thought, the idea of absolute, objective truth is rejected, while subjective experience is elevated as the predominant criteria for determining what is true, thus resulting in relative truth. Postmodernism has been described by Celek and Zander as “a room without walls, a floor, or a ceiling” (50), thus reflecting the anti-

foundational nature of postmodernism and its tendency to avoid foundational judgments regarding truth and meaning. The contradictory nature of postmodernism is well illustrated in that while it claims to be anti-foundational it does ascribe to one absolute foundational judgment—absolute truth does not exist.

### **Design of the Project**

The project of the study was two dimensional in nature, consisting of a weekly Bible study and worship celebration experience, based on the principle of creative redundancy. In Church for the Unchurched, George Hunter writes that, “Because the Christian gospel is a multifaceted gem, no one comprehends the message from one exposure” (165). Applied to the cultivation of biblical literacy in Baby Busters, this means biblical truth needs to be repackaged in multiple, creative ways in order for it to be most effective. The project was conducted over a nine-week period with fourteen Baby Busters not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic Bible study program. The purpose was to begin the process of developing biblical literacy in this group.

Once the fourteen participants were selected as a result of responding to an invitation letter (see Appendix A) to complete a descriptive questionnaire (see Appendix B), each was administered a multiple choice pretest questionnaire on Bible basics (see Appendix C), which was then ranked on the informational literacy scale (see Appendix D). The fourteen subjects were then asked to participate in an entrance interview by me (see Appendix E) and asked to share their individual story and their current understanding of how it was connected to other stories contained in the Bible. This was done for four reasons. First, it provided a bridge of communication and rapport with each participant. Second, it communicated the value of their personal experience. Third, it set

the stage for more fully connecting their story to other related biblical stories, and fourth it gave me insight into the degree of influence and integration that has occurred between the biblical story and their daily living (formational literacy). Following each of the weekly Bible studies, I completed a structured, observation instrument (see Appendix F). Following the project, the subjects were asked to complete a participant evaluation form (see Appendix G). A multiple choice posttest, Bible basics questionnaire, as well as an exit interview by me (see Appendix H), were also administered to each subject. The first dimension of the project involved a researcher-designed weekly Bible study entitled, “Intersections: How Biblical Stories and Themes Connect with Your Life Journey” (see Appendix I). It was two hours in length, conducted at a location away from the local church. The setting was casual, allowing for casual dress attire and the provision of food and soft drinks in order to help create an inviting, non-threatening environment. The New Living Translation served as the primary Bible text during the sessions in addition to the use of media technology where appropriate. The purpose of the Bible study was to take some initial steps toward developing biblical literacy in each participant through a study of biblical stories, related Bible basics, and corresponding theological themes central to the Christian faith and espoused in both the Old and New Testaments. The themes considered over the nine weeks of the project were sin and the fallen human condition, grace, repentance, discipleship, Scripture, the Church universal, evangelism, stewardship, and evil and suffering. The value of using biblical stories in the project to teach Bible basics and the theological themes of Scripture is underscored by Nathan and Wilson in Empowered Evangelicals when they observe that “college students raised in the postmodern mentality are more responsive to the use of biblical parables, stories, and



analogies” (145). The use of such stories and parables served to underscore the propositional teaching present in the Pauline epistles.

Each Bible study gathering had eleven separate movements, with each movement receiving a different allotment of time and emphasis. The eleven movements were as follows.

#### The Gathering and Prayer Time

The purpose of this movement was to foster a spirit of *koinonia* among the group. Sharing in one another’s lives through an informal gathering and intentional prayer time assisted in the development of a community that was supportive, accepting, and authentic.

#### The Modern Movie Parallel

The purpose of this movement was to root and relate the biblical/theological theme into a context and language that was readily accessible and applicable to each of the participants. It assisted me in bridging the relevance gap created by presenting biblical/theological concepts from antiquity to twenty-first century, postmodern Baby Busters.

#### Introduction of the Biblical/Theological theme

The purpose of this movement was to set the stage for each of the two-hour Bible study gatherings. Once the biblical/theological theme had been introduced through the modern movie parallel, a definition of the theme was offered, as well as a relevant quote from a religious author, and a related Scripture passage.

#### The Related Bible Story

The purpose of this movement was to root and relate the biblical/theological

theme to a Bible story. As the participants encountered the particular Bible story, they were hopefully able to relate and identify their personal story to it, as well as to the objective truth contained in it, and thereby to develop an identification and connectedness to the Scripture.

#### The Related Epistle Lesson

The purpose of this movement was to root and relate the biblical/theological theme to its New Testament epistle teaching, and the biblical historical context associated with the particular epistle. This movement also assisted the participants to see the systematic connection among the biblical/theological themes, related biblical narratives, and their related, epistle teaching.

#### The Related Bible Basics

The purpose of this movement was to assist the participants in grasping the books of the Bible, biblical personalities, history, structure, genre, and original context of the biblical text related to the biblical/theological theme.

#### The Break

The purpose of this movement was to allow the participants a time to use the restroom, to get something to eat, and to build community with one another.

#### The Related Issue/Concern

The purpose of this movement was to associate the biblical/theological theme to a modern day issue or concern of a Baby Buster, to assist the participants in understanding the pragmatic nature of the biblical/theological theme, and to discover how it works and applies in the real world.

### The Practical Application

The purpose of this movement was to assist the participants in applying the biblical/theological theme and biblical narrative to their life and to examine how what they believed about the theme could make a difference in their character and behavior.

### The Closing Prayer Time

The purpose of this movement was to experience a time of closure and covenanting among the group participants after each of the Bible study gatherings.

### Priming The Pump

The purpose of this movement was to keep the participants engaged in the discipline of Bible study, and to get them thinking and preparing for the next week's study in advance through pre-assigned Scripture passages.

The second dimension of the project involved attendance at the Sunday worship celebration. The music, message, testimonies, drama, and media technology used in the gathering were organized around the various Bible stories and theological themes featured in the weekly Bible study gathering. For instance, if the theme of the Bible study was grace, the worship celebration would have featured a message developed on this same theme communicated in a culturally relevant fashion.

The goal of the project was to customize an approach to cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters that would keep them consistently engaged with the discipling process and that would take into account the influence of postmodernism on the way they encounter the Bible. Greater detail regarding the methods involved in accomplishing this goal will be provided in the review of literature in this study.

### **Biblical and Theological Foundation**

The value of having a consistent plan for faith development following salvation is underscored in Jesus' parable of the sower recorded in Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23.

“Some (seed) fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root” (Matt. 13:5-6). The seed scattered among the rocky soil represents the danger and demise facing the spiritual well-being of a Baby Buster who, following conversion, is not disciplined and nurtured through ongoing, systematic Bible study. This parable reflects how imperative evangelism and discipleship are in the ministry of the church to reach and disciple Baby Busters for Christ. In the same way that the seeds scattered among the rocky soil had no root system to sustain their growth, so the Baby Buster's new faith will perish if it is not provided a plan for developing a spiritual root system and if the person is not responsive to such a plan.

In his comments on the seed that fell on the good soil, Donald Hagner states that “the good soil is that which receives the seed of the word, which nurtures that seed in discipleship, and which bears fruit in accordance with the pattern of conduct described in the Sermon on the Mount” (33A: 380). Therefore, in order for Baby Busters to develop into biblical literate followers of Jesus Christ and to resemble the seed scattered among the good soil, the local church must exercise a customized, consistent, and systematic Bible study approach on their behalf.

Paul models an incarnational approach to communicating the gospel that informs the methodology required for cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters when he writes

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one 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, 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 persons so that by all possible means I might save some.

(1 Cor. 9:20-22)

In order to reach both the Jew and the Gentile with the gospel message, Paul modeled the incarnation of God to humanity, by “becoming like one under the law, or like one not under the law,” entering into their particular worldview, and connecting with them without compromising the core values of his faith. His commitment to “become all things to all persons so that by all possible means I might save some” is the same commitment necessary in order to cultivate biblical literacy in Baby Busters. We, too, in the local church must indigenize ourselves into the worldview of Baby Busters, connecting with their narrative, experiential, and relational orientation to the Bible, in order to lead and disciple them in biblical truth. We cannot stay perched in our modern worldview and cast biblical truth their way and hope that they will digest it and apply it on their own. We must become one with them, loving and valuing Baby Busters and their faith so much that we will find a way to connect with them without compromising our commitment to the Way in the process.

Greater attention to the biblical and theological foundations of this study will be covered in Chapter 2.

### Methodology

The methodology involved an evaluative study primarily utilizing descriptive measures. The seven measures used include a quantitative descriptive questionnaire; a pretest-posttest, multiple choice, Bible basics questionnaire; qualitative in-person

entrance and exit interviews; as well as a written participant exit evaluation. I also completed structured observation following each weekly session of the project.

### Subjects

Fourteen subjects were involved in this study. Fourteen were selected due to the probability of attrition over the nine-week period, resulting in a few of the participants dropping out of the study. Attrition can occur for any number of reasons, the most common being scheduling conflicts, health issues, or a failure to experience a connection with the Bible study or those participating in the study. For the purpose of this study, I focused on Baby Busters between the ages of eighteen to thirty-six. This increased the probability of ascertaining fourteen subjects and of focusing on individuals most significantly influenced by postmodernism. The selection process involved an invitation letter (see Appendix A) sent to fifty-one potential participants attending Pine Ridge Fellowship describing the purpose of the study and inviting them to complete a descriptive questionnaire (see Appendix B). The fourteen participants were selected based on the results of the descriptive questionnaire and their compatibility to the purpose of the project.

### Variables

Three types of variables pertained to the project. They were independent, dependent, and intervening. The independent variable was the nine-week Bible study—the content, methods, and group dynamics of the project. The dependent variable was the level of biblical literacy in the subjects. The intervening variables were the age, gender, length of time the subjects had been Christians, the religious environment in which they were raised, and the different geographical locations in which they were reared.

According to George Gallup, Jr. and Sarah Jones, in their book 100 Questions and Answers: Religion in America, adults who are located in the Bible belt demonstrate greater knowledge of the Bible (43).

### Instrumentation

As noted above, seven descriptive measures related to the study. The first was a researcher-designed quantitative descriptive questionnaire (see Appendix B) administered to thirty-two Baby Busters attending Pine Ridge Fellowship. The questionnaire was comprised of twenty, multiple choice questions designed to identify fourteen Baby Busters whose worldview had been influenced by postmodernism, and who were not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic Bible study program.

The second measure used in the study was a pretest, multiple choice, Bible basics questionnaire (see Appendix C). It was comprised of forty-eight questions specifically related to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. A researcher-designed, informational literacy scale was used to score the responses of the subjects to the pretest questionnaire (see Appendix D).

The third measure of the study was an entrance interview (see Appendix E) I conducted with the subjects of the project. Questions were asked of each participant as a means of assisting them to tell their story. The entrance interview provided me with an understanding of how well the subjects understood, integrated, and connected biblical stories to their personal story prior to the project.

The fourth measure of the study was a structured, observation instrument (see Appendix F). I used this instrument following each session of the project to record observations and questions related to group dynamics and the subjects' response to the

particular material presented and discussed.

The fifth measure of the study was a written participant evaluation by the subjects (see Appendix G) completed at the close of the project. The written evaluation allowed each subject to reflect on the effectiveness of each dimension of the project, in addition to how well the project fulfilled its desired goal of engaging them in an ongoing Bible study program .

The sixth measure of the study was a posttest, multiple choice, Bible basics questionnaire identical to the pretest questionnaire. It, too, was comprised of forty-eight questions specifically related to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. It measured the subjects' growth related to the informational aspect of biblical literacy following the project. Like the pretest, it, too, was scored using the biblical literacy scale.

The seventh measure of the study was an exit interview I conducted with the subjects of the project (see Appendix H). The exit interview provided insight into the possible growth the subjects may have experienced in their formational literacy following the project in terms of their understanding of the relationship between their story and the biblical narrative.

### **Data Collection**

The data was collected through a quantitative, descriptive questionnaire, a pretest-posttest questionnaire, researcher-conducted entrance and exit interviews, a written, participant evaluation, and a structured, observation instrument.

### **Delimitations and Generalizability**

This study involved five delimiting factors. The first involved my bias as the researcher. As a United Methodist pastor, I chose to limit the study to the United



Methodist denomination within the United States while not exclusively limiting it to participants affiliated with United Methodism. References made to the lack of biblical literacy programs intentionally customized for Baby Busters were limited to this denominational affiliation and were not intended to be generalized beyond the United Methodist church within the United States. The second involved the focus of the study on persons between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six, thus placing them within the generation known as the Baby Busters. Third, the project portion of the study was limited to persons not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic Bible study program. The fourth delimiting factor involved the limitation of the project to a nine-week study of particular biblical and theological themes and related passages in the Old and New Testaments. The fifth delimiting factor involved the size of the small group portion of the project. It was limited to fourteen Baby Busters. Taking into account the probability of attrition among the group, the number of persons involved declined from fourteen to around twelve. Current literature on small group dynamics suggests anywhere from six to twelve persons is an ideal number for a small group (Long, Small Group Leaders Handbook 18).

### **Overview of the Study**

Chapter 2 reviews pertinent literature related to the areas of postmodernism, the Baby Buster generation, and biblical literacy. In addition to detailing the biblical and theological basis for the study, Chapter 2 will also provide the defining characteristics of a design for biblical literacy among Baby Busters. Chapter 3 provides a detailed explanation of the research design and instruments employed in the study. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 discusses the significance of the findings

of the study and their implications for the work of biblical literacy among Baby Busters  
in the local church.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Selected Literature

This study's focus was a design for developing biblical literacy among Baby Busters. For the purpose of clarity, I have organized this review of literature around five predominant themes:

What is postmodernism?

Who are Baby Busters?

What is biblical literacy?

The biblical and theological foundation of the study; and,

Predominant characteristics of a design for biblical literacy among Baby Busters.

#### What is Postmodernism?

Dennis McCallum, in The Death of Truth, defines postmodernism as “the movement in late twentieth-century thought that rejects enlightenment rationalism, individualism, and optimism” (283). Historically, postmodernism was most significantly shaped by the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Karl Marx. According to Stanley Grenz, “Nietzsche formulated most of the themes that would be essential to the development of the postmodern intellectual climate” (89). Most significant was Nietzsche’s rejection of the enlightenment concept of objective truth. He claimed that absolute truth does not exist and cannot be known. Truth, according to Nietzsche, was a function of the language we employ to interpret the world around us (97). According to Magda King, in her book Heidegger’s Philosophy, and Iain Thompson in an article entitled Martin Heidegger: A Philosophical Snapshot, Martin Heidegger also rejected truth as an objective reality, claiming that “truth cannot exist

somewhere by itself like a thing, and cannot have the ontological character of reality” (King 144). “Truth,” according to Heidegger, “is the disclosedness that comes as a result of *Dasein*; of ‘being there’ and being able to make intelligible of (sic) the place in which we find ourselves” (Thompson 1-3). Of course, the ultimate goal for Heidegger would be for the conditional reality of *Dasein*, shaped by “being there” in the world, to abandon itself to the ultimate reality of *Sein*. The philosophy of Marxism also espouses the relativistic nature of truth characteristic of postmodernism. According to Walter Odajnyk, in his book Marxism and Existentialism, Marxism declares that “each age must establish its own truths, and its own facts, for these are of the world and the world is dynamic. What was true at one age or society may no longer be true at another age, in another society” (6). According to Sir Arnold Toynbee, who was one of the first scholars to use the term “postmodernism,” the postmodern age is “one dominated by anxiety, irrationalism, and helplessness” (qtd. in Veith 44-45).

Postmodern philosophy exhibits seven themes that seem to capture its essence and meaning. The first theme is deconstruction. Deconstruction was first proposed in the 1970s by French philosopher Jacques Derrida who sought to deconstruct or empty language of its objective value and meaning. According to deconstruction theory, no objective truth or reality exists except the reality that our language creates in our minds (Ford 119). Therefore, in deconstruction, language does not reveal meaning as much as it constructs meaning (Veith 54). The postmodern statement, “we are incarcerated in a prison house of language,” points out that in deconstruction everything from religion to science is essentially considered a linguistic construct (52). Since deconstruction suggests that truth is a linguistic construct and that, as a result, one person’s or group’s

truth is no better than another's, the cultivation of biblical literacy in Baby Busters needs to begin at their level, with their construct of truth, based on their experience.

The second theme is truth. The only absolute truth in postmodernism is that absolute truth does not exist. According to McCallum, "Postmodernism is nothing less than the death of truth" (244). Whereas in most cases the death of something is followed by a period of mourning, in the case of postmodernism the death of absolute truth is celebrated as being long overdue. As a result, postmodernism lacks a single, objective, all-consuming truth or meta-narrative encompassing all peoples and all times. Due to the deconstruction of the biblical text, each person or subgroup is free to create its own narrative theology or understanding of truth based on individual experience. All such theologies are considered equally valid whether or not they contradict each other (18), enforcing the claim that human interpretation and experience serve as the ultimate form of authority in the postmodern pursuit of truth. All of this would support the statement made by Grenz that "in postmodernism there is no absolute truth or reality; rather, truth is relative to the community in which we participate" (8). As in the case of deconstruction, while the absence of an acknowledged objective, absolute truth is disconcerting to those not ascribing to the postmodern worldview, it does create an opportunity to develop biblical literacy among Baby Busters utilizing the only form of absolute truth they do recognize—their subjective experience.

The third theme is pluralism. In postmodernism, one of the grossest possible sins one could commit in both the secular and religious arenas is to show intolerance to other belief systems, regardless of how irrational or destructive they may be. This emphasis on tolerance and never questioning the propositions of other points of view leads to

pluralism. According to Leslie Newbigen, religious pluralism is the belief that differences between the religions are not a matter of truth and falsehood but of different perceptions of the one truth (14). As a result, pluralism produces a melting pot of truth and belief, based on the assumption that everyone's claim to truth can be right and no one's is wrong, with the exception of those who profess to possess absolute truth. As a result of the postmodern emphasis on pluralism, any such claims by individuals or groups to absolute, objective truth are viewed as ignorant, arrogant, and disrespectful to those who ascribe to different belief systems. The postmodern emphasis on pluralism is the natural result of its deconstruction and rejection of absolute truth and its tolerance of any truth. So while pluralism applauds a tolerance for truth based on subjective experience and interpretation, and while it presents obvious challenges to Christian discipleship, it also provided a common ground for developing biblical literacy in Baby Busters, who, in their journey to grow in biblical truth, responded best to an approach that began at the point of their subjective experience.

Fourth is the theme of contradiction. The postmodern claim that absolute truth does not exist functions as an absolute statement on the part of postmodernism, reflecting its contradictory nature. While postmodernism boasts a tolerance for differing belief systems and claims to the truth, it rejects the Christian claim of objective truth found in the person of Jesus Christ. It is tolerant to all claims of truth except those that claim to be absolute truth, as in the case of Christianity. While the rational intellectualism of modernism could not tolerate contradictions, the postmodern mind has no problem ascribing to contradictory viewpoints at the same time. Rational consistency is simply not important. Robert Frost, in the opening lines of his poem, "The Road Not Taken,"

portrays the tension that exists between modernism and postmodernism in this regard: “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and sorry I could not travel both and be one traveler, long I stood and looked down one as far as I could; to where it bent in the undergrowth” (Holland 1286). The traveler in Frost’s poem who could not travel both roads and still remain one traveler is like the intellectual representing modernism whose worldview simply cannot accommodate contradicting philosophies. This individual’s rational, logical mindset will only allow for the choice of one way or another, not both. However, the very nature of postmodernism allows an individual to travel as many philosophical roads as he/she might choose regardless of the inherent contradictions. While modernism operates by an “either-or” philosophy, postmodernism functions with a way of thinking that allows for a “both-and” approach, which may explain why many Baby Busters who professes faith in Jesus Christ are unwilling to reject the multiple paths to God promoted in pluralism. The evidence of postmodern contradiction and its acceptance by Baby Busters was reflected in the approach of the project, which sought to disciple Baby Busters according to the objective truth of Scripture, while initiating that process from the perspective of the individual’s subjective experience.

The fifth theme is centerlessness. According to Grenz, “postmodernism does not allow for a common standard or authority whereby people can appeal in their efforts to measure, judge, or value ideas, opinions, or lifestyle choices” (19). He goes on to say that “there is no clear shared focus that unites the diverse and divergent elements of postmodern society into a single whole” (19). The absence of a central objective meta-narrative causes postmoderns to construct local narratives based on their subjective experience. While the centerlessness of postmodernism represents a release from the

philosophical constraints of modernism, it also creates a hunger for meaning and purpose among postmoderns, as well as a sense of despair and disconnectedness. The aforementioned hunger could function as the perfect motivation for moving a Baby Buster from the centerlessness of postmodernism to the centeredness of a relationship to Jesus Christ.

The sixth theme is nihilism. Simply defined, nihilism is “nothing-ism,” the theory that life is meaningless and without purpose and that nothing is worth living for. It is the by-product of the postmodern emphasis that truth and meaning do not exist in any objective sense, and if meaning and reality can be found in life they are what we create on our own. The postmodern emphasis that places self and subjectivity at the center of our existence as human beings ultimately leads people to ask, “Is this all there is? Is there nothing more?” To which postmodernism can only respond, “Yes, this is all there is.” According to McCallum, “no worldview is more likely to produce depression and despair than postmodern nihilism” (267). Celek and Zander point out that among those between the ages of seventeen and thirty-two who most clearly embody postmodern philosophy, an overwhelming sense prevails of feeling alone, abandoned, and alienated (25). They go on to say that if one broke postmodern philosophy down to two words, they would be “nothing matters” (46). As will be discussed later in the study, nihilism provides the Christian community a wonderful opportunity for sharing with Baby Busters the message of hope and truth experienced in establishing and growing in a personal relationship to Jesus Christ, who alone can bring meaning, fulfillment, and purpose to life.

The seventh theme is community. While modernism stressed the individual



above community, postmodernism, as a reaction against the radical individualism of modernism, emphasizes community and the social dimension of life. However, the postmodern understanding of community differs from the Christian understanding of community. Not only is Christian community redemptive and open, it seeks to influence what its constituents believe to be real and true based on God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ attested to in Scripture. The postmodern community, however, determines what is true and real, and what constituents are expected to believe. So while both exercise a certain degree of determinism and influence over their constituents regarding what is true and real, one is based on God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, while the other is based on the subjective experience and relative truth claims of those within the community. As Grenz points out, "postmoderns believe that not only our specific beliefs but also our understanding of truth itself is rooted in the community in which we participate" (14). One of the keys to cultivating biblical literacy in Baby Busters was to blend the Christian understanding of community with the postmodern understanding, so that what resulted was an open, redemptive community that valued individuals' subjective experience and helped them identify and connect their personal story to the stories and biblical truth of Scripture.

While the influence of postmodernism is observable throughout our culture in such areas as religion, education, literature, and the arts, it is particularly visible in the lives of individuals commonly referred to as Baby Busters. According Celek and Zander, Baby Busters are our postmodern Next Generation (51).

### **Who are Baby Busters?**

They have been called Generation X, the Twenty-something Generation, the

Yiffies (young, individualistic, freedom minded, and few), the Thirteenth Generation, the Invisible Generation, the Marginalized Generation, the Lost Generation, and the Fatherless Generation. They are those who, for the purpose of this study, are referred to as Baby Busters, born between 1965 and 1983. Gary McIntosh, in Three Generations, suggests they derive their generational label due to the smaller (bust) number of Americans born primarily between 1965 and 1976, extending as far as 1983, as compared to the Boomers who make up the largest single generation to be born in the United States (130). In an article entitled “alt.ministry@genx forum” published in Next, Leadership Network suggests that the Baby Buster generation is the first, post-Christian generation in American having been predominantly shaped and influenced from early childhood by television and music, as opposed to the values and teachings of Christianity (1-5).

### **Nine Defining Characteristics of Baby Busters**

#### **Relative truth**

Baby Busters believe that absolute, objective truth cannot be known. According to a survey conducted by Barna Research and published in The Invisible Generation, 70 percent of Baby Busters claim that absolute truth does not exist, and that all truth is relative and personal (81). Truth for Baby Busters is based on what works for the individual. They pick and choose ideals and values from various worldviews to come up with what they consider truth. Their catch phrase is “You have your truth and I have mine” (Celek and Zander 46).

#### **Live and let live**

They value their freedom to choose to believe and do as they please. This generation of persons places high value on tolerance and pluralism. Respecting and

tolerating the beliefs and truth concepts of others regardless of how illogical they seem is one of the values they esteem most highly. According to Andrea Nasfell, in an article entitled “What Will It Take to Reach Generation X,” the Baby Busters are the first generation to grow up in a postmodern society where right and wrong are dirty words and tolerance is considered the greatest virtue (11).

### Contradictions and Paradoxes

According to Jeff Bantz, Baby Busters or Generation X is often called the “paradox generation.” They are individualistic, and yet they value relationships. They do not respect authority, and yet they long to receive instruction. They are skeptical yet pragmatic. They have an extended adolescence, and yet they grow up too soon. They are slow to commit and passionately dedicated. They are a challenge to manage but are excellent workers. They are apathetic, and yet they care deeply. They are relativistic, and yet they are searching for meaning. They are disillusioned, and yet they are not giving up (37-102).

### Group and community

They hunger for intimate, supportive relationships within an accepting community. In contrast to those in the Boomer generation shaped by the individualism of the Modern era, Baby Busters value feelings and interpersonal relationships over logic, objective facts, work, money, and status. Baby Busters are more team oriented. Celek and Zander have noted that Busters are more interested in doing things as a team. They would rather do things together than have any one of their own peer group elevated above the others to the top (35). They gain their identity from within the community. The NBC prime time television show Friends is a perfect reflection of this Baby Buster

characteristic. It depicts six members of the Baby Buster generation who have become a community of people who care for each other, trying together to make sense of life. They have become for one another the family they all lacked growing up (Long, Generating Hope 83). Again Celek and Zander suggest that while Boomers are conquest focused, Baby Busters are community focused. Instead of wanting to conquer, Busters want to connect with other people (31).

