Towards a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA

by

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SUMMARY

This study is an attempt to provide a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA.

In a literature review an attempt is made to analyse and evaluate the theological basis of Christian ethics, as the foundation of a Christian lifestyle. A biblical survey is then conducted to discover the biblical foundations for a Christian lifestyle. Special attention is given to a biblical exegesis of I Timothy 4:16, as a key verse relating to a Christian lifestyle.

An attempt is made to conduct a situational analysis of the American church in the context of a post-modern society. Trends within American society and the American church are then examined and how these trends influence the beliefs and behaviour of American Christians. The study then utilises an empirical survey to identify hindrances to spiritual growth among parishioners at Harvest Hills Church. In particular, the survey identifies key areas relating to the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document perceived by the parishioners as lacking in practical application. Perceptions relating to the negative impact of certain secular worldviews on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church are also identified.

Based on the research findings, the study proposes a ministry model (a new *praxis*) for promoting a Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth at Harvest Hills Church. The study concludes with a summary of the research findings and the contribution of those findings to the field of practical theology.

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Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

1.1.1 Background to the problem

1.1.1.1 Statistical data regarding the beliefs of Christians

Within the Christian community at large there is often little correlation between scriptural guidelines for Christian living and the lifestyle practices of believers. Christian social scientist, George Barna, has done extensive empirical research in this area that reveals alarming data. For example, according to Barna (1996:1) nearly nine out of every ten adults (almost 90%) state that religious faith is very important in their lives. However, only one in five adults (20%) claims that the Bible is the dominant influence on their decisions regarding lifestyle practices (Barna 1996:105).

1.1.1.2 The lifestyle practices among Christians

Research suggests that the lifestyle practices of Christians differ little from non-Christians (Barna 1998:6). The minimal lifestyle difference between Christians and non-Christians, as well as the nominal correlation between scripture and practice among many Christians, produced an interest in this area of practical theological research.

1.1.2 The problem observed

1.1.2.1 Apathy as a dominant trait within the church of the 21st century

This apathy is evident not only in a diminished zeal for evangelism, but also in the lack of commitment to biblical guidelines in determining behavioural and life

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style practices. Partial responsibility lies within the context of post-modernism, characterised by its rejection of absolute truth.

1.1.2.2   The post-modern tendency to disregard biblical principles of conduct

In post-modernism, truth is defined by and for the community, not via an established objective standard (Erickson 1998:19). A majority vote of approval on a given issue seems to be the pattern adopted by many Christians. Barna (1998:6-7) contends that because of the irrelevance of Christian teaching, Americans have begun to piece together a customised version of the faith that borrows liberally from any available and appealing faith.

1.1.2.3   The prevailing spirit of apathy within today's church

For the past twenty-nine years, the researcher has served as a minister under the auspices of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee, USA). Ordained in 1986, the researcher has served for the past twenty years primarily in the pastorate. As a Christian pastor, the reality of Barna's research has been observed personally. Although the statistical data represents the Christian community at large (within the USA), the faith tradition of the researcher is also impacted.

1.1.2.4   The biblical precedent in Judges 21:25

The biblical parallel of this prevailing spirit of apathy within today's churches is seen in Judges 21:25 (NIV), *In those days Israel had no king, everyone did what he saw fit*. That is, in those days there was no established or accepted standard of truth. Likewise, Barna (1998:62) asserts that only one in four (25%) American adults believe in the existence of absolute truth. As a result, the relationship between doctrine and practice is often minimal, with many Christians doing as they see fit, rather than allowing scripture to influence their model of living.

1.1.2.5   The distinct correlation between belief and behaviour in I Timothy 4:16

In this passage, Paul clearly identifies a correlation between what one believes (doctrine) and one's lifestyle (behaviour). The passage states, *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers* (I Timothy 4:16, NIV). From this verse it is clear that there are two areas in the life of the Christian that need to be scrutinized and pursued, namely, doctrine and lifestyle. Due to the perceived lack of correlation between biblical beliefs and practice and a general spirit of apathy amongst today's Christians, there is a need to develop a strategy for equipping parishioners at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA to implement a biblical lifestyle model.

1.1.3   <u>Summary of the problem</u>

The following questions summarise the main research problem:

(1)   What are the main factors that hinder the parishioners from implementing the Church of God *Practical Commitments* as a means of spiritual growth?

(2)   What are the biblical and the Church of God's denominational views of the Christian lifestyle, and in particular, what are the biblical and theological foundations of the Church of God *Practical Commitments*?

(3)   What ministry model (new *praxis*) can be developed for promoting a Christian lifestyle at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA?

1.2   Aims of the study

1.2.1   The theological basis for Christian ethics

The first aim is to provide a theological basis for Christian ethics, as the foundation for a Christian lifestyle. An evaluation of some contemporary ethical systems will be presented, as well as a critique of Christian ethics (Chapter 2).

1.2.2   Biblical foundations for a Christian lifestyle

The second aim is to present a biblical and denominational view of a Christian lifestyle, in particular, the biblical and theological foundations of the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (Chapter 3).

1.2.3   The American church in the context of a post-modern society

The third aim of this study is to examine the *general context* of this study, that is, the state of the contemporary American church in a post-modern society (Chapter 4).

1.2.4   An empirical study of the Harvest Hills Church

The fourth aim of this study is to examine the *specific context* of this study, the Church of God, Harvest Hills Church, Burlington, North Carolina, USA (Chapter 3), in particular:

(1)   To identify the key areas in the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document that parishioners regard as lacking in practical application.

(2)   To investigate the main factors that hinder parishioners from implementing the Church of God *Practical Commitments.*

1.2.5 The ministry model (new praxis)

The fifth aim of this study is to develop a ministry model (new *praxis*) for promoting a Christian lifestyle amongst parishioners at the Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA (Chapter 6).

1.3 Clarification of relevant concepts and contextualisation

1.3.1 Clarification of concepts relating to a basic lifestyle model

1.3.1.1 Christian ethics

Mikolaski (1979:477) defines *Christian ethics* as, "dedicating one's whole life to God daily and conforming all conduct to the standard of his righteousness." In this regard, Christian ethics is not merely a set of beliefs or application of those beliefs, but also the foundation upon which those beliefs are determined.

1.3.1.2 The covenant relationship (as the basis for Christian ethics)

In the context of Christian ethics the *covenant relationship* is, "a particular quality of holiness expected of the people of God, a lifestyle of sanctification and purity." The basis of this expectation resides in the covenant relationship between Christ and the believer, that is, the new covenant wrought and established by Christ (Erickson 1995:1036). Biblical support for this position is found in Romans 12:1, where the Apostle Paul writes, *I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship*. Therefore, the covenantal relationship calls for a new mind, a new heart, a new spirit, and thus, a new way of living (Williams 1996:299).

1.3.1.3 A Christian lifestyle

The *Christian lifestyle* is not such that it comes packaged as a gift presented to us at our profession of faith or our admission into the Church. It is a lifestyle that accompanies a true confession with its demands of obedience and with a divine

model as an example (Cook 2005). A *lifestyle model* sets forth specific criteria for affecting one's behaviour and manner of life. In the context of this research, a *Christian lifestyle* is defined as the biblical lifestyle incumbent on the Christian by virtue of his/her relationship with Jesus Christ. In this regard, biblical principles of conduct are established as a model for living the Christ life.

1.3.1.4   Spiritual growth

According to Barackman (1998:375), *spiritual growth* is the progressive increase or development in certain areas of one's spiritual life and its experience. This view is validated in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians (4:11-16), where believers are depicted as *becoming mature* and *growing up in Christ*.

1.3.1.5   Post-modernism (as a hindrance to spiritual growth)

In brief, *post-modernism* is a rejection of and reaction to the basic tenets of modernism. This is especially true regarding the acceptance of absolute truth. Crouch (2000:76) asserts that this reaction to modernism results in a worldview that embraces *anything, everything and nothing*. The church in this context faces unique hindrances to spiritual growth.

Colson and Pearcey (1999:48) present the following grim portrayal of *post-modernism*:

> Today, all the major ideological constructions are being tossed on the ash heap of history. All that remains is the cynicism of postmodernism, with its false assertions that there is no objective truth or meaning, that we are free to create our own truth as long as we understand that it's nothing more than an illusion.

1.3.2   Clarification of concepts relating to the denomination with which Harvest Hills Church is affiliated

1.3.2.1   Church of God

The *Church of God* is the official name of the oldest continuing Pentecostal denomination in the United States. Founded in 1886, the Church of God has international offices located in Cleveland, Tennessee, USA. Presently, the Church of God has a worldwide membership of over 6 million with a presence in nearly 150 countries (*History* 2007).

1.3.2.2   Declaration of Faith

The *Declaration of Faith* document is the primary creedal statement of the Church of God. The Declaration of Faith is the denomination's standard and official expression of its doctrine (*Declaration of Faith* 2007).

1.3.2.3   Doctrinal Commitments

The *Doctrinal Commitments* document represents the core beliefs of the denomination as outlined in scripture (*Doctrinal Commitments* 2007). Twenty-two points of doctrine are listed, along with biblical references.

1.3.2.4   Practical Commitments

The *Practical Commitments* document offers scriptural guidelines for practical Christian living (*Church of God Practical Commitments* 2007). It highlights the basic tenets of personal, social and civic life—seven areas of ethical practice and behaviour—as interpreted in terms of the Declaration of Faith and the Doctrinal Commitments.

1.3.2.5   Parishioner

The word *parishione*r has been defined as, "A member of a parish; a religious person; a church goer; or, a church member" (*WordReference* 2007). Throughout

this study, the word is used in reference to the constituency of Harvest Hills Church.

1.3.3 Contextualisation of the study: A brief ethnographic profile of Harvest Hills Church, Burlington, North Carolina, USA

1.3.3.1 A demographic profile

Harvest Hills Church is comprised of persons from various age groups, ranging from senior adults to babies. Approximately 60% of the parishioners are female, with 40% being male. Most adults are married, with a number of the senior adults being widowed. There are single parents, as well as grandparents rearing their grandchildren. The youth/student ministry comprises about 15-20% of the constituency. The primary ethnicity is Caucasian. Some of the parishioners have earned bachelors and masters degrees. Vocationally, the church is made up of varied professions, including nursing, schoolteachers, law enforcement, business owners, manufacturing, sales, etc. Harvest Hills Church is primarily a middle class congregation.

1.3.3.2 The social context in which Harvest Hills Church is placed

The church owns a thirty-eight acre parcel of land, located just inside the city limits of Burlington, North Carolina, USA. A multi-purpose building sits on the property, constructed to provide an auditorium for worship, as well as a gym/kitchen/family life centre for various other activities and events.

1.3.3.3 Worship attendance

The average attendance for Sunday morning worship is approximately 200. Sunday evening worship attendance is approximately 120. A mid-week service is held on Wednesday evenings with an average attendance of approximately 100. A Sunday school programme is conducted on Sunday mornings with an average attendance of approximately 120. Various age groups comprise the attendance for

all services, for example, senior adults, middle-aged persons, young married couples, youth, adolescents and nursery age toddlers. Approximately 60-70% of the current church membership is in attendance during Sunday morning worship.

1.3.3.4 History and theological emphasis

Harvest Hills Church was founded in 1940 as the result of a tent revival. After meeting in homes for a brief period, a building was erected only a few blocks from downtown Burlington. Through the years additions were made to the building, however, the location prohibited expansion. In 1996, thirty-eight acres of land were purchased, and in 1998 a new building was built on the property.

From its inception, Harvest Hills Church has been affiliated with the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee). Its theological position is Wesleyan Pentecostal. The church leadership model is oversight by representation via the senior pastor and a group of seven elders.

1.4 Methodology

This study falls within the discipline of practical theology, which, according to Heitink (1993:6), is defined as *the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society*.

1.4.1 Zerfass research model

Although various models exist for pursuing research within practical theology, the Zerfass research model will be used as a paradigm for this study. Zerfass (1974) developed a research model in which specific deficient *praxes* (practices) are analysed by using instruments derived from the social sciences for the purpose of enriching certain praxes (practices) (Heitink 1993:113).

The Zerfass model is used as the point of departure for this research. It follows the following process (Heitink 1993:114):

The Zerfass model
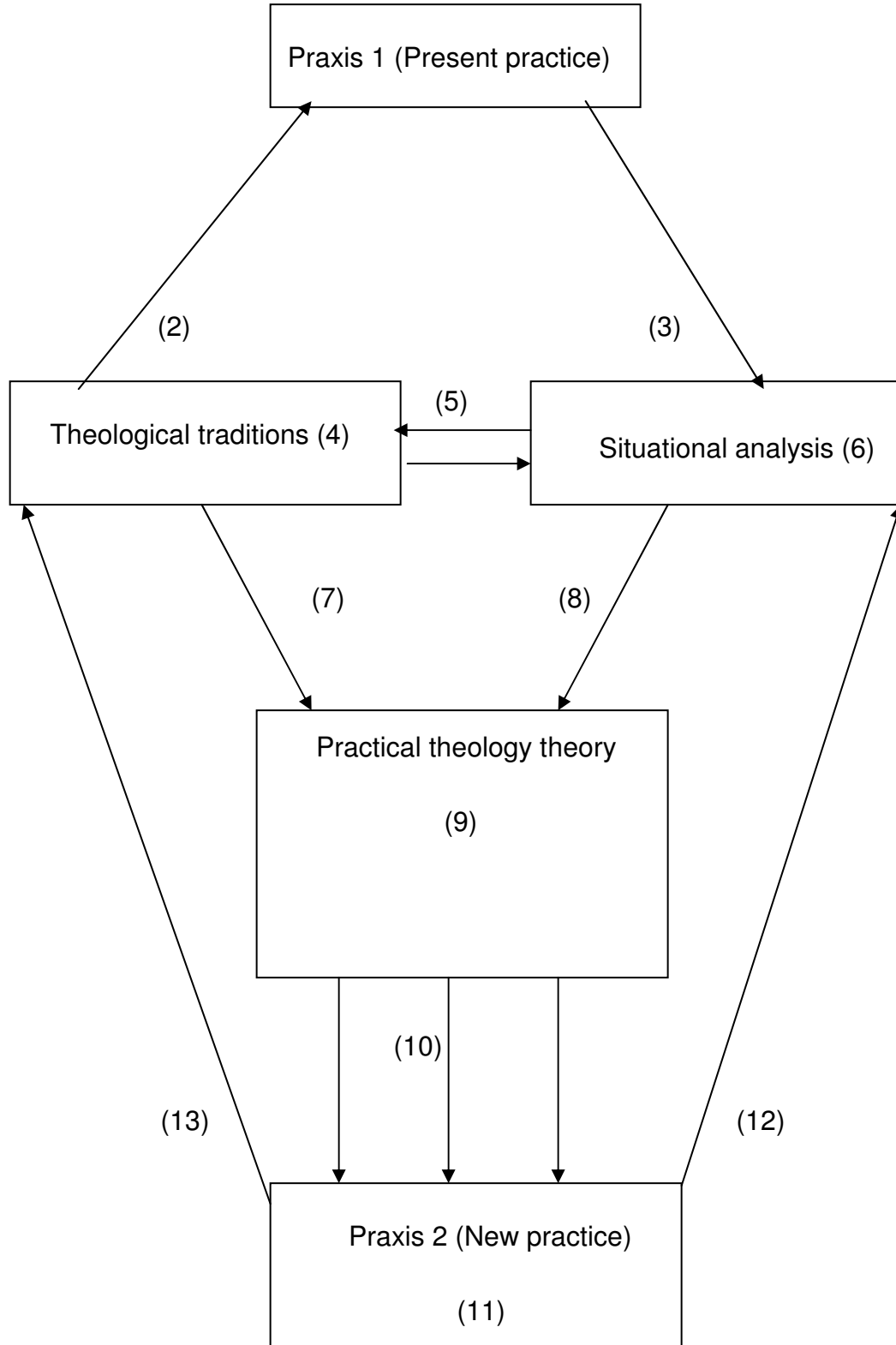
1.4.2 How the Zerfass model will be utilised in this study

Praxis 1 represents the issue of the teaching and application of Christian ethics at the Harvest Hills Church. Christian ethics is understood and applied in a specific manner due to *theological tradition*, that is, church tradition, church history and other theological disciplines. The fact that some parishioners find it difficult to apply a Christian lifestyle in a post-modern society, in the midst of numerous ethical systems, demands that a situation analysis be conducted of possible changes in the theological views regarding Christian ethics, as well as possible changes in the needs of the parishioners.

The dialogue between the church and theological traditions, on the one hand, and the situation analysis, on the other hand, takes place on the basis of new information obtained from the situation. Information regarding the situation analysis can be obtained empirically (empirical research), as in this study, or by using the results of other sciences and then to integrate it with one's own practical theological theory (the so-called interdisciplinary approach). Theory must become *praxis*, and therefore the new theory should be applied in practice. To complete the circle, the new *praxis* should be tested in terms of the situation and the theological tradition (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:39 ff).

1.4.3 Wesleyan Pentecostal tradition

The thesis will be written within the parameters of the Wesleyan Pentecostal tradition, specifically that of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee, USA). The study will primarily engage the Church of God. However, it will hopefully be applicable to the broader evangelical community as well. The Church of God is the denomination in which the researcher is ordained and with which Harvest Hills Church is affiliated.

1.4.4 Theological traditions

Chapter 2 will conduct a literature review to provide a theological basis for Christian ethics, as the foundation of a Christian lifestyle, and will cover the following:

(1) An evaluation of some contemporary ethical systems

(2) A theological analysis of Christian ethics

(3) A critical evaluation of Christian ethics

Chapter 3 will present a biblical foundation for Christian lifestyle and behaviour. Special emphasis will be placed on I Timothy 4:16 regarding the integral relationship between Christian doctrine and lifestyle. The biblical foundations of the Church of God *Practical Commitments* will also be examined.

1.4.5 Situation analysis

Chapter 4 will examine the *general context* of the study, namely, the state of the contemporary American church in a post-modern society. Statistical data from numerous sources will be presented and discussed. The unique challenges of post-modernism will also be noted.

Chapter 5 will examine the *specific context* of the study, Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA. This will involve conducting a quantitative empirical study via the use of questionnaires. This chapter will also include the outcomes of the empirical study. The survey will have two main purposes:

(1) To identify the key areas in the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document that parishioners regard as lacking in practical application.

(2)   To investigate the main factors that hinder parishioners from implementing the Church of God *Practical Commitments* at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA.

1.4.6   New *praxis*

Chapter 6 will develop a ministry model (new *praxis*) for promoting a Christian lifestyle at Harvest Hills Church based on the *theological traditions* of (Chapters 2 and 3) and a *situational analysis* of Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA (Chapters 4 and 5). Implementation of the proposed ministry model should help to promote a Christian lifestyle amongst parishioners at the Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA (Chapter 6).

1.4.7   Research findings

Erickson (1995:22) asserts that theology relates to living rather than merely to belief, observing that,

> The Christian faith has something to say to help us with our practical concerns … It should be noted however, that theology must not be concerned … with the practical dimensions [alone]. The … application of a doctrine is a consequence of the truth of the doctrine, not the reverse.

Based on Erickson's observation, Chapter 7 will offer a summation of the research findings as they relate to the field of practical theology.

1.5   Literature review

The following resources will be used extensively to facilitate completion of this study:

1.5.1 Barna G 1996. *The index of leading spiritual indicators*

George Barna, Christian social scientist, offers a statistical report on the condition of religion in the United States. The book highlights trends in the morality, beliefs, lifestyles and behaviour of American Christians. The statistical data in this book, along with two additional works by Barna, *The second coming of the church* (1998) and *The state of the church* (2006), provide valuable insight into the general and specific context of this research. Barna is president of Barna Research Group in Oxnard, California, USA, and has taught at Biola and Pepperdine Universities, as well as at several seminaries. He holds two masters degrees from Rutgers University and a doctorate from Dallas Baptist University.

1.5.2 Barnette H 1998. *Introducing Christian ethics: biblical foundations for Christian ethical decisions*

This book provides an introduction to Christian ethics, in which the author gives special attention to the biblical basis and the role of the Holy Spirit in making Christian ethical decisions. The author focuses on contemporary ethical problems in light of biblical teaching, resulting in the effective application of the Christian faith. Barnette, who served as both a pastor and seminary professor, earned the Th.M. and Th.D. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

1.5.3 Erickson M 1998. *Postmodernizing the faith: evangelical responses to the challenge of postmodernism*

In this volume Millard Erickson explores six evangelical responses—both positive and negative—to post-modernism. The book is written to familiarize the reader with the important issues surrounding this topic. A leading evangelical spokesperson, Erickson serves as distinguished professor of theology at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, USA. He holds a Ph.D. from Northwestern University. His volume titled *Christian theology* (1995) will also be used for this research.

1.5.4 Gaebelein F (ed) 1978. *The expositor's Bible commentary*

This twelve-volume set of commentaries is the work of seventy-eight contributors from numerous denominational backgrounds, and is widely recognised by pastors and teachers for offering critical exposition of the biblical text. According to Gaebelein (1979:vii), its stance is that of scholarly evangelicalism committed to the divine inspiration, complete trustworthiness, and full authority of the Bible. Gaebelein is the former headmaster of Stony Brook School and former co-editor of the magazine *Christianity Today*.

1.5.5 *Minutes of the 71st General Assembly of the Church of God* 2006

The International General Assembly is that organized body with full power and authority to designate the teaching, government, principles, and practices of all the local churches affiliated with the Church of God (*Church of God minutes* 2006:109). This volume provides the most recent official statistical data for the Church of God, as well as information regarding the three denominational documents used in this study.

1.5.6 Roebuck D 1999. *Restorationism and a vision for world harvest: a brief history of the Church of God*

The author provides a succinct and informative history of the denomination known as the Church of God. Roebuck serves as assistant professor of religion at Lee University, and as director of the Dixon Pentecostal Research Center, both located in Cleveland, Tennessee, USA. He earned both the MA and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University.

1.5.7 Sims J 1995. *Our Pentecostal heritage: reclaiming the priority of the Holy Spirit.* Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press

This book traces the historical and theological roots of the Church of God in particular and the Pentecostal movement in general, with special emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit for empowerment. This volume highlights the need for a

divine visitation from God to restore the passion and priority of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. For twenty-five years, Dr. John Sims served as professor of religion and history at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee, USA. He is also a visiting scholar at Cambridge University and a member of the Evangelical Theological Society.

1.5.8   Thompson G 2000. *Proclaiming the Gospel to postmodernists*

In this doctoral dissertation Thompson focuses on the basic tenets of post-modernism, as well as its unique challenges and opportunities for effective ministry. The author offers valuable statistical information regarding contemporary culture. Thompson earned the Ph.D. in practical theology from North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) in South Africa.

1.5.9   *The Holy Bible, New International Version.* 1973

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in this thesis will be from the *New International Version*.

PART I

CURRENT THEOLOGICAL TRADITIONS FOR A CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE BASED ON CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Chapter 2

The theological basis of Christian ethics: A literature review and critical evaluation

2.1   Introduction

Ethics involves standards of behaviour that dictate how one should conduct oneself in a given situation. The word *ethics* is derived from the Greek term *ethos* (ἐθος), which has reference to custom, usage, manner of life, or pattern of conduct (Verbrugge 2000:372). Although ethics resides within the discipline of systematic theology, Grudem (1994:26) correctly distinguishes between the two, that is, theology is concerned primarily with how persons should think, while ethics is concerned with how persons should live. In general terms, ethical inquiry is a journey into one's moral nature for the purpose of discovering areas of personal responsibility and how to fulfil them. The aim of this chapter is to present a theological basis of Christian ethics and to evaluate Christian ethics in terms of criteria for an adequate ethical system. The following areas will be examined:

(1)   Some contemporary ethical systems and dilemmas confronting Christian ethics: a critical evaluation

(2)   Some problems in the Christian view of ethics: a critical evaluation

(3)   The theological basis of Christian ethics

(4)   An evaluation of Christian ethics based on the characteristics of an adequate ethical system

2.2   The moral crisis facing modern culture

Modern culture, American culture in particular, is experiencing a moral crisis of dramatic proportion. Gallup and Jones (2000:32-34) note the following evidences of the current moral crisis facing American culture:

(1)   Unsettling violence

(2)   Corruption in leadership

(3)   Lifestyle gaps

(4)   Alcohol and drug use and abuse

(5)   Poverty

(6)   Racism

(7)   Family breakdown

(8)   Consumerism and materialism

The moral crisis affects not only secular society, but also Christ's Church. Because this is true, a Christian ethic is of paramount importance to effectively engage the present generation.

2.3   Some contemporary ethical systems and dilemmas confronting Christian ethics: a critical evaluation

According to Eckman (1999:6-8), the study of ethics is important for the following reasons:

(1)   Western culture has relinquished any absolute framework for thinking about ethical standards

(2)   The "slippery slope" nature of so many ethical questions

(3)   Christians need to understand the integrated nature of ethical issues

(4)   Many Christians know where they stand on certain ethical issues but they do not know how to defend their position

Numerous ethical systems set forth criteria for the determination of truth, each with its own advocates and adherents. A brief critical evaluation of the following ethical systems and dilemmas confronting Christian ethics will be offered.

2.3.1 Cultural relativism

Cultural relativism holds at its core the belief that ethics is defined by culture. Assertions of what is right and wrong and what make them such become the interpretation of the majority within a given culture. Cultures may indeed learn from each other, however, no particular culture is the sole arbiter of truth. Inherent within this ethical system are at least two fundamental variables: 1) because truth is perceived as relative, there are no absolutes, and 2) since cultures evolve regarding their moral positions, truth is in a permanent state of transition.

In critically evaluating cultural relativism Whitworth (1995) makes the following important observations regarding the problems presented by this ethical system:

(1)   It is not enough to say that morals originated in the world and are constantly evolving. Cultural relativism needs to answer how value originated out of non-value, that is, how did the first value arise?

(2)   Cultural relativism seems to hold as a cardinal value that values change. But, if the value that values change is itself unchanging, this theory claims as an unchanging value that all values change and progress. Thus, the position contradicts itself.

(3)   If there are no absolute values that exist trans-culturally or externally to the group, how are different cultures to get along when values collide? How are they to handle such conflicts?

(4)   Where does the group, tribe, or culture get its authority? Why can't individuals assume that authority?

(5)   Most of our heroes and heroines have been those who courageously went against culture and justified their actions by appealing to a

higher standard. According to cultural relativism, such people are always morally wrong.

(6) Cultural relativism assumes human physical evolution as well as social evolution.

2.3.2 Situational ethics

Situational ethics is found in two primary streams, atheistic and religious. According to Fletcher (1997:30), the basic premise within this system is that love is the one norm or principle that is always binding and right. In each and every situation requiring an ethical decision, all other principles and norms become subservient to the criterion of love. Eckman (1999:11) observes that situational ethics omits the idea of absolute moral principles, because they place themselves over people. Rather, any action that produces the greatest good for the greatest number is the loving thing to do. It is solely a utilitarian perception of love.

Situational ethics has become the ethics of choice for many within contemporary culture, however, it is also problematic. Jackson (1999) offers several logical difficulties within this system:

(1) It is self-contradictory. This view contends that there are no rules except the rule to love. But what if, in a certain situation, one decides that love is not the appropriate course of action? There are no absolutes—except that one absolutely must love in all situations! But what is the standard by which this mandate is defended?

(2) In situational ethics love is purely subjective. In Joseph Fletcher's book, *Situation ethics*, love is defined in no less than twelve ways. Who, then, decides what love is in any given context?

(3) "Situation ethics" removes God from the throne, as the moral sovereign of the universe, and substitutes man in his place. Situationism completely ignores the biblical view that mere mortals

are void of sufficient wisdom to guide their earthly activity (Jeremiah 10:23).

(4) Love is defined as some sort of ambiguous, no-rule essence that is a cure-all for moral problems. This line of argumentation is not substantially different from nihilism, since, as Fletcher (1997:55), writes, for the situational ethicist there are no rules—none at all.

2.3.3 Post-modernism

Post-modernism is discussed at length in Chapter 4 of this thesis. However, in terms of ethics, post-modernism is uniquely challenging. Post-modernism defines truth in subjective terms. Tolerance is expected of all because all belief systems are perceived as equally valid. Barna (1998:59) notes several essential characteristics (and shortcomings) of this ethical system:

(1) There is no grand purpose in life. The reason for living is to achieve comfortable survival.

(2) Success is defined as the absence of pain and sacrifice, and the experience of happiness.