### Pragmatic

In the movie, Jerry Maguire, actors Tom Cruise and Cuba Gooding, Jr. portray the on-again, off-again relationship between a sports agent and professional athlete. At one point in the movie, after talking and theorizing about potential contracts and income, the athlete says to his agent, “Show me the money!” He says in essence, “Don’t tell me about it, just show me. Get practical!” Similarly, Baby Busters are longing for that same practicality. They are not interested in abstract theories. They are more interested in what works and how it will apply to their lives. For instance they are not that interested in knowing why community is important. They just know that it is, and they are seeking where they can find it so that they can experience authentic relationships and feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. According to Kevin Graham Ford, in Jesus for a New Generation, “My generation is searching for a gospel that works. The question my generation is asking is not ‘Can Christians prove what they believe?’ but ‘Can Christians live what they believe?’” (174).

### Authenticity

Baby Busters value and seek authenticity in those in positions of leadership (political, religious, economic, etc.). Ford states that

my generation hungers for role models who will exemplify what it means to live out an honest, gritty, gutsy faith in a user-unfriendly world. When they hear our story and see us living that story out on a daily basis, they will be amazed. (238-39)

Celek and Zander suggest that “our communication [with Baby Busters] has got to be real. With a generation so skeptical because ‘image is everything,’ we have to work diligently to be real with them” (101). They liken the concept of authenticity to Paul’s teaching in 2 Corinthians 4 where he talks about how the treasure of Christ is contained in earthen vessels.

When Christians are willing to demonstrate their authenticity by saying ‘I am going to quit pretending that this piece of pottery called my life is perfect, and I’m going to start letting the treasure of the Gospel show through the cracks in my life’ they will gain a listening audience among the Baby Buster generation (101).

### Just do it

Baby Busters are oriented to the here and now and are determined to seize the moment. According to Ford, “when it comes to sex Baby Busters just do it. When it comes to risk they just do it. When it comes to maintaining an image of physical perfection, Baby Busters just do it!” (91-92).

### Subjective experience reigns

Baby Busters value their life story and subjective experience over logic and objective facts. Subjective experience remains the primary criteria for determining what is morally acceptable and true. If a particular truth can be validated through their life story, then it will pass the test. If that truth cannot be validated through their life story, then it may be true for someone else but not for them. If something seems good and right and if it meets their needs, then it is okay, regardless of whether or not it contradicts logic. Celek and Zander have observed that Busters trust only themselves. They will

trust only their experience to decide if something is worthy of their attention or not (48).

### Pessimism and skepticism

Speaking on behalf of the Baby Buster generation, Ford suggests that “there is a general feeling in my generation that our political leaders have failed us, that our religious leaders are a joke and that our Baby Boomer parents have abused or abandoned us” (48). As a result, Baby Busters feel angry about the past, pessimistic about the present, and skeptical about the hope of the future. “They don’t have a lot of faith in institutions—political, religious, or financial. They see the world through a cloud of cynicism and skepticism” (Celek and Zander 26).

Having defined postmodernism and highlighted several predominant characteristics of the Baby Buster generation that make them unique from other generations, I will now examine biblical literacy, particularly as it relates to having developed an approach to Baby Busters.

### **What Is Biblical Literacy?**

In order to flesh out the nature of biblical literacy, I will begin with a general definition of literacy. According to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, literacy is “the ability to read and write” (412). However, according to E. D. Hirsch, Jr., in his book Cultural Literacy, literacy involves more than simply reading and writing. A person must be able to function as a result of these skills. So, in addition to the fundamental skills of reading and writing, literacy involves the effective use of the standard literate language (3). Floyd Shacklock, in his World Literacy Manual, also distinguishes between literacy and functional literacy. He defines functional literacy as “the ability to use the skills of reading and writing at a self-sustaining level in a person’s

daily life and work, and for active participation in the life of that person's society" (5). His concern is that literacy would not simply be an end in itself but that it would lead to further learning.

In the same way that Shacklock and Hirsch stress the dual nature of literacy, Mulholland forms the basis for the definition of biblical literacy employed in this study when, in his book Shaped by the Word, he stresses the dual nature of reading the Bible as not only informational (knowing) but also formational (being). Informational reading, according to Mulholland, is when the reader seeks to master and grasp control of the text. Formational reading is when the text is allowed to master and shape the reader (54). While Mulholland recognizes that we often tend to think of informational and formational as two different techniques, he agrees that they are really two distinct parts of a single developmental process (58). This developmental process is what I am referring to as biblical literacy.

In an article published in Christianity Today, James Bryan Smith observes that "there is much more to reading the Bible than merely understanding the words on the pages. There can and must be a happy marriage between textual study and contemplation viewing them not as competing but complementary" (29-31). He adds, "One without the other feels incomplete" (29-31). According to Mulholland

the informational mode is only the 'front porch' of the role of Scripture in biblical literacy. It is, you might say, the point of entry into the text. But once we have crossed 'the porch,' we must enter into that deeper encounter with the Word which is the formational approach. (Shaped by the Word 59)

Aelred Squire, in Asking the Fathers, builds upon this idea. He asks, "Is it enough simply to preserve the words of scripture in our memory?" To which he

responds,

To those who only do this the apostle says, ‘knowledge puffs up.’ And, further, forgetfulness easily obliterates a memory. You must keep the word of God in the same way as it is best to keep your bodily food. Let it be taken into the stomach of your mind and pass into the things you care for and the things you do. (127)

Dennis McCallum, in his book The Death of Truth, states,

Those who seek to dichotomize the heart and the head are doing something alien to biblical teaching. The real problem comes when heart knowledge and head knowledge are viewed from an “either-or” perspective instead of a “both-and” perspective. Such a division between our “hearts” and our “heads” is dangerous. What we know in our heads and our hearts should be the same, not different. Head knowledge and heart knowledge must always be compatible. Neither is dispensable. (240)

Working together as a developmental process in the life of a new convert to the Christian faith, biblical literacy involves both an informational head knowledge and formational character encounter with God’s Word resulting in acts of righteousness and obedience.

The informational dimension of biblical literacy involves knowing such things as the structure, the original context (*Sitz im Leben*), content, history, geography, characters, genre, and themes of the Bible. Building upon the informational dimension, the formational dimension of biblical literacy involves incarnating the meaning of Scripture in our context of life. According to Mulholland, in Invitation to a Journey, it means

being conformed to the image of Christ. It is a journey into becoming persons of compassion, persons who forgive, persons who care deeply for others and the world, persons who offer themselves to God to become agents of divine grace in the lives of others and their world. In brief, persons who love and serve as Jesus did. (25)

So then, while informational literacy is focused on the mind and the pursuit of biblical information, formational literacy is focused on the heart, allowing the Scripture to shape



character. Independent of one another, they create an incomplete, unbalanced form of biblical literacy. Informational literacy without the character transformation sought after through formational literacy will lead to nothing more than knowledge that puffs up the ego. According to Long,

in a postmodern world where logic and reasoning are not a given and where the emotions are more in evidence, an approach to discipleship that emphasizes only reason will fail miserably. Both the heart and the mind have to be engaged in the spiritual journey. (Generating Hope 162)

Where the informational and formational aspects of biblical literacy function together, the result will be a healthy, Christ follower. To contribute to the development of such a result was the desired goal of the project, however, the development of formational literacy is a life-long pursuit, and over the course of a nine-week Bible study, the most for which one can hope is to take some initial steps toward its cultivation, as well as to foster in the participants an understanding of and a commitment to pursue its development.

### **Why Is Biblical Literacy Important?**

Biblical literacy is important for two reasons. First, it provides a means of combating the informational biblical illiteracy that pervades our postmodern society. As stated earlier, many Baby Busters possess what could be called a “trivial pursuit” knowledge of the Bible. They may know a factual bit of trivia related to a biblical narrative or personality, but they do not know how that information relates to the overall biblical themes of Scripture. George Gallup, Jr. and Sarah Jones observe that

even though the Bible is the world’s best seller, comparatively few adults seem familiar with important parts of it. Only 45 percent nationwide are able to name more than five of the Ten Commandments. Only 46 percent can correctly name all four of the New Testament Gospels, and a meager 42 percent of American adults know that Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. (43)

Laurence W. Wood, in an article entitled “Telling the Old, Old Story in the Postmodern Age,” further establishes the extent of the problem and the necessity for action when he writes that “biblical illiteracy pervades our postmodern society, even among church people” (4).

Second, biblical literacy is important because if Christians are not “in the Word” and “shaped by the Word” they cannot function as followers of Christ (Shaped by the Word 54). Biblical literacy is foundational to discipleship. In John 15:5, Jesus says, “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.” To “remain in him” is to have both the informational and formational dimensions of biblical literacy operative in one’s life. To “bear much fruit” is to be engaged in reaching out to love, teach, and serve a hurting, hopeless world. Therefore, only as both dimensions of biblical literacy are given expression will God’s desire that we not only “be” disciples but that we also “make” disciples be fulfilled.

### **Significant Movements within the History of Biblical Literacy**

Biblical illiteracy has plagued society across the ages. From the premodern age to the postmodern age, attempts have been made to address the issue. For the purpose of this study, reviewing what has been done in the past and what is being done in the present to confront the problem of biblical illiteracy would be beneficial.

The history of communicating the biblical narrative for the purpose of understanding and assimilating biblical truth into one’s life can be categorized into three distinct, yet overlapping, movements: the oral, the visual, and the printed.

According to Susan Niditch, in Oral World and Written Word, “the ‘oral’ lies deep in the pre-history of biblical texts” (109). Written works and stories were communicated among the ancient Israelite community essentially, however not exclusively, by an oral mentality” (44). The Torah is an example. While the written Torah had an important place in assisting ancient Israel in remembering and living according to God’s wisdom and will, the oral Torah also played a key role. According to Birger Gerhardsson in Memory and Manuscript, “The written Torah is ‘that which is read’, while the oral Torah is ‘that which is repeated’” (28). While the Shema [the great commandment] in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is an example of the written Torah, verse 7 is an exhortation for the Israelite community to practice oral Torah. Moses writes, “*Repeat* [emphasis mine] them [the commands] again and again to your children. *Talk* [emphasis mine] about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again.” The emphasis on orality and repetition helped the Israelite faith community to remember and practice God’s truth in the context of their daily lives. Psalm 106 is a further example of the importance of the oral expression of the biblical narrative. It is a song to be sung among the faith community upon their return from national captivity. It was there to help them remember the history of their rebellion and God’s faithfulness to them as his covenant people.

According to Gerhardsson, “Up until the early 2 century, the Gospels were *holy tradition* [original emphasis] rather than Scripture and function to all appearances mainly orally” (Memory and Manuscript 202). Based on this statement, he raises the question, “How then were catechumens taught in the church at this time?” (203). He suggests that

later in the second century, while some of the teaching may have been based on the Scriptures and some Gospel document, it is reasonable to

suppose that the catechumen had to learn by heart a number of formulae, sayings, important texts and summaries, and that the sacred words were interpreted for him (203).

The following statement from Irenaeus underscores the oral nature of the teaching that occurred:

I can even name the place where the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, where he went out and in. I remember his way of life, what he looked like, the addresses he delivered to the people, how he told of his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he remembered their words and what he had heard from them about the Lord, about his miracles, and about his teaching. As one who had received this from eyewitnesses of the word of life Polycarp retold everything in accordance with the Scriptures. I listened to this then, because of the grace of God which was given me, carefully, copying it down, not on paper, but in my heart. And I repeat it constantly in genuine form by the grace of God. (qtd. in Memory and Manuscript 204)

In addition to the influence of orality in teaching, it was also very central in the liturgy of the early Church through congregational singing and the public reading of Scripture. Both were oral expressions that created a biblical context for daily life in which people could develop in their understanding and assimilation of the Scripture.

Commenting on the acceptance of oral tradition, Alan Millard, in Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus, states that “with the evidence for the role of oral tradition in the ancient world so clear, the majority of scholars accept such statements as ‘All our knowledge of Jesus is drawn from the deposit of a tradition which was transmitted for several decades by word of mouth’” (195).

While the oral movement continued over the next several centuries to exercise influence throughout the local church, the advent of stained glass windows, carvings in wood, and stone depicting biblical images and narratives paved the way for the visual movement of biblical literacy, giving rise to another method of communicating the Bible

to illiterate persons as well as to those unable to afford the cost of a printed copy of the Bible. According to W. Grady Jones, in the eleventh century and for several centuries after, stained glass with painted figures and painted windows in churches were regarded as picture books to tell the biblical story, since few people were able to read or write (16). Because illiteracy among commoners was such an issue, stained glass windows not only admitted the light of day and enhanced aesthetics, they also proclaimed the Christian verities (Duby 26). According to Steven Ozment, in The Age of Reform, while the illiterate and financially less fortunate were dependent on the oral and visual movements of biblical literacy, the wealthy and well-educated members of the clergy and social sector were able to obtain printed copies of the Vulgate produced on sheets of parchment made from sheep or calf skin by scribes and monks (199). However, with the dawn of the Renaissance in the late fourteenth century, significant developments in the translation, printing, and accessibility of the Bible gave rise to the printed movement of biblical literacy. Not only did John Wycliff make English translations of the Vulgate available during this time, Gerard Groote continued his work by also translating portions of the Bible. According to Groote, it was not enough that the clergy be educated. He believed that, “a layman must do more than go to church and listen to his preacher; he must read and think for himself” (qtd. in The Age of Reform 16-17).

The advent of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century was another one of the key developments of the Renaissance period that gave impetus to the biblical literacy movement, as well as to the Protestant Reformation. According to Walter Ong, in his book Orality and Literacy, the printing press not only helped to implement the Protestant Reformation and reoriented Catholic religious practice, it also changed family life and

politics, diffused knowledge as never before, made universal literacy a serious objective, made possible the rise of modern sciences, and otherwise altered social and intellectual life (117-18). By the end of the fifteenth century, printing presses existed in over two hundred cities and towns, and an estimated six million books had been printed with half of the thirty thousand titles being on religious subjects (Ozment 199). By making the Bible available in the vernacular and as a continual text, the printing press allowed commoners to experience the written Word, to instruct their children, and to have a sense of competence in matters previously reserved exclusively to high church authority (Ozment 202).

Colonial Americans also addressed the need for biblical literacy, particularly among children. Ascribing to the belief that children should be educated in the faith of their fathers, colonial Americans provided for the religious training of children through family instruction, town schools, and ministers' catechizing classes (Boylan 6). In 1780, a British evangelical layman named Robert Raikes became concerned over the well-being of poor children in Gloucester, England, and as a result laid the foundation for what is commonly referred to today as Sunday school. Observing young children's illiteracy and atrocious behavior, Raikes believed that the children of the poor ought to be taught reading, writing, and religion. He felt it was the starting point to improving their behavior among society and to becoming literate human beings. He contended that children need education to understand the Bible. According to Raikes, to be a good Christian was to be a good citizen; to be a good citizen, one had to know the Bible. To know the Bible was to read, and in order to read, persons had to be taught. Therefore, within this first organized Sunday school, functional literacy was emphasized in order to

produce biblical literacy, which in turn was to produce children who, being “in the Word” and “shaped by the Word,” would be good citizens (166).

No one in the twentieth century has had a greater influence in the area of literacy than Dr. Frank Laubach. Laubach’s love for people and his passion for those suffering under the yoke of illiteracy caused him to devote his life to traveling around the world teaching people to read and write so that they would not only experience an essential dimension of being human but also to be able to function within their particular society with dignity and understanding. “Each one teach one” was the battle cry of his literacy campaign. Laubach believed that each person who had been taught to read would want to play a part in teaching someone else. While Laubach believed that people’s human dignity was influenced by functional literacy, he also believed that the future well-being of Protestant Christianity depended on and related to biblical literacy as well. He recognized that the development of biblically literate followers of Jesus Christ committed to the ministry of the Church ultimately depended on whether or not they were literate and thus capable of reading the Bible.

In his book Forty Years with the Silent Billion, Laubach writes,

Every Christian needs to read his Bible. Wherever a church contains illiterates, it feels weak and unhappy until it has taught them to read. It finds that illiterates just emerging from non-Christian habits need constant personal attention to keep them from sinking back into the old life. They could gain new power to overcome if they could read the gospels, and hymns, and Sunday school journals, and prayer books. It is universally recognized that literacy is a first objective in every Protestant mass movement. (16)

According to David Mason, by 1965 Frank Laubach had worked for the cause of literacy in 103 countries with 314 different languages (Apostle to the Illiterates 83). His literacy campaigns have been credited with teaching from 60,000,000 to 100,000,000

people to read and providing them with the skills to read the life-giving truth of the Bible. Today an international literacy mission, called Laubach Literacy, Inc., continues the work of this man fondly remembered as “Mr. Literacy.”

In the mid-1950s the Lutheran Church produced a comprehensive study of the Bible called “The Bethel Series.” Its primary teaching method involved lectures and pictures containing various symbols used to teach the individual themes contained in each of the books of the Bible, thus reflecting a strong emphasis on the informational dimension of biblical literacy. Over 1,000,000 people from forty-seven different denominations in the USA and around the world have benefited from its unique approach to developing biblical literacy (1). It continues to be used today in countless local churches.

In 1972, Bruce H. Wilkinson developed “Walk Thru the Bible,” a non-denominational ministry originally conceived to enable Christians to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. As their mission statement indicates, “Walk Thru the Bible Ministries exists to contribute to the spiritual growth of Christians worldwide through Bible teaching, tools, and training” (3). While the process of spiritual growth implies a balanced emphasis on both the informational and formational dimensions of biblical literacy, Walk Thru the Bible seems to place a greater emphasis on the informational dimension of biblical literacy. This becomes evident when one considers the primary methods Walk Thru the Bible employs for addressing biblical illiteracy. They conduct Old and New Testament seminars based on teacher lectures and audience participation, each designed to help people grasp the “big picture” of the Bible and remember the key themes in each book. In addition to the seminars, Walk Thru the



Bible has several publications available to help Christians read through the Bible in a year.

In 1987, the United Methodist Church developed “The Disciple Bible Study” in response to the desire of an ordained United Methodist pastor in the Arkansas Annual Conference to be able to provide the members of his congregation with a serious, in-depth study of the Bible. Bishop and Mrs. Richard Wilke of the Arkansas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, in addition to Dr. Maxie Dunnam, Dr. Ira Galloway, and several other individuals, played a significant role in the organization of Disciple Bible Study. Disciple Bible Study is a thirty-four-week, comprehensive study of the Old and New Testaments designed for small groups of eight to twelve persons. Its curriculum includes a study manual organized thematically corresponding to the books of the Bible. In addition to weekly video lecture presentations given by pastors and scholars that correspond to the printed material, Disciple Bible Study is facilitated by a leader who provides opportunities for group reflection and discussion (2-4). Disciple Bible Study seeks to hold in balance the informational and formational dimension of biblical literacy.

In March 1997, while on a tour of the Kwanglim Methodist Church in Seoul, Korea, I learned of several methods they utilize for building biblical literacy among those in the faith community. In addition to participation in a cell group where prayer and Bible study are standard fare, individuals can also transcribe the entire Old and New Testament in longhand. Once the project is complete, the individual or family unit submits the entire document to the Kwanglim church who then has the document bound. The pastor of the church, Bishop Sundo Kim, then presents the Bible to the individual or family during the Sunday morning worship service. The process of transcribing the Bible

by longhand ensures an informational knowledge of the biblical text for those who select to pursue such a project, while participation in the cell group fosters both the informational and formational dimensions of biblical literacy.

### **Why a Different Approach Is Necessary**

Having addressed what biblical literacy is, why it is important, and several of the significant movements on behalf of its cause, one might question why designing an approach to biblical literacy among Baby Busters needs to be different than that designed for other Christians. The answer to this question involves what Jim Sutherlin, in his dissertation “Developing Biblical Literacy in the Local Congregation”, calls the biblical pre-hermeneutic of the believer, a concept originally based on what Rudolf Bultmann called prior understanding in his 1950s essay entitled “The Problem of Hermeneutics” (Sutherlin18).

According to Sutherlin, the biblical pre-hermeneutic involves the question(s) the interpreter brings to the biblical text. Included among these would be such things as the interpreter’s worldview and concept of the nature of the literature to be interpreted (18). The biblical pre-hermeneutic of Baby Busters involves one primary factor that distinguishes them from other new Christians, thus requiring a different approach to developing biblical literacy in their lives. That factor has to do with the postmodern worldview undergirding their life experience and from which they originally came to the Christian faith.

According to Ford,

Baby Busters or Generation X is the first to see the world through postmodern eyes. Few of those born prior to the Baby Buster generation understand how radically the thought patterns of Baby Busters differ from their own ways of thinking. Baby Busters don’t just look and dress and

act differently from previous generations. Baby Busters think differently, perceive differently, believe differently and process truth differently from any previous generation. (113)

As a result, their view of the Bible, its truth claims, and their needs are different from other Christians born before 1965 who would have most likely come to Christianity out of a modern worldview. Due to Baby Busters' understanding that the biblical text is not absolute, objective truth, but rather, one form of truth based on subjective interpretation and whose value lies in its ability to identify with their personal experience; and due to the way they process biblical information—in community, and according to their feelings and emotions rather than their logic, an approach to developing biblical literacy in Baby Busters needs to be employed that is different than that used for new Christians in general. I agree with Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen in GenXers after God that

if the church is to be successful in reaching GenX, we must be prepared to spiritually mentor and disciple these individuals, expecting that they will have differences in how they approach their faith. These differences, will represent formidable challenges in discipling relationships. (17)

### **The Biblical and Theological Foundation**

Jim Leffel and Dennis McCallum observe that “today we face an American religious cafeteria where we ‘take the best and leave the rest,’ without any thought as to whether any of it is true in an objective sense” (207). The predominant criterion is that if any form of spirituality works for the individual and serves to empower that individual in life, then it is okay. Such is the reality of the postmodern worldview that defines our culture and shapes the lives of Baby Busters seeking to become biblically literate. As a result, one is inclined to ask what sort of biblical response can be given to such a reality?

In 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16 Paul formulates a response that is relevant to the postmodern deconstruction of Christian truth. In this passage he addresses the subject of

human wisdom in a denunciatory fashion. He writes to those in Corinth who were trusting more in the Greek concept of wisdom that focused on human thought processes rather than the reception of wisdom as God's revelation through the Spirit. His writing addresses the potential of those in the Corinthian church to adapt to and be influenced by the displays of worldly wisdom (i.e., philosophical knowledge, religious and ethical insights, and argumentation) that stood in contrast to God's wisdom. Paul's stated desire is not to feature any such worldly wisdom but to wholly reflect God's wisdom in his communication among the people. Such wisdom, according to Paul, is bound up in the message of the cross and draws attention to the Christ of the cross.

As the following quote reveals, Paul essentially deconstructs postmodern ideology by suggesting that truth claims based on worldly wisdom and philosophies are foolishness and ultimately a dead end.

For it is written, 'I [God] will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. 1:19-24)

Paul affirms that the message of Christ crucified is more than a social or linguistic construct. It is power and wisdom to those called by God to salvation. It is a revelation based not on worldly wisdom but on the power of the Spirit. According to Paul, the message of Christ crucified is the key to experiencing the wisdom of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:6 Paul says, "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to

nothing.” Paul had a faith relationship with the Christ who embodied the message of the cross. As a result of that relationship, he received the gift of the Spirit, the same Spirit who “searches out everything and shows us even God’s deep secrets” (1 Cor. 2:10). Through the ministry of the Spirit, Paul received the wisdom of God that transcended the natural world of persuasive philosophy and wisdom. It was a wisdom that functioned as an outward manifestation of an inner life in harmony with God as opposed to a worldly wisdom based on reason and logic. In 1 Corinthians 2:13 Paul says, “We speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

Paul’s intent was to declare that a person cannot comprehend the wisdom of God without first experiencing and possessing the Spirit of God through a relationship with Jesus Christ. The natural mind cannot comprehend the wisdom of God if it has not first experienced the Spirit of God by receiving and responding to the message of the gospel in Jesus Christ.

Paul’s words to those in first century Corinth echo an important message to those standing on the shifting sand of twenty-first century postmodernism: Don’t trust in truth that is constructed and based on worldly wisdom. Build your life on the experience of a truth constructed in God’s wisdom and established in a relationship to the message and Messenger of the Cross. The relational and experiential aspects inherent in such a step of faith provide an important bridge to postmodern Baby Busters who are inherently relational and experiential in nature as well and that, like the Corinthian culture, stand in great need of experiencing the message of the cross and the wisdom of God. So while, at one level, Paul’s teaching functions to deconstruct postmodern ideology, at another

level, it also builds a bridge to it. Paul's defense of a wisdom based on the supernatural revelation of God, and in opposition to the reason and logic-based wisdom of the Greek philosophers, serves as an additional point of connection with postmodern Baby Busters. They have rejected the objective, reason and logic-based truth claims of modernism, and have embraced the postmodern avenues of experiencing truth, placing ultimate value on subjective interpretation, the supernatural, and on what appeals to the heart and feelings. These factors contributed to the design of the project which was narratively-organized, experientially-focused, and relationally-based.

Jesus' parable of the two foundations (Matt. 7:24-29) provides a vivid word picture of the impending demise of individuals, institutions, and societies built upon the shaky foundation of a postmodern worldview. Like the house built upon the sand, all that we construct upon the foundation of relative truth and pluralism will eventually implode and come crashing down. By allowing subjective experience to determine what constitutes truth and reality, while denying the absolute truth of the biblical narrative as the foundation of our lives, personal and communal destruction will be inevitable. Unlike postmodernism, the truth revealed through the words of Scripture, and in particular Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, serve as a rock-solid foundation upon which to build a life and establish community.

Clifford Edwards reminds us, in his book Christian Being and Doing, that "Christian doing must take place where there is vital Christian being" (160). Where "doing" does not flow out of "being," an unhealthy spirituality exists. Jesus states, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock" (Matt. 7:24). Jesus'

reference to “these words of Mine” is to his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). The inclusion of the phrase “and acts upon them” is a reminder that while the informational dimension of biblical literacy is important, it is not enough. What exists as biblical truth in our minds must be authenticated in our character through our behavior, since a person’s character is revealed through his or her behavior.

In James 2:14-26, James is writing to Jewish Christians who had been scattered throughout the Mediterranean world because of persecution and were tempted to let intellectual agreement pass for true faith (Life Application Study Bible 1984). He is encouraging the believers not only to hear the truth but also to put it into action. He is addressing the disconnection between faith in Christ and deeds of love and service, challenging the believers to demonstrate and authenticate their faith through their good works. The nature of James’ argument is enforced by Thomas Merton when he writes, “Any serious reading of the Bible means personal involvement in it, not simply mental agreement with abstract propositions” (33). For James, the issue centers around the involvement and quality of their faith. The failure of their faith to motivate good works reflects a “faith that is dead.” Likewise, as it relates to this study, a healthy faith is one that is formationally strong in its biblical literacy resulting in deeds of love and service. However, if we claim to possess a healthy faith but it does not manifest itself in good works, it is nothing more than informational faith, rich in knowledge but poor in spiritual character and incapable of authenticating our faith.

The emphasis on the formational dimension of biblical literacy is further stressed by Peter in his second letter to the Christians of the early Church. Amidst attacks waged against their faith by false teachers, Peter exhorts the believers in both his salutary and

concluding remarks, with some variation between them, to “grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.” While Peter’s reference to knowledge (*epignosis*) has little to do with the cognitive nature of knowing about Jesus (informational), it has much to do with the relational nature of knowing Jesus (formational). The word “epignosis” refers to having a more full and accurate knowledge and recognition of God, not becoming more knowledgeable with information about God. According to PHEME PERKINS, in the Interpretation, commentary on 1 and 2 Peter, James, and Jude, “Peter uses ‘epignosis’ as a reference to the recognition of God that accompanies conversion” (167). So amidst the false teachers of the day, Peter is urging the believers to “come to know Jesus, better and better,” in an experiential way, in order to discern their false teaching. While centuries have passed since Peter first addressed the believers of the first century, believers today continue to face challenges to their faith, except that today we call it postmodernism. If twenty-first century believers, Baby Busters in particular, are to stand firm and grow in their faith, it will not be primarily due to their informational literacy or knowledge about Jesus and the biblical narrative. It will be, like the believers in Peter’s day, because they have a formational literacy focused on experientially knowing and growing in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

When approached by a Pharisee regarding the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus responded to him by saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:36-37). In this passage, we discover the significance and interplay of both the heart and mind in cultivating biblical literacy.

According to Dr. Robert Mulholland, in Shaped by the Word,

the informational aspect of biblical literacy relates primarily to loving God with our minds, while formational literacy relates primarily to loving God



with our hearts... and while loving God with all of our heart and all of our soul precedes loving God with all of our mind, both dynamics are necessary. (23, 60)

When Jesus utters this command to love God, the primary component of biblical love toward God is not affection but commitment. So in his response, Jesus is calling for a stubborn, unwavering commitment to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. The informational and formational dimensions of biblical literacy provide a helpful framework from which to express this comprehensive, committed love for God. As Mulholland suggests, we can love God with our mind through informational literacy, and we can love God with our heart and soul through formational literacy (Shaped by the Word 63).

Jesus' use of stories to communicate with the people of first-century Palestine provides a biblical framework for communicating with Baby Busters in the twenty-first century church. Rather than attempting to communicate truth through abstract treatises and dogmatic argumentation, Jesus told culturally relevant stories that not only incarnated the truth within their storyline but that also maintained the integrity of the truth while connecting with the lives of his hearers. These stories, or parables, characterized the ministry of Jesus among crowds of people, some of whom were hungry to hear a word of truth that transcended the legalism of their day. Others may have been among the crowd to observe Jesus as the latest attraction, to request a miracle of some sort, to pursue a political agenda, or to capitalize on an opportunity to entrap him. According to Gene Veith and others who have studied effective ways to communicate Christian truth to our postmodern society, "contemporary people have problems paying attention when someone talks about abstract ideas. Such ideas, however, can be brought down to earth

by expressing them in stories and emphasizing practical applications” (226).

Jesus’ way of contextualizing and customizing the message of the gospel, depending on the cultural and personal influences shaping the worldview of whomever he was addressing, provided a rationale for the purpose of this study. Ford has observed that “Jesus approached his culture and the individuals in it with a sensitivity to the unique factors shaping their worldview and their interpretation of biblical truth” (30). As a result Ford suggests that “we need to look at the world through Generation X [Baby Buster] lenses and see how life is colored by their experiences” (36). A comparison of Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus in John 3:1-21 and his encounter with the woman at the well in John 4:4-26 highlights how Jesus communicated the gospel while reshaping and recontextualizing it to each individual. With Nicodemus, Jesus’ comments were tailored to him mindful of his orientation as a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin. When Jesus says to Nicodemus “you must be born again,” (v. 3) he was using a concept with which Nicodemus was familiar in its application to Gentile converts. However, because of his status as a Pharisee, Nicodemus presumed Jesus’ words regarding being “born again” did not apply to him in the same way. He assumed Jesus literally meant that he must be “born again by water,” to which Nicodemus expressed puzzlement (i.e., “surely a man cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” v. 4). Jesus’ restatement to Nicodemus that “unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” points out that, indeed, the “born again” experience Jesus was calling Nicodemus, the Pharisee, to experience was the same “born again” experience required of Gentile converts. Jesus knew Nicodemus’ worldview included a knowledge of Old Testament biblical history and references; therefore, we observe in verse 14 his

reference to “Moses lifting up the bronze snake in the wilderness” (Num. 21:8-9), as well as his reference in verses 5-6 to the concept of renewal in the Spirit also mentioned in Ezekiel 36:25-26. These elements in Jesus’ discourse with Nicodemus no doubt contributed to his understanding and built a bridge to his presumed personal encounter with the gospel later in the narrative (John 19:39-40).

With the woman at the well, Jesus does not try to impose a “one size fits all” approach to ministering to her needs in the same way he did Nicodemus’ needs. Jesus is sensitive to her worldview which includes social tension among her peers (verses 6-7 that indicate she went to the well at noon in order to avoid those who would have gone in the morning and evening and would have known her reputation), gender and ethnic tension (v. 9), and relational tension (vs. 16-18). Jesus, having listened and entered into her world, is now mindful of her emotional and spiritual needs. Utilizing the context of Jacob’s well and the presence of water, he builds an invitational bridge for her to experience the living water that only he can offer. In each situation, Jesus’ sensitivity allows him to contextualize the message of the gospel (“born again” and “living water”) to each individual without compromising the content. This insight will provide the basis for the ten characteristics shaping the design of the project.

### **Predominant Characteristics of a Design for Biblical Literacy among Baby Busters**

Since Baby Busters are those most heavily influenced by postmodern philosophy, the challenge this study faced became quite clear.

#### **The Challenge**

How does one communicate the absolute truth of Scripture and the objective reality of the biblical narrative grounded in God’s self revelation in Jesus Christ to

persons whose worldview up to this point has denied and viewed any such absolute truth with disdain? As Celek and Zander pose the question, “If a group of people say they don’t believe there’s absolute truth, how do we begin to help them process the truth?” (122).

While this first challenge facing the designing of an approach to biblical literacy among Baby Busters involves the postmodern factor, a second challenge involves the fact that we are now living in a postliterate society. In an article entitled “New Tools for the New Paradigm” published in Next, Haddon Robinson suggests that “we have become a postliterate culture. What that means is that we have also become an oral/visual culture” (4-5). Baby Busters have been more heavily influenced by hearing, by story, and by image than by the written word. They are more likely to respond to something being communicated in an oral/visual manner than they would to words on a page. Just because people are functional in their ability to read and write does not mean that they will engage the biblical text or let the biblical text engage them. According to George Barna, in Virtual America, more than 92 percent of households contain at least one Bible, while less than 37 percent of persons have read from the Bible, excluding when they were at a religious service (49). In an article entitled “As A Book That Is Sealed,” Lawrence R. Blades makes a similar observation: “America has more printed Bibles per capita than any nation in the world, yet for most people it is a book that is sealed” (2).

### **Ten Defining Characteristics**

The following ten characteristics shaped the design of an approach to developing biblical literacy in Baby Busters. They were based on three guiding principles:

- The goal of biblical literacy to develop biblically literate, fully devoted followers

of Jesus Christ;

- The common themes which exist between Baby Busters and postmodern philosophy. Celek and Zander have observed that “if we want to understand and minister to the Baby Buster generation, postmodernity is our starting point” (51); and,
- The insights of pertinent literature on how best to communicate biblical truth to postmodern Baby Busters.

Small group dynamics. Because Baby Busters are group oriented and drawn to relational settings, the small group was a perfect environment for communicating biblical truth. According to Celek and Zander, while small groups correspond to Baby Busters’ need to be part of a team and to feel connected to their peers in intimate relationships, they are also the most effective way for bringing about life change in Baby Busters (132). According to Mulholland in Invitation, “Corporate spirituality is an essential context within which a person can grow toward wholeness in the image of Christ... a person can no more be conformed to the image of Christ outside of corporate spirituality than a coal can continue to burn being outside of the fire” (157, 145).

A loving, koinonia community. According to Long, “Because Generation X is suffering from the effects of the dysfunctional family, their longing is for a place to belong, a place to call home” (Generating Hope 83). Long then defines community as “a set of personal, dependable and durable relationships that are based in the values of the community’s participants. It is a place where people find themselves sustained spiritually and emotionally” (142). He goes on to suggest that “the change from an emphasis on individualism to an emphasis on community, or tribal group, is the primary characteristic of emerging postmodern generations. Small groups characterized by intimate community

will be a key factor in ministering to Baby Busters” (136-37). Having developed a loving, trusting community where Baby Busters could question and discuss the biblical narrative and other scriptural truth went a long way in keeping them engaged in the Bible study.

Use of media and video technology. Communicating the informational aspect of the Bible through media and video technology, when applicable, also appealed to the Baby Busters. According to George Barna, because Baby Busters were weaned on video images and tend to see their world in light of how television and movies have portrayed reality, communicating with them will naturally be enhanced by the use of video-based presentations (Invisible Generation 175).

Creative redundancy and repetition. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, in order to have been most effective in developing biblical literacy in Baby Busters, creative ways of exposing them to Bible basics and to the important themes of Scripture were essential (see p. 10). One way this project employed the principle of creative redundancy was by duplicating the teaching content and theme of the small group in the Sunday worship celebration.

Absence of religious and theological terminology. Communicating the informational and formational aspects of biblical literacy to Baby Busters in language they understood and to which they could relate was critical. This approach of indiginizing biblical/theological truth in the user-friendly language of Baby Busters reflected respect and appreciation for them and their new Christian orientation.

Emphasize practical application and relevance. Because Busters filter information through the lens of pragmatism, they were far more receptive to the

informational and formational dimensions of the Bible when they were shown to have practical and pertinent application.

Avoid over-intellectualizing biblical truths. Keeping the communication of biblical information and truth mentally accessible enhanced the probability that Baby Busters were able to comprehend and receive what was being communicated. Keeping in mind that the goal was biblical literacy and not biblical scholarship was also helpful in avoiding this pitfall.

Using stories from the Gospels. Baby Busters did not respond to abstract biblical truth. They did, however, respond to such truth when it was communicated within the context of a story. Celek and Zander have observed that one of the most effective ways to communicate the attractive, relevant truth of Scripture is through the telling of biblical stories (125). According to Nathan and Wilson, in Empowered Evangelicals,

the truths of justification by faith are as foundational now as they were during the time of the Reformation. But in order for these truths to be heard, the church would do well to accompany them with a compelling presentation of Christ and His kingdom revealed in a gospel narrative. (145-46)

Ford offers an important word of caution regarding this characteristic when he writes,

Like Jesus, we have to go beyond stories. We have to state our truth. Stories can carry an enormous cargo of truth and meaning, but stories can't carry it all. If we do not make some propositional statements along with our storytelling, we fall into the trap of postmodernism, which suggests that all meaning resides in the hearer's interpretation of the story. (236)

Narrative discipleship. Ford has observed that

as our culture increasingly moves away from logic and propositional-oriented thought forms and deeper into feelings-oriented and transactionally oriented thought forms, the only evangelism that speaks the language of the culture is a story-oriented evangelism. Narrative evangelism speaks the language of a media-saturated, story-hungry

generation. (221)

According to Ford,

narrative evangelism begins with the story of God's interaction with human history and with individual human lives. It challenges those who hear the story to either reject it or join their own stories to it, to become part of the story of God. (225)

Long suggests that in narrative evangelism, "'our story' merges or collides with 'God's story' resulting in conversion" (Generating Hope 188). Once that spiritual "collision" occurs, narrative discipleship begins. According to Hahn and Verhaagen,

narrative discipleship is the outworking of narrative evangelism. After the stories of our lives are linked with God's story, the story does not end. Narrative discipleship involves helping followers of Christ see how the unfolding of their own life story is a key part of God's ongoing plot of redemption...it begins to take form and shape when we introduce them to the various plot themes of the biblical narrative. (26, 38)

For Baby Busters, the one absolute form of truth can be found in their personal story. By inviting them to communicate their story in the context of the small group setting, the opportunity was then created to show how the biblical story continued to intersect with their own story. Also, by inviting Baby Busters to share their personal stories, their life history and presence was affirmed as important and valuable.

Utilizing Baby Buster issues and concerns as a bridge to communicating biblical truth. This involved looking at the world through the eyes of a Baby Buster and discovering the presence of biblical themes cloaked in their most pressing issues and concerns. One might refer to it as an incarnational approach to communicating biblical truth. For instance, one way of looking at redemption is recycling. Redemption is taking something that should be thrown away and making it useful again. According to Celek and Zander, "that's where Baby Busters are at. They don't think they're usable. But the



Gospel says, not only are they usable, they're valuable, and God wants to use them to affect others for eternity" (123). By utilizing this approach the process of cultivating biblical literacy began on the turf of the Baby Busters' experience without compromising the integrity and truth of the Bible I was seeking to impart.

### **Research Method**

Due to the design of the study, which involved planning nine weekly Bible studies, teaching and participating in those studies, observing the response of the subjects, reflecting on those findings and then making adjustments, I chose participant observer research as the method for addressing the purpose of the study as well as the research questions guiding the study. Participant observer research, more commonly referred to as action research, has been defined by Bob Dick as

A family of research methodologies which pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time. It does this by using a cyclic or spiral process alternating between action and critical reflection and in the later cycles, continuously refining methods, data and interpretation in the light of the understanding developed in the earlier cycles...In most of its forms it is also participative and qualitative. (1-2)

In the study this process first began with my action of teaching information-based Bible studies at Pine Ridge Fellowship. Based on my research and observation I discovered that Baby Busters were dropping out of the studies and feeling disconnected because the studies did not take into account the intellectual and emotional influences that shaped the way they interpret and assimilate biblical truth. My next action, based on this discovery, was to develop a customized approach to teaching Baby Busters the Bible that was narratively-organized, experientially-focused, and relationally-based and that would lead to the development of their biblical literacy and result in their continued commitment to the discipling process. The nine-week Intersections Bible study was the tangible result of

that action. Based on my participation in and observation of the Bible study, and the research findings regarding its effect on the subjects and their response to it, I was able to support the findings of current literature as well as to initiate some change and improvement in the local church regarding biblical literacy among Baby Busters. My next action will be to teach a revised and expanded version of the Intersections Bible study.

Reflecting on the purpose of the study, action research provided an effective framework for addressing the research questions that guided the study as well as allowing me the flexibility to reflect on the Bible studies from week to week and to make refinements over the course of the nine-weeks, which not only improved the project but the subjects' experience in it.

### Summary

This review of literature sought to research and integrate pertinent information from the areas of postmodernism, the Baby Buster generation, biblical literacy, and biblical theological information in order to show how they informed the design of an approach to biblical literacy among Baby Busters.

The research on postmodernism revealed the predominant influence of the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche on the origins of postmodernism. The denial of absolute truth is viewed as one of the hallmarks of postmodern philosophy, while the relativism, pluralism, and nihilism permeating the philosophical climate of the 1990s culture are considered to be the by-product of such a philosophy.

The literature regarding the Baby Buster generation indicated that this body of 46,000,000 individuals born between 1965 and 1983 is most indicative of postmodern

philosophy. In the same way that postmodernism stands opposed to the claims of Enlightenment modernism, the Baby Buster generation rejects the modernistic orientation of the Baby Boomer generation. The literature revealed the immense challenge facing the local church to communicate the objective truth of the biblical narrative to Baby Busters who have come to Christian faith out of a background where pluralism and relative truth are elevated to honorable status.

The literature related to biblical literacy assisted me in developing a comprehensive definition of biblical literacy as it is established in Scripture and Church tradition. As a developmental process involving an individual's mind, character, and behavior, biblical literacy encompasses knowing, being, and doing. For the purpose of this study, I employed the terms informational and formational to describe these important aspects of biblical literacy. The literature also provided a sound basis for why biblical literacy is important, as well as a review of the significant events and movements in the history of biblical literacy from the premodern age to the present. Utilizing the concept of the biblical pre-hermeneutic of the believer, I addressed why a unique approach to biblical literacy among Baby Busters is necessary.

Prior to defining the characteristics of a design for biblical literacy among Baby Busters based on the review and integration of pertinent literature, the study was established in the biblical context and theological and scriptural support were provided regarding the importance and unique challenge undergirding this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

#### **Problem and Purpose**

As noted in Chapter 1, the problem of the study was that while United Methodist churches offer discipleship opportunities to develop biblical literacy among the general populus, very few offer such opportunities specifically tailored to take into account the influences that have shaped the lives of individuals from the Baby Buster generation. Consequently, many Baby Busters are disengaging from any consistent, organized form of discipleship because it does not present biblical truth in a way they can understand and assimilate into their postmodern worldview. Since, according to the research of Celek and Zander, and Long, Baby Busters are said to think, perceive, believe, and process truth differently from previous generations, an approach to biblical literacy was needed that took into account these differences.

The purpose, therefore, of this study was to design, implement, and evaluate an approach to cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic Bible study program. The study was evaluative in nature, and primarily utilized qualitative measures.

The project designed to test the approach occurred over a nine-week period with fourteen subjects from the Baby Buster generation. The project was developed based on the ten characteristics of an approach to biblical literacy among Baby Busters listed in Chapter 2 (see p. 54-59). The goal of the project was threefold: to test the validity of the design of the approach to biblical literacy among Baby Busters, to lay a foundation of biblical literacy so that they would have the tools to develop into committed followers of Jesus Christ, and to cultivate in the subjects a desire to stay engaged in the discipling

process.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the purpose of the study, three research questions guided the project.

#### **Research Question 1**

Did the subjects demonstrate a change in informational literacy over the nine-week Bible study?

The most important factors in this study are the subjects and their development into biblically literate followers of Jesus Christ. Measuring their informational literacy prior to and following the project for a change indicated, in part, whether or not they experienced the desired forward momentum in their spiritual formation.

Operational Question 1. If a change took place what kind was it and why did it occur?

This question sought to discover the degree of change that may or may not have occurred in the subjects' level of informational literacy over the nine-week Bible study through the pretest/posttest informational literacy questionnaire as graded on the informational literacy scale. It also sought to determine the possible causes for that change.

#### **Research Question 2**

Did the subjects demonstrate a change in formational literacy over the nine-week Bible study?

Measuring the subjects' formational literacy prior to and following the project for a change not only suggested, in part, whether or not they experienced the desired forward momentum in their spiritual formation, it also guarded against unbalanced, spiritual

development in the subjects. While the informational approach to studying the Bible is more analytical, focusing more on mastering and getting one's mind around the text, Mulholland suggests that "if we come to the informational aspect of reading [the biblical text] with an inner posture of openness to God, the informational task will then lead us to the formative dynamic" (Shaped by the Word 58). The subjects' formational literacy was measured anecdotally through several questions on the participant evaluation form as well as through the exit interview.

Operational Question 1. If a change took place what kind was it and why did it occur?

This question sought to discover the degree of change that may or may not have occurred in the subjects' level of formational literacy over the nine-week Bible study as well as the possible causes for that change. Once again, this was measured anecdotally through specific questions on the participant evaluation form and the exit interview.

### Research Question 3

Did the subjects develop a change in their commitment to participate in an ongoing Bible study program?

As was stated earlier in the study, developing into a biblically literate follower of Jesus Christ is a lifelong process to be enjoyed and cannot fully be accomplished within the short time span of nine weeks. However, the customized approach to building community and connecting the subjects to the biblical story and its themes could be so compelling that they would develop a desire to continue participating in an ongoing, systematic Bible study.

Operational Question 1. If a change took place what kind was it and why did it

occur?

This question sought to determine, through anecdotal means derived from specific questions on the participant evaluation form and the exit interview, what change the subjects experienced in regard to their commitment to participate in an ongoing Bible study program.

### Subjects

Fourteen individuals from the Baby Buster generation, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six, not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic Bible study program served as the subjects of the project. Due to the probability of attrition over the nine-week project, fourteen subjects were selected in order to ensure that at the conclusion of the project at least twelve participants remained. The subjects were drawn from among a group of Baby Busters attending Pine Ridge Fellowship in Deltona, Florida.

In order to assemble a group of Baby Busters, an invitation letter (see Appendix A) was written to fifty-one individuals between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six attending Pine Ridge Fellowship inviting them to complete a twenty-item, descriptive questionnaire (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was administered on four previously agreed upon days, times, and locations to the thirty-two individuals who responded to the invitation to participate, from which twelve were selected for the project. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, I took a few minutes to informally express words of appreciation and instruction, and to explain the purpose of the questionnaire. Individuals were provided as much time as was necessary to complete the questionnaire; however, thirty minutes was an anticipated time frame. One person from the Research Reflection

Team accompanied me in order to provide assistance in administering the questionnaire and to answer the subjects' questions.

Following the completion of the questionnaire, individuals were then asked to leave the questionnaire on the desk and to help themselves to a refreshment table where crackers, fruit, cookies, and soft drinks were served.

### **Variables**

Three types of variables pertained to the project. They were independent, dependent, and intervening. The independent variable was the nine-week Bible study—the content, methods, and group dynamics of the project. The dependent variables were the level of biblical literacy in the subjects, as well as the different geographical locations where they were raised. The intervening variables were the age, gender, length of time the subjects had been a Christian, and the religious environment in which they were raised.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation for this study involved seven descriptive measures related to the study. The first was a quantitative, descriptive questionnaire administered to thirty-two Baby Busters attending Pine Ridge Fellowship (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was comprised of twenty, multiple choice questions designed to identify fourteen Baby Busters whose worldview had been influenced by postmodernism and were not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic discipling program.

The second measure used in the study was a pretest, multiple choice, Bible basics questionnaire (see Appendix C). It was comprised of forty-eight questions specifically related to the Old and New Testaments. A researcher-designed informational literacy



scale was used to score the responses of the subjects to the pretest questionnaire (see Appendix D).

The third measure of the study was an entrance interview I conducted with the subjects of the project (see Appendix E). Questions were asked of participants as a means of assisting them to tell their story. The entrance interview provided me with an understanding of how well the subjects understood and connected their story to the biblical narrative prior to the project.

The fourth measure of the study was a structured observation instrument (see Appendix F). I used this instrument following each session of the project to record observations and questions related to group dynamics and the subjects' response to the particular material presented and discussed.

The fifth measure of the study was a written participant evaluation by the subjects (see Appendix G) at the close of the project. The written evaluation allowed each subject to reflect on the effectiveness of each dimension of the project in addition to how well the project fulfilled its desired goal of engaging them in an ongoing Bible study program .

The sixth measure of the study was a posttest, multiple choice, Bible basics questionnaire, identical to the pretest questionnaire. It, too, was comprised of forty-eight questions specifically related to the Old and New Testaments. It measured the subjects' growth related to the informational aspect of biblical literacy following the project. Like the pretest, it, too, was scored using the biblical literacy scale.

The seventh measure of the study was a formational literacy exit interview I conducted with the subjects of the project (see Appendix H). The exit interview provided an understanding of the growth that had occurred following the project in terms of the

subjects' understanding of the relationship between their story and the biblical narrative.

### **Reliability and Validity**

As a means of ascertaining the reliability and validity of the descriptive questionnaire and pretest-posttest, multiple choice, Bible basics questionnaire instruments, I presented each as a pretest to the five individuals associated with the Research Reflection Team. As part of the pretest of each instrument I asked the individuals to note necessary revisions or additions. I also sent the pretest-posttest, multiple choice, biblical literacy questionnaire to Dr. Robert Mulholland from Asbury Theological Seminary. As professor of New Testament, he was capable of reviewing the test items and offering input on attaining content validity for the pretest-posttest multiple choice, biblical literacy questionnaire.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected through a descriptive questionnaire, a pretest-posttest questionnaire, an entrance and exit interview, a written participant evaluation, and a structured, observation instrument.