(3) There is no value to focusing on or preparing for the future. Every person must live in the moment and for the moment.

(4) There are no absolutes. All spiritual and moral principles are relative to the situation and the individual.

(5) There is no omnipotent, all-knowing deity that guides reality. Each person must lean on his/her own vision, competencies, power and perceptions to make the most of life.

Post-modernism poses two difficulties in particular. First, if all belief systems are equally valid, who determines truth when one or more systems collide? Second, if truth is subjective, what criteria determine moral and ethical norms?

2.3.4 Scientific, medical and technological advances

Scientific, technological and medical advances have created numerous benefits for contemporary society. They have also generated new and challenging ethical dilemmas. Grenz (1997:17) confirms this position:

> We are confronted by the greatest issues humankind has ever faced at a time when the moral fibre of our society appears to be at its weakest. Ethical questions are assaulting us at breakneck speed at a time when people have lost their sense of mooring, their sense of stability and their sense of possessing some platform on which to stand as they make moral decisions.

Genetic engineering, gene therapy, stem cell research, foetal tissue research, cloning and genetic testing are but a few modern advances the ethicist must address.

One example is in the area of genetic engineering where a cell's genetic structure is altered, with the promise of increased medical benefits. While the pursuit of medical advances is a noble objective, even here the following ethical questions need to be answered (*Ethics and morality* 2008):

(1)   If society has no firm, God-given ethical system, isn't it dangerous to play God?

(2)   In genetic engineering experimentation human embryos are sacrificed. How can this be morally right?

Christian ethics is undeniably confronted today by the challenge various ethical systems and ethical dilemmas. However, these challenges only serve to accentuate the validity and necessity of Christian ethics.

2.4   Some problems in the Christian view of ethics: a critical evaluation

As an ethical system, Christian ethics is not without its own concerns and criticisms. The following sampling will serve to highlight a few areas problematic for Christian ethics.

2.4.1   <u>The Problem of conflicts</u>

Conflicts are inevitable within any ethical system. Christian ethics is not exempt. For example, if one's family is taken hostage, with the only option for their release being the destruction of the captors, does one violate the prohibition of murder (Exodus 20:13, NIV) to save one's family? Or, does one violate the mandate to provide for and protect one's family (I Timothy 5:8, NIV), allowing the captors to kill them? Christian ethicists have suggested the following explanations in addressing such conflicts (*Christian view of ethics* 2008):

(1)   God never puts us into a situation where we have to choose between commands. The conflict is only apparent and there is always a way to avoid sin. For example, Daniel and his three friends appear to be in a dilemma when they are commanded to eat meat sacrificed to idols, a violation of their dietary code. Daniel presents his captors with a creative alternative, which allows him and his friends to honour their dietary code and meet the demands of the state at the same time.

(2)   A second approach is the lesser-of-two evils view. There are genuine moral dilemmas which one is faced with in life where both alternatives are clearly wrong. In this situation, the lesser of the two evils is chosen, then, the sin is confessed.

(3)   A third option is called the "greater good" view. Those who hold this view claim it seems to be the model of Christ Himself. He spoke of *greater sin* (John 19:11), *greater love* (John 15:13), *greatest commandment* (Matthew 5:19), and *weightier matters* of the law

(Matthew 23:23, NIV). It is one's duty to obey government, but not when in conflict with a command of God.

2.4.2 The Problem of evil

The existence of evil in the world, while simultaneously asserting the goodness of God, has deterred many sincere seekers from embracing the Christian faith. If God is omnipotent, then, why is there so much rampant evil in the world?

> If God is wholly good and wholly powerful, how does one account for the existence of evil? If He is all powerful, why does He not eliminate evil? If He is all good and the Creator of all that is, how did evil ever originate? ... Up to this point, there is no single answer that has silenced all of Christianity's critics (*Christian view of ethics* 2008).

Resolving the concepts of good and evil has often been a daunting task for Christian ethicists and theologians. One approach in addressing this problem is to look to the Bible. The following three passages facilitate an understanding of the problem of evil:

(1)   Genesis 50:20: *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives* (NIV). Here, God appears to allow evil to participate in His plan of redemption.

(2)   John 9:3: *Neither this man nor his parents sinned*, said Jesus, *but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life* (NIV). Here, evil is allowed to ultimately reveal the glory of God.

(3)   Romans 9:17: For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: *I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my*

name might be proclaimed in all the earth (NIV). Here, sin is permitted, yet God's sovereignty is intact.

2.4.3   The Problem of interpretation

A third area that is problematic to Christian ethics is the area of interpretation. In seeking to interpret the Bible's ethical instructions and make them applicable to a particular setting, culture or situation, what role does human subjectivity play in the process? Hoose (2003:4) argues that while there is no such thing as interpretation without presupposition, one must not allow one's exegesis to colour the interpretation of the biblical text.

Interpretation also involves applying general ethical principles to specific life situations. For example, while the Bible does not specifically prohibit the recreational use of mind-altering drugs, it does indeed mandate the renewing of the mind through the offering of one's body as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:2, NIV). Consequently, one could argue that recreational drug use violates this mandate and should not be engaged in. A similar problem is found in the various ethical instructions that are best culturally interpreted. Paul's directive to greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16, NIV) could be applied in some cultures as greeting one another verbally or with a handshake.

While some areas of Christian ethics are indeed problematic, satisfactory resolutions to such concerns are available. Christian ethics sets forth a system of ethical principles and moral teachings that are unsurpassed in human history (*Christian view of ethics* 2008).

2.5   The theological basis of Christian ethics

The theological basis of Christian ethics originates within the biblical text. To validate this statement, biblical support for each of the following six topics relating

to Christian ethics will be provided: 1) its nature, 2) its basis, 3) its source, 4) its subjects, 5) its goal, and 6) its motive.

2.5.1 The nature of Christian ethics: An ethical system of traditional absolutes

At its core, unlike other ethical systems, Christian ethics is a system of absolutes. Absolute truth is universal and objective. It remains the same for every person in every culture in every generation. Christian ethics presupposes the existence of the one true God who has spoken to humankind via specific authoritative and eternal absolute truths. Christian ethics maintains the following absolutes (*Ethics and morality* 2008):

(1) The statement of Jesus, *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me* (John 14:6, NIV). Jesus' declaration sets forth Christianity as the single and sole path to God.

(2) An authority higher than humankind as revealed in Jesus. God's word as revealed in the Bible is paramount to all human reason, logic and philosophy.

(3) The absolute moral standard of the Creator God. This is a non-negotiable standard, eternally established in the immutable nature of God.

(4) The belief that God's moral standard is timeless and exists for the well being of humankind.

By its very nature Christian ethics requires the presence of absolutes. Anything less would invalidate the transcendent moral principles lifted up by this ethical system.

2.5.2 The basis of Christian ethics: God's moral revelation (The Bible)

God's standard of morality is revealed in his Word. This is the origin of Christian ethics. *Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?*

He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false (Psalm 24:3-4, NIV). Within this ethical system the criterion for moral decisions and conduct is the will of God as revealed in the Bible. Inherent in God's revealed will are the following basic ideas (Whitworth 1995):

(1) God's moral revelation is based on His nature. God is separate from everything that exists, is free of all imperfections and limitations, and is His own standard. No moral rule exists outside of Him.

(2) God's moral principles have historical continuity. If God's moral revelation is rooted in His nature, it is clear that those moral principles will transcend time.

(3) God's moral revelation has intrinsic value. God's standards, like the laws of nature, have built-in consequences. Just as we have to deal with the laws of nature, we will eventually have to deal with the consequences of violating God's standards unless we put our faith in Christ.

(4) Obedience to God's Law is not legalism. The Bible speaks strongly against legalism since biblical morality is much more than external obedience to a moral code. No one can live up to God's standards without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

(5) God's moral revelation was given for the benefit of his people. Though in the short run it may sometimes appear that biblical moral standards are too restrictive, we can be sure that such injunctions are for our benefit because of His love for us.

(6) Exceptions to God's revelation must have biblical sanction. Our responsibility is to obey; God's responsibility is to take care of the consequences.

2.5.3 The source of Christian ethics: The nature of God

Christian ethics finds its origin in the person and nature of God. Ethical ideas such as *good*, *bad*, *right* and *wrong* are essentially connected to the Christian view of God. The source of good choices and behaviour is found in the one whose very nature is the essence of good. When the Scriptures seek to differentiate between good and bad, the reader is directed to the nature of God.

Ferguson and Wright (1988:232) argue that discovering what is right in a given situation requires the discernment of God's will. The fundamental mandate of Scripture is to imitate God. This position is corroborated in the following Old and New Testament passages.

(1) *I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy … I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy* (Leviticus 11:44-45, NIV).

(2) *Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy"* (I Peter 1:14-16, NIV).

Understanding the source of Christian ethics is possible because God has revealed this aspect of his nature, while accentuating his attribute of holiness.

2.5.4 The subject of Christian ethics: The nature of humankind

Although God is intrinsically holy, the subject of Christian ethics involves that which is not—humankind. Crook (1999:88) asserts that an understanding of the nature of humankind can be summed up in the following four affirmations:

(1) Humankind is one part of the natural order of creation

(2) Humankind is unique in creation

(3) Human beings are social creations

(4) Human beings are sinners. *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23, NIV).

Each of the following four affirmations is important for a better understanding of the need for a Christian ethic (Whitworth 1995):

(1) Human beings are not divine. As created beings there is a need for an ethical system that transcends that which is created.

(2) Human beings are made in the image of God and comprise the pinnacle of the creative process. As such, human beings possess at least four qualities that distinguish them from the animals: 1) personality, 2) the ability to reason, 3) a moral nature, and 4) a spiritual nature.

(3) As social creations human beings live in community. This requires a standard of conduct for promoting civil interaction within the community.

(4) As sinners with a moral nature, human beings need an ethical system capable of transforming the sinful moral nature into that which is holy.

2.5.5 The goal of Christian ethics: The glory of God

The ultimate objective of human existence is to bring glory to God (*Westminster Shorter Catechism* 2008). Scripture reveals that all persons are to *fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man* (Ecclesiastes 12:13, NIV). In addition, the Bible declares that *all the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name* (Psalm 86:9, NIV).

Jesus instructs his followers to,

> Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see
> your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven
> (Matthew 5:16, NASB).

Lifestyle choices and behavioural patterns derived from a Christian ethic produce good works, that is, visible displays of the God life. When observed by others these good works become a testimony to the enabling power of God. Ultimately, God is given the glory.

Paul further validates the goal of Christian ethics by asserting, *whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31, NIV). By appropriating a Christian ethic, as the basis for one's lifestyle and behaviour, the primary objective is to bring God glory.

2.5.6 The motive of Christian ethics: Love for God and humankind

The motivation to apply a Christian ethic is found primarily in one's love for God, but also in one's love for one's fellow human beings. According to Crook (1999:97), central to the Christian life is a relationship with God and other people. The two are so intrinsically connected that they cannot legitimately be separated. Validation for this motivational motif is found in the following passage:

> If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For
> anyone who does not love his brother, whom he as seen, cannot
> love God, whom he has not seen (I John 4:20, NIV).

In this verse, the motivation for Christian ethics is clearly identified, that is, the vital relationship between love for God and love for others.

In order to offer a theological basis for Christian ethics this section of the chapter has attempted to examine this ethical system from six different perspectives. It is evident from this brief treatment that Christian ethics contains a substantive biblical and theological foundation.

2.6 An evaluation of Christian ethics based on the characteristics of adequate ethical system

An adequate ethical system is a system that effectively addresses and engages the needs of a given context. Before discussing an adequate ethical system, it is first necessary to understand that there are several things that ethics is not (*A framework for thinking ethically* 2008):

     (1)   Ethics is not the same as feelings
     (2)   Ethics is not following the law
     (3)   Ethics is not religion
     (4)   Ethics is not following culturally accepted norms
     (5)   Ethics is not science

Both Christians and non-Christians accept the following criteria as being essential to an adequate ethical system (*Christian view of ethics* 2008): 1) a standard, 2) justice, 3) a motive-dynamic, 4) guidance or a model, 5) a relationship between rules and results, and 6) harmony. A brief evaluation of Christian ethics will now be offered in terms of the above criteria.

2.6.1 The need for a standard

Inherent within an adequate ethical system is the necessity for a standard. A standard is a criterion for ascertaining what qualifies an action or behaviour as being right or wrong. It is a universal principle that transcends time and culture. A standard allows certain behaviours and actions to be determined as right or wrong,

subsequently allowing the ethicist to make application in a given culture, context or scenario. Without a standard, ethics cannot adequately exist or operate.

Christian ethics qualifies as an adequate ethical system in terms of the need for a standard. Rousseau (2004:84) makes the following observation:

> To discover the rules of society that are best suited to nations there would need to exist a superior intelligence, who could understand the passions of men without feeling any of them, who had no affinity with our nature, but know it to the full, whose happiness was independent of ours, but who would nevertheless make our happiness his concern, who would be content to wait in the fullness of time for a distant glory, and to labour in one age to enjoy the fruits in another.

Indeed, this superior intelligence can be understood in an omniscient God. Within Christian ethics the very nature of God is the standard by which all moral conduct and behavioural norms are defined. The essence of all that is good resides in the character of God. Jesus validates this truth by declaring, *No one is good—except God alone* (Mark 10:18, NIV). Emanating from the goodness of God is the standard for Christian ethics.

Because this standard is based upon God's holy nature, it is binding on all people. There is no standard beyond Him that can define moral conduct. Christian ethics applies to everyone and is not merely a parochial discipline for Jews and Christians. God's moral revelation extends to all generations. God is the ultimate standard for human behaviour (*Christian view of ethics* 2008).

2.6.2 <u>The need for justice</u>

The second criterion and a major test of an adequate ethical system is the capacity to provide justice. Ethical justice can be understood from at least three perspectives (Henry 1981:360-362, adapted):

(1)   *Restorative justice* focuses on the restoration of violated rights
(2)   *Remedial justice* focuses on the present correction of past injustices
(3)   *Retributive justice* focuses on future and final accountability

In each of these three perspectives the challenge is to provide justice on a consistent and comparable basis. Although many ethical systems fall short in this area, Christian ethics, correctly applied, provides adequate justice with equality. In terms of the three perspectives cited above, Christian ethics offers a substantive response (*Christian view of ethics* 2008):

(1)   Regarding *restorative justice*, Christian ethics sets forth a principle that affirms the equality and dignity of all human beings. Paul asserts that for those in Christ and operating under a Christian ethic, *there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:26-28, NIV).