### **Data Analysis**

This study involved six areas of analysis. The first was related to the descriptive questionnaire (see Appendix B). The responses on the questionnaire were analyzed in order to ascertain fourteen subjects to participate in the project of the study. I analyzed responses that specifically

1. Correlated to the characteristics of postmodernism and the Baby Buster generation provided in the Chapter 2 review of literature and
2. Reflected Baby Busters who are not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic

discipling program.

The second area of data analysis referred to the researcher-designed pretest-posttest, multiple choice, Bible basics questionnaire (see Appendix C). As noted earlier, this questionnaire was comprised of forty-eight questions related to the Old and New Testaments. The questionnaire was analyzed using a researcher-designed Bible basics scale (see Appendix D). The scale ranged from 0 to 12, with each mark in between representing four correct responses. Zero would represent the lowest level of informational literacy while 12 would represent the highest level of informational literacy within the context of the questionnaire. For instance, if a subject provided sixteen correct responses, that subject would score a 4 on the informational literacy scale, representing a somewhat low, pretest level of informational literacy. Following the nine-week project, this same subject would take the posttest, multiple choice, Bible basics literacy questionnaire and would again receive a score based on the number of correct responses. If, in the posttest, the subject provided thirty-two correct responses, the subject would score an 8 on the informational literacy scale, representing a 50 percent improvement over the pretest score and some significant development in terms of his or her level of informational literacy.

The third area of analysis was related to the researcher-conducted entrance interview with the subjects participating in the project (see Appendix E). Questions were asked of each participant as a means of evaluating the presence and development of formational biblical literacy in each participant. The entrance interview provided me with an understanding of how well the subjects understood and connected their individual narratives to other biblical narratives prior to the project.

The fourth area of analysis was related to the structured observation instrument (see Appendix F). Information I recorded based on weekly structured observation of the project provided observations and insights that were used to support the findings of the study. This information was also used as anecdotal material in Chapter 4 of the study.

The fifth area of analysis was related to the post-project written participant evaluations (see Appendix G). Information from the evaluations was used as anecdotal material in Chapter 4 of the study.

The sixth area of analysis involved the researcher-conducted exit interview with the subjects participating in the project (see Appendix H). The exit interview provided an understanding of the growth that occurred following the project in terms of the subjects' understanding of the relationship between their individual narrative and related biblical narratives, and the qualitative difference such understanding made in their character. I recorded the subjects' responses on the interview form and used them as anecdotal material in Chapter 4 of the study to support the findings of the project.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings of the Study

This chapter presents the findings of the study, organized in five sections. The first section provides a profile of the subjects of the study. The next three sections address the three research questions, and the final section highlights the key learnings rising out of the study that inform biblical literacy among Baby Busters.

The data for this chapter was drawn from the researcher-designed instruments noted in Chapter 3. These include the descriptive questionnaire, the pretest and posttest questionnaires, the entrance interview, the exit interview, the structured observation instrument, and the participant evaluation form. When quoting or referring to the subjects of the study I use their first and last initials.

#### Profile of the Subjects

The Bible study group was originally made up of fourteen persons selected from the Pine Ridge Fellowship United Methodist Church. However, only twelve persons completed the study. The two individuals who dropped out did so after the second Bible study gathering for health-related reasons. Among the twelve who completed the study, one-third were male, and two-thirds were female, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six, with the average age being twenty-seven (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

#### A Profile of the Subjects

	<u>Actual Numbers</u>
<u>Gender</u>	
Male	4
Female	8

Table 4.1 (con't)

<b><u>Age</u></b>	
18-24	5
25-30	1
31-36	6
<b><u>Length of Time as a Christian</u></b>	
Not yet	1
0-2 years	6
3-5 years	1
6-10 years	2
11-over	2
<b><u>Religious Environment in Which You Were Raised</u></b>	
Nonexistent	3
Haphazard	4
Unhealthy	1
Healthy	4

Among the twelve subjects one was not yet a Christian at the time of the study. While the study was designed to involve Baby Busters who were already believers, I decided to involve a committed seeker who was very close to taking that step of faith to become a believer. My hope was that through the influence of the Bible study she would become a believer, and halfway through the study that is exactly what occurred. For this individual, as well as for several others who had been Christians for less than two years, this Bible study was their first sustained exposure to any sort of systematic group study of the Scripture. It therefore carried significant, yet not exclusive, influence in terms of their future choices regarding participating in other Bible study programs. This factor also applied to the other subjects of the study who, even though they may have had previous involvement in a Bible study, had since become disconnected and uninvolved.

Research question #3 reflects the influence and effectiveness of the nine-week Bible study in producing a commitment among the subjects regarding their future participation in an ongoing, systematic Bible study program.

In the descriptive questionnaire, subjects were asked to describe the religious environment in which they were raised. While Table 4.1 reflects their responses, this information is important because it serves as one among several variables shaping each subject's experience in the Bible study. For those subjects whose religious environment was non-existent, the possibility existed that they might have entered into the study with little or no commitment, questioning whether it would have any real value and meaning for their lives. For those raised in a haphazard environment, there, too, existed the possibility of commitment and motivation issues plaguing their experience. Those whose religious environment was described as unhealthy could possibly have encountered difficulty trusting the heart of the leader, the other participants, and the Bible study itself to provide them with a positive, beneficial experience. Subjects whose environment was described as healthy were likely to have gone into the study positive and expectant.

Among the twelve subjects who completed the study, only three attended all nine of the Bible studies. One subject missed four of the studies, four missed two of the studies, and four missed one of the studies. Because of these inconsistencies in attendance, several of the subjects' experience of community was diminished and fragmented, and the potential impact of the study on the development of their biblical literacy was restricted. In a few of the subjects, a possible correlation could be established between their attendance and the influence of their religious upbringing. For instance, the subject who missed four of the studies was raised in a haphazard religious

environment and acknowledged having struggles with commitment. One of the three subjects who attended all nine of the Bible studies was raised in an environment described as healthy. However, numerous other subjects' Bible study experience provided no discernable correlation to the religious environment in which they were raised. Therefore, as was stated earlier, the religious environment in which the subjects were raised was only one among many variables shaping their experience in the nine-week Bible study.

### Research Question #1

Did the subjects demonstrate a change in informational literacy over the nine-week Bible study?

I sought to answer this question through the use of a pretest and posttest Informational Literacy Questionnaire, as well as an Informational Literacy Scale. The questionnaire was limited to the nine themes of the study distributed randomly among the forty-eight questions. Eight of the questions dealt with books of the Bible, five with biblical personalities, ten with biblical quotes, three with biblical definitions, four with parables, two with Bible stories, fourteen with biblical concepts, and four with general biblical trivia. Ten of the questions were from the Old Testament; thirty-two were from the New Testament, and six were general in nature (see Table 4.2).



Table 4.2  
 Informational Literacy Pretest and Posttest Questionnaire  
 Question Distribution Scale

<b>Biblical/ Theological Theme</b>	<b>Books of the Bible</b>	<b>Biblical Personalities</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Parables</b>	<b>Bible Stories OT/NT</b>	<b>Biblical Cncpts.</b>	<b>Biblical Trivia</b>
<b>Week #1 Sin</b>	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	0
<b>Week #2 Grace</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
<b>Week #3 Repentance</b>	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	0
<b>Week #4 Discipleship</b>	0	0	2	1	1	0	2	1
<b>Week #5 Scripture</b>	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
<b>Week #6 Church</b>	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	1
<b>Week #7 Evangelism</b>	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	0
<b>Week #8 Stewardship</b>	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
<b>Week #9 Evil and Suffering</b>	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Questions</b>	7	5	10	3	3	3	12	5

Subjects were administered the questionnaire before the nine-week study as well as immediately afterward without any changes or adjustments to the questionnaire. Each subject was allowed as much time as was necessary for them to complete the questionnaire, with most requiring twenty-five minutes. Each pretest and posttest questionnaire was scored on a researcher-designed, informational literacy scale comprised of twelve grid marks with each mark representing four correct answers. For example, if a subject selected thirty-two correct responses out of the possible forty-eight, he or she would have received a score of eight on the literacy scale. The literacy scale registered the comparative change or lack thereof in each subject's informational literacy based on his or her participation in the study.

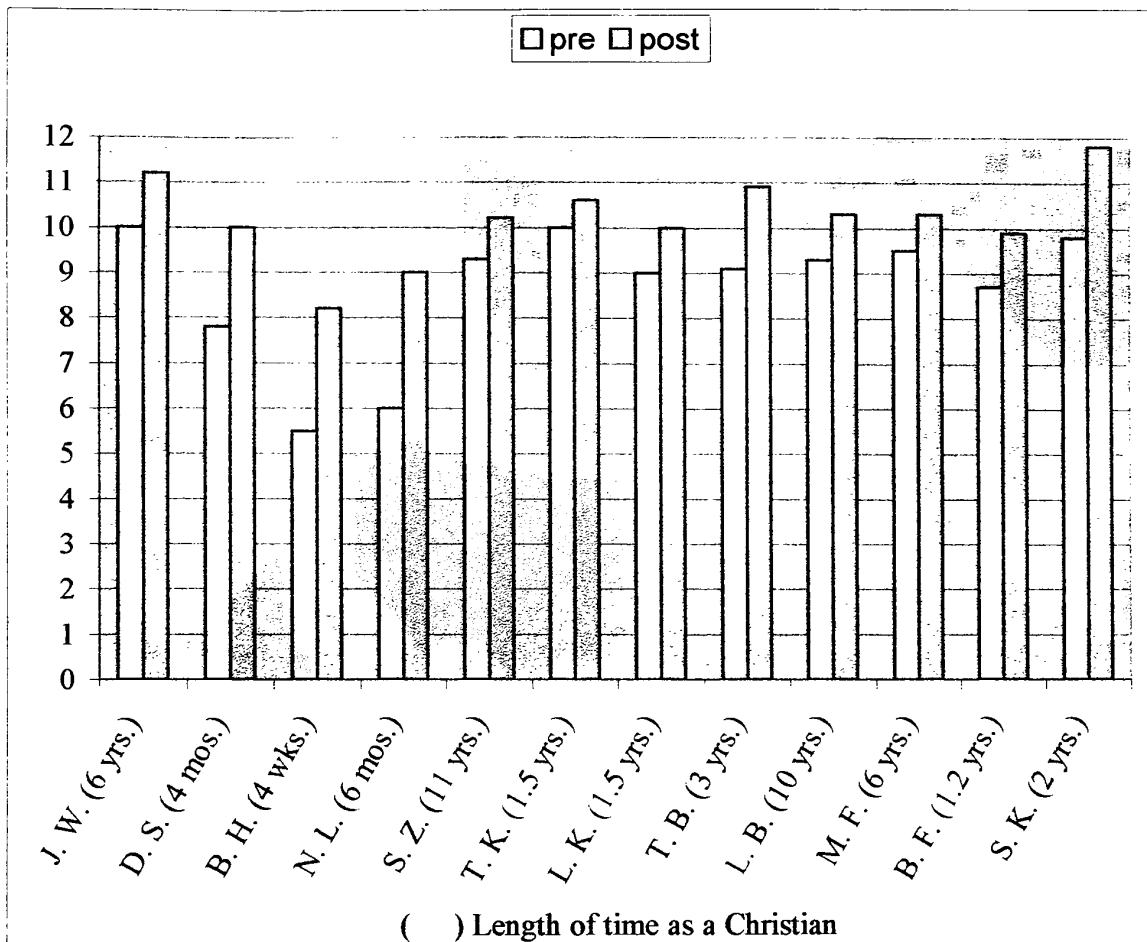
#### Operational Question 1

If a change took place what kind was it and why did it occur?

According to the results provided by the pretest and posttest, informational literacy scales, all twelve subjects registered a change in their informational literacy. Table 4.3 reflects that in every case the change that occurred was in the form of an increase.

Table 4.3

The Change in Informational Literacy



Several of the subjects who were new to the Christian faith (0-2 years) experienced the most significant increases to their informational literacy while those who had been believers for a longer period of time experienced a more nominal increase, described by some as a sort of “filling in the gaps” with regard to their prior Bible

knowledge. The increase in each of the subject's informational literacy can be attributed to four factors as derived from the exit interviews with each subject as well as the structured observation instruments completed after each weekly Bible study.

The systematic presentation of the Bible material each week. The development of informational literacy in each of the subjects was more of a serendipitous by-product coming out of the presentation of the biblical/theological theme, the Bible story, and the epistle lesson each week as opposed to a rote dispensing of Bible facts and information. For instance, in the first week of the study, the topic was "Sin and The Fallen Human Condition." To begin the Bible study, I showed a four-minute clip from the John Grisham movie, A Time to Kill, in which two of the characters display racist attitudes toward African Americans and then proceed to assault and rape a little girl and leave her for dead. It was a very disturbing clip and immediately made the subjects experience the terrible nature of sin. Following the clip, I led the group in highlighting six focus points for the purpose of naming the sins we observed in the clip: racism, hatred, substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse, and a complete disregard for life. Next, I formally introduced the theme to the class and defined the word "sin" as meaning that we have "missed the mark of God's holiness because of a failed condition in our souls inclining us to willfully rebel against and disobey God's known laws." In addition to this definition, I also reviewed Romans 3:10-12 with the class which says, "As the Scriptures say, 'no one is good—not even one. No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong—no one does good, not even one.'" Next we looked at the story of David and Bathsheeba recorded in 2 Samuel 11–12:12, specifically highlighting 11:1-5. Following the retelling of the story, we took a close-up look at each

of the main characters and their role within the drama: David, Bathsheeba, Uriah, Joab, and Nathan. Then, as a group, we discussed the question, “In what ways did David sin and draw attention to the fallen, human condition?” Next we studied the related epistle lesson, which in this case was Romans 5:12-21, with the key verse being, “When Adam sinned [Gen. 3:1-7], sin entered the entire human race. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.” As a part of this time, we discussed three focus questions: “What is the origin of sin and the fallen human condition?” (Rom. 5:18-19), “What purpose does the Law of Moses (the Ten Commandments) serve according to this text?” (Rom. 6:20; Gal. 3:19a–24a); and, “Can we and should we be held personally responsible for our sin if ‘Adam’ was the cause?” (Rom. 8:12-13). In the process of experiencing the theme, defining the theme, relating the theme to a biblical narrative and related Scripture from the epistles, and discussing the theme, the subjects increased their knowledge and developed in their informational literacy.

The processing and discussion of biblical truth within the group context. In the exit interviews, subjects were asked, “Has your level of informational literacy changed over the nine-week Bible study, and if so, explain what factors contributed to that change?” A majority of the subjects said that the time spent processing and discussing the themes, questions, and Bible stories in the group setting was a significant contributor to the increased change in their informational literacy. Long supports this finding when he writes, “Xers [Busters] take delight in dialogue and discussion. They take joy in the process of discovering truth for themselves with the assistance of others in community” (Generating Hope 193). The group process not only reinforced what they were learning, but new insights and answers were gleaned in the exchange process. For instance, T. K.

said, “The discussion groupings produced some of the greatest learnings for me, especially on the theme of stewardship.” S. Z. stated that “the discussions, and exchanges that occurred among my peers regarding the Bible story resulted in answers and new insights that I would not have received on my own.”

Bridging the relevance gap. Once the subjects were able to see the relevance of the themes to their everyday lives and to understand their pragmatic value, they were more inclined to invest themselves in the learning process. Being able to identify with the theme and to experience its relevance gave them a hunger to know more in order to understand it and to apply its truth to their lives. In her exit interview, T. B. said, “The video clip and the Bible story made the themes more real to me and helped me to see their relevance to my life, which in turn made me want to learn and gain more knowledge.” As Celek and Zander suggest, “When communicating to Busters, it must be relevant to their generation. Above all else, it has to be useful in order for them to listen to it” (104). As Table 4.4 reflects, the content of the Bible study was presented in such a way that the relevance gap was bridged.

Table 4.4

Response of the Subjects to the Participant Evaluation Form

<b>Question #2</b>		
<b>The content of the nine-week Bible study was</b>		
<b>Uninformative and irrelevant (0-3 on the scale)</b>	<b>Informative but irrelevant (4-7 on the scale)</b>	<b>Informative and relevant (8-10 on the scale)</b>
		✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
“I have learned and can understand more how Bible stories and my story relate.”		
“Some weeks, of course, were more relevant than others.”		

The principle of creative redundancy. The theme of each week's Bible study was also the theme of the following Sunday worship celebration. This meant that the Bible story and epistle lesson, as well as the insights and information from the study, were repackaged and restated in the form of the worship celebration message, music, and "My Story" testimonies (see p. 10). The effect of this redundancy was the reinforcing of the biblical/theological theme and the related biblical information covered during the previous week's study. Several subjects, who, because of employment, sickness, or being out of town, were not able to benefit from the effect of the worship celebration. I can only surmise that had they been more present for both the Bible study and worship celebration the level of change in their informational literacy would have been even greater.

One other observation is worth noting as it relates to operational question #1 regarding "why a change occurred in the subjects informational literacy." Among those who participated in the study, five in particular recorded the greatest increases in their informational literacy according to the results of the pretest and posttest. These subjects also lacked any substantive exposure to biblical teaching and training in their past. For three of the five, their pretest scores also reflected the lowest levels of informational literacy. Therefore, those who entered the project with the least amount of informational literacy were able to register some of the greatest change in the form of an increase due to the effect of the Bible study and their lack of exposure to any substantial biblical teaching prior to the project.

#### Research Question #2

Did the subjects demonstrate a change in formational literacy over the nine-week

## Bible study?

From the study, I discovered that formational literacy cannot be measured in the same way that informational literacy is measured. In trying to determine whether a change in formational literacy had occurred I had to depend largely upon anecdotal material gathered from the responses of the subjects to three questions taken from the exit interview and participant evaluation forms. One was an interview question while the other two were evaluative in nature.

1. Has your level of formational literacy (your character and behavior) changed over the nine-week Bible study? If so, explain what factors contributed to that change.

2. The effectiveness of the Bible study in helping me to understand how “what I believe” is integrated into “the way I behave and live my life” was ineffective, effective, or very effective, along with room for comments.

3. The Bible study helped me to encounter the presence and power of God in the Bible and to experience change in my character not at all, somewhat, or very much, along with room for comments.

The responses of the subjects to these questions are recorded in Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7.



Table 4.5

The Change in Formational Literacy

	Pre Bible Study			Post Bible Study		
	Low Formational Literacy	Partial Formational Literacy	High Formational Literacy	Low Formational Literacy	Partial Formational Literacy	High Formational Literacy
J. W.		✓				✓
D. S.	✓				✓	
B. H.	✓				✓	
N. L.	✓				✓	
S. Z.	✓				✓	
T. K.		✓				✓
L. K.	✓				✓	
T. B.	✓				✓	
L. B.	✓				✓	
M. F.		✓				✓
B. F.	✓				✓	
S. K.		✓				✓

Table 4.6

Response of the Subjects to the Participant Evaluation Form

Question #5		
The effectiveness of the Bible study in helping me to understand how "what I believe" is integrated into "the way I behave and live my life" was		
Ineffective (0-3 on the scale)	Effective (4-7 on the scale)	Very effective (8-10 on the scale)
		✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
"Before I had a knowledge based understanding of the themes we studied. But now, I can see there [sic] relevance to my life, and how they can be a practical part of my daily living."		
"It helped me to realize that not just one part of my life needed God, but every part. I can't just believe it, I need to live it, and this study helped to show me how."		

Table 4.7

Response of the Subjects to the Participant Evaluation Form

<b>Question #10</b>		
<b>The Bible study helped me to encounter the presence and power of God in the Bible and to experience change in my character</b>		
<b>Not at all (0-3 on the scale)</b>	<b>Somewhat (4-7 on the scale)</b>	<b>Very much (8-10 on the scale)</b>
	✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
<p>“I’m not sure how to divide the change in character between the Bible study, church worship, and being around others in the faith. I would say it served as a positive reinforcement to all of the above.”</p> <p>“I have certainly retained many of the points we discussed throughout the study, and have put those ideas into practice in my life. The lesson on sin [week #1] was particularly life changing for me.”</p>		

As Table 4.5 indicates, all twelve subjects experienced a change in their formational literacy; however, several subjects observed that while their formational literacy changed, it was not the sole effect of the nine-week Bible study that caused the change. Rather, it was the cumulative effect of many factors over a period of time, including, but not limited to the study.

Operational Question #1

If a change took place what kind was it and why did it occur?

As was previously noted, all twelve subjects experienced a change in their formational literacy and that change was in the form of an increase. That change, however, occurred in some specific ways worth noting.

1. Several of the subjects’ change occurred conceptually. They came to appreciate an old value and to understand it within the context of a new terminology. Prior to the study, most of the subjects were familiar with the value commonly articulated as, “If you’re going to ‘talk the talk’, you’d better ‘walk the walk.’” What they came to

discover is that this value of “talking the talk” and “walking the walk” forms the basis for what was commonly referred to throughout the project as the integration of Christian knowing and Christian doing, or otherwise known as formational literacy. Equipped with this new term, they were able to see how, together with informational literacy, it creates a complete picture of biblical literacy and healthy Christian discipleship.

2. Several of the subjects expressed not only having developed a greater awareness and understanding of the importance of Christian knowing and doing but also of having a stronger commitment to integrate them in their daily lives. They came to understand that one without the other forms an incomplete, unbalanced discipleship. In the words of one of the subjects, “This study really helped me to see that this is not so much just what I believe with my mind that is important but also how I act. I want my whole life and every detail of it to reflect Jesus in me.”

Before addressing several of the reasons for why the change in formational literacy occurred in the subjects, there are several reasons worth noting for why it had not occurred prior to the project. First, several of the subjects admitted that prior to the Bible study, they had never really personalized the importance of formational literacy for their daily lives. Second, many of the subjects had no faith community in which to process and receive support and guidance for assimilating biblical truth into their daily lives. Third, all of the subjects remarked that they had struggled in being able to identify with and to experience the relevance and practical application of the biblical themes and stories to their lives and had therefore lacked sufficient motivation to integrate knowing and doing simply because the Bible or another person said they should. As Long reminds us, “Busters want to be led to discover the truth for themselves instead of being told what

to believe. They are willing to discuss things, and are suspicious of people who arrogantly claim to know the truth” (Generating Hope 193).

What then were the reasons for the change the subjects experienced in their formational literacy?

The presentation of biblical truth relationally and then propositionally. Presenting the biblical truth and theological themes first relationally through a biblical story helped the subjects to establish a connection and identification with the theme from the inside out. From this identification with the theme and the biblical story, group discussion was stirred among the subjects that, in addition to the practical application time, eventually led them to the discovery of the theme’s relevance and application to their lives. The presentation of propositional truth through the Epistles served not only to underscore the relational truth of the biblical story but to also impress upon them the importance of the theme’s integration into their daily lives. Commenting on the place of propositional truth in the development of formational literacy Ford says,

A story is a starting point, not a conclusion. In Jesus’ hands a story was a powerful tool for illumination and persuasion, but he never stopped with a story. Stories attract us, involve us and tug at our emotions, but Jesus always went on to appeal to the intellect and the will... Some of his most effective teaching was direct, didactic and propositional. (236)

Processing truth in community through the practical application time. The flow of the project was designed to help the subjects experience biblical truth in the group setting through the modern movie parallel and the Bible story, to be taught biblical truth in the group setting through the introduction of the biblical/theological theme, the Bible basics, and the epistle lesson, and to process and apply biblical truth in small clusters of three-four people through the related issue/concern time and the practical application

time. The goal of the practical application time was to take the theme and, through a series of questions, to consider how its truth could be integrated into the character of the subjects and applied to their daily lives. As Long suggests, “The key question for Xers [Busters] today is ‘Is it real?’ not ‘Is it true?’ They need to see the incarnation of the gospel in people’s lives more than to hear the proclamation of the gospel through our words” (Generating Hope 210). Long is suggesting that Busters want to experience the difference that biblical truth can make in their lives and not just be told that it can or should make a difference, which is what I hoped would be accomplished through the practical application time. Commenting on the power of small group community, Celek and Zander have observed that

life change most frequently will not occur among Busters in a church service or a large group setting. Large group meetings merely lay the groundwork, lower the drawbridge, and tear down the walls so that life change can occur in more intimate settings. Busters process truth relationally, and need time to think about it, to talk about it among their friends, and to talk about it some more. (114)

S. Z., commenting on how her level of formational literacy had changed over the nine-week Bible study said, “The discussions we had in the practical application time made me feel like I wasn’t alone and they helped me to understand how to apply what I was learning.” J. W. said, “The practical application time helped me to process, among my peers, many of the points that were discussed throughout the study, and to put those ideas into practice in my daily life.”

The worship celebration experience, particularly the message and the “my story” segments. The purpose of the worship celebration within the project was to reinforce the biblical theme and related teaching that were covered during the Bible study the week before. All aspects of the worship experience, from the music to the message, were

developed to present the theme to the congregation in a way that would stimulate their mind as well as to challenge their character and behavior. While the messages were narrative in their content and presentation, I included informational aspects of the previous week's theme, while focusing heavily on the formational dimensions challenging them and helping them to see how the content of the message could apply to their lives. During several of the worship celebrations a lay person, very often one of the subjects from the study, was invited to take five-seven minutes to share their story, telling how Jesus Christ had made a difference in his or her life particularly in relation to the theme of the day. On some occasions it also took the form of an interview, with me interviewing the person by asking questions about his or her faith story as it related to the theme. On Sunday, 14 October 2001 the theme of the worship celebration was discipleship. As a way of highlighting the importance of integrating what we were learning about discipleship with the actual doing of discipleship, I invited M. F. to participate in a "my story" interview. I began by asking her to introduce herself and to share the story of how she came to faith in Christ. I then asked her to share why discipleship is important to her, and what her daily practice of discipleship looks like. I then asked her to describe her greatest struggle with discipleship and concluded by inviting her to share one of the key truths she was learning as a result of her discipleship practices. What I discovered as a result of this and other similar experiences over the course of the project is that it not only built a bridge of identification among the listeners, particularly the subjects of the study, but it also provided an additional way for them to be challenged by it and directed as to how they could practice and apply its truth in their own lives.

Research Question #3

Did the subjects develop a change in their commitment to participate in an ongoing, Bible study program?

In seeking to determine whether the subjects' experienced a change in their commitment to participate in an ongoing, Bible study program, I had to depend largely upon anecdotal material gathered from the responses of the subjects to three questions taken from the entrance and exit interviews and participant evaluation forms. Two were interview questions while one was evaluative in nature.

1. Describe and explain your involvement or lack of involvement in an ongoing, systematic Bible study. What factors have contributed to your involvement or lack of involvement (Pre Bible Study Table 4.8)?

2. Has your level of commitment to participating in an ongoing, Bible study program changed? If so, describe how and why (Post Bible Study Table 4.8)?

3. The Bible study captured my heart and has given me the desire to stay committed to participating in an ongoing Bible study program not at all, somewhat, very much, with room for comments (Table 4.9).

Table 4.8

Change in Commitment to an Ongoing, Bible Study Program

	Pre Bible Study			Post Bible Study		
	No Commitment	Nominal Commitment	High Commitment	No Commitment	Nominal Commitment	High Commitment
J. W.		✓				✓
D. S.	✓					✓
B. H.	✓				✓	
N. L.	✓					✓
S. Z.	✓					✓
T. K.		✓				✓
L. K.		✓				✓
T. B.	✓					✓
L. B.	✓				✓	
M. F.	✓					✓
B. F.	✓				✓	
S. K.	✓					✓



Table 4.9

Response of the Subjects to the Participant Evaluation Form

<b>Question #11</b>		
<b>The Bible study captured my heart and has given me the desire to stay committed to participating in an ongoing, Bible study program</b>		
<b>Not at all (0-3 on the scale)</b>	<b>Somewhat (4-7 on the scale)</b>	<b>Very much (8-10 on the scale)</b>
	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
<p>“A taste of real community has given me the desire to continue in a small group.”</p> <p>“I really enjoyed the study, but find it hard sometimes to fit everything in. I have the desire to continue in this type of study, but it is just making the time to commit to it that is hard.”</p>		

As Table 4.8 reflects, each of the subjects did experience a change in their commitment to participating in an ongoing Bible study.

**Operational Question #1**

If a change took place what kind was it and why did it occur?

Before addressing several of the reasons why the subjects experienced a change in the form of an increase in their commitment to participating in an ongoing, Bible study, there are several reasons worth noting for why it had not occurred prior to the project. First, several subjects suggested that because they were raised in either nonexistent or haphazard religious environments, participating in a Bible study was just not part of their paradigm for living life. D. S. said, “I had never really considered going to a Bible study. I didn’t know what it was.” Second, some subjects had a negative experience participating in a Bible study in the past and concluded as a result that it simply was not worth their time or personal investment. N. L. said, “The one time I attended a Bible study it was awkward and I couldn’t relate.” Third, several subjects mentioned

difficulties coordinating their daily schedules to accommodate a Bible study, in addition to problems with travel and distance. Fourth, a number of subjects, including B. F., mentioned that they allowed their fear of feeling inadequate and ignorant around “Scripture quoting kind of people” to prevent them making a commitment to be involved in a Bible study. Fifth, nearly half of the subjects did not feel that the content of a Bible study would be relevant to their lives, and with no presumed relevance, the motivation to participate and be committed was absent.

What then were the reasons for the change the subjects experienced in their formational literacy?

The contagious experience of community. According to Hahn and Verhaagen, who are Baby Busters themselves,

no generation in recent memory has valued relationships more than ours. Many of us are from broken homes, so talk of our friends being like family is not sentimental, idle chatter. Such talk reflects our heart hunger to connect, to experience belonging and community. (172-73)

Echoing this thought in his response to having participated in the project, J. W. said, “Experiencing the sense of community within the group has made me hungry for more and given me the desire to continue in a small group. The relationships were excellent and gave me a taste of real community.” B. F. added, “I now know that I’m not alone in my journey. I discovered that I’m not standing alone.” N. L. also said, “I liked being able to hear other people’s stories and to experience how they could identify with my story.” These comments not only mirror the spirit of Hahn and Verhaagen’s statement, but they are also reflective of the findings presented in Table 4.10 on the effectiveness of the study in producing a sense of community and connectedness among the subjects.

Table 4.10

Response of the Subjects to the Participant Evaluation Form

<u>Question #7</u>		
The effectiveness of the Bible study in developing a sense of community and connectedness among the group members was		
Ineffective (0-3 on the scale)	Effective (4-7 on the scale)	Very effective (8-10 on the scale)
	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
<p>"I really enjoyed working in groups because it allowed me to connect with a lot of people I normally wouldn't have. It was a neat way to learn and hear other people's stories and to know that I am not alone."</p> <p>"I think it began to occur over the course of the study, but for me it takes more than 18 hours [nine two-hour Bible studies] to develop a sense of community."</p>		

The study revealed that the development of biblical literacy is best accomplished in the context of an emotionally safe, authentic, trusting community. While that is not an exclusive truth relative to Baby Busters, I discovered that it is a key component in their spiritual development and in motivating them to stay committed to an ongoing, Bible study program. However, developing that type of community among the subjects of the study over the nine-week project was a slow, consistent process that really just got started and never fully developed as Table 4.10 and Table 4.11 indicate.

Table 4.11

Response of the Subjects to the Participant Evaluation Form

<b>Question #8</b>		
<b>The emotional climate of the Bible study was</b>		
<b>Intimidating and unloving (0-3 on the scale)</b>	<b>Cautious (4-7 on the scale)</b>	<b>Safe and caring (8-10 on the scale)</b>
	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
<p>“The climate was generally safe and caring. This definitely improved as the study progressed.”</p> <p>“It took a few weeks for people to warm-up and share openly. I noticed some people only shared in the smaller group setting throughout the study. I felt more comfortable the last few sessions and could really speak up.”</p>		

While developing that sort of community takes years to be fully realized, I was able to discover through the anecdotal data provided by the subjects that enough of the spiritual and relational dynamics of biblical community were present among the group to capture their hearts and motivate them to stay committed to the developmental process of biblical literacy.

The relevance of the study to daily living. Commenting on why he experienced a change in his commitment to participating in an ongoing, Bible study program L. B. said, “The project wasn’t just a knowledge-based study full of things we couldn’t apply. It was real and relevant and applicable to our everyday lives.” Each week the subjects seemed expectant that the theme being studied was somehow going to intersect with their story and relate to their daily living. I believe the project’s failure to be relevant would have influenced the subjects to discontinue their participation and to remain uncommitted to participating in a program for biblical literacy. However, this fortunately was not the case as Table 4.12 clearly reflects.

Table 4.12

Response of the Subjects to the Participant Evaluation Form

<b>Question #9</b>		
<b>The relevance of the Bible study to my life was</b>		
<b>Irrelevant (0-3 on the scale)</b>	<b>Somewhat relevant (4-7 on the scale)</b>	<b>Very relevant (8-10 on the scale)</b>
	✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
“I was really able to get into this. Our family as a result has been applying what we have learned in our own lives.”		

The project was successful in meeting the subjects’ expectations for relevance and, therefore, to encourage them to stay committed to an ongoing, Bible study program. This was due in large part to the effect of the related issue/concern and the practical application movements of the project which focused on addressing the pragmatic nature of the themes being studied.

The desire to maintain biblical literacy momentum. For L. K. and S. K. the desire to stay committed to an ongoing, Bible study program involved not wanting to sacrifice the momentum gained from the nine-week project. L. K. said, “I want to continue to stay committed because I want to keep learning more and more. I want the way I act and treat others to keep improving.” S. K. simply said, “I don’t want to fall away and go back to the way I was.” While L. K.’s response reflects a desire to build on her discipleship and S. K.’s response reflects a fear of falling away in her discipleship, both have placed a value on the progress they experienced in the development of their biblical literacy and are thus motivated to stay committed to an ongoing, Bible study program. Part of their motivation may also stem from their experience as members of a generation having experienced fizzled out hopes and dreams personally, relationally, economically, and

politically. As Long says, “The difficult experiences that this generation has gone through deeply affect how they view society and themselves” (44-45), and I would add how they view their spirituality. Therefore, for L. K. and S. K., and others like them, some of their motivation for staying committed to an ongoing, Bible study is that they do not want to see the developing momentum behind their hopes and dreams for becoming biblically literate die.

The flow and format of the Bible study. As Table 4.13 reflects, the subjects found the flow of the Bible study each week beneficial to their experience.

Table 4.13

Response of the Subjects to the Participant Evaluation Form

<b>Question #3</b>		
<b>The flow of the Bible study each week was</b>		
<b>Cumbersome to my experience (0-3 on the scale)</b>	<b>Acceptable but not beneficial to my experience (4-7 on the scale)</b>	<b>Beneficial to my experience (8-10 on the scale)</b>
		✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
“I needed more discussion time in the small groups.”		
“The transition from section to section was smooth and easy to follow.”		

J. W. said, “I appreciated the flow of the Bible study each week in that it was different from the usual Bible study format of reading Scripture and discussing questions.” N. L. said, “I liked the format of the study because it helped me to learn and to relate my personal story to the stories from the Bible.” The customized design of the Bible study, which was developed around narrative discipleship, took into account the relational and communal way Baby Busters encounter and process biblical truth and proved to be

effective toward the goal of motivating them to stay committed to an ongoing, Bible study program.

### Summary of Findings

The premise of this study was that in order to cultivate the biblical literacy of Baby Busters a customized approach would be required. That approach would need to be designed taking into account the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual influences shaping the lives of Baby Busters, in addition to the way they process and assimilate biblical truth. What I discovered through the project and the application of my research questions is that my premise, based on my experience ministering with Baby Busters in the local church as well as the insights of pertinent literature, was correct. As was stated in Chapter 1, “Baby Busters are a unique generation of individuals requiring a different approach as well as specialized strategies and methodologies in order to develop them into biblically literate followers of Jesus Christ” (see p. 2). Based on the findings of my research, the first thing that “different approach” requires is the use of a narrative discipleship model built around the importance of community. As the project revealed, the subjects had little desire to have the Bible story inspire them and more of a desire to be able to identify their story with it. Out of that identification, the relevance gap was bridged, and the subjects displayed a willingness to engage and buy into the truth of the text and to apply it to their lives. However, the “oxygen” that kept this process alive was the experience of authentic community. As the subjects shared with one another their doubts, struggles, and hopes of connecting to the biblical story and theme and applying its truth in their daily lives, the experience of community allowed them to do so within a trusting, caring environment.

The second aspect of that “different approach” involves the pragmatic nature of the subjects’ engaging of the Bible stories and themes. Learning Bible information simply for the sake of gaining knowledge provided little motivation for the subjects. The underlying question among the subjects was, “How is this going to make a difference in my life?” and “Is this real and applicable in my world?” The subjects needed time to discuss these questions and to process and apply their discoveries to their individual stories. In retrospect, I needed to have allowed more time in each Bible study for that process to occur.

The third aspect of that “different approach” to developing biblical literacy in Baby Busters was the confirmation of the value of the collaborative relationship between the Bible study experience and the worship experience. Built upon the principle of creative redundancy, this allowed the subjects to hear and experience the same biblical truth being communicated in multiple, creative ways and over an extended period of time. In the same way that biblical literacy is incomplete without both the informational and formational dimensions, so the approach to developing biblical literacy in Baby Busters is incomplete without the collaborative effect of both the Bible study experience and the worship experience when developed around the same theme.

While the project seemed to accomplish the purpose of the study, I realize that developing biblical literacy in Baby Busters is a lifelong process. The subjects’ exposure to nine weeks and nine thematic studies was only enough to begin to cultivate and till the soil of their hearts and minds. Perhaps that is why research question #3, which sought to measure through anecdotal means their commitment to participating in an ongoing, Bible study, was so important. The future development of the subjects’ biblical literacy will no



doubt be influenced by their commitment to complete what the project was only able to begin.

## Chapter 5

### Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 1 the reader was introduced to a fictitious, married couple named Chris and Charlene, symbolic of the Baby Buster generation. As postmodern Christians, they, like generations before them, had a desire to grow in their faith. Yet, they wanted to do so within the context of an authentic, trusting community of their peers and with an approach that would be customized to take into account the intellectual and emotional influences and experiences that had shaped their lives as well as the way they encounter and process Scripture. The conclusions recorded in this chapter will substantiate the findings of current literature, as well as those of the study, suggesting that if Baby Busters, like Chris and Charlene, are to stay committed and engaged in the process of becoming biblically literate, a specialized approach to cultivating biblical literacy is required.

### Evaluation and Interpretation of Data

The first element of my evaluation is an acknowledgement of the challenge I encountered in conducting a participant observer study. Because I had a relationship with each of the subjects in the study as their pastor and because of my commitment to their discipleship, I naturally wanted them to experience an increased change in their informational and formational literacy and in their commitment to participating in an ongoing, Bible study. My number one priority throughout the project was their spiritual growth and development. The presence of this desire on my part as the researcher highlighted the importance of the objective, unbiased nature of the instrumentation employed in the study. The descriptive questionnaire, pretest/posttest, informational

literacy questionnaire, as well as the exit interviews and the participant evaluation forms are examples of this instrumentation. Their presence helped to ensure the validity of the study and to counterbalance the inherent relational bias present in a participant observer study.

### **The Design of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to design, implement, and evaluate a customized approach to cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters, like Chris and Charlene, not currently involved in an ongoing, systematic Bible study program. The specific approach that was designed and implemented involved a nine-week Bible study entitled “Intersections: How Biblical Stories and Themes Connect with Your Life Journey.” The title “Intersections” was selected because one of the goals of the study was to employ a narrative discipleship approach in helping the subjects to develop their biblical literacy. Narrative discipleship, as stated in Chapter 2, “is the outworking of narrative evangelism. After the stories of our lives are linked with God’s story, the story does not end. Narrative discipleship endeavors to show how the biblical story continues to intersect with our stories” (see p. 57-58). The title represented one of the key truths that emerged from the study. Namely, that in cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters a connection or intersection exists between their stories and the biblical story. Once they were able to identify with the biblical story and theme and that relational connection was established, it increased the probability for the development of informational and formational literacy.

Each of the Bible studies was two hours in length, and according to the subjects’ response to question #1 on the participant evaluation form regarding their thoughts and

feelings about the two hour time commitment to the Bible study each week, they viewed it as a wise and acceptable investment of their time. While the subjects agreed on the value of the time investment, some discrepancy existed on whether the two hour time allotment was adequate to accommodate the eleven movements of the study. T. B. said, "I felt the two hours was a good amount of time...Any less time would have been inadequate." In response to question #3 of the participant evaluation form regarding the flow of the Bible study, J. W. said, "At times it seemed like a bit too much to get through in two hours." Responding to question #4 regarding the effectiveness of the Bible study in helping the subjects to understand Old and New Testament Bible basics, he also said, "I felt like time constraints limited us in this are...I would have liked more explanation in some instances, but there was not enough time." J. W.'s comments reflect a challenge that I, too, experienced in trying to give credible attention to all eleven movements of the Bible study in two hours, particularly the related epistle lesson, the Bible basics, the related issue/concern, and the practical application (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

## Summary of the Structured Observation Instrument

<b>The Gathering and Prayer Time</b> (10 minutes)	"The subjects were engaged and responsive to one another. Each week that passed there was a greater freedom and trust experienced between the subjects."
<b>The Modern Movie Parallel</b> (5 minutes)	"By and large this was very effective. There were a few instances where it did not connect, but that was due more to poor clip choice. More often than not it fulfilled its purpose of giving the subjects a point of identification with the theme."
<b>Introduction of the Biblical/Theological Theme</b> (10 minutes)	"This time was always productive. All subjects were engaged and responsive to the theological/biblical theme. It often served as a real "light bulb" moment for many of the subjects."
<b>The Related Bible Story</b> (15 minutes)	"The subjects were always engaged and responsive to the Bible story. The purpose and goal was to establish identification and to provide information. This consistently occurred."
<b>The Related Epistle Lesson</b> (15 minutes)	"This time did not receive as much attention as it should have due to time constraints. Most often the biblical historical context of the epistle was not expounded on which would have provided an additional point of connection for the subjects. It functioned more to provide information rather than identification."
<b>The Related Bible Basics</b> (15 minutes)	"This section feels somewhat awkward in terms of its placement in the Bible study. It was glossed over during our actual gatherings. I would reference it, and encourage the subjects to review it, and then keep moving due to time constraints."
<b>The Break</b> (10 minutes)	"This was a well-timed breather. It was used as a real community-building time."
<b>The Related Issue/Concern</b> (15 minutes)	"A very good time among the subjects to relate the theme to a social issue relevant to them. It wasn't a time for coming up with pat answers to complex issues as much as it was a time of discussion and reflection. They really seemed to look forward to this time, and always wanted more."
<b>The Practical Application</b> (15 minutes)	"The group really seemed engaged and responsive to this time. It was a time for them to draw together the modern movie parallel, the theme, the biblical story, and the epistle lesson and apply it to their stories. They looked forward to this time as well and always seemed to want more."
<b>The Closing Prayer Time</b> (10 minutes)	"The subjects were engaged and responsive to one another."
<b>Priming the Pump</b>	"I never really referenced this in our time together. The subjects were encouraged to review it over the upcoming week."

The time crunch experienced in the project highlights a potential danger and a dilemma that were present. The danger lay in the pressure I felt to push the subjects to complete the eleven movement flow of the study in order to attain the goal of finishing each week. The implied message of my pushing and prodding was that completing all eleven movements was more important than the subjects' experiences. While nothing

could have been further from the truth, what resulted at times was the feeling that the eleven movements in the study functioned less as the means to an end, the end being a faith journey to be experienced, and more as an end in themselves, the end being a goal to be conquered. This in turn could have proven to be counterproductive to the building of community, as well as to the development of formational literacy, both of which require time to simply “be” and to reflect. The dilemma presented by the study was that in order for me to give credible attention to each movement of the study, an adjustment needed to have occurred. I needed to have removed or decentralized movements deemed unnecessary to the fulfillment of the goal of the study, to have lengthened the study time, or both. Based on my evaluation (see Table 5.1; p. 104) as well as the anecdotal material provided through the participant evaluation forms, I needed to have both decentralized one of the movements and to have lengthened the study time. Therefore, in the future, when this study is offered again, it will most likely increase from two hours to 2 ½ hours, allowing for more time to be given to those movements in the study that experienced a time crunch. It would also allow me to adjust the amount of time and placement given to other movements within the study. Because of the awkwardness and abruptness of shifting from the relational and experiential dynamics of the study to the informational segment on Bible basics, I would decentralize this movement by assimilating it into the introduction of the biblical/theological theme, the Bible story, and the epistle lesson movements of the study and therefore omit it as a single movement. This would allow me to more naturally address those parts of the study, like the Bible basics, that were informational in nature, while maintaining a narrative, relational, and experiential focus.

While time was a factor in the diminished effectiveness and influence of a few of

the movements in particular, the overall systematic arrangement of the Bible study accomplished the goals of the project: to build and foster community among the subjects, to present biblical truth relationally using a narrative discipleship approach, to help the subjects experience the pragmatic nature of particular biblical truths, and apply them in a relevant way to their lives.

In an e-mail I received from J. W. following the first Bible study, he underscored the spiritual impact he experienced as a result of the systematic flow of the movements. Together, to a greater or lesser degree, they produced a relationally-focused Bible study allowing him to identify with the biblical story and not just be informed or inspired by it. He wrote,

I've never come out of a Bible study with so much to take with me to think about. Everything—from the opening movie clip to the closing focus questions—challenged me to really look at how “sin” (and specifically the story of King David) intersects with my own life. It is so easy for us as Christians to read about people like David (or Adam for that matter) and shake our good Christian index finger at them in judgment. Your study, however, forced me (and I believe forced all of us) to realize that we too have missed the mark of God's holiness time and time again. I think the most eye opening to me was the realization that my sin looks as disgusting as the sin of the two movie characters. Also, seeing the cycle of events that fueled David's continued acts was so relevant to my own shortcomings. Although I had read and heard the story of David and Bathsheba before, intersecting it with my own daily life was amazingly relevant to say the least.

Could J. W. have had the same experience through a Bible study that began with the propositional truths of Romans 3:23 and 5:12-21 and then being told that he had a sin problem? I think it is very doubtful. The fact that he was able to discover his sin problem by first relating and identifying with the Bible story of David and Bathsheba as

well as to the modern movie parallel made him far more receptive to the propositional truth of the epistle that followed. As a Baby Buster influenced by postmodernism, J. W.'s understanding of truth is tied to his personal story and experience. Therefore, by first intersecting and identifying the relational truth of the David story with J. W.'s personal story, it laid the foundation for his subsequent affirmation of the theological/biblical truth associated with the theme of sin. It also positively effected the development of formational literacy in him, more so than if it had occurred beginning with an approach focused on propositional truth. This is why the related Bible story movement (relational truth) in each of the nine gatherings preceded the related epistle lesson (propositional truth). This goes to affirm the insights of Celek and Zander who have observed that "Busters process truth relationally rather than propositionally" (51) as well as those of Hahn and Verhaagen who suggest that "GenXers [Busters] are yearning for something more than solely information-based discipleship" (see p. 2).

J. W.'s comments regarding the impact of the narrative discipleship approach on his experience is a microcosm of the eleven other subjects' experiences. In response to question #6 on the participant evaluation form which asked them to evaluate the effectiveness of the Bible study in helping them to understand how their personal story was related to other stories in the Bible, eleven rated it as very effective, and one rated it as effective. No one rated it as ineffective.

In retrospect, I believe two aspects of the project could have been more effective in the way they were presented. The first has to do with the design of the project. I should have designed the project to be more experiential based and less reason based, since Baby Busters would rather discover and experience truth than have it told or



explained to them. For example, in the Bible study on evangelism, I spent quite a bit of time appealing to the subjects' reason by highlighting the parables in Luke 15 and showing a video of Bill Hybels talking about "The Lost Sheep," "The Lost Coin," and "The Lost Son." While that served an important function, it probably would have been even more effective if I would have first filled four kiddie pools with hay, dropped a diamond ring into each pool of hay, divided the group into teams of three, and had each team search for the ring until they found it. By doing it this way, I would have helped the subjects to experience the heart of evangelism to seek and save the lost and then appealed to their reason by reading Luke 15, followed by the teaching video by Bill Hybels.

The second aspect that could have been more effective involves the topics that were selected for the subjects to discuss during the related issue/concern movement of the project. Based on the particular biblical/theological theme of the week, I could have selected topics that were more relevant to the concerns of Baby Busters. As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this movement was to associate the biblical/theological theme to a modern day issue or concern of a Baby Buster and to thereby assist the participants in understanding the pragmatic nature of the theme and to discover how it works and applies in the real world (see p. 13). While some of the issues and concerns selected addressed actual "hot topics" for Baby Busters (e.g.- tolerance and pluralism when the theme was evangelism), others were rather general and mundane (e.g.- quotes by Epicurus and Knechtle when the theme was evil and suffering). According to Ford,

Busters are searching for a Gospel that works, that addresses issues relevant to their lives, issues like: racial justice and reconciliation, equality, the environment, poverty, hopelessness, economic justice, sexual addictions and disorders, gender confusion, as well as every kind of exploitation including child abuse, spousal abuse, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. (174)

In the future, I want to be more intentional to incorporate these and other issues into the related issue/concern movement of the Bible study and to thereby help those participating see how the biblical themes work and relate in their world.

Each of the weekly Bible studies was developed around a biblical/theological theme with the eleven movements of the study functioning to contextualize and flesh out each of the themes. The themes occurred in the following order:

Week One: Sin and the Fallen Human Condition;

Week Two: Grace;

Week Three: Repentance;

Week Four: Discipleship;

Week Five: Scripture;

Week Six: The Church;

Week Seven: Evangelism;

Week Eight: Stewardship; and,

Week Nine: Evil and Suffering.

The themes were developed with a systematic progression beginning with the problem of sin. God's response to the problem of sin separating humanity from himself was to offer grace through Jesus Christ. The human response to God's grace offered in Christ is repentance from sin and trusting in Christ for salvation. Once salvation has occurred, discipleship begins. Two of the central elements of growing in one's faith are a continuing encounter with Scripture as well as a commitment to the ministry of the Church universal through the local church. Two key commitments of all Christ followers involve evangelism and the stewardship of one's life and resources. One of the harsh

realities all disciples of Jesus experience in this life is that of evil and suffering.

Together, these nine themes helped the subjects to understand and experience concepts central to Christianity and to the life of all disciples of Jesus Christ.

As a pastor I see a twofold need among Baby Busters. First, to be rooted in the basic beliefs of Christianity and second, to understand and experience those biblical values that would develop and grow them in their faith. In retrospect, the themes selected for the project were really a blending of these two foci, neither being very comprehensive. Therefore, when I teach the Intersections Bible study again, I would like to develop it into two, nine-week tracks according to these dual foci and to re-arrange their order in the following manner:

**Track One: Basic Beliefs**

Week One: God;

Week Two: Sin;

Week Three: Jesus;

Week Four: Grace;

Week Five: Repentance;

Week Six: Salvation;

Week Seven: Sacraments;

Week Eight: Evil and Suffering; and,

Week Nine: End Times.