(2)   Regarding *remedial justice*, Christian ethics posits that past injustices must be amended in the present, that is, past unjust behavioural patterns must change. Scripture validates this by asserting that *he who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands* (Ephesians 4:28, NIV).

(3)   Regarding *retributive justice*, Scripture declares that at the future judgment, God will judge *every man according to their works* (Revelation 20:12, NIV). Christian ethics offers the assurance that all the failures of human justice will one day be totally rectified, and true justice will be meted out accordingly.

2.6.3 The need for a motive

A third criterion for an adequate ethical system is motive. According to Henry (1981:521), a motive is defined as the source or reason behind a specific action. Becker and Becker (2001:1185) observe that,

> Motives play a central role in ethics because they often carry the burden of … assessment. A [person] will be judged to have acted well or to be morally good as [he/she] acts from right motives … A [person] will be judged to have moral worth if [his/her] motive in acting is to conform [his/her] actions to the relevant principles of right or standard of goodness.

For this reason more is needed than mere knowledge of correct moral behaviour(s); there must also be the desire to act morally.

Christian ethics provides an adequate motive to act morally. Although human beings are sinful by nature, after conversion the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to pursue moral behaviour. Paul affirms this when he writes, *for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose* (Philippians 2:13, NIV). The Holy Spirit motivates the believer in several areas:

(1)   The new believer, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is motivated by his love for God. This is what makes the believer want to obey God.

(2)   The Holy Spirit's confirmation of God's love for the believer motivates him to focus on the needs of others.

(3)   The believer is also motivated by external factors, such as the promise of eternal rewards (*Christian view of ethics* 2008, adapted).

2.6.4 The need for guidance (a model)

A fourth criterion for an adequate ethical system is guidance. How does one apply a particular ethical principle to a specific life situation? What process is needed to sort through myriad ethical principles and apply them accordingly? Herein lies the need for guidance to appropriate individual ethical principles. Inherent within Christian ethics are several sources of guidance for successful application of ethical principles.

Henry (1981:278) suggests that guidance is explicit in the ministry of Jesus. To follow Christ implies that he leads and guides as one follows. Two examples in particular validate this aspect of Jesus' ministry:

(1)   Jesus beckons, *if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me* (Matthew 16:24, NIV).

(2)   Jesus states, *my sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me* (John 10:27, NIV).

Furthermore, guidance is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, *when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth* (John 16:13, NIV). The believer also receives guidance from the Scriptures; therefore, success in the ethical life requires a familiarity with the Word of God (*Christian view of ethics* 2008).

2.6.5 A relationship between rules and results

Some ethical systems focus on rules (deontological ethics) while some focus primarily on results (teleological ethics). A fifth criterion for an adequate ethical system is a balanced relationship between rules and results. According to Henry (1981:575), to arrive at a course of moral action, one would typically inquire as to the rules governing the type of action under consideration. The goal of this approach is to determine *what is right*. The goal of result-oriented ethics is the

effect. Within this approach good is determined primarily on the basis of the outcome.

Christian ethics sets forth a balance between rules and results. Scripture cautions against extreme positions in both areas. For example, Jesus denounced the extreme rule oriented approach of the Pharisees, yet he also taught that the end result of an action is insufficient in and of itself. One must have pure motives in the process of decision-making. Positive results do not guarantee the goodness of an action, however, in Christian ethics, it is reasonable for the Christian to assume that by following God-given rules, that the end result will be good (*Christian view of ethics* 2008).

2.6.6   Internal harmony

The sixth and final criterion for an adequate ethical system is internal harmony. Since it is inevitable that conflicts will intermittently arise, the various components of an adequate ethical system should function collectively with minimal internal conflict. Some ethical systems begin to implode when experiencing several opposing absolutes. Fletcher (1991:17-22) argues that Christian ethics possesses this type of flaw, because whenever there is more than one absolute there will be hopeless conflict between absolutes. Scripture, however, indicates otherwise. In an attempt to lure Jesus into using conflicting absolutes, the religious intellectuals of his time posed the following question:

> *"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments"* (Matthew 22:36-40, NIV).

Jesus responded by using two principles as though they are one. What appears initially to be a conflicting situation is resolved by applying a Christian ethical principle. Christian ethics teaches that all moral absolutes originate in the nature of God. Since the nature of God also includes the attribute of omniscience, the God who knows all things - in terms of Christian ethics - produces a harmony that will resolve potential conflicts within the system (*Christian view of ethics* 2008).

This section has attempted to evaluate Christian ethics in terms of six specific criteria. From the evaluation it is evident that Christian ethics is an adequate ethical system and far superior to contemporary ethical systems.

2.7   Conclusion

The chapter drew attention to the moral crisis facing modern culture, hence the need for an adequate ethical system. The aim of this chapter was to present a theological basis for Christian ethics and to evaluate Christian ethics in terms of criteria for an adequate ethical system. Several contemporary ethical systems were evaluated and found to be lacking in many important areas. In spite of the challenge of contemporary ethical systems and ethical dilemmas confronting Christian ethics today, and some problematic areas in Christian ethics, it was found that Christian ethics is a valid ethical system with a sound theological basis. Finally, an evaluation of Christian ethics in terms of six specific criteria clearly revealed that Christian ethics is an adequate ethical system, which is far superior to the contemporary ethical systems of modern culture.

In Chapter 3, the researcher will attempt to offer biblical foundations for a Christian lifestyle. Chapter 4 will assess the American church in the context of a post-modern culture, while Chapter 5 will detail an empirical survey relating to the need for a ministry model within the specific context of the study. In Chapter 6 a practical strategy (ministry model) will be presented, based on the collective research of Chapters 2-5.

Chapter 3

Biblical foundations for a Christian lifestyle

3.1   Introduction

To promote spiritual growth among the parishioners of Harvest Hills Church, a practical strategy will be offered in Chapter 6. A successful strategy, however, requires a substantive biblical foundation. The aim of this chapter is to present a biblical foundation for Christian lifestyle and behaviour. This will involve several components:

(1)   A succinct synopsis of biblical ethics, specifically as it relates to a Christian lifestyle and behaviour

(2)   A denominational synopsis of the Christian lifestyle, with emphasis on the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document

(3)   An exegetical analysis of I Timothy 4:16

3.2   A succinct synopsis of biblical ethics

The purpose of this section is to present a brief synopsis of biblical ethics. Central to this research project is the correlation between belief and behaviour, which is apparent in God's mandate to Israel, *I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy* (Leviticus 11:45, NIV). Here, God presents a premise for belief by telling his people: *I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God*. The Israelites are to believe this truth, and respond accordingly by pursuing holiness (*be holy*) in their behaviour and manner of life. Biblical ethics is a consistent motif throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

3.2.1 Old Testament ethical foundations

An emphasis on ethical issues (belief and behaviour) is visible early in human history, in terms of both a relationship with God and interpersonal human relationships. Ethical principles are found within each genre of the Old Testament, first observed in what Murray (2001:27) calls the creation ordinances. Here, an emphasis is observed in the following areas:

(1)   Procreation of offspring

(2)   Replenishing the earth

(3)   Subduing the earth

(4)   Dominion over created things

(5)   Labour

(6)   The weekly Sabbath

(7)   Marriage

As early as the creation narrative the God of the Bible establishes a particular ethical standard by which His creation is to be accountable. Murray (2001:202) contends that this ethic is not a mere adherence to a code of conduct, but is a direct reflection of the God of the Bible in terms of a covenant relationship. According to Barnette (1998:12),

> A fundamental continuity prevails between Old and New Testament teaching. Hence, an understanding of Hebrew ethics is essential to an adequate knowledge of the ethics of Jesus and the New Testament as a whole. Christian ethics, therefore, requires an analysis of the characteristics and content of the main streams of morality in the Old Covenant.

Based on this thesis, the following Old Testament categories will be briefly examined: 1) ethics in the Decalogue, 2) ethics in the Wisdom literature, and 3) ethics in the Prophetical literature.

3.2.1.1   Ethics in the Decalogue

The Old Testament refers to the Decalogue as *ten words* (Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4), or *the words of the covenant* (Exodus 34:28). The centrality and grandeur of the Decalogue within the biblical story is evident throughout the Old Testament writings (Janzen 1994:89). The Decalogue is presented as a list of succinct ethical statements designed to offer parameters for the behavioural practices of God's people. Each of the following ten covenantal statements contains guidelines for practical living:

(1)   You shall have no other gods before me.
(2)   You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything.
(3)   You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.
(4)   Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
(5)   Honour your father and your mother.
(6)   You shall not murder.
(7)   You shall not commit adultery.
(8)   You shall not steal.
(9)   You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.
(10) You shall not covet (Exodus 20:3-17, NIV).

Within these ten words or maxims, a system of ethical accountability is set forth and further expanded throughout the Pentateuch in terms of specific behavioural practices. However, Barnette (1998:19) asserts that the Decalogue is more than a mere collection of customs and habits. Rather, these moral injunctions are commands of God, constituting universal and eternal values that are integral for the fulfilment of individual and societal morality. This is of primary importance.

Successful incorporation of such injunctions mandates the belief that God requires obedience to these commands. The essence of the covenant relationship is fundamental to the appropriation of the Decalogue's ethical principles.

3.2.1.2   Ethics in the Wisdom literature

Barnette (1998:35) suggests that Hebrew wisdom is fundamentally theological, and human existence in all its relationships is viewed from theistic and moral principles. Wisdom literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs) has a definite ethical focus that is primarily practical in emphasis. Within this genre of literature the relationship between belief and behaviour is clearly visible. For example, the following summary of the emphasis of each book highlights particular aspects of ethical behaviour in response to God's covenant relationship with His people:

(1)   Job: Loyalty to God in the midst of suffering

(2)   Psalms: A great and good God in a godless world

(3)   Proverbs: Practical morality in all walks of life

(4)   Ecclesiastes: Fear God and keep his commandments

(5)   Song of Songs: The faithfulness of true love

According to Robinson (1979:241), Wisdom literature taught individuals the application of ethical principles in the light of experience. The writers sought to convey the essence of ethics in such a way as to empower the individual to successfully live out his/her moral obligations within a societal context. For the wisdom writers the aspect of community is fundamental to biblical ethics. While a relationship with God is inherent, it is within the context of community—the people of God—that ethical behaviour finds its most valuable framework.

3.2.1.3 Ethics in the Prophetical literature

The prophets of Israel, both writing and non-writing, are individuals who function as agents of change. They serve as preachers of personal righteousness, advocates for the rights of humankind and persons of hope in a world often lacking such principles (White 1994:22). They preach against the sins of the people, which most often involve a violation of God's covenant with them and their mistreatment of those within the covenant community (Maston 1997:35). The following specific examples serve to highlight the ethical focus of each prophet:

(1)   Amos cries for justice among the people of God

(2)   Hosea reveals God's love toward His wayward people

(3)   Micah exposes the sins of Jerusalem and cities in general

(4)   Ezekiel discloses the specific sins of Israel's leadership

(5)   Jeremiah focuses on Israel's personal responsibility to God

According to McConville (2002:202), the ethics of the Prophets originate from their theology, in that right behaviour depends on knowing God and sharing his concerns in the life of the community. Kaiser (1983:5) corroborates this assertion by suggesting that to know the God of Israel is to know and practice righteousness. Operating from this premise the objectives of the Prophets are: 1) to reveal to their constituent audience(s) the lack of righteousness, 2) to warn of the dangers of continuing to practice unrighteousness, and 3) to emphasize the rewards of pursuing righteousness. From a prophetical perspective, righteousness is visible primarily in one's manner of life and moral conduct.

The theme of biblical ethics is clearly visible in each of the above Old Testament categories. Obedience to God's will as the basis for character and conduct is the guiding principle of Old Testament ethics (Barnette 1998:13).

3.2.2 New Testament ethical foundations

Building on Old Testament ethical foundations, ethics in the New Testament emphasizes the New Covenant relationship between God and humankind based on the ministry of Jesus Christ. The ethical emphasis at this point involves primarily the Christian community. Matera (1996:10) suggests that while outsiders may indeed admire certain aspects of New Testament moral teaching, only those who participate in the faith life of the believing community can fully appreciate its ethic. Participation in the believing community is understood as the New Covenant relationship that is entered via repentance.

The following New Testament categories will be briefly examined: 1) the life and ministry of Jesus, 2) Pauline literature, and 3) non-Pauline literature.

3.2.2.1 Ethics in the life and ministry of Jesus

Central to a New Testament ethic is the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Of Jesus, *all the prophets testify* (Acts 10:43, NIV). In Jesus, the Law is fulfilled (Matthew 5:17, NIV). Through Jesus, the moral teachings of the Old Testament find completion. Ladd (1993:126) asserts that the ethics of Jesus embody the standard of righteousness that a holy God requires from His people. Jesus' ethical teachings are essentially connected to obedience. By means of obedience motivation is found for dedicating one's entire life to God. The result of this relationship is the intentional conforming of all conduct to the standard of Jesus' righteousness (Mikolaski 1979:477).

While not a complete statement of Jesus' ethics, Matthew 5-7 sets forth the basis of His moral teachings. Barnette (1998:44) contends that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus places a new emphasis upon the inseparable relationship between theology and ethics (belief and behaviour). He summarises the content of the sermon as: 1) Christian character (Matthew 5:3-12), 2) Christian corollary (Matthew 5:13-16), and 3) Christian conduct (Matthew 5:17-7:12). In the Sermon on the

Mount Jesus introduces the principles that will characterise living within the kingdom He came to initiate, the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps the most succinct statement of Jesus' ethics is found in Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV), *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself*. Righteousness finds its fullest expression in the principle of love, which is central to the entire body of Jesus' moral teachings. According to Childress and McQuarrie (1986:421), the ethics of Jesus is based upon the close relationship between a love for God and a love for one's neighbour, and in the absolute priority of love above all other virtues.

3.2.2.2   Ethics in Pauline literature

Nowhere does Paul set forth a systematic presentation of Christian ethics; nor does he present a comprehensive summary of community organisation and duties (Hays 1996:17). Rather, Pauline ethics finds its origin in the ethics of Jesus. Although Paul expands on many of the moral principles presented by Jesus, he never opposes them, nor does he introduce something different. According to Paul, Christian believers are to live *according to Christ* (Colossians 2:8, NASB). Inauguration into a biblically ethical life comes from a relationship with Christ, that is, *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come* (II Corinthians 5:17, NIV). Ladd (1993:522) observes that Paul instructs those who are in Christ to live upright lives, because the new life demands moral conduct.

Paul reveals the impossibility of attaining the ethical teachings of Jesus via human effort. Attainment of such is possible only through the enablement of the Holy Spirit residing within the believer (Romans 3:20; 6:12-14; 8:3-4). Through the Holy Spirit the believer is *being transformed into his* [Jesus'] *likeness* (II Corinthians 3:18, NIV). This process allows the believer to emulate Jesus in terms of inner ethical convictions (Barnette 1998:73).

In Pauline ethics the new life finds one aspect of expression in the immediate circle of the family, the first school of community living (White 1994:168). Paul's ethical instructions regarding marriage, divorce, remarriage, parenting, and interpersonal relational issues within the home, all emphasize a well-ordered home life. Positive ethical behaviour within the context of the family is critical, for it is here in the primary unit of human community, that Christian love finds its basic expression.

3.2.2.3 Ethics in non-Pauline literature

Apart from the Gospels and Pauline letters, the remaining New Testament literature is also concerned with ethical matters. Blaiklock (1979:552) notes that these letters highlight the issue of Christian conduct, both personal and social. This body of literature also places emphasis on the ethics of Jesus as the ultimate model for Christian belief and behaviour. For example,

(1)   The writer of Hebrews warns of *disobedience* (Hebrews 2:2, NIV), while instructing the reader to focus *on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith* (Hebrews 12:2, NIV).

(2)   James offers very practical guidelines for Christian behaviour, based on the premise that his readers are *believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ* (James 2:1, NIV).

(3)   Peter emphasizes the necessity of *doing good* (I Peter 2:15, 20; 3:17, NIV) and ethical behaviour that arises from *obedience to Jesus Christ* (I Peter 1:2, NIV).

(4)   John accentuates the ethics of Jesus by noting that it is impossible to *have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness* (I John 1:6, NIV).

(5)   Jude asserts that because believers are *kept by Jesus Christ* (Jude 1, NIV), they are not to change God's grace into a *license for immorality* (Jude 4, NIV).

In general, ethics in non-Pauline literature is based on human conduct being subject to a standard of unconditional value, namely, the righteousness of God (Mikolaski 1979:477). This standard is personified in the ethics of Jesus.

It is clear that the theme of biblical ethics is found throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Central to God's revelation to his people is the component of the covenant relationship between God and His people, where belief and behaviour are strategically connected, with the latter being the end result of the former.

3.2.3 Theological interpretation of three key passages relating to biblical ethics

In the following key passages, the essence of biblical ethics—the relationship between belief and behaviour—is observed as the paradigm for Christian living.

3.2.3.1 Romans 12:1-2

Paul's letter to the Romans highlights the motif of salvation, which is understood in terms of the righteousness of God. Central to this motif is the issue of biblical ethics. Harrison (1976:8) observes that Paul does not set forth his theological teaching merely for informational purposes, but as a foundation for transformed conduct. According to Bruce (1985:212), biblical doctrine is never taught simply to be known, but primarily that it may be translated into practice. This is clearly evident in the Romans 12:1-2 (NIV) passage, where, after eleven chapters of a theological and doctrinal nature, Paul offers the following practical instruction,

> *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

This passage serves as an introductory prelude, according to Harrison (1976:126), to the discussion of specific ethical duties, setting forth the fundamental obligations that must be met in order to face the challenge of living as a believer in the world. Paul's admonitions are specific: 1) offer your bodies as living sacrifices, 2) live holy lives pleasing to God, 3) live no longer like the world, and 4) be transformed into the image of Christ.

3.2.3.2   Galatians 5:19-24

In his *Magna Carta of Christian liberty*, Paul sets forth the doctrinal tenet of justification by faith. Key to this doctrine is the fundamental teaching of grace: that salvation is obtained by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. However, this results in a new and transformed way of living. Cole (1989:42) asserts that while the letter to the Galatians does indeed focus on salvation by faith, this new and transformed way of living is characterized by the practical demands of Christian living. In the main, Christian liberty does not invalidate biblical ethics. Galatians 5:19-24 (NIV) places a line of demarcation between sinful and spiritual living in the following terms,

> *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

The essence of biblical ethics is again evident in that the distinct relationship between belief and behaviour is set forth. The Galatian believers, and ultimately believers in every age, are assured that via the New Covenant relationship, Christ provides the enablement to crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

3.2.3.3   Colossians 3:5-10

Paul's theological emphasis in the letter to the Colossian believers is the absolute supremacy and sole sufficiency of Jesus Christ (Vaughan 1978:168). As in the previous two passages, here too the relationship between belief and behaviour is understood. In Colossians 3:5-10 (NIV) Paul instructs his audience to,

> *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

Wright (1986:133) observes that by bluntly naming sinful practices, Paul sets a clear standard for the church in that such behaviour is incompatible with the transformed life. The connection between theology and ethics is paramount in this passage as Paul firmly asserts, *you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self* [with its practices] (Colossians 3:9b-10a, NIV).

The theological emphasis of biblical ethics is inherent in each of the above three key passages. By way of the New Covenant a new and transformed life is established, characterised by the ethics of Jesus.

3.3 A denominational synopsis of the Christian lifestyle, with emphasis on the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document

The purpose of this section is to offer a brief synopsis of the Christian lifestyle from the perspective of the researcher's faith tradition. This section is relevant to the ministry model that will be presented in Chapter 6. As an affiliate congregation of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), Harvest Hills Church endorses the theological and doctrinal positions of the denomination. The theological, doctrinal and ethical positions of the Church of God are delineated in three documents:

(1) The *Declaration of Faith* document sets forth in fourteen succinct statements the denomination's primary articles of faith.

(2) The *Doctrinal Commitments* document details in twenty-two specific areas the denomination's doctrinal emphases, along with biblical support for each.

(3) The *Practical Commitments* document offers practical guidelines in seven general areas regarding issues of behaviour, lifestyle and conduct.

3.3.1 Historical and theological perspective

All Christian denominations, movements and para-church organisations have historical and theological foundations. The historical and theological origins of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) are briefly noted below.

3.3.1.1 Brief historical overview of the Church of God

The Church of God traces its roots to 1886, where, on the Tennessee-North Carolina (USA) border, a small group of eight believers established the Christian Union. Alarmed over the perceived waning spiritual vitality that characterised many of the churches of that region, and after two years (1884-1886) of attempted reform within those churches, a new church was established. The primary objective of the

Christian Union was a renewed emphasis on biblical doctrine and the pursuit of New Testament evangelism.

From 1886-1896 the embryonic group was intentional in its commitment to pursuing biblical doctrine and promoting evangelism. During a revival in 1896 approximately one hundred persons were baptized in the Holy Spirit. This event became a catalyst for the church's integration of Pentecostal/charismatic theology. Church of God Historian Charles Conn (1996:29) writes,

> For ten years the Holy Spirit had been preparing the hearts of the people for something extraordinary. And then it happened. While praying, several of the people became so enraptured with Him to whom they prayed that they were curiously moved by the Holy Spirit. They, like Montanus in the second century, seemed to be moved upon by the Spirit as if they were a musical instrument, and in ecstasy they spoke in languages unknown by them or anyone who heard them.

In I Corinthians 1:2 and II Corinthians 1:1, Paul addresses the letters *to the church of God in Corinth* (NIV). Desiring a scriptural name, in 1906 the group officially adopted the name Church of God. From these sparse origins the Church of God has grown to become the oldest continuing Pentecostal denomination in the United States, with international executive offices located in Cleveland, Tennessee, USA. As an international church, the Church of God has a current global membership of over 6 million, with ministry venues in nearly 150 countries, as well as numerous Bible colleges and seminaries.

3.3.1.2   Theological affiliation of the Church of God

From a theological perspective the Church of God is founded upon the principles of Christ as revealed in the Word of God. It has its foundation of faith and practice in the Scriptures. The Church of God is theologically and doctrinally,

(1)   Christian

The Church of God is a determinedly Christian church. It is built upon the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The doctrines and practices of the church are based upon His teachings.

(2)   Protestant

While not a follower of any specific leader of the Protestant Reformation, the Church of God is founded upon the principles of Protestantism, standing firmly for justification by faith, the priesthood of believers and the authority of the Bible.

(3)   Foundational

The Church of God subscribes to the following five foundational Christian doctrines: 1) the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, 2) the virgin birth and complete deity of Christ, 3) the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death for the sins of the world, 4) the literal resurrection of the body, and 5) Christ's second coming in bodily form to earth.

(4)   Evangelical

Evangelical is the term used to describe those who affirm the primary doctrines revealed in the Scriptures. The Church of God is aligned with the basic statement of faith of the National Association of Evangelicals, the largest association of its kind in the USA.

(5)   Pentecostal

In 1896, many members of the Church of God experienced a spiritual outpouring they identified as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Because it was so similar to the experience of the early Christians on the day of Pentecost, it came to be called a Pentecostal experience, an

enrichment of the Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit that empowered believers to be effective witnesses of Christ.

(6)   Charismatic

The gifts of the Spirit (*charismata*) appeared early in the life and ministry of the Church of God. The gifts can be divided into three categories: the gifts of revelation, the gifts of power and the gifts of utterance or inspiration. The Holy Spirit bestows these gifts, and those who accept the validity of these gifts are called charismatic.

(7)   Evangelistic

From its inception the Church of God has been a revival movement. Evangelism has been in the forefront of all its activities. The church has maintained an aggressive effort to take the message of Christ throughout the world.

(8)   Organised

Because the magnitude of the Great Commission requires a united effort, the Church of God is centrally organised. This united endeavour is efficiently served by guidance, support, resources and leadership from a common centre. Centralised church government involves administration from the international, state or territorial and local levels that facilitates the fulfilment of the mission of the church. Benefits of centralised government include the following: 1) uniformity of doctrine and practice; 2) principles that bind together local churches in the same manner; 3) membership commitments in all churches; 4) expansion and extension of fellowship; 5) accountability; 6) cooperative decision-making; and 7) united efforts in evangelism and world outreach (Adapted, Church of God 2008).

3.3.2 Denominational perspective regarding Christian lifestyle and behaviour

From its inception, the Church of God assumed a distinct position regarding biblical ethics, emphasizing the integral relationship between Christian doctrine and lifestyle practices.

3.3.2.1 Historical position

The foundation of the Church of God is laid upon the principles of biblical holiness (*Church of God minutes* 2006). The denomination is rooted in the holiness revival of the 19th century. Sims (1995:63) asserts that the core beliefs of the Church of God were influenced by the doctrines and practices of the 19th century Wesleyan-holiness traditions. One of the principal tenets of the Wesleyan-holiness tradition is an emphasis on biblical ethics, a tenet that was incorporated into the faith tradition of the Church of God. According to Hughes (1989:115), while holiness is primarily internal and spiritual, it is also external and practical. The Christian experience demonstrates itself in the common practices of everyday life.

This understanding of holiness is evident from the very first General Assembly of the Church of God, at which the issue of biblical ethics was discussed. An example was the embryonic denomination's decision regarding the use of tobacco. Believing its use to be contrary to Scripture, a useless expense and a negative influence, the General Assembly elected to oppose the use of tobacco in any form (*Church of God minutes* 1906:5-6). In 1911, after careful examination of particular ethical issues, a codified list of behavioural guidelines was developed and adopted. Included were lifestyle issues, such as restitution where possible, abstinence from alcohol, and the prohibition of the use of swearing/profanity (Conn 1996:138-140). While the principles of biblical ethics remain intact, several times throughout its history the Church of God has assessed and adapted the *Practical Commitments* document in order to effectively engage contemporary cultural trends.

3.3.2.2 Contemporary position

Historically, the Church of God has maintained its emphasis on holiness and the importance of ethics in the life of the believer. Adopted in 2002, the following resolution reaffirms the denomination's commitment to, and highlights its contemporary position on biblical ethics.

(1) Whereas holiness defines our character, and that this character must be passed on in order to influence the next generation; and

(2) Whereas the Scriptures compel us to live holy lives conformed to the image and character of a holy God; and

(3) Whereas the Church of God is firmly rooted in both the Pentecostal and Holiness Movements; and

(4) Whereas the Church of God is historically, doctrinally, and practically a holiness church;

(5) Be it therefore resolved that we accept holiness as the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and humbly recognise the scriptural mandate to be a holy people; and

(6) Be it further resolved that we thankfully praise the Lord for His holiness and His call for us to be holy; and

(7) Be it further resolved that we joyfully and decisively affirm our holiness character as a people of God; and

(8) Be it further resolved that we reaffirm our commitment to holiness; and

(9) Be it further resolved that we continually remind our ministers and laity of the importance of love in the preaching, teaching, and practice of holiness, so that our God-given character of holiness flows out of a spirit of compassion rather than a spirit of legalism; and

(10) Be it finally resolved that we call upon all Church of God educational programmes to intentionally develop and maintain a curriculum that emphasizes the biblical call to holiness, our history as a church

rooted in the Holiness Movement, and the ongoing necessity to live a life pleasing to God in an increasingly sinful and secular world (*Church of God minutes* 2002).

While some denominations have relaxed their emphasis on biblical ethics, opting for a more culturally defined and politically correct ethic, the Church of God continues to emphasize biblical guidelines regarding lifestyle and behavioural issues.

3.3.3   The Church of God *Practical Commitments* document

The Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006) offers biblical guidelines for practical Christian living. The document does not attempt to legislate moral conduct or behaviour, nor does it constitute an exhaustive list of ethical directives. Rather, the guidelines proposed in the document offer parameters for a lifestyle based on a biblical ethic.

3.3.3.1   Biblical foundations

From its inception the Church of God has sought guidance from God's Word regarding behavioural and lifestyle practices, encouraging its adherents to model their lives after the ethics of Jesus. Historically, one of the primary functions of the Church of God General Assembly has been to search the Scriptures. The purpose of this function was (and is) to ensure scriptural congruence in matters of polity and practice (Conn 1996:74). To facilitate this objective, the Church of God assumed the posture of taking the whole Bible rightly divided, with the New Testament being the only rule for government and discipline (Conn 1996:138). This is the foundation upon which the *Practical Commitments* document is built.