**Track Two: Growth and Development**

Week One: Discipleship—the process by which we grow;

Week Two: The Church—the body in which we grow;

Week Three: The Holy Spirit—the power by which we grow;

Week Four: Scripture—the Word in which we grow;

Week Five: Prayer—the heart with which we grow;

Week Six: Worship—the expression of our growth;

Week Seven: Servanthood—the fruit of our growth;

Week Eight: Stewardship—the measure of our growth; and,

Week Nine: Evangelism—the passion of our growth.

### **Implications of the Findings**

Cultivating biblical literacy in Baby Busters, like Chris and Charlene, requires a customized, incarnational approach that takes into account the intellectual and emotional influences that have shaped their lives. In the same way that interpreting a biblical text without first taking into account the cultural context and influences that have shaped it would be irresponsible, cultivating biblical literacy in Chris and Charlene without first considering the influences and experiences that have shaped who they are and how they encounter Scripture would also be irresponsible. Two of the most significant influences are intellectually and emotionally wrapped up in postmodernism. Intellectually, as members of the first postmodern generation, Chris and Charlene reject modernism's claim that truth is rationale, objective, and absolute. Instead, they are more comfortable with postmodernism's claim that truth is subjective and experiential bound up in a person's individual story. As such, they do not want to be told what to believe but would rather relate and identify their story to the biblical story and discover what constitutes truth as a result of that intersection and their interpretation of it. Emotionally, Chris and Charlene reject the independent, individualistic nature of modernism and embrace

postmodernism's affinity for interdependence and community, where feelings and relationships supercede logic and reason. As noted in Chapter 1, Chris and Charlene both came from dysfunctional homes and were new in their community. While on the one hand these factors created in them some fear and anxiety over being in relationship with other people, they also created in them an emotional hunger to feel whole and secure and meaningfully related and connected to other people. A few of the words to the theme song of the television program, "Cheers," express the longing of their hearts:

Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they  
Are always glad you came. You wanna be where you can see, our  
Troubles are all the same you wanna be where everybody knows your  
Name. You wanna go where people know, people are all the same, you  
Wanna go where everybody knows your name (Angelo and Portnoy).

Thus, in order for Chris and Charlene, as Baby Busters, to grow in their biblical literacy, the approach has to be narratively organized, experientially focused, and relationally based, reflecting key values present in postmodernism.

The theological basis informing this approach to cultivating biblical literacy in Chris and Charlene is found in the incarnation of God with its practical expression in the ministry of Paul. In the incarnation, God chose to find common ground with humanity by becoming indigenous and connecting with us, living among us in Jesus Christ, who was fully human yet fully divine and without sin. As was stated in Chapter 1, Paul's methodology for leading people to Jesus Christ was incarnational (see p. 15-16). An example of this is his experience among the Greek philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) where he indiginized the gospel. He entered into their worldview of religion and altars, built relationships with them, found a meaningful point of connection with them (e.g., the altar "To an Unknown God"), and then led them to the Christian worldview

without compromising his own in the process.

In cultivating biblical literacy in Baby Busters like Chris and Charlene, the same incarnational approach applied. I had to indiginize biblical truth by entering into the postmodern worldview and its narrative, experiential, and relational characteristics. From these points of connection and identification, the Baby Busters were eventually led to affirm the truth of the various Bible themes and stories in the project. In the project, this process occurred through all eleven movements but most specifically through the modern movie parallel, the Bible story, and the practical application time. For example, if I were trying to help Chris and Charlene understand the concept of grace, I would not begin with the propositional truth statements of Titus 3:4-5 or Ephesians 2:1-10. Rather, I would begin by showing them a brief clip from the movie, Les Miserables based on the novel by Victor Hugo. The clip would focus on the main character, Jean Valjean, a man whose past was shaped by cruelty and hardship and whose future was shaped by a gesture of undeserved love and mercy offered when it was needed most and deserved the least. As they watch the clip, I would ask them if they could relate to Valjean by thinking of times in their lives when they, like he, had received love and mercy when they needed it the most and deserved it the least. Sharing stories and experiences of possible intersections between themselves, Valjean, and one another would then follow. I would then invite them to listen to the reading of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16 and to discuss how they would feel if they were the laborers employed at the third hour as well as those employed at the eleventh hour? I would also ask them how Valjean was like the eleventh hour laborer and if they could relate their stories to either character. The practical application time would allow them an opportunity to

voice, through printed questions, their doubts and fears and to share their insights on how grace is relevant and applicable in their lives. The goal of these movements would be to indiginize the biblical truth and to help Baby Busters like Chris and Charlene to experience a connection between their story and the stories of their peers, the Jean Valjean story, and the story of the laborers. As they develop an identification with the characters in the stories, they would very likely discover and affirm the truth of grace for themselves and relate it to their lives. This approach, beginning at the level of Chris's and Charlene's personal stories and experiences as well as their hunger for authentic community, reflects the influence of postmodernism in their lives as well as its influence in the approach to cultivating their biblical literacy as Baby Busters.

#### Limitations of the Study

Five limitations were present in this study. The first and most obvious is that it was limited to believers affiliated with the Baby Buster generation born between 1965-1983. While persons born before 1965 who ascribe to postmodern values and process biblical truth according to its influence would have responded favorably to the project, the study was specifically limited to those between the ages of 18 and 36.

The second limitation is that only Baby Busters who were not currently involved in an ongoing, Bible study could participate in the project. This limitation was based on the premise of the study that the reason they were not participating in an ongoing, Bible study was because of its "one size fits all" approach that failed to account for the influence of postmodernism on the way they interpret, assimilate, and apply biblical truth. By developing a customized approach among those disconnected, I would be able to determine whether or not a change in their commitment to participate was due to the

customized approach of the project.

The third limitation involved the length of the project. It was only nine weeks long and was limited to two hours each week. The development of biblical community, as well as the development of informational and formational literacy, was really just beginning to take shape once the nine weeks was completed. While Chapter 4 documented that the subjects experienced an increased change in both their informational and formational literacy as well as in their commitment to an ongoing, Bible study, that change reflected only what occurred over the nine-week period. Nine weeks only allowed for the subjects' biblical literacy to be scratched at the surface whereas a longer period of time would have increased the probability of greater change.

Another factor limiting the study were the nine biblical/theological themes around which the project was organized. Biblical literacy is very comprehensive and involves the whole of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. The nine themes in the project, however, were limited to various sections and stories in the Bible; therefore, the cultivation of informational and formational literacy is relative and limited to the nine themes studied. For instance, because sin was one of the themes we studied, each subject could appear to be biblically literate on this topic. However, if asked about the Holy Spirit, whom we did not study, very few of the subjects would reflect a very significant level of biblical literacy. This limitation highlights the need for a longer, more comprehensive Bible study involving multiple biblical themes and stories, more fully encompassing the whole of Scripture.

A fifth factor limiting the study was that it involved only Baby Busters from Pine Ridge Fellowship and did not include persons from other United Methodist churches or



denominations. Would persons from other churches or denominations have had a negative effect on the development of community among the group? Would they have adversely affected the development of informational and formational literacy, especially if their loyalty to a different church would have prevented them from participating in the worship celebration aspect of the project? Because of this limitation, I do not know.

### **Future Research**

As was noted in Chapter 4 (see pg. 83, 100), the principle of creative redundancy (see pg. 10) was said to have been an influencing factor in developing biblical literacy among Baby Busters. However, because I failed to measure accurately its effect on their biblical literacy through my research, there was no objective, verifiable documentation to support such a claim. In the future, if further research is conducted, I would suggest adding three types of questions to the study in order to measure more effectively the effect of the creative redundancy principle. First, I would include an additional research question: What was the effect of the creative redundancy principle in developing the subject's informational and formational literacy over the nine-week Bible study? Second, I would add a question to the Participant Evaluation (Appendix G): The combined influence of the weekly Bible study and worship celebration experience contributed to the development of my biblical literacy over the nine-week Bible study—Very much, Somewhat, Not At All. Third, I would add a question to the Exit Interview (Appendix H) regarding the impact of creative redundancy on the subject's experience. If these three questions had been included in the current study, I feel certain that the data would have supported the findings reached in Chapter four (see pgs. 83, 100).

## Conclusions

One of my motives for engaging in this study was born out of a frustration I felt over the number of Christian Baby Busters at Pine Ridge Fellowship who, like Chris and Charlene, were active in worship but had fallen away from participating in any sort of ongoing, Bible study program. I found myself interpreting their absence as an indication that they were “spiritual slackers” and did not care about growing in their faith, either informationally or formationally. I felt frustrated trying to reach out to them through traditional, propositionally-oriented, small group, Bible studies, while receiving very little, if any, response. Initially, the thought never occurred to me that their lack of involvement could be related to the methodology associated with the way Pine Ridge Fellowship was attempting to disciple Baby Busters through Bible study. Eventually, through conversations with several of them, I realized that they had a hunger for a faith that was real, relevant and relational, and that went beyond Sunday worship and inspirational ideas. What they were looking for in a Bible study was really no different than the indigenous approach missionaries employ in reaching unchurched people groups with the gospel. The missionaries enter into the people’s particular worldview, seek to find a point of connection, and, as a result of that connection, lead them to discover and experience the truth of the gospel. My Baby Buster friends were looking for a Bible study that would be customized to their postmodern worldview and that would present biblical truth to them by taking into account the intellectual and emotional influences that had shaped their lives. They were looking for a Bible study that could speak their postmodern language, one in which their story and personal experience took center stage, where relationships dominated, and that was experiential and relevant, not just theoretical

and inspirational. The nine-week project of this study is the result of that endeavor. I am convinced that in the United Methodist church I serve, as well as in the United Methodist denomination, if we want to develop young people like Chris and Charlene into biblically literate followers of Jesus Christ we will have to customize our approach to discipleship and account for the influence of postmodernism shaping the way they interpret, assimilate, and apply biblical truth. If we are unwilling, we run the risk of placing a higher value on the type of discipleship methodology comfortable to us rather than those for whom that methodology exists to serve. While I was sensitive to the need of the project to be relational and to foster a sense of community among the subjects, I underestimated the importance the subjects placed on this particular dynamic of the project. I discovered that in cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters, relationships rule. The focus must be relational, as opposed to informational. Based on the development of relationships and community and the communication, assimilation, and processing of biblical truth within that context, informational and formational literacy began to occur. Cultivating biblical literacy in Baby Busters is a group process that involves and is contingent upon the presence of community: a community in which they are able to share their doubts, fears, and questions on their journey toward identifying their story with the biblical story and to discovering and applying the biblical truth therein.

While developing a relational environment and customized approach are essentials to cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters like Chris and Charlene, those factors alone are not enough to make them biblically literate. In addition to these, they have to bring a commitment and consistency to the lifelong process of biblical

literacy. The purpose of the nine-week project was to begin the process of cultivating biblical literacy in the subjects and to give them a hunger to stay committed and consistent to its development over the course of their life. Christian Baby Busters like Chris and Charlene who are willing to exercise the commitment and consistency necessary to grow in their faith can be found in churches all across America. They just need a local church to offer the kind of customized approach to cultivating biblical literacy described in this study to intersect with their commitment.

This study on biblical literacy among Baby Busters was born out of a dilemma I encountered for discipling individuals like Chris and Charlene. Prior to this study, my approach for discipling believers in their faith was one dimensional, based largely on modernistic philosophy. It was informationally oriented and appealed primarily to logic and reason. It was an approach I commonly used for developing biblical literacy in people, regardless of their generational affiliation. After observing several Baby Busters drop out of these studies and experience little or no change in their understanding or behavior, I became concerned. My concern led me on a journey, which, for me, resulted in a valuable discovery. Namely, as this study has shown, discipling Baby Busters into biblically-literate followers of Jesus Christ is a lifelong process requiring a customized approach that accounts for the influence of postmodernism on the way they encounter, assimilate, and apply biblical truth. When such an approach is employed, as it was through the project of this study, it will be effective in cultivating biblical literacy in Baby Busters.

### Postscript

Since the conclusion of the project, all twelve subjects have continued as active

participants in the ministry of Pine Ridge Fellowship through the weekly worship celebration. Eight of the twelve subjects have continued to grow in the context of task small groups organized around a ministry function, and structured to provide a sense of community and connectedness. Four of the twelve subjects have continued to pursue small group discipleship opportunities based on the communication of biblical truth from a propositional approach. While this type of small group is not their first choice, currently at PRF, it is their only choice. However, in September of 2002 this will change. The Intersections Bible Study will be offered in its revised and expanded version providing the subjects with an ongoing small group Bible study that will accommodate their desire for a study that is narratively-organized, experientially-focused, and relationally-based. While nine of the twelve subjects have expressed strong interest in participating in the study when it is offered again, there are also many other Baby Busters at PRF, who did not participate in the nine-week study, who have expressed interest in participating.

## APPENDIX A

### Letter of Invitation

Name

Date

Dear

Hi! I hope this letter finds you doing well. As you know, I am privileged to serve as the senior pastor of Pine Ridge Fellowship, a new United Methodist church in the DeLand district of the Florida Annual Conference. However, you may not be aware that I am also enrolled as a doctor of ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary where I am writing a dissertation on "Biblical Literacy Among Baby Busters." It is my hope that through my studies I will be able to contribute and enhance not only our local church's effort but also the United Methodist Church's effort in cultivating biblical literacy among Baby Busters.

For the project portion of my study, I will be leading a nine-week Bible study with fourteen Baby Busters beginning Thursday, September 13, 2001, and concluding on Thursday, November 15, 2001. The Bible study will be designed specifically for the purpose of cultivating biblical literacy among newly converted Baby Busters possessing a worldview defined by postmodernism.

As one whose age places you within the Baby Buster generation (1965-1983), I would like to invite you to complete a twenty-item, descriptive questionnaire for the purpose of determining whether or not you would fit the desired profile for subjects involved in the project. In order to accommodate your busy schedule, I will be administering the descriptive questionnaire on four separate dates, Sunday, August 5, 2001, and Sunday, August 12, 2001 at the Heritage Middle School Cafetorium at 11:30 a.m. following worship, and on Tuesday, August 7, 2001, and Wednesday, August 8, 2001, at 7:00 p.m. at the Pine Ridge Fellowship church office located at 1555 Saxon Boulevard, building 3, suite 302. Please select the date most convenient to your schedule. The questionnaire should require no more than 30 minutes to complete, after which you will be free to leave.

Thank you for considering my request of you to participate in this first dimension of my dissertation project. To confirm your participation and/or to ask questions regarding the contents of this letter, please call me at 386-575-0078 or 386-860-6880, or e-mail me. God bless you!

Sincerely,

David C. Moenning

Pastor of Pine Ridge Fellowship

**APPENDIX B**

**Descriptive Questionnaire**

The purpose of the questionnaire is to function as an instrument for identifying Baby Busters who

- Possess a postmodern worldview and not just a Baby Buster demographic affiliation;
- Have recently converted to the Christian faith (0-12 months); and,
- Have had limited, if any, experience in the local church, as well as limited qualitative and/or quantitative exposure to the Bible and its teaching.

**General Information**

Please provide the following information:

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex (check one): Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_

Marital Status (check one):

\_\_\_\_ Single

\_\_\_\_ Married

\_\_\_\_ Divorced

\_\_\_\_ Widowed

**Please place a check in the box beside the statement that most accurately describes  
you, your views, and your approach to life.**

1. I have asked Jesus Christ to come into my heart and to forgive my sins within the last

- 0-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 12 months–longer
- I have not yet asked Jesus into my heart.

2. Since becoming a Christian,

- I have attended worship regularly and have had ongoing participation in a small group for learning and support.
- I have attended worship regularly and have not had ongoing participation in a small group for learning and support.
- I have rarely attended worship but have regularly participated in a small group for learning and support.
- I have rarely attended worship and have not consistently participated in a small group for learning and support.

3.

- I was raised to occasionally participate in the ministry of the church by attending Sunday school, youth group, and worship at least once a month.
- I was raised to attend church only on religious holidays like Easter and Christmas.
- I never attended a church-sponsored function except for a wedding or funeral prior to my conversion.



4. Prior to my conversion experience,

- I never read from any portion of the Bible.
- My only exposure to the Bible was when I would attend a wedding or funeral.
- I read from the Bible several times a month.
- I read from the Bible several times a week.

5. Since my conversion experience,

- I have never read from any portion of the Bible.
- My only exposure to the Bible is when I attend church.
- I read from the Bible several times a month.
- I read from the Bible several times a week.

6.

- "What's in it for me" describes my philosophy of life.
- "The Bible says it so I believe it" describes my philosophy of life.
- "Live and let live" describes my philosophy of life.
- Other philosophy: \_\_\_\_\_

7.

- The Bible provides the standard for absolute truth.
- There is no such thing as absolute truth.
- Each person or community creates its own understanding of truth.

8.

- Christianity is the only right way to experience the hope of eternal life with God.
- Christianity is only one among many acceptable ways to experience the hope of eternal life with God.
- There is no right or wrong way to experience the hope of eternal life with God.

9.

- I would describe myself as a “lone ranger.”
- I can take or leave doing things with other people.
- I prefer to do things as a team and in close community with others.

10.

- I work because I love it.
- I work to make a living.
- If given the choice I would rather go out with friends than spend time working.

11.

- I am drawn to leaders who are great communicators.
- I am drawn to leaders who are authentic.
- I am drawn to leaders who are very smooth and polished in their presentation.

12.

- I like ideas to make rational, logical sense.
- I do not like it when ideas contradict each other.
- I have no problem with contradictions or paradoxical ideas.

13.

- Twenty-first century technology and MTV have had the most significant influence in shaping my life.
- The values and teachings of Christianity have had the most significant influence in shaping my life.
- My friends and peers have had the most significant influence in shaping my life.
- My parents and extended family have had the most significant influence in shaping my life.

14. Which television show most accurately reflects your life philosophy and value system?

- Friends
- The Brady Bunch
- Touched by an Angel
- Real World

15.

- I trust political, religious, and financial institutions.
- I feel skeptical toward political, religious, and financial institutions.
- I feel indifferent toward political, religious, and financial institutions.

16. I would prefer to listen to a sermon about

- Why the Ten Commandments are important for today.
- John Wesley and the doctrine of sanctification.
- How to be successful in the marketplace.
- How to find meaning and purpose in life.

17. How would you describe the religious environment in which you were raised?

- Nonexistent
- Haphazard
- Unhealthy
- Healthy

18. Which of the following items is a key factor for you in making decisions?

- The logic and objective truth of the Bible.
- Your horoscope.
- Your life experience and what you believe to be the truth for you.
- A parent or other authority figure in your life.

19. I believe couples who choose to live together before marriage are

- Disobeying God.
- Being smart.
- Not doing anything wrong.
- Entitled to do what they believe to be moral.

20. When I think about the future of our nation, I feel

Optimistic.

Indifferent.

Depressed.

Pessimistic.

## APPENDIX C

### Pretest and Posttest Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire is to serve as an instrument for measuring the subjects' informational biblical literacy prior to the project as well as their growth in the same regard following the project. Each of the questions correlates to one of the nine, biblical themes to be studied in the project.

Please place a check in the box beside the answer you believe to be correct.

1. The story of Adam and Eve is located in

- The book of Revelation
- The book of Genesis
- The book of Galations
- The book of Matthew

**Theme: sin and the human condition**

2. Who is recognized as the Head of the Church?

- Peter
- Jesus
- Paul
- Moses

**Theme: the Church**

3. Which of the following has nothing to do with the biblical concept of stewardship?

- Time
- Talents
- Prayer and Fasting
- Money

**Theme: stewardship**

4. Which of the following books of the Bible describe the sinful fall of humanity?

- Revelation
- Genesis
- Matthew
- Deuteronomy

**Theme: sin and the human condition**

5. Complete the following sentence spoken by Jesus: "In this world you will have

\_\_\_\_\_."

- Peace, love, and happiness
- Financial problems
- Stress
- Tribulation

**Theme: evil and suffering**

6. Which of the following quotes is ascribed to the Gospel of Matthew?

- “God helps those who help themselves.”
- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
- “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
- “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

**Theme: evangelism**

7. When did the early Church begin?

- When Jesus was born.
- When Jesus rose from the dead.
- Following St. Paul’s martyrdom.
- On the day of Pentecost.

**Theme: the Church**

8. What New Testament book of the Bible introduces the concept of “being justified [saved] by grace through faith in Jesus”?

- Acts
- Revelation
- Romans
- Matthew

**Theme: grace**



9. The word repentance means

- To be given a second chance.
- To experience a change of mind.
- To try harder.
- To be sorry.

**Theme: repentance**

10. The ministry of helping people to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ is called

- Fellowship
- Sponsorship
- Evangelism
- Discipleship

**Theme: discipleship**

11. How many books are there in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible?

- 39; 27
- 34; 25
- 36; 36
- 20; 20

**Theme: Scripture**

12. Which of the following parables addresses the subject of stewardship?

- The Prodigal Son
- The vine growers
- The Talents
- The Marriage Feast

**Theme: stewardship**

13. Which of the following books of the Bible is best known for addressing the subject of evil and suffering?

- John
- Job
- James
- Joshua

**Theme: evil and suffering**

14. What chapter and book of the Bible is known for its emphasis on evangelism?

- John 14
- Psalm 23
- Exodus 20
- Luke 15

**Theme: evangelism**

15. Which of the following Bible stories most accurately reflects the problem of the human sinful condition?

- The feeding of the five thousand
- Daniel and the lions' den
- David and Bathsheeba
- David and Goliath

**Theme: sin and the human condition**

16. What parable in the Bible most clearly communicates the concept of God's grace?

- The Rich Fool
- The Prodigal Son
- The Two Foundations
- The Laborers in the Vineyard

**Theme: grace**

17. Which of the following did St. Paul emphasize as needing to be a key characteristic of those who follow Jesus Christ?

- Preaching
- Teaching
- Prayer
- Arguing

**Theme: discipleship**

18. Which of the following is not a type of literature found in Scripture?

- Prophetic
- Self-Help
- History
- Gospel

**Theme: Scripture**

19. The Bride of Christ refers to

- God
- The Holy Spirit
- The Church
- The Virgin Mary

**Theme: the Church**

20. The following Bible passage from Ephesians 2:4 describes what biblical doctrine?  
“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive together with Christ.”

- Repentance
- Sin
- Grace
- The Church

**Theme: grace**

21. For whose death did God call King David to repent?

- Goliath
- Uriah
- Absalom
- Saul

**Theme: repentance**

22. Which of the following parables highlights the importance of discipleship?

- The Parable of the Sower
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed
- The Parable of the Marriage Feast
- The Parable of the Fig Tree

**Theme: discipleship**

23. To what did Jesus compare the person who listened to and acted upon His words of truth as revealed in Scripture?

- A rock
- A house built upon the rock
- The church
- The Kingdom of God

**Theme: discipleship**

24. All Scripture is given by what?

- The inspiration of God
- The inspiration of man
- The inspiration of the Church
- An unknown source

**Theme: Scripture**

25. What is the book of Acts about?

- The early years of Jesus' ministry
- How to speak in tongues
- The early years of the Church and the spread of the gospel
- The activities and teachings of Jesus

**Theme: the Church**

26. What did Jesus teach about stewardship?

- It's a matter of obligation.
- It's a matter of obedience to and love for God.
- Do it or your damned.
- It's a key to being accepted by God.

**Theme: stewardship**

27. To whom was God referring when He said, "Have you considered my servant \_\_\_\_\_? There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil."

- Noah
- Jonah
- Job
- Abraham

**Theme: evil and suffering**

28. It is important to tell others about Jesus Christ because

- All people have sinned and need a Savior.
- You never know who might listen.
- It makes God like you more.
- It's not that important.

**Theme: evangelism**

29. Adam was the cause of what?

- The salvation of mankind
- Eve coming into the world
- Sin coming into the world
- God being mad at the world

**Theme: sin and the human condition**

30. Salvation comes by

- Receiving Jesus Christ as Savior.
- Being baptized.
- Having Christian parents.
- Being a member of a church.

**Theme: grace**

31. According to the Bible, God desires that

- “Some would repent, and only a few perish.”
- “All would repent, and none perish.”
- “None would repent, and all perish.”
- Everyone just do their best.

**Theme: repentance**

32. What is the Greatest Commandment?

- “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
- “Love the Lord Your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”
- “Thou shall not kill.”
- “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

**Theme: discipleship**



33. Which of the following is not a category of Scripture?

- The Gospels
- The Epistles
- The Apostles
- The Pentateuch

**Theme: Scripture**

34. What are the two sacred ordinances that the Lord commanded the church to observe?

- Marrying and burying
- Worship and the offering
- Singing and preaching
- Baptism and the Lord's Supper

**Theme: the Church**

35. The biblical concept of tithing is related to which of the following biblical disciplines?

- Evangelism
- Fellowship
- Stewardship
- Outreach

**Theme: stewardship**

36. Which of the following books of the Bible is known for its emphasis on experiencing joy even in the midst of evil and suffering?

- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians

**Theme: evil and suffering**

37. The story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch highlights the significance of

- Compassion.
- Memorizing Scripture.
- Sharing one's faith.
- Telling the truth.

**Theme: evangelism**

38. The word "sin" means to

- Have a good time.
- Disappoint God.
- Miss the mark.
- Be condemned.

**Theme: sin and the human condition**

39. To a non-Christian, the message of the Cross is \_\_\_\_\_.

- Shameful
- Foolishness
- Wisdom
- Powerful

**Theme: grace**

40. Complete the following sentence: "Peter said to them, '\_\_\_\_\_', and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

- Stand up
- Pray
- Repent
- Worship

**Theme: repentance**

41. Jesus taught, "If any person will come after Me," let them what?

- Pray three times a day.
- Be poor, and follow Me.
- Deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.
- Plan on a nice, easy life.