3.3.3.2   Practical instructions and guidelines

The current *Practical Commitments* document was adopted by the Church of God General Assembly in 1988. The previous version—portions of which had been in

use since 1911—offered thirteen succinct and practical ethical directives for Christian living. The current version incorporates the thirteen directives from the previous version into seven areas of practical Christian living. Each of the following seven general areas is comprised of three sub-divisions containing scriptural and explanatory notation, while accentuating practical instructions and guidelines for a Christian lifestyle:

(1)   Spiritual example
(2)   Moral purity
(3)   Personal integrity
(4)   Family responsibility
(5)   Behavioural temperance
(6)   Modest appearance
(7)   Social obligation

In the brief synopsis offered in this section, it is evident that the Church of God has endeavoured to implement and maintain a biblical ethic regarding Christian behaviour and lifestyle practices.

3.4 An exegetical analysis of I Timothy 4:16

The purpose of this section is, by way of an exegetical analysis, to offer biblical validation for the relationship between belief and behaviour. According to Fee (1983:21), the immediate objective of an exegesis is to understand the biblical text, with the ultimate objective of applying that understanding to the contemporary church and world. A brief exegetical analysis of I Timothy 4:16 will be offered based on Fee's two-fold definition.

3.4.1 General background of I Timothy

The letters (epistles) of I and II Timothy and Titus are typically referenced as a unit, which Price (1971:472) calls *the pastorals*. The three letters contain a shared

emphasis on providing instruction in matters of doctrine and conduct. Within this general background and shared emphasis, I Timothy offers specific ethical guidelines. Earle (1978:347) suggests the following brief outline for letter:

I. Salutation (1:1-2)
II. Timothy's task at Ephesus (1:3-11)
III. Thanksgiving to God (1:12-17)
IV. Timothy's responsibility (1:18-20)
V. Worship and conduct (2:1-3:16)
VI. Special instructions to Timothy (4:1-16)
VII. Special groups in the church (5:1-6:2)
VIII. The danger of the love of money (6:3-10)
IX. Paul's charge to Timothy (6:11-16)
X. Closing instructions (6:17-21)

3.4.1.1 Author and date

Until the 19th century the authorship of I Timothy was generally attributed to Paul. Internal historical, ecclesiastical, doctrinal and linguistic concerns caused some 19th century higher-critical scholars to question Pauline authorship. Some contemporary critics attribute the letter to either a pseudonymous author or an admirer of Paul who incorporated authentic Pauline material (Gill 1999:1219). However, Oxford theologian J. N. D. Kelly (1987:34) observes that after careful consideration of all internal concerns, the evidence remains in favour of traditional Pauline authorship. Vermillion (1992:1112) concurs, stating that there is no compelling reason to deny Pauline authorship, for as in his other letters Paul is concerned with believers conducting themselves as befits the Christian faith. While the pastorals do indeed have a different tone than other Pauline letters, this seems only to suggest that the letters have a different purpose.

Several possible dates are offered for Paul's first letter to Timothy. Early church tradition suggests that Paul was put to death during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, who committed suicide in A. D. 68. Paul's first imprisonment is dated between A. D. 59-64. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul requests that he come to him *before winter* (II Timothy 4:21, NIV), which would place the date of the letter no later than perhaps A. D. 67. This would place the date of I Timothy somewhere between A. D. 62-66 (Earle 1978:343-344).

3.4.1.2   Main theme and purpose

Internal evidence suggests the main theme of I Timothy is twofold: 1) sound doctrine; and 2) right living. Because false teachers were infiltrating the congregation at Ephesus, Timothy is frequently instructed to focus on correct doctrine (I Timothy 1:9-11; 3:9; 4:6; 6:3-4). He is then instructed to set an example in terms of conduct and behaviour (I Timothy 4:12). Vermillion (1992:1112) suggests that Paul has three major purposes for writing to Timothy:

(1)   To encourage him to preserve the truth
(2)   To instruct him to teach believers regarding Christian lifestyle and conduct
(3)   To command him to combat heresy

Guthrie (1990:17) observes that while many of the pastoral injunctions are personal in nature, much of the ethical instruction is directed toward those to whom Timothy ministers. An example is found in I Timothy 3:14-15, where Paul instructs Timothy to understand *how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household* (NIV). The context of the entire letter reinforces the relationship between doctrine and practice, a theme that will be further examined in the remainder of this section.

3.4.2 Pericope of I Timothy 4:11-16

According to Fee (1983:22), the New Testament letters are primarily comprised of paragraphs of argumentation or exhortation. Before examining I Timothy 4:16 in particular, the pericope (*small unit*) or paragraph within which it resides will be analysed. Metzger (2003:240) comments on the importance of this pericope (4:11-16), noting its emphasis on Timothy's conduct in the discharge of his duties. The text (4:11) indicates that although Timothy is a young man, he is to set an example for his constituents regarding the following:

> *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers* (I Timothy 4:11-16, NIV).

3.4.2.1 Historical and cultural context

Paul writes to Timothy (1:3), possibly from Macedonia, instructing him to remain in Ephesus for the purpose of providing spiritual oversight, as well as doctrinal and ethical instruction, to the believers at Ephesus. Positioned geographically on the western coast of Asia Minor, at the time of Paul's letter, Ephesus is the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire, with a population of approximately 250,000 people. The city is renowned for its myriad baths, gymnasia, a stadium seating 24,000 people (Acts 19:29), as well as a medical school.

According to Gill (1999:1222), the city is characterised by intellectual snobbery, oriental culture and a predominance of goddess worship. Chief among the latter is the cult of Artemis. Considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world is a massive temple (Acts 19:35) built in honour of Artemis. Characterised by a strong missionary zeal, the cult competes with early Christianity in its universal mission of expansion and growth (Beitzel 2006:478). The influence of the Artemis cult affects not only the religious life of the city, but economic and cultural life as well.

As a centre of religious activity, the cultural context of the city is fertile with religionists, some of whom are active in infiltrating the church and indoctrinating the believers at Ephesus. Oden (1989:43) observes six influences of the false teachers Timothy is encouraged to address.

(1)   Gnostic elitism (I Timothy 6:20)
(2)   Rejection of the bodily resurrection (I Timothy 1:19-20)
(3)   Asceticism (I Timothy 4:3-4)
(4)   Antinomian license (I Timothy 6:5)
(5)   Fascination with myths and genealogies (I Timothy 4:7)
(6)   Controversialist mentality (I Timothy 1:4)

Such is the context in which Timothy is called to minister. Paul's instruction and encouragement are no doubt vital to his success in ministry.

3.4.2.2   Literary context
Guthrie (1990:18) notes several literary features within I Timothy that are relevant to its exegesis.

(1)   There is a lack of studied order, with some subjects being treated more than once without apparent premeditation.

(2)   The various brief doctrinal statements are interspersed with personal requests or ecclesiastical advice.

(3)   Rather than a mere literary exercise, the letter contains Paul's personal reflections about the future of the work he will soon delegate to others.

(4)   The letter reveals Paul's reactions to situations he faced within the church.

Hanson (1982:42-46) suggests that the letter is comprised of nine distinct types of material. The nine types are listed below, accompanied by an example from the text:

(1)   Extracts from a church order (I Timothy 5:17)

(2)   Domestic codes (I Timothy 2:9-15)

(3)   Liturgical fragments (I Timothy 3:16)

(4)   Confessional statements (I Timothy 2:4-6)

(5)   Lists of sinners or sins (I Timothy 1:9-10)

(6)   Historical details about Paul's life (I Timothy 1:3)

(7)   Pauline passages transposed (I Timothy 6:12)

(8)   Expounding on Old Testament Scripture (I Timothy 1:13-16)

(9)   Direct exhortation and instruction (I Timothy 4:11-16)

The material is linked together by alternating between the various types, that is, by introducing a theme, moving to a different theme, then resuming the first. While the ideas are not always theologically developed, their rhythmic form suggests liturgical influence. By using this approach, Hanson (1982:46) believes the author's intention is to give the impression of a letter, as opposed to a mere manual of instruction. The pericope (I Timothy 4:11-16) fits precisely within what Hanson (1982:46) calls *direct exhortation and instruction*. Here, Paul writes to Timothy with direct ethical exhortation and instruction.

The pericope reinforces the theme reiterated throughout the letter, that Timothy is to appropriate a biblical ethic for the purpose of influencing his constituents toward godly living. He is to set an example through his godly lifestyle, personal conduct and moral character. This theme is reiterated throughout the New Testament not only for persons in leadership, but also for all who are in a relationship with Christ through the New Covenant.

3.4.2.2.1   Literary unit (I Timothy 4:11-16)

Several forms of letter writing were in use during the 1st century with which Paul undoubtedly was familiar. Johnson (2001:34) suggests that the content of I Timothy bears the characteristics of a form of royal correspondence known as *mandata principis*, or commandment of a ruler. As a literary unit the pericope is comprised of a series of didactic statements. Timothy is given specific instructions regarding his role as a spiritual leader in the following areas:

(1)   Be a godly role model in all you do (4:11-12)
(2)   Publicly preach, teach and read the Word of God (4:13)
(3)   Be faithful in all aspects of the ministry (4:14-15)
(4)   Safeguard your personal life and doctrine (4:16)

3.4.2.2.2 Literary genre (I Timothy 4:16)

According to Marshall (1999:12), I Timothy is structured in the ancient form of a letter. Presented as a personal message from a single writer (1:1) to a single reader (1:2), the letter opens with a greeting and closes with a benediction. The position of I Timothy 4:16 within the letter as a whole accentuates further its didactic nature.

3.4.3 Analysis of I Timothy 4:16

After a brief examination of I Timothy 4:11-16 and the position of verse 16 within the pericope, a succinct analysis of verse 16 in particular will now be offered. The analysis will focus on the following three areas:

(1)   Comparative translation

(2)   Composition (key words)

(3)   Synthesis

3.4.3.1 Comparative translation

A comparative translation of I Timothy 4:16 will be offered. Two approaches will be used: 1) a view of the verse in the original language, and 2) a review of three English translations. A comparative translation will then be offered by the researcher.

(1)   UBS Greek New Testament

επεχε [give heed] *σεαυτω* [to yourself] *και* [and] *τη* [to the] *διδασκαλια* [teaching;] *επιμενε* [continue] *αυτοις* [in them;] *τουτο γαρ* [for this] *ποιων* [doing,] *και* [and/both] *σεαυτον* [yourself] *σωσεις* [you will save] *και* [and/both] *τους* [those that] *ακουοντας* [hear] *σου* [you.]

(2)   New International Version

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

(3)   New American Standard Bible

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

(4)   New Living Translation

Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

(5) A comparative translation

Watch your lifestyle and teaching very closely. Persevere in both. In doing this, you will save not only yourself, but also those who hear you.

3.4.3.2 Composition (key words)

I Timothy 4:16 is rather straightforward in its composition. The New International Version renders the verse as follows: *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.* Four key words enhance the meaning of the verse regarding its emphasis on biblical ethics: 1) watch, 2) life, 3) doctrine, and 4) persevere. Each word will be briefly analysed in terms of its definition and usage in the New International Version.

(1) Watch

The Greek verb $\varepsilon\pi\varepsilon\chi\omega$ is translated *watch* in this passage. Using the present active imperative form of the word ($\varepsilon\pi\varepsilon\chi\omega$), the implication is to lay hold of, give attention to or watch closely. Within the grammatical structure of the passage the subject of the verb $\varepsilon\pi\varepsilon\chi\omega$ is two-fold, life ($\sigma\varepsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$) and doctrine ($\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\alpha\lambda\iota\alpha$). Guthrie (1990:111) observes that Timothy's manner of life and accompanying teaching are intimately linked together. Timothy is instructed to give special attention both to his behaviour and belief system.

(2) Life

The first thing Timothy is told to watch is his life ($\sigma\varepsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\upsilon$). The word implies *yourself*, *your life* or *one's person*. Using the dative case ($\sigma\varepsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$) Timothy is instructed to continually watch and observe his

manner of life. Paul is here emphasizing Timothy's crucial role as a model or pattern for the lives of others (Gill 1999:1249). While written primarily to Timothy, the instruction is intended to address a broader audience, those to whom Timothy ministered.

(3)   Doctrine

Timothy's second point of close observation is his doctrine ($\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\alpha\lambda\iota\alpha$). The word implies the *activity of a teacher* or *that, which is taught*. Verbrugge (2000:322-333) argues that the primary usage here is in reference to the relatively fixed orthodoxy given to the churches, which they are to preserve against heresy. Therefore, implied within the term is not only the aspect of *that which is taught*, but also that which is accepted as truth. Timothy is to give special attention both to lifestyle and doctrine.

(4)   Persevere

While watching closely his $\sigma\epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$ and $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\alpha\lambda\iota\alpha$, Timothy is to persevere ($\epsilon\pi\iota\mu\epsilon\nu\epsilon$) in both. The present active imperative of $\epsilon\pi\iota\mu\epsilon\nu\omega$ is used, meaning to *stay, remain*, *persist* or *continue in*. The implication here is not merely a brief examination of life and doctrine, but a continual application of $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\chi\epsilon$.

3.4.3.3   Synthesis: What is the author attempting to communicate?

Paul's purpose in I Timothy 4:16 is to accentuate the importance of both a godly lifestyle and orthodox doctrine. Here, good behaviour is fundamentally connected with belief in doctrinal integrity. Timothy is to give heed to both, and in so doing set an example for those to whom he ministers. Earle (1978:345) maintains that while the letter is written primarily to Timothy, through Timothy Paul addresses the entire church at Ephesus, as well as the Christian community at large.

3.4.4   Application of I Timothy 4:16

Paul's instructions in I Timothy 4:16 are written to Timothy as guidelines for successful and productive ministry. Nute (1979:1474) observes that here, as well as in the entire letter, there is a constant demand for godliness of character. Timothy is encouraged to set an example for his parishioners by means of personal integrity, behavioural temperance and a godly lifestyle. His doctrine is to include the redemptive work of Christ, as well as the moral and ethical instruction given by Paul. There is to be a continual examination of both behaviour and belief for the purpose of advancing the effectiveness of his ministry and expanding the kingdom of God on earth.

Conversely, the instruction does not appear to be solely for Timothy. Dunn (2000:36) argues that while the letter is addressed to Timothy, the letter's function is ultimately to offer ethical guidelines for the entire congregation. This is vitally important to the issue of biblical ethics. In I Timothy 4:16, as well as in numerous other biblical passages, the fundamental relationship between belief and behaviour is revealed. Consequently, the directives set forth in I Timothy 4:16 are applicable to every follower of Christ. This is evident in the following areas: 1) the Christian's relationship with God; and 2) contemporary Christian lifestyles and behaviour.

3.4.4.1   The Christian's relationship with God

Paul instructions are, *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers* (I Timothy 4:16, NIV)*. The essence of *saving oneself* is not the vicarious or efficacious act of redemptive salvation. This was accomplished by Christ alone. It is rather a continuum of obedience to the commands of God—obedience that originates from a personal covenant relationship with the God of the Bible. This covenant relationship is the source of all ethical directives.

3.4.4.2   Contemporary Christian lifestyle and behaviour

Paul's integration of theology and ethics is such that, according to Dunn (2000:24), theology is not only adherence to a systematic formula, but also involves practical corollaries for daily living. Indeed, the moral and ethical guidelines offered by Paul are not mere ideological assumptions to which mental assent is given. They are to be incorporated on a very practical level in the life of the believer. Biblical moral and ethical directives are the foundation upon which contemporary lifestyle and behavioural issues are to be determined and resolved.

Drifting from a committed Christian lifestyle based on biblical directives is disastrous to one's spiritual journey. Because this is true, Richards (2002:527) argues that it is essential for belief and behaviour to be in complete harmony. Regarding the relationship continuum between belief and behaviour, Barna (2006:50) writes,

> Behaviour is influenced by core beliefs. It is possible to find changes in behaviour without concurrent shifts in beliefs related to that behaviour, but without change in the underlying beliefs, the changed behaviour is not likely to remain changed. In most cases, the behaviour will eventually revert back to its original state because there is not a mental, emotional and spiritual support system to sustain the alteration in activity.

It is evident from the brief exegetical analysis of I Timothy 4:16 that the passage is of importance to the subject of biblical ethics. The passage clearly defines the relationship between doctrine (belief) and practice (behaviour).

3.5   Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to offer biblical foundations for a Christian lifestyle. (1) To facilitate this objective, a brief synopsis of biblical ethics in the Old and New Testaments has been presented. (2) To contextualise the study, a

denominational perspective of the Christian lifestyle has been set forth. (3) To emphasise the necessity of a biblical foundation, a brief exegetical analysis of I Timothy 4:16 has been included. Each of the above three components of this chapter have made an important contribution towards the overall aim of this chapter, namely, to offer biblical foundations for a Christian lifestyle.

In Chapter 4 an analysis will be given of the American church in the context of a post-modern culture. Chapter 5 will focus on an empirical survey within the context of the study. Then, in Chapter 6, the researcher will attempt to offer a practical strategy (ministry model) for promoting a Christian lifestyle.

PART II

A SITUATION ANALYSIS OF THE HARVEST HILLS CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH IN A POST-MODERN SOCIETY

Chapter 4

The American church in the context of a post-modern society

4.1   Introduction

The essence of practical theology is not merely to contemplate or comprehend the world as it is, but to contribute to the world's becoming what God intends it to be (Cowan 2000:1). However, to contribute in a meaningful way to God's intended purpose for the world requires an understanding of *the world as it is*. According to Williams (1996:26), the more theology is informed by what is going on in the world, the more relevant theological writing will be. To facilitate an informed basis for this research, the researcher will seek to identify the situation and describe its distinctive components.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to examine the *general context* of this research project, namely, the state of the contemporary American church in a post-modern society. To facilitate this objective the following items will be discussed:

> (1)   The state of the church in America
>
> Contemporary trends in American society
>
> Contemporary trends in the American church
>
> Contemporary trends in American beliefs and behaviour
>
> (2)   Post-modernism: The context of the American church
>
> The transition to post-modernism
>
> The characteristics of post-modernism
>
> The opportunities of post-modernism

4.2   The state of the church in America

Through the avenue of a novel, Charles Dickens (2001:1) describes the cultural and social upheaval of his time in the following words:

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us.

Dickens' description adequately depicts much of contemporary American culture, and to some extent, the American church as well. In recent decades the church in America has undergone dramatic change. Much of the change is the result of shifting trends in American culture.

4.2.1   <u>Contemporary trends in American society</u>

America is a society with myriad complex components. The population is becoming increasingly secularised in its orientation, as well as fragmented on many levels. During the past two three decades numerous changes have taken place, each contributing to the increasing diversity of American society. The following sampling validates this observation.

4.2.1.1   Ethnicity

The ethnicity of America is becoming increasingly diverse. According to the United States Census Bureau (Grieco and Cassidy 2001), the following ethnic percentages reflect the current population of America.

Ethnic percentage of US population in 2000

Pacific Islander 0.1

Other Race 5.5

Asian 3.6

Two or More Races 2.4

American Indian 0.9

Black or African American 12.3

White 75.1
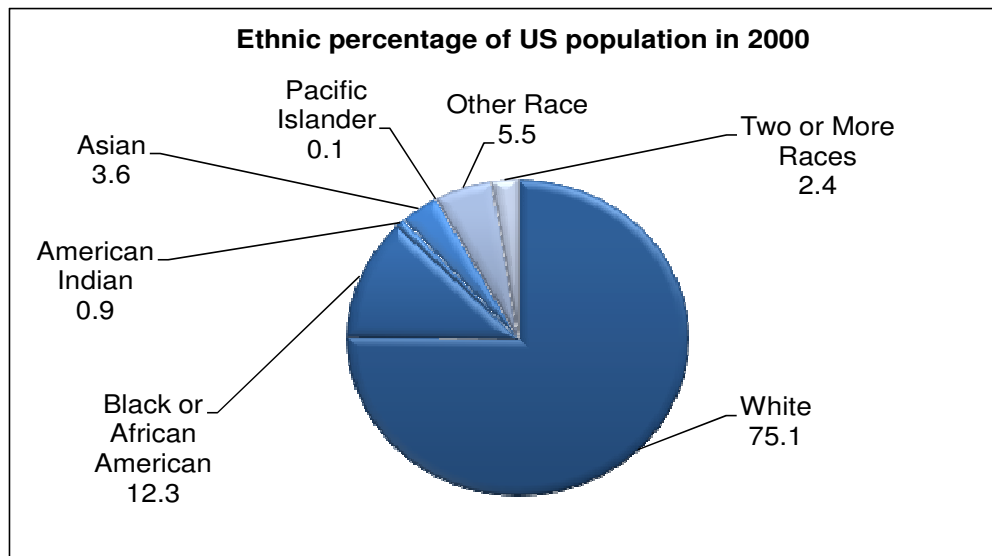
By the year 2050, it is projected that minority groups will comprise 50% of the total American population of 420 million, with Hispanics comprising 25%, African Americans 15%, and Asians 8% (*The sociology of race & ethnicity* 2007). During this same time period, the non-Hispanic, white population is projected to comprise just 50.1% of the total population. The trend toward an ever-expanding ethnicity is a significant factor in the changing demographics of American society.

4.2.1.2   Wealth

America is a nation of both extreme wealth and dismal poverty. Remmer (2000:15) states that at the turn of the 21st century, the United States was home to 276 billionaires, over 2,500 households with a net worth exceeding $100 million, 350,000 individuals with a net worth of $10 million, and 5 million millionaires. The disproportionate levels of wealth in America have produced a culture of have's and have not's. America's middle class is shrinking as the rich are becoming super rich, increasing what Gallup and Jones (2000:33) call America's inflated expectations and overly pampered lifestyles. Ironically, many Americans seem

oblivious to these inflated expectations, assuming a posture of socio-economic entitlement.

The result of such self-indulgence, according to Celente (2007), is that America is drowning in debt. Government statistics reveal the poverty rate for 2006 at 12.3% of the population (*Poverty* 2007). The American economy is currently in transition via the rapid expansion of its service-based conglomerates. This trend will inevitably produce a growing number of lower-paying jobs. As a result, the economic stability of many will be affected, further marginalising a large segment of the population.

4.2.1.3   Education

According to former United States Attorney General Robert Bork (1996:251):

> The United States spends more on education than do other Western industrialized nations, and gets less in return. This is not only harmful to individuals and to our competitiveness internationally; it is a likely source of considerable social unrest and antagonism.

With such massive amounts of money funding public education, one would expect better return rates. However, Bork's assessment appears to be accurate.

In the past several decades, school violence has escalated, while academic standards have declined. Barna (1998:55) reports that in 1997, over one million students were allowed to graduate high school, even though they could not read their diploma. Many public school systems, rather than risk entanglement in costly and extended litigation, have distanced themselves from matters of faith, even non-sectarian moral guidelines (Gallup and Jones 2000:30). Such conditions do not

prepare students for the realities of life, and the trend in this area will continue to create challenges for both students and society alike.

4.2.1.4 Technology

Technological advances over the past several decades have transformed the dynamics of American society. The rapid escalation and incorporation of e-mail, facsimiles, Internet, online distance education, mass computerisation, etc., continue to introduce seismic change within American society at large.

Barna (1998:64-65) notes five major shifts that have occurred because of increased technology.

(1)   The fear and suspicion that used to accompany the introduction of new products is largely in the past

(2)   The integration of technology into every dimension of life has raised the expectation of customised products and services

(3)   Brand names mean less in a pioneering time

(4)   There is little filtering of incoming communication

(5)   People can obtain most things they want without coming into contact with another human being

The trend of advancing technology will continue to escalate, creating both innovative marketable consumer items, as well as critical challenges.

4.2.1.5 Family

Perhaps no specific demographic area is experiencing more seismic transition than the family. Popenoe (2007) describes the ramifications of this transition by stating that fewer adults are getting married, more are divorced or remaining single, more are living together outside of marriage or living alone, more children are born out-

of-wedlock, and more are living in stepfamilies, with cohabiting but unmarried adults, or with a single parent.

According to Barna (1998:66), one in four adults concur that the family unit is weaker today than it was thirty years ago, a statement reflected in the following statistics:

(1)   One out of every four marriages ends in divorce

(2)   Two out of three adults believe a successful marriage is one where both partners have total freedom to do as they choose

(3)   One-third of married adults believe adultery is acceptable

(4)   Cohabitation has risen over 500% the past two decades alone

(5)   One out of three children will be born to an unwed mother

The trend of redefining the concept of family can only add to the ever-growing challenges facing American society in the twenty-first century. This sampling of trends within American society at large serves to contextualise the trends occurring within the American church.

4.2.2   Contemporary trends in the American church

Just as American society is experiencing trends that produce change, so too is the American church. Gallup and Jones (2000:62) observe that while Americans exhibit a broad and pervasive faith, it is not always a deep faith. The lack of depth among many Christians contributes to the overall context of this research.

4.2.2.1   A brief overview of the American church

From its inception, the United States of America has been immersed in a religious context. While revisionist historians often minimize the importance of the Christian faith—specifically the church—in the birth and development of this nation, a brief perusal of American history reveals otherwise. However, as America enters the

twenty-first century, three developments shape the church in America (Sundberg 2000): (1) while conservative churches in America are growing, mainline church membership is in decline; (2) political activism seriously divides mainline churches; and (3) a radical separation of church and state contributes to the secularisation of American society.

The Hartford Institute for Religion Research (*Mega-churches* 2006) estimates there are approximately 335,000 religious congregations in America, with between 20-40% of the population attending worship on a given Sunday. Of those, about 300,000 are Protestant and other Christian churches, with 22,000 being Catholic and Orthodox churches. Non-Christian religious congregations are estimated at about 12,000. Of these 335,000 churches, the median church in America has 75 regular participants in worship on Sunday. However, while there is indeed a large number of very small churches, most people attend larger churches. It is estimated that the smaller churches draw only about 11% of those who attend worship. Meanwhile, 50 percent of churchgoers attend the largest 10% of congregations. A brief examination of churches per size will be helpful at this point.

4.2.2.1.1 House churches

A biblical precedent for the house church concept is found in several New Testament passages. In Romans 16:3-5 (NIV), Paul writes:

> Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also *the church that meets at their house* [Italics added].

A house church is defined as a group of believers that meet in a home or some other informal setting, tending to be small, comprised of between six to thirty people (Tenny-Brittian 2005). Also known as organic churches or simple churches,

these small communities of faith meet in homes, offices, campuses, wherever the opportunity arises.

House churches are becoming more and more common throughout America. Their attractiveness is due in part to the intimate nature of a smaller setting. Barna (2006:38) notes that one out of every ten adults participates in a house church in a typical week, with a similar number attending once per month. This trend will likely continue, as the number of house church attendees is expected to double in the coming decade.

4.2.2.1.2 Small churches

The small church is defined within broad parameters; however, less than 100 in attendance offers a general guideline. Of the approximately 335,000 American congregations, between 51-60% average 75 in weekly attendance, a percentage that holds true across racial and class boundaries (Bliese 2003). Small churches remain attractive to constituents for numerous reasons. First, the smaller context often fosters more intimate relationships, a trait seen by many as necessary for spiritual formation. Second, while not always the case, many small churches continue to exist and thrive because of family heritage. A third reason why small churches are attractive is the level of participation and personal involvement per capita. Small churches do not appear to be in decline, but continue to represent a sizable portion of the church market.

4.2.2.1.3 Mid-size churches

While both small churches and the larger churches are maintaining momentum and gaining constituents, mid-size churches, those with an average attendance of 100-300, have experienced minimal decline (Barnes and Lowry 2006). Several reasons facilitate this decline:

(1)   Many people begin to attend larger churches, believing they are upgrading to first class ministry

(2)   There are multiple expectations on mid-size churches that often cannot be met, such as dynamic cutting-edge music, innovative youth ministries, etc.

(3)   Mid-size churches simply do not possess the necessary financial resources to compete with their larger counterparts, which is an absolute necessity for providing the myriad ministry venues offered by larger churches

While the slight decrease in attendance has been noted, mid-size churches continue to impact their constituents in very positive ways.