**Theme: discipleship**

42. The biblical concept of stewardship first appears in what chapter and book of the Bible?

- Exodus 3
- Matthew 5
- Genesis 28
- Genesis 12

**Theme: stewardship**

43. To whom is Jesus referring when He says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy”?

- The Pharisees
- The Devil
- Judas
- Pontius Pilate

**Theme: evil and suffering**

44. What work of ministry is being referred to in the following Bible verse: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

- Hospitality
- Servanthood
- Preaching
- Evangelism

**Theme: evangelism**

45. Jesus said He came to do what to the Scripture?

- Write it.
- Fulfill it.
- Destroy it.
- Memorize it.

**Theme: Scripture**

46. What was the primary message of the prophet Jeremiah to those in exile?

- Say you are sorry.
- Believe and be baptized.
- Be kind to the poor.
- Repent for your sin.

**Theme: repentance**

47. Complete the following Bible verse, "And I tell you, you are \_\_\_\_\_, and on this rock I will build my \_\_\_\_\_."

- Parents; Family
- Peter; Church
- Jesus; Kingdom
- Paul; Ministry

**Theme: the Church**

48. To what was Jesus referring when he said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples?”

- If you give to the poor.
- If you can quote the Bible.
- If you have love for one another.
- If you can perform miracles.

**Theme: discipleship**

**APPENDIX D**

**Informational Literacy Scale**

This scale was used as an instrument to score the responses of subjects completing the pretest-posttest, multiple choice, informational biblical literacy questionnaire. Each number on the scale corresponds to four correct responses. The terms “Very Low,” “Moderate,” and “Very High” refer to the level of informational literacy among the subjects.

**0**

**12**

. . . . .

**LOW**

**MODERATE**

**HIGH**

**APPENDIX E****Entrance Interview and Researcher Documentation Form**

The following questions were asked of each participant prior to the project in order to evaluate the presence of formational biblical literacy in each participant. Such evaluation was based on the participants' articulation of how their individual stories are related to other biblical stories and the qualitative difference such understanding is making in their character.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Question 1**

What adjectives (descriptive words) would you use to describe your life story and experience?

(Please include descriptions of people, circumstances, events, and feelings).

**Researcher Documentation:**

**Question 2**

If you had to relate your life story to the life story of a biblical character or event recorded in the Bible, who or what would it be? Why?

**Researcher Documentation:**

**Question 3:**

Describe and explain your involvement or lack of involvement in an ongoing, systematic Bible study. What factors have contributed to your involvement or lack of involvement?

**Researcher Documentation:**

**Question 4:**

Can you describe how your character/behavior has changed as a result of your conversion experience? Can you relate your experience to a character or situation in the Bible?

**Researcher Documentation:**

**Question 5:**

What do you hope to gain from participating in this nine-week Bible study?

**Researcher Documentation:**

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Structured Observation Instrument**

This instrument was used following each of the nine-week, cell group meetings to record the subjects' responses to the following dimensions of the project.

Date:

Bible Study Session:

Movement #1: The Gathering and Prayer Time

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to the gathering and prayer time.
- Engaged and responsive to the gathering and prayer time.
- Confused by the gathering and prayer time.

Movement #2: The Modern Movie Parallel

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to the modern movie parallel.
- Engaged and responsive to the modern movie parallel.
- Confused by the modern movie parallel.

**Movement #3: The Theological//Biblical Theme**

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to the theological/biblical theme.
- Engaged and responsive to the theological/biblical theme.
- Confused by the theological/biblical theme.

**Movement #4: The Bible Story**

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to the Bible story.
- Engaged and responsive to the Bible story.
- Confused by the Bible story.

**Movement #5: The Epistle Lesson**

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to the Epistle lesson.
- Engaged and responsive to the Epistle lesson.
- Confused by the Epistle lesson.

**Movement #6: The Bible Basics Related to the Theological/Biblical Theme**

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to the Bible Basics.
- Engaged and responsive to the Bible Basics.
- Confused by the Bible Basics.

Movement #7: The Break

The subjects were

- Unresponsive to one another during the break time.
- Engaged and responsive to one another during the break time.
- Uncomfortable with one another during the break time.

Movement #8: The Related Issue/Concern

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to the related issue/concern.
- Engaged and responsive to the related issue/concern.
- Confused by the related issue/concern.

Movement #9: The Practical Application

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to the practical application time.
- Engaged and responsive to the practical application time.
- Confused by the practical application time.

Movement #10: The Closing Prayer Time

The subjects were

- Disengaged and responsive to one another during the closing prayer time.
- Engaged and responsive to one another during the closing prayer time.
- Confused by the closing prayer time.

**Movement #11: The Group Dynamics among the Subjects**

The subjects were

- Disengaged and unresponsive to one another.
- Indifferent to one another.
- Engaged and responsive to one another.

**Summary:**

**APPENDIX G**

**Participant Evaluation Form**

This form was used by the participants to provide qualitative feedback regarding the nine-week, Bible study experience.

Please circle the number on the scale following each of the questions that represents your experience with the nine-week, Bible study. Please use the “comment” space to record additional remarks related to your answer.

**1. The two hour time commitment to the Bible study each week was**

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

A poor investment  
of my time and energy

An acceptable investment  
of my time and energy

A wise investment  
of my time and energy

Comment:

**2. The content of the nine-week, Bible study was**

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Uninformative  
and irrelevant

Informative  
but irrelevant

Informative  
and relevant

Comment:

3. **The flow of the Bible study each week was**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Cumbersome to my  
experience

Acceptable but  
not beneficial to my  
experience

Beneficial to my  
experience

Comment:

4. **The effectiveness of the Bible study in helping me to understand Old and New Testament Bible basics was**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Ineffective

Effective

Very Effective

Comment:

5. **The effectiveness of the Bible study in helping me to understand how “what I believe” is integrated into “the way I behave and live my life” was**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Ineffective

Effective

Very Effective

Comment:



- 6. The effectiveness of the Bible study in helping me to understand how my personal story is related to other stories in the Bible was**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ineffective				Effective			Very Effective			

Comment:

- 7. The effectiveness of the Bible study in developing a sense of community and connectedness among the group members was**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ineffective				Effective			Very Effective			

Comment:

- 8. The emotional climate of the Bible study group was**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Intimidating and unloving				Cautious			Safe and caring			

Comment:

**9. The relevance of the Bible study to my life was**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Irrelevant

Somewhat  
relevant

Very  
relevant

Comment:

**10. The Bible study helped me to encounter the presence and power of God in the Bible and to experience change in my character:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Somewhat

Very much

Comment:

**11. The Bible study captured my heart and has given me the desire to stay committed to participating in an ongoing Bible study program:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all

Somewhat

Very much

Comment:

**APPENDIX H**

**Exit Interview and Researcher Documentation Form**

The following questions were asked of each participant following the project in order to evaluate the development of formational biblical literacy in each participant. Such evaluation was based on the participants' articulation of how their individual narrative is related to other biblical narratives and the qualitative difference such understanding is making in their character.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 1:**

Now that you have completed the nine-week, Bible study, which one of the following themes do you most closely relate to: sin and the fallen human condition, grace, repentance, discipleship, Scripture, the church, evangelism, stewardship, evil and suffering? Please explain why and share a personal story that illustrates why you relate most closely to that particular theme.

Researcher Documentation:

**Question 2:**

Now that you have completed the nine-week, Bible study, to what biblical character or event recorded in the Bible would you relate your life story? Why?

Researcher Documentation:

**Question 3:**

Has your level of informational literacy (understanding of the Bible and theological themes) changed over the nine-week, Bible study? If so, explain what factors contributed to that change?

Researcher Documentation:

**Question 4:**

Has your level of formational literacy (your character and behavior) changed over the nine-week, Bible study? If so, explain what factors contributed to that change.

Researcher Documentation:

**Question 5:**

Has your level of commitment to participating in an ongoing, Bible study program changed? If so, describe how and why?

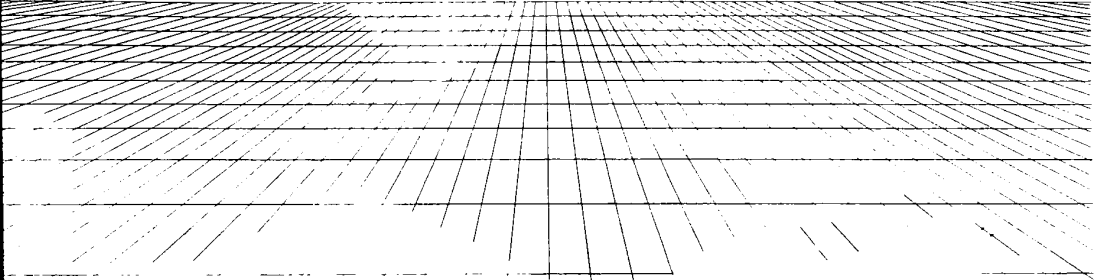
Researcher Documentation:

## **APPENDIX I**

### **“Intersections” Bible Study**

**This appendix contains a detailed description of the “Intersections “ Bible study including an introductory letter to the participants of the project, a detailed outline of each of the nine-weekly, Bible studies, as well as the design of each week’s corresponding worship celebration.**

**HOW BIBLICAL STORIES AND THEMES  
CONNECT WITH YOUR LIFE JOURNEY**



# **INTERSECTIONS**

**A NINE WEEK BIBLE STUDY  
SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR BABY BUSTERS**

Introductory Letter

Dear

I want to welcome you to the “Intersections” Bible study and thank you for your investment of time. Over the next 9 weeks, we will experience the joy of community and the wonder of discovering how biblical stories and themes intersect with our life journeys. Our time together will be characterized by authentic relationships, relevant topics, practical teaching from the Bible, and applications to everyday life.

It is my sincere hope that you will experience a safe, non-threatening environment in which to grow in your faith and to have both your understanding and your character shaped as you encounter God’s Word.

Please remember that this Bible study has been designed specifically with you in mind as a member of the Baby Buster generation. Your story, and the influences that have shaped your life, really matter, and will play an important role in how you interpret and assimilate biblical truth. I am very excited about our time together, and I pray you will receive a blessing from it, much more than you could ever hope or imagine.

Once again, welcome to the “Intersections” Bible study!

Keeping the Faith,

Pastor David C. Moenning



**WEEK ONE BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, September 20, 2001

Theme: Sin and The Fallen Human Condition

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

**A Time To Kill**—John Grisham

**The Focus Points**

- ◆
- ◆
- ◆

## Introduction of the Theme

S\_\_\_\_\_ and the F\_\_\_\_\_ H\_\_\_\_\_ C\_\_\_\_\_

## Definition

The concept of sin means that we have M\_\_\_\_\_ the M\_\_\_\_\_ of God's holiness because of a failed condition in our souls inclining us to willfully rebel against and disobey God's known laws.

“As the Scriptures say, ‘no one is good—not even one. No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. All have turned away from God; All have gone wrong—no one does good, not even one.’”

(Romans 3:10-12)

## The Related Bible Story

The story of King David and Bathsheeba

◆ 2 Samuel 11-12:12

Focus Verses: 2 Samuel 11:1-5

“The following Spring, the time of year when kings go to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to destroy the Ammonites. In the process they laid siege to the city of Rabbah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem. Late one afternoon David got out of bed after taking a nap and went for a stroll on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, ‘She is Bathsheeba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.’ The David sent for her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. Then she returned home. Later, when Bathsheeba discovered she was pregnant, she sent a message to inform David.”

King David's Perspective:

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**Bathsheeba's Perspective:**

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**Uriah's Perspective:**

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**Joab's Perspective:**

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**Nathan's Perspective:**

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**Focus Question:**

- ◆ In what ways did King David sin and draw attention to the fallen, human condition?

**The Related Epistle Lesson**

- ◆ Romans 5:12-21

**Focus Verse: Romans 5:12**

“When Adam sinned (Genesis 3:1-7), sin entered the entire human race. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.”

Focus Questions:

- ◆ What is the origin of sin and the fallen human condition? (Romans 5:18-19)
- ◆ What purpose does the Law of Moses (The Ten Commandments) serve according to this text? (Romans 6:20; Galatians 3:19a-24a)
- ◆ Can we and should we be held personally responsible for our sin if “Adam” was the cause? (Romans 8:12-13)

The Related Bible Basics

- ◆ 1 & 2 Samuel

History:

The two books of Samuel were originally one complete book. Many modern scholars even suggest that 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings were from the very beginning a single, connected history. 1 & 2 Samuel provides the transition from the era of the judges to the period of the Monarchy.

Context:

“1 Samuel begins in the days of the judges and describes Israel’s transition from a theocracy (led by God) to a monarchy (led by a king). 2 Samuel tells the story of King David’s rule in Israel. There are 3 major figures whose lives are recorded throughout 1 & 2 Samuel: Samuel, Saul, and David.”

(Beers 402, 458)

Structure:

Eli and Samuel	(1 Samuel 1:1-7:17)
Samuel and Saul	(8:1-15:35)
Saul and David	(16:1-31:13)
David’s Successes	(2 Samuel 1:1-10:19)
David’s Struggles	(11:1-24:25)

**Genre:** (A category of literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.) 1 & 2 Samuel has a history genre.

### **Break**

### **The Related Issue/Concern**

- ◆ Broken homes in our community and country.

“The Boston Herald, in a column written by Don Feder, carried the headline, ‘Nuclear Family in Meltdown.’ Allan Carlson of the Howard Center for the Family said, ‘We are moving toward a post-family society.’ This God-ordained institution, which has prevailed in almost every culture on earth since the Garden of Eden, is unraveling right in front of our eyes. Households headed by unmarried partners grew by almost 72% during the past decade, most of them involving people living together out of wedlock. Households headed by single mothers increased by more than 25%, and those led by single fathers grew by almost 62%. For the first time ever, nuclear families dropped below 25% of households. A third of all babies were born to unmarried women (33%) while cohabitation increased by close to 1,000% from 1960 to 1998. While same-sex homes are soaring, the old taboos against divorce and cohabitation are disappearing, and the culture is abandoning its commitment to lifelong marriage. The divorce rate is actually higher by a small margin among born-again Christians than for those who profess to have no faith at all. These social changes represent a growing decadence with far-reaching implications for the future.”

- Dr. James Dobson, Focus on the Family

### **Focus Question:**

- ◆ Try to identify and discuss some of the cause/effect realities between “sin and the fallen human condition” and the epidemic of broken homes in our country.

### **The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ Are there general ways in which the story of King David and Bathsheeba relates to your story?

- ◆ What was the “cycle of sin” (James 1:14-15) in the King David scenario? Can you identify a way in which the “cycle of sin” has been at work in your own life?
- ◆ Read Galatians 5:19-21. Would you add anything in particular to the list based on your own life experience?
- ◆ Can you really be a Christian and still struggle with sin? Look at the following passages: Romans 6:6-14; Galatians 5:24-25; Romans 7:22-25.

### **The Closing Prayer**

“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

(Galatians 6:2)

### **Priming The Pump**

For next week please read Romans 1-6, and the Gospel of Matthew 20:1-16. Look for evidence of people receiving what they need the most and deserve the least.

**WEEK ONE WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, September 23, 2001

Theme: Sin and the Fallen Human Condition

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

Message

*"Intersections: Part 1—Missing The Mark"*

Giving Back to God

Closing Song

**WEEK TWO BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, September 27, 2001

Theme: Grace

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

Les Miserables—based on the novel by Victor Hugo

**The Focus Points**

- ◆
- ◆
- ◆



## Introduction of the Theme

G \_\_\_\_\_

### Definition

Jesus never used the word grace, but he taught it and lived it. Grace means “to bend, to stoop, or to show undeserved favor (*charis*). To show grace is to extend favor or kindness to one who doesn’t deserve it and can never earn it.

“Love that goes upward is worship; love that goes outward is affection; love that stoops is grace.” - Charles Swindoll

“For all have sinned; and fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet now God in His gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins.” (Romans 3:23-24)

### The Related Bible Story

The parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

- ◆ Matthew 20:1-16

#### Focus Question:

- ◆ In this parable, who or what is represented by the landowner? The laborers? A denarius? The different times: early in the morning, the third hour, the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh hour?
- ◆ What is the connection between the parable and the people of Israel and the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18; Romans 11:25-28)?
- ◆ How is grace exhibited in this parable?

### The Related Epistle Lesson

- ◆ Titus 3:3-7

#### Focus Verse: Titus 3:4-5

“But then God our Savior showed us His kindness and love. He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit.”

#### Focus Questions:

- ◆ When it comes to grace, what is God’s role, and what is our role?
- ◆ Is there a cost associated with grace? For whom?
- ◆ What is cheap grace?

“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

–Bonhoeffer

### The Related Bible Basics

- ◆ Matthew and Titus

#### Context & History:

“The Jews had expected a Messiah (God-anointed leader) who would rescue them from their Roman oppressors and establish a new kingdom. Few, however, recognized Jesus as the Messiah. The Gospel of Matthew was written to Jews to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah [ref: Matthew 1:1-17, geneology] and to explain God’s kingdom.”

“Titus was a Greek believer who was taught and nurtured by Paul. He was one of Paul’s trusted traveling companions and closest friends. He became Paul’s special ambassador, and eventually the overseer of the churches on Crete. Paul developed Titus into a mature believer and a responsible leader. The letter to Titus was a step in this discipleship process and was a guide to assist Titus in organizing and overseeing the churches on Crete.”

(Beers 1394, 1946)

**Structure:**

Birth and preparation of Jesus the King (Matt. 1:1-4:11)  
Message and ministry of Jesus the King (Matt. 4:12-25)  
Death and Resurrection of Jesus the King (Matt. 26:1-28:20)  
Leadership in the church (Titus 1:1-16)  
Right living in the church (Titus 2:1-15)  
Right living in society (Titus 3:1-15)

**Genre:** (A category of literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.) The particular style, form, and content of Matthew makes it a Gospel, written by Matthew (Levi) the disciple of Jesus. The particular style, form, and content of Titus makes it an epistle written by Paul.

**Break**

**The Related Issue/Concern**

- ◆ Offering grace to those in our families and in the marketplace who have hurt us.

Grace is two-dimensional in nature. We receive it from God (vertical grace) and are called to offer it to others (horizontal grace).

We validate or invalidate the grace in our hearts by the way we offer it to others.

**Focus Question:**

- ◆ How do we balance holding individuals who have hurt or offended us accountable for their actions while showing them the same gift of grace God has shown us?
- ◆ What is the price we pay for not being willing to extend God's grace to others, especially those who have an emotional "debt" (Matthew 18:2-35)?

### **The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ If it applies to you, discuss why you have a problem with “last hour laborers” connected to your life who haven’t deserved to receive the same “wage” (forgiveness and eternal life) as everyone else, but because of God’s grace, they do.
- ◆ How has God’s grace made a difference in your life?
- ◆ It has been said, “God’s grace just isn’t fair. Thank God it’s not fair!” How does that statement relate to your personal faith story?

### **The Closing Prayer**

“Share each others troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

(Galatians 6:2)

### **Priming The Pump**

For next week please read Acts 2:14-47 and the Gospel of Luke 15:11-31. Look for evidence of people turning from sin and responding to God’s grace.

**WEEK TWO WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, September 30, 2001

Theme: Grace

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

Message

*"Intersections: Part 2—Love That Stoops"*

Giving Back to God

Closing Song

**WEEK THREE BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, October 4, 2001

Theme: Repentance

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

“The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir—A Testimony”

**The Focus Points**

- ◆
- ◆
- ◆

## Introduction of the Theme

R \_\_\_\_\_

### Definition

The R \_\_\_\_\_ of a persons heart to God's grace, resulting in a change of mind

(*metanoia*) and C \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_ of their life motivation and direction, away from sin and toward God.

“Now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins. Then wonderful times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord.”

(Acts 3:19-20a)

“Repentance is the process by which we see ourselves, day by day, as we really are: sinful, needy, dependent people. It is the process by which we see God as He is: awesome, majestic, and holy.”

- Charles Colson

## The Related Bible Story

The parable of the Prodigal Son

- ◆ Luke 15:11-31

Focus Verses: Luke 15:17-21

“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired men have food enough to spare, and here I am, dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you. And I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired man.’” So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’”

Focus Question:

- ◆ In this parable, who is represented by God, the younger son, and the older son?
- ◆ What does this parable tell us about God and his desire for humanity? (2 Peter 3:9)?

- ◆ How is being sorry different from repentance?
- ◆ What events led to repentance on the boy's part?

### The Related Epistle Lesson

- ◆ Romans 2:4

“Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?”

### Focus Questions:

- ◆ What was the cultural situation to which Paul was writing in this passage? What does it suggest about some of the things that get in our way of repenting?
- ◆ What role does God have in the act of repentance?

### The Related Bible Basics

- ◆ Romans

### Context & History:

“Paul wrote the letter to the Romans from Greece (particularly Corinth), at the beginning of his third missionary journey. Paul had never been to Rome at the time of his writing but was planning to go there. By having this letter prior to his arrival in Rome, the Jews who had come to faith during Pentecost (Acts 2) and had subsequently started the church, would be familiar with his teaching and theology. In his letter, Paul presents and gives the basis for the major concepts of the Christian faith as well as his personal faith.”

(Beers 1763)



**Structure:**

**A. What to Believe (1:1-11:36)**

1. Sinfulness of humankind
2. Forgiveness of sin through Christ
3. Freedom from sin's grasp
4. Israel's past, present, and future

**B. How to Behave (12:1-16:27)**

1. Personal responsibility
2. Personal notes

**Genre:** (A category of literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.) The particular style, form, and content of Romans makes it an epistle (a letter addressed to a particular audience of people, in this case the Jewish Christians in Rome) written by Paul.

**Break**

**The Related Issue/Concern**

- ◆ Repentance and Authenticity. People can say they have repented, but how do we really know?

**Signs of Repentance Then:** Jonah 3:1-10; James 2:17-20

**Signs of Repentance Now:** Acts 2:37-39; James 2:17-20

**The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ If you were the younger son in the parable of the Prodigal Son, what would you have expected the father's response to have been to your return? Is your answer similar or different to what the father's response was? Why?

- ◆ To which part of the younger son's repentance "journey" do you most strongly relate? The moment of his acknowledgement of his sin, his running home, or his reception once he arrived home?
- ◆ What are some of the feelings you have experienced when you have repented? How are they similar or different from those experienced by the younger son?

### **The Closing Prayer**

"Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ."

(Galatians 6:2)

### **Priming The Pump**

For next week please read Colossians 1-4 and look for what Paul says new Christians should do to grow in their faith.

**WEEK THREE WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, October 7, 2001

Theme: Repentance

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

My Story Interview

*Sand Koref*

Message

*"Intersections: Part 3—Making a 'U-Turn' in life"*

Special Song

*"Welcome Home"*

The Lord's Supper

Giving Back to God

Closing Song

**WEEK FOUR BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, October 11, 2001

Theme: Discipleship

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

“Dive” music video – Steven Curtis Chapman

**The Focus Point**

- ◆ S\_\_\_\_\_ the spiritual surface with God is not enough! If we really want to grow in a meaningful relationship with God, we’ve got to “Dive In,” fully immersing ourselves in Him and hungering to be with Him.

**Introduction of the Theme**

D\_\_\_\_\_

**Definition**

A lifestyle focused on following and hungering for more of God and on growing in one’s love and faith relationship to Jesus Christ.

“Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must LOVE [emphasis mine] the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.”  
(Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

“No one can become my disciple without giving up everything for me.”  
(Luke 14:33)

### **The Related Bible Stories**

Mary and the Costly Perfume (Nard) and the Cost of Being a Disciple

- ◆ Mark 14:1-9 and Luke 14:25-35

Focus Verses: Mark 14:3b and Luke 14:25-27

“During supper, a woman came in with a beautiful jar of expensive perfume. She broke the seal and poured the perfume over his head.”

“Great crowds were following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, ‘If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brother and sisters—yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me.’”

Focus Questions:

- ◆ What was the significance associated with Mary pouring the perfume over Jesus, besides “anointing his body for burial ahead of time?” What did it represent?
- ◆ In Luke 14:25-27 was Jesus trying to discourage people from following Him?
- ◆ What is Jesus’ idea of discipleship? How does it differ from today’s pop culture idea of discipleship?

### **The Related Epistle Lesson**

- ◆ Colossians 2:6-7

#### **Focus Verse: Colossians 2:7a**

“Let your roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him, so that you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught.”

#### **Focus Question:**

- ◆ When Paul talks about “letting your roots grow down into Him (Jesus), so you will grow in faith,” what is he talking about? How does one “let their roots grow down into Him”? What are some practical ways this takes place?

### **The Related Bible Basics**

- ◆ Colossians

#### **Context & History:**

“Paul wrote this letter from prison to combat false teachings which had infiltrated the Colossians church. The specific problem he was addressing was ‘syncretism’—the combining of ideas from other philosophies and religions with Christian truth and doctrine. The resulting heresy was known as ‘gnosticism’ which emphasized having a ‘special knowledge’ and denying Christ as God and Savior. While Paul never visited Colossae, the purpose of his letter was to remind and encourage them to hold fast to the truth of the Christian gospel.”

(Beers 1897)

#### **Structure:**

- A. What Christ has done (1:1-2:23)
- B. What Christians should do (3:1-4:18)

**Genre:** (A category of literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.) The particular style, form, and content of Colossians makes it an epistle (a letter addressed to a particular audience of people, in this case the church at Colosse) written by Paul.

## **Break**

### **The Related Issue/Concern**

- ◆ Dispassionate–Inauthentic Christianity. Shallow Christians (with weak faith root systems) make shallow churches (with weak faith root systems).

“One of the frightening things that we find in our research all the time is that even among the tens of millions of born-again Christians, about half of them would say that when it comes to Christianity they are not absolutely committed to the faith. I’m rapidly coming to the conclusion that part of our problem is that we’ve made it too easy to be part of the Christian church. I think that there is very little sense of privilege and awe and responsibility that comes along in our culture with the notion of being considered a disciple of Christ. It is like, ‘Hey, I got my salvation taken care of, I’ve got my membership card at my church. Now let me go to the country club and do my thing.’ The problem is that Christianity is not just about being a church member. It is about consistently trying to become more like Christ. It is about life transformation. So each individual has to ask, ‘Well, so what? What difference does it make if I’m really a follower of Christ, and if I’m a follower of Christ, what difference should I be making in this world?’”

(qtd. in United Methodist Review June 22, 2001: 3)

- ◆ What do you consider the goal of your faith? Is it simply salvation and church membership, or is it to become a “healthy,” fully-devoted follower of Jesus Christ? How do you think the majority of Christians today would answer that question?

### **The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ At its core, is discipleship something we do as Christians or is it more of an attitude and desire toward God?

- ◆ On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your love for God (1 being dispassionate like Judas and 10 being passionate like Mary—Mark 14:1-9)?
- ◆ How well are you doing in living up to Jesus' words about the cost of discipleship in Luke 14:25-33?
- ◆ What spiritual disciplines are hardest for you to practice? What steps can you take to improve in that area?
- ◆ What does Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 have to do with discipleship?

### **The Closing Prayer**

“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

(Galatians 6:2)

### **Priming the Pump**

For next week please read Acts 17:16-34; 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and Hebrews 4:12. Think about the claim that “we should organize our lives around the teaching and truth of Scripture.”



**WEEK FOUR WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, October 14, 2001

Theme: Discipleship

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

Special Song

*"Your Love Is Extravagant"*

Message

*"Intersections: Part 4—Passionate Love"*

Giving Back to God

Closing Song

**WEEK FIVE BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, October 18, 2001

Theme: Scripture

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

**You’ve Got Mail**

**The Focus Point**

- ◆ Just like Joe and Kathleen shared their H\_\_\_\_\_ and S\_\_\_\_\_ with one another through e-mail, God has shared His S\_\_\_\_\_ and T\_\_\_\_\_ with us through His Holy Word, which is kind of like receiving one big e-mail from God.

**Introduction of the Theme**

S\_\_\_\_\_

**Definition**

The specific R\_\_\_\_\_ of God to humanity, inspired by the Holy Spirit and recorded by men in order to guide and instruct us in daily living.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God’s way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.”

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

“The word Scriptures is a translation of the Greek term graphe. It means ‘that which is written.’ When we rely on the Bible, we rely on that which has been written. God didn’t simply think His message. He didn’t simply speak His message or reveal it in the clouds or through dreams to men and women in biblical times. No, He saw to it that His Word was actually written down. He put it in the language of the people, so that people in all generations could read it and grasp its significance. He graphed His Word. It contains the very mind of our God in written form.”

—Charles Swindoll

### **The Related Bible Story**

#### **The Story of Jesus and the Pharisees**

- ◆ **Matthew 23:25-28**
- ◆ **Focus Verses: Matthew 23:25-26**

“How terrible it will be for you teachers of the religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! Blind Pharisees! First wash the inside of the cup, and then the outside will become clean, too.”

#### **Focus Questions:**

- ◆ **Why did Jesus speak so harshly to the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees?**  
After all, weren’t they knowledgeable about the Bible and very educated in the ways of God?
- ◆ **What do Jesus’ words to the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees reveal to us about the purpose and power of Scripture?**

- ◆ How do Jesus' words highlight the importance of encountering the Scripture both informationally and formationally?

### The Related Epistle Lesson

- ◆ Hebrews 4:12

“For the Word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are. Nothing in all creation can hide from him. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes. This is the God to whom we must explain all that we have done.”

### Focus Questions:

- ◆ Discuss the meaning and purpose of the words in this passage intentionally inspired by God to describe the Scriptures: living and power.
- ◆ Discuss the meaning of the phrase, “We need to not only get into the Word of God, but we need to let the Word of God get into us,” in relation to the passage above.

### The Related Bible Basics

- ◆ “The Bible is comprised of a rich assortment of literature types—hymns and histories, laws and genealogies, prophecies and proverbs, parables and prayers, epistles and apocalyptic visions. Each employs different literacy techniques and is intended to serve different purposes. And each demands to be treated differently.”
- ◆ “The only Scripture known to the apostle Paul and the early church was the Hebrew Bible, the core of what Christians now call the Old Testament. It would be nearly a century after the death of Jesus before the concept of a distinctly Christian Scripture would begin to emerge. And it would take longer still before any formal consensus would arise as to which writings should be included in the biblical canon (the list of officially recognized books). The process of canon formation was very much a human and historical process. Already in Paul's time it was widely believed that the status ‘inspired by God’ is what set the sacred

Scriptures apart from other meritorious texts. As it is today, the Hebrew Bible (O.T.) at the turn of the era was a diverse assortment of sacred Jewish literature—law and history, liturgy and poetry, proverb and prophecy—composed by different hands and in different places over hundreds of years. It existed then as it had for centuries as a collection of loose parchment or papyrus scrolls, each normally containing no more than one ‘book’ of the Bible. By then there were no surviving manuscripts from the hand of an original author. Each scroll had been painstakingly copied from an earlier copy, over and over again, generation after generation. The scrolls were probably kept together as a collection in boxes or other containers at the Jewish synagogue or library or at the ‘house church’ where Christians worshiped. While they may have been arranged ‘in order,’ any significance that was attached to the sequence of the books was not fully reflected physically until centuries later, when the codex, with its bound pages set in place one after another, would require a deliberate ordering of the biblical material. It is somewhat misleading then to think of the early Bible as a neatly defined ‘book’ in the sense of a single unified literary work, or even as an anthology. In reality, it was an ancient library whose components together had come to be recognized as the inspired and authoritative Scriptures of the people of Israel. By the first century it was widely recognized that the Scriptures consisted of three distinct units: the law, the prophets, and the writings. Many scholars conclude that the Hebrew Scriptures of the first century probably were not substantially different from what they are today.”

- ◆ “The formation of the Christian Scripture was a slow and gradual process. In the early years of the church, the message of Christianity was transmitted orally. Preachers and evangelists, many of whom had witnessed the events of Jesus’ life and had heard his teachings, shared their vivid memories and proclaimed the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. The teachings of the apostles, those who had been closest to Jesus, were deemed especially authoritative. The oral traditions of the apostles would continue to be recited well into the second century. As the years rolled on, however, and the church spread into Asia Minor and Rome. Written record of the sayings of Jesus and the teachings of the apostles became increasingly important against the fading of memory and the death of the apostles. Eventually, those writings would assume a status equivalent to that of the Hebrew Scriptures. Still there was no official list of recognized Christian Scriptures. The first step in that direction came around 140 CE as a result of disputes over heresies that were springing up in the church. Out of this second century conflict, developed the church’s emphasis on authentic apostolic connection as the prime determinant of canonical status. Church leaders began circulating lists of books they considered authoritative, and while there was widespread agreement, there also were some minor variations. Early in the fourth century, the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea divided the most widely circulated books into three categories: ‘recognized’ books, ‘disputed’ books, and ‘heretical’ books. Thus, all 27 books of what would become the canonical New Testament were listed favorably by Eusebius. The first list to give direct assent to all 27 appeared in the Easter Letter of Athanasius to the Alexandrian church in

367 CE. Under Augustine's influence, the Third Council of Carthage approved the same list in 397 CE, and it was ratified by a papal decree in the year 405. By the end of the fourth century, then, the New Testament canon for the church in the West was virtually set. Apostolic connection, conformity to the 'rule of faith,' and acceptance and usage in the churches had been the keys. The Christian canon marked the arena in which each new generation of believers stood and sought to understand afresh the nature of the faith. It did not establish one doctrinal position, but often balanced several or fixed the limits within which Christians might rightly disagree."

—Jeffrey L. Sheler from Is the Bible True?

## **Break**

### **The Related Issue/Concern**

- ◆ How do we reconcile the exclusive claims contained in Scripture with the sacred texts (the Koran, The Book of Mormon, etc.) of other world religions?

### **The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ What difference does the reading of Scripture make in your life? What difference can it make according to what is written in the Bible?
- ◆ What is the one thing about Scripture that is most difficult for you to accept? What are you doing to address and resolve that tension?
- ◆ What does the phrase, "identification leads to affirmation" mean to you in light of this study on Scripture?

**The Closing Prayer**

“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

(Galatians 6:2)

**Priming The Pump**

For next week please read Acts 1-2:42-47 and Ephesians 4:1-16. Look for evidence of what it means to be “The Church.”

**WEEK FIVE WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, October 21, 2001

Theme: Scripture

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

Video Clip

*"You've Got Mail"*

Message

*"Intersections: Part 5—You've Got Mail"*

My Story Interview

*Mrs. Mindy Falls*

Giving Back to God

Closing Song



**WEEK SIX BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, October 25, 2001

Theme: The Church

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

**The Best Bits of Mr. Bean: Mr. Bean Can't Stay Awake in Church.**

**The Focus Point**

- ◆ The C \_\_\_\_\_, what is it? What is it really supposed to look and feel like?

**Introduction of the Theme**

C \_\_\_\_\_

**Definition**

*Ekklesia*: “To call out from among (the world).”

The church is an assembling of Christ followers “called out from among” and gathered for the purpose of living out their faith through fellowship, discipleship, service, outreach, and worship under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

“And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’  
And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and

blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not overpower it.”

(Matthew 16:16-18)

### **The Related Bible Stories**

The story of Peter on the day of Pentecost

- ◆ Acts 2:41-47 “The First Glimpse of the Church”

**Focus Verses:** Acts 2:44,46

“And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.”

**Focus Questions:**

- ◆ What is the background story (Acts 2:22-40) to what occurs in Acts 2:41-47?  
What are the 5 key purposes of the Church that are articulated in verses 41-47?  
What is the common value present in this story about the Church and its development. (Hint: Regardless of what they did, it was done in community. N\_\_\_\_\_ W\_\_\_\_\_ S\_\_\_\_\_ A\_\_\_\_\_!)
- ◆ Why do people go to bars? What’s one of the key things they’re hoping to experience? Why do people go to church? What’s one of the key things they’re hoping to experience? What makes the Church different from a bar?

“When people’s need for community, and to not stand alone through the ups and downs of life, is best met in the church among the body of believers we will have begun to scratch where the mass of humanity is really itching, and we will have bridged the first gap along the pathway of leading them to Jesus.”

—D. Moenning

### The Related Epistle Lesson

- ◆ Ephesians 4:1-7; 11-16

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift....And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

### Focus Questions:

- ◆ What are the various functions of the Church that Paul highlights in this passage?
- ◆ What does this passage teach us about how the Church should treat one another?
- ◆ What role does Jesus Christ play in the Church?

### The Related Bible Basics

- ◆ The Book of Acts

#### History:

Acts was written by Luke as a sequel to his Gospel. It is the connecting link between Christ’s life and the life of the church. It is an accurate historical record of the early Church. It was written to “Theophilus”—all lovers of God.

#### Context:

“The book of Acts begins with the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit and the

commencement of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This Spirit-inspired evangelism began in Jerusalem and eventually spread to Rome, covering most of the Roman Empire. The gospel first went to the Jews, but they, as a nation, rejected it. A remnant of Jews, of course, gladly received the Good News. But the continual rejection of the gospel by the vast majority of the Jews led to the ever-increasing proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. This was according to Jesus' plan; the gospel was to go from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

(Beers 1684)

**Structure:**

**A. Peter's Ministry (1:1-12:25)**

1. Establishment of the church.
2. Expansion of the church.

**B. Paul's Ministry (13:1-28:31)**

1. First missionary journey.
2. The council at Jerusalem.
3. Second missionary journey.
4. Third missionary journey.
5. Paul on trial.

**Genre:** (A category of literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.) The particular style, form, and content of Acts makes it a historical book, accounting for the beginning of the Church and the spread of Christianity.

**Break**

**The Related Issue/Concern**

- ◆ The Church: societal change agent or spiritual holy club?

**Focus Questions:**

- ◆ What is the primary purpose of the Church according to Scripture? To effect social change or to be a spiritual holy club, or to \_\_\_\_\_? How

does the tyranny of the “either/or” apply to this?

- ◆ Should the Church shape the culture or should the culture shape the Church in terms of its mission and social principles? What are the implications of your answer?

### **The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ How can God use who you are (life, experiences, talents, interests) to further the mission and function of the Church? (Group members are encouraged to help one another in answering this question.)
- ◆ Comparing the Church to a family and its different members, who are you most like and why? The step child, the rebellious child, the strong-willed child, the well-adjusted child, the risk-taking child, the special needs child, or \_\_\_\_\_?
- ◆ If the Church is “one body with many parts” (1 Corinthians 12), which part do you identify with most?

### **The Closing Prayer**

“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

(Galatians 6:2)

### **Priming The Pump**

For next week please read Luke 15, and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Look for evidence of how God feels about those who are spiritually lost and how God wants us to view them.

**WEEK SIX WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, October 28, 2001

Theme: Church

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

My Story Interview

*Cheryl Herring*

Message

*"Intersections: Part 6—Nobody Stands Alone"*

Giving Back to God

Closing Song

**WEEK SEVEN BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, November 1, 2001

Theme: Evangelism

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

**Homeward Bound**

**The Focus Point**

- ◆ In the same way that the animals had been lost in the wilderness, and had come home to those who loved them and celebrated their return, so it is with G\_\_\_\_\_ when a person, who is lost in the wilderness of S\_\_\_\_\_, comes H\_\_\_\_\_ to God’s love and forgiveness. That’s the spirit of E\_\_\_\_\_.

**Introduction of the Theme**

E\_\_\_\_\_

**Definition**

To bring the G\_\_\_\_\_ N\_\_\_\_\_; to announce the gospel.

Evangelism is the cooperative effort between the Holy Spirit and those who follow Christ, of communicating the Good News of God's unconditional love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

Specific means: Relational "one-to-one" evangelism; servant evangelism; narrative evangelism; prayer evangelism; event evangelism.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all the 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."

(Matthew 28:19-20a)

### The Related Bible Story

Luke 15:1-32 "The Lost and Found Chapter" in Scripture.

- ◆ Vs. 3-7: A lost sheep
- ◆ Vs. 8-10: A lost coin
- ◆ Vs. 11-32: A lost son

"Contagious Christianity" video tape—Pastor Bill Hybels

### Focus Questions:

- ◆ What does this parable tell us about how God feels about "spiritually lost people?"
- ◆ Do we share his same feelings for "spiritually lost people"? Why or Why not?

### The Related Epistle Lesson

- ◆ 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

"This means I am not bound to obey people just because they pay me, yet I have become a servant of everyone so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Jews, I become one of them so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with those who follow the Jewish laws, I do the same, even though I am not subject to the law, so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Gentiles who do not have the Jewish law, I fit



in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.”

**Focus Questions:**

- ◆ To what key principle for doing the work of evangelism does Paul make reference four times in this passage of Scripture?
- ◆ How can that principle inform the way we do evangelism in 2001-2002?

**The Related Bible Basics**

- ◆ The Gospel of Luke

**History:**

Luke was written by Luke the physician in order to present an accurate account of the life of Christ and to present Christ as the perfect human and Savior. It was written about AD 60.

**Context:**

“The Gospel of Luke is the most comprehensive Gospel. The general vocabulary and diction show that the author was educated. Luke stresses Jesus’ relationships with people; emphasizes prayer, miracles, and angels, and gives a prominent place to women. Most of Luke 9:51-18:35 is not found in any other gospel. In addition to being a doctor, Luke was also a Greek, and a Gentile Christian. He is the only known Gentile author in the New Testament, and was a close companion of Paul. Luke also wrote Acts. The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts go together.”

(Beers 1532)

**Structure:**

- A. Birth and preparation of Jesus, the Savior (1:1-4:13)
- B. Message and ministry of Jesus, the Savior (4:14-21:28)
  - 1. Jesus’ ministry in Galilee
  - 2. Jesus’ ministry on the way to Jerusalem
  - 3. Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem

**C. Death and Resurrection of Jesus, the Savior (22:1-24:53)**

**Genre:**

(A category of literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.) The particular style, form, and content of Luke makes it a Gospel (a book that records the life, ministry, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ).

**Break**

**The Related Issue/Concern**

- ◆ Keeping in mind “The Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19-20a), it is apparent that Jesus’ command presupposes that “all the people” represented in “all the nations” want to and feel the need to be evangelized with the gospel. What do we do with Jews, Muslims, and Hindus who feel like they have already discovered the way to God? How do you reconcile your response with the words of Acts 4:12 and John 14:6?

**The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ Is evangelism an expectation of everyone who follows Jesus Christ? If so, are you willing to be passionate about it? Why or why not?
- ◆ What are your biggest hang-ups about evangelism? What do you need to do to move beyond them?
- ◆ Share the story of how you were “evangelized” into the Christian faith. How did you feel about it?

**The Closing Prayer**

“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

(Galatians 6:2)

**Priming the Pump**

For next week please read Matthew 25:14-30 and consider what God expects us to do with the resources he has given us (time, talent, finances, etc.).

**WEEK SEVEN WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, November 4, 2001

Theme: Evangelism

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

Sacrament of Infant Baptism

*Kylianne Philip*

Message

*"Intersections: Part 7—Spiritual Hoarding"*

The Lord's Supper

Giving Back to God

Closing Song

**WEEK EIGHT BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, November 8, 2001

Theme: Stewardship

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

**Simon Birch**

**The Focus Point**

- ◆ Simon lived only 12 years, and was physically challenged, and yet he made a huge contribution to the lives of many people. He was a good S\_\_\_\_\_ of what God had given him in life.

**Introduction of the Theme**

S\_\_\_\_\_

**Definition**

The privilege and responsibility of managing the varying amount of resources God has poured into our lives. Those resources include our time, our minds, our talents and abilities, our relationships, and our faith.

“Give as freely as you have received.” (Matthew 10:8)

### The Related Bible Story

Matthew 25:14-30 “The Parable of The Talents.

- ◆ A talent was an expression for a sum of money worth approximately 15 years’ wages. In biblical times, people lived from day to day, and to have accumulated even one year’s worth of wages would have been enormous wealth.

### Focus Questions:

- ◆ What do the landowner, the servants, and the talents represent?
- ◆ To which of the servants do you most closely relate? The servant who was given 1 talent, 2 talents, or 5 talents?
- ◆ What are the 3 distinct roles occupied by the landowner? He O\_\_\_\_\_ the gift, he S\_\_\_\_\_ accounts, and he gave R\_\_\_\_\_ to those who were good stewards.

### The Related Epistle Lesson

- ◆ Romans 12:1

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will accept. When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask?”

### Focus Questions:

- ◆ Drawing upon the Old Testament image of sacrifice, Paul encourages believers to offer themselves (totality) as “living sacrifices” to God. Why should they/we? What does this have to do with stewardship?

## **The Related Bible Basics**

The concept of stewardship first appears in the Old Testament book of Genesis, where Jacob makes the following vow:

“If God be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing, and if He will bring me back safely to my father, then I will make the Lord my God. This memorial pillar will become a place for worshipping God, and I will give God a tenth of everything He gives me.”

(Genesis 28:20-22)

### **History:**

Genesis was written in 1450-1410 BC by Moses. It was written to the people of Israel to record God’s creation of the world and his desire to have a people set apart to worship him.

### **Context:**

“Genesis means ‘beginnings’ or ‘origin’ and it unfolds the record of the beginning of the world, of human history, of family, of civilization, of salvation. It is the story of God’s purpose and plan for His creation. As the book of beginnings, Genesis sets the stage for the entire Bible. It reveals the person and nature of God; the value and dignity of human beings; the tragedy and consequences of sin; and the promise and assurance of salvation.”

(Beers 2)

### **Structure:**

- A. The story of creation (1:1-2:4)
- B. The story of Adam (2:4-5:32)
- C. The story of Noah (6:1-11:32)
- D. The story of Abraham (12:1-25:18)
- E. The story of Isaac (25:19-28:9)
- F. The story of Jacob (28:10-36:43)
- G. The story of Joseph (37:1-50:26)

**Genre:**

(A category of literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content). The particular style, form, and content of Genesis makes it an Old Testament book of law and history.

**Break**

**The Related Issue/Concern**

- ◆ How do we communicate the true nature of stewardship to God in a capitalistic culture that views everything as “mine.” It’s my money! It is my time! They’re my talents! It’s my life!!!

**The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ What aspect of the stewardship equation do you struggle with most? Why?
- ◆ If you were to have a conversation with God “right now” about your stewardship, what would that conversation be like?

**The Closing Prayer**

“Share each others troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

(Galatians 6:2)

**Priming the Pump**

For next week please read the book of Job as it relates to the subject of evil and suffering.

Record your questions, objections, and observations as you read.



**WEEK EIGHT WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, November 11, 2001

Theme: Stewardship

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

Message

*"Intersections: Part 8-The Gift"*

Giving Back to God

Closing Song

**WEEK NINE BIBLE STUDY**

Date: Thursday, November 15, 2001

Theme: Evil and Suffering

**The Gathering and Prayer Time**

- ◆ The highs, lows, and in-betweens of your week.
- ◆ “Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”  
(Hebrews 4:16)

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**The Modern Movie Parallel**

**Schindler’s List**

**The Focus Point**

- ◆ The realities of E \_\_\_\_\_ and S \_\_\_\_\_ are painful and disturbing to us. In the face of such events we ask, “why?” “Where is God?” “What is His answer to the problem of evil and suffering?”

**Introduction of the Theme**

E \_\_\_\_\_ and S \_\_\_\_\_

**Definition**

Evil and suffering are both the problem and the result. While there are two kinds of evil: moral (man’s own inhumanity to man) and natural (natural causes in the world), suffering imposed on humanity is the result.

◆ Examples:

“We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

(Romans 5:3-4)

**The Related Bible Story**

◆ Job 1-42

◆ Focus Verses: Job 2:11-13

“Three of Job’s friends were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. When they heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him. When they saw Job from a distance, they scarcely recognized him. Wailing loudly, they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to demonstrate their grief. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. And no one said a word, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.”

**Focus Questions:**

- ◆ Based on this story in Job, is it correct to attribute all evil and suffering to Satan?
- ◆ Are evil and suffering always the result and penalty for sin?
- ◆ Are people who love and honor God exempt from evil and suffering? Should they be?
- ◆ If you were Job, what would your response to evil and suffering have been?

### The Related Epistle Lesson

- ◆ Hebrews 2:18

“Since He Himself (Jesus) has gone through suffering and temptation, He is able to help us when we are being tempted.”

### Focus Questions:

- ◆ Discuss the phrase, “evil and suffering are no respecters of people.”
- ◆ What difference does it make that Jesus suffered pain and experienced temptation? How can it help us as we experience evil and suffering?

### The Related Bible Basics

- ◆ Job

### History:

The date for the writing of Job is uncertain, but estimates have suggested that it was written during the time of the patriarchs, around 2000-1800 BC. The authorship of Job is unknown, but some have suggested that it could possibly have been Job, Moses, Solomon, or Elihu.

### Context:

“Job, the book, tells the story of Job, the man of God. It is a gripping drama of riches-to-rags-to-riches, a theological treatise about suffering and divine sovereignty and a picture of faith that endures. Job was a prosperous farmer living in the land of Uz. He had thousands of sheep, camels, and other livestock, a large family, and many servants. Suddenly, Satan the Accuser came before God claiming that Job was trusting God only because he was wealthy and everything was going well for him. And so the testing of Job’s faith began. Ultimately and through it all, Job decided to trust God, regardless of what happened to him.”

(Beers 781)

### Structure:

- A. Job is tested (1:1-2:13)
- B. Three friends answer Job (2:4-5:32)

- C. A young man answers Job (6:1-11:32)
- D. God answers Job (38:1-41:34)
- E. Job is restored (42:1-17)

Genre:

(A category of literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content). The particular style, form, and content of Job makes it an Old Testament book of wisdom literature.

Break

The Related Issue/Concern

- ◆ Discuss the following 2 quotes:

“Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to; or he cannot and does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked. But, if God both can and wants to abolish evil, then how comes evil in the world?”

—Epicurus (Poole, vol. 4)

“Babies are born with multiple birth defects. Genetic disorders plague many of us. An earthquake levels a city, and thousands lose their lives in the rubble. The Bible teaches that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between sin and suffering. When we human beings told God to shove off, he partially honored our request. Nature began to revolt. The earth was cursed. Genetic breakdown and disease began. Pain and death became a part of the human experience. The good creation was marred. We live in an unjust world. We are born into a world made chaotic and unfair by a humanity in revolt against its Creator.”

—Cliff Knechtle (Poole, vol. 4)

### **The Practical Application**

(Choose at least one to discuss)

- ◆ Have you responded to evil and suffering in your life more like Job or Job's wife?
- ◆ How does the evil and suffering that Jesus experienced at the hands of sinful humanity (Luke 23:13-49) uniquely qualify him to speak to you in the midst of your suffering?
- ◆ Are people today looking to God more for an "explanation of their suffering" or an "identification with their suffering?" Explain your answer.

### **The Closing Prayer**

"Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ."

(Galatians 6:2)

### **Priming the Pump**

Consider how you will continue your participation in an ongoing Bible study.

**WEEK NINE WORSHIP CELEBRATION**

Date: Sunday, November 18, 2001

Theme: Evil and Suffering

Opening Segment

*"P.R.F. Praise Team"*

Welcome

Song Celebration

Prayer

Special Song

*"Why, Why, Why?"*

Message

*"Intersections: Part 9 – God's Answer To Evil and Suffering."*

Giving Back To God

Closing Song

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