4.2.2.1.4   Large churches

Large churches are alive and well in America. The growth of large churches, those averaging 300-2000 in attendance, is somewhat connected to the circulation of contemporary believers. According to Olson (2000), most new attendees of larger churches used to attend smaller churches. Many, if not most, larger churches have the financial resources and personnel to offer ministries that appeal to a wide range of constituents. Barna (1998:16-17) offers an adequate description of the large church:

> These churches appeal to young families and have a wider range
> of congregational activities, ranging from peer groups for mothers
> of preschoolers to young adult basketball leagues to divorce
> recovery groups … A primary goal of these churches is numerical
> growth, which will enable them to expand their range of programs
> and to expand their facilities … One of the pastor's consistent
> challenges is to keep people focused on the vision and primary
> goals of the church.

By virtue of growth, the large churches will no doubt continue to influence and impact America's religious context.

4.2.2.1.5 Mega-churches

Somewhat of an innovation during the past twenty to thirty years is the rapid increase in the number of mega-churches. According to the Hartford Institute, there are currently over 1200 such churches in the United States (Thumma, Travis and Bird 2005). The term mega-church is the name given to a cluster of very large congregations that share several distinctive characteristics. These churches (*Mega-churches* 2006) generally have:

(1) 2000 or more persons in attendance at weekly worship
(2) A charismatic, authoritative senior minister
(3) A very active seven-day-a-week congregational community
(4) A multitude of social and outreach ministries
(5) A complex differentiated organisational structure

Mega-churches, more so than their smaller counterparts, most often have the resources, both financial and personnel, to offer a variety of ministry opportunities. This ability only enhances the attraction of the mega-church. These churches will no doubt continue to increase in number and impact American Christianity in both positive and negative ways.

4.2.2.2 Four mega-trends changing the American religious landscape

America's religious landscape is indeed in transition. At the turn of the twentieth century, most Americans observed religious expression within primarily a Judeo-Christian worldview. While other religious traditions were present, the dominant worldview was Judeo-Christian. However, by the turn of the twenty-first century religious expression had shifted to include numerous belief systems. There are

some interesting signs, according to Robinson (2006), that the religious landscape continues in a state of rapid flux:

(1)   The percentage of American adults who identify themselves as Christians dropped from 86% in 1990 to 77% in 2001. This is an unprecedented drop of almost 1 percentage point per year.

(2)   The percentage of American adults who identify themselves as Protestants dropped below 50% about the year 2005.

(3)   Confidence in religious institutions has hit an all-time low.

(4)   There appears to be a major increase in interest in spirituality among North Americans. However, this has not translated into greater church involvement.

(5)   Mainline denominations have been losing membership for decades in the U.S., while conservative denominations have been growing.

(6)   At the present rates of change, Islam will become the dominant religion in the world before 2050.

(7)   At the present rate of change, most Americans would identify themselves as non-religious or non-Christian by the year 2035.

(8)   The number of "un-churched" people—individuals who have not attended church in recent months--has increased rapidly.

(9)   Agnostics, atheists, secularists are growing.

(10)   Interest in new religious movements (e.g. New Age, Neo-paganism) is growing rapidly, with Wiccans doubling in numbers about every 30 months.

(11)   The influence of the central, programme-based congregation is diminishing as more cell churches are being created.

The above sampling, while not exhaustive, offers a portrait of the rapidly changing religious landscape. David Roozen (2001) suggests that the plethora of trends

impacting American spirituality can be reduced to four mega-trends. These mega-trends represent shifts in perception regarding particular aspects of faith.

4.2.2.2.1 Ecumenical to interfaith

As noted above, American religious expression has been historically and primarily Judeo-Christian. A high percentage of Americans lived their entire lives within a particular faith tradition. However, a shift toward diversity, tolerance and the acceptance of other faith traditions is noticeable. Although ecumenical cooperation among faith traditions is present, specifically within the Judeo-Christian context, there is also a growing interest and participation in interfaith cooperation. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than with the recent integration of Islam into America's public religious observance. Since September 11, 2001, the date of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York City, an intentional effort has been made within many sectors to integrate Islam into America's religious landscape. Since Judaism, Christianity and Islam view the Old Testament as a sacred text, for many, the inclusion of Islam into the public religious life of the nation is the natural course of action.

Interfaith cooperation will no doubt continue to characterise American religious life, especially in the public arena. The current tendency toward political correctness and the rejection of all things intolerant will almost certainly mandate a continuum in terms of this mega-trend.

4.2.2.2.2 Prophetic to political

From its inception America was established on the premise of a Judeo-Christian worldview, and society at large functioned within those parameters. Social concerns, from both the religious and secular sectors, were viewed and engaged within this worldview. However, as American society became increasingly diverse, ecclesiastical groups, para-church ministries and denominations began to address social concerns via the political venue. This *modus operandi* became clearly visible

in the 1960's as various denominational bodies established public resolutions regarding the issue of civil rights.

From the early 1980's numerous entities have been established to impact and influence American culture via the political method. Organizations such as the Moral Majority, Focus on the Family, American Family Association, American Centre for Law and Justice and the Christian Coalition have sought to influence social concerns and policy via a Judeo-Christian worldview. Public positions from these organisations, as well as numerous ecclesiastical and denominational groups, on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, stem-cell research, AIDS, etc., have been established. The implementation of faith-based initiatives by current U.S. President George W. Bush is perhaps an outgrowth of this trend from prophetic to political. Social concerns, no longer the agenda of board meetings or seasonal sermons only, have become the business of America's religious landscape; and as Roozen (2001) correctly asserts, it is extremely difficult to visualise an end to the politicisation of American religion. Therefore, this mega-trend will no doubt continue to influence American religious life.

4.2.2.2.3 Word to Spirit

American religious orientation, according to Roozen (2001), has historically been rooted in the Word, an orientation he describes as being cognitive and objective, based on a collection of beliefs and doctrines directly drawn from sacred scripture. Here, preaching is most often expository in style, focusing on matters of hermeneutics and exegesis in order to provide a foundation for offering application. However, Roozen (2001) notes a shift, a mega-trend, toward a religious perspective oriented to the Spirit. Here, the emphasis is experiential and subjective. The preaching style tends to be narrative rather than expository; and while belief and doctrinal concerns are rooted in sacred scripture, they may draw from other sources as well.

Gallup and Jones (2000:50) also note the shift from Word to Spirit. Their research data reveals that 72% of Americans view their spiritual orientation as "personal and individual," rather than "in terms of organized religion and church doctrine." The continuation of this mega-trend, the one Roozen (2001) believes is the most profound and foundational of the four, will present numerous methodological challenges for the transitioning American religious landscape.

4.2.2.2.4   Mission to worship

While almost every norm of the Christian faith experienced a paradigm shift, worship in many mainline denominations remained entrenched in a 1950's model. The primary emphasis for many of these churches was mission. In recent decades, however, recognising that genuine worship is a predecessor of mission, many of these faith traditions have rediscovered the wonder of worship. Roozen (2001) notes that almost one-third of liberal Protestant American churches experienced significant change in their style of worship during the previous five years. So much so the term "worship wars" has been coined, with the transition in worship style producing conflict in many congregations. Yet, this mega-trend continues to make a huge impact on the American religious scene. Many churches that once opposed the use of electric guitars and drums have now incorporated them into their worship venues. Contemporary music styles, praise and worship bands, and high-energy worship dominate American religion.

Given the influx of these four mega-trends, where will they take the American church? Where will it end? It is impossible to know for sure, however, Roozen (2001) presents several possibilities:

    (1)   Increasing diversity across religious groups
    (2)   Increasing diversity within religious groups
    (3)   Both will contribute to the more expressive, subjective and spiritual aspects of religious expression

(4)   Both will prompt religious groups to re-emphasize their primary business of the worship of God

4.2.2.3   Contemporary trends in American religious beliefs and behaviour

Not only are there trends that can be derived from empirical research regarding the American religious landscape at large, there are also trends that define the religious beliefs and behaviour of American Christians. The Barna Group recently conducted an extensive survey of religion in America, documenting the research data in a publication entitled, *The State of the Church: 2006*. The data reveals cause for both concern and hope for the future of religious expression and faith in America. The following sampling of religious beliefs and behaviour will be briefly discussed.

4.2.2.3.1   Religious beliefs

Since the beginning of the Republic, Americans have considered themselves as Christians. The current percentage is approximately 84%, varying by region, ethnicity, age, gender and political preference. Protestants comprise roughly 57% of the adult public, with Catholics comprising some 24%. Of these percentages, Barna (2006:12-29) documented the level of commitment to the Christian faith among professing believers: Some 54% considered themselves absolutely committed, 37% were moderately committed, 6% were not too committed, with 2% not committed at all. A high percentage, 71%, viewed God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today. Of those who believed the Bible to be totally accurate in all the principles it teaches, 48% strongly agreed, 20% agreed somewhat, 15% disagreed somewhat, 13% strongly disagreed, while 4% didn't know. Of those who believed they had a personal responsibility to share their faith, only 39% strongly agreed, with another 16% who agreed somewhat.

The question was posed as to whether the participant's religious faith was very important in his/her life. Some 69% agreed strongly that it was, with 16% who agreed somewhat, with approximately 15% who disagreed or didn't know. Another belief statement posed to the participants was, "When He lived on earth, Jesus Christ was human and committed sins, like other people." Approximately 23% strongly agreed, 19% agreed somewhat, with 52% who disagreed. Regarding the statement that belonging to a community of faith was necessary for spiritual completion and maturity, only 34% agreed, while 63% disagreed. Regarding the question of those who had made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, 45% responded in the affirmative. This brief sampling of contemporary beliefs in the American religious community is only a microcosm of a much broader belief system. However, it does offer a basic understanding of current belief trends.

4.2.2.3.2 Religious behaviour

Barna's (2006:34-48) research revealed that American religious behaviour is not always consistent with prevailing belief patterns. For example, although 68% believed the Bible to be accurate in all its principles, only 47% had read from the Bible in the seven days prior to the survey. Also, while 84% of the participants claimed to be Christian, only 47% had attended a church service in the week prior to the survey. One of the most consistent behavioural patterns involved praying to God, with 84% of the participants responding in the affirmative. Of those who had shared their religious beliefs with others during the preceding twelve months, 60% responded in the affirmative.

Other patterns of behaviour demonstrated much lower percentages. Regarding the tithe, the giving of 10% or more of one's annual income, only 5% of adult Christians (8% of evangelicals) did so the year prior to the survey. The median donation per donor was $101, and the mean was $851. Only 27% of the participants had volunteered time to help the church. Approximately 23% had met with other

believers for the purpose of Bible study, small group ministry, prayer or Christian fellowship.

Earlier research (Barna 1998:6) revealed that the behavioural patterns between Christians and non-Christians were alarmingly similar. Of the twenty-five specific lifestyle practices noted in the survey ranging from giving to a charity, buying a lottery ticket, or watching an R-rated movie, the percentage difference between Christian and non-Christian behaviour was minuscule. At the critical level, the implication is that Christians often behave no differently than anyone else. This fact alone presents numerous challenges for engaging American culture with the life-changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It further validates the research of this thesis: to set forth within the researcher's context a ministry model that will equip local church parishioners to more effectively engage their culture.

4.3   Post-modernism: The context of the American church

According to I Chronicles 12:32 (NIV), the men of Issachar *understood the times and knew what Israel should do*. The ability to understand the times in which they lived allowed the men of Issachar to make wise decisions regarding Israel's current and future objectives. Understanding the state of the American church inevitably includes an understanding of the times, that is, the current context within which the American church resides. Post-modernism, with its myriad nuances, is that context.

4.3.1   The transition to post-modernism

Western culture has been categorised into three broad eras of time, pre-modernism, modernism and post-modernism. Each is characterised by unique philosophical, sociological and religious descriptors. Recognition of the primary elements of each era and how each transitions to the next allows one to understand the contemporary context of post-modernism.

4.3.1.1   Pre-modernism

The pre-modern period covers human history to approximately 1500 A.D., encompassing both the ancient and medieval periods. Pre-modern cultures were characterised by a belief that the natural world did not comprise the entire essence of reality. In religious terms, lines of demarcation were drawn regarding the natural and supernatural, with the corresponding belief in God or gods. For the most part, these cultures had limited religious or cultural diversity and minimal social change. Groothuis (2000:33) argues that for Western culture, the grand example of pre-modern existence was the rise of Christianity. This period was distinguished by the worldview that an omnipotent God had created the entire universe and the human race, and had a plan that He was bringing about (Erickson 1998:15). United by a particular faith tradition, one that stipulated codes of conduct and societal norms, other religious traditions were considered marginal. And while non-Christian religions did indeed exist, Christianity was a key factor in the cultural stability that existed during this period.

The Renaissance (1350-1600) marked the beginning of a paradigm shift from medieval norms in that it ignited a new interest in knowledge and particularly the heritage of ancient Greek civilisation (Thompson 2000:7). Containing both Christian and non-Christian elements, Renaissance proponents challenged established theological and cultural opinions and explored pre-Christian Greek thought for neglected insights (Groothuis 2000:34).

As change occurred in the disciplines of art, academia and philosophy, Christianity itself began to experience a metamorphosis. The period from 1300-1500 witnessed numerous attempts at reforming Roman Catholicism, culminating in the reform efforts of a Catholic monk named Martin Luther (1483-1546). Luther's efforts ignited the Protestant Reformation, which challenged the religious monopoly held by the Roman Catholic Church. The social effect of this theological reform was a

further destabilisation of Christianity. These events facilitated the transition from pre-modernism to modernism.

4.3.1.2   Modernism

The Renaissance, along with the Reformation, created the cultural, religious and social climate, which gave birth to the period known as the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason. Encompassing the 17th and 18th centuries, the Enlightenment initiated the transition from the pre-modern and modern era. Perceptions long held by Christians regarding theology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, science and the world at large began to change. The questioning of almost every norm energised the scepticism, which became the nucleus of the Enlightenment, the exaltation of human reason above all else.

Personalities such as Rene Descartes (1596-1650), John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1711-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) led the thrust toward modernity. These proponents sought all-inclusive explanations of events and of reality, but believed that this could be done without recourse to anything supernatural (Erickson 1998:16). Several motifs helped set in motion modernity's formation. First, *foundationalism* postulated the existence of beliefs and experiences upon which systems of belief could be established. Second, *structuralism* taught that cultures and societies develop texts to define the meaning of life in general, and that those texts, via the hermeneutical method of reason, could be collectively understood. Third, the concept of *meta-narrative*, the compilation of stories within a text, could help define human existence by providing a logical sequence of events regarding the main issues of life.

Modernism, however, was not relegated merely to the philosophical or scientific, but covered a broad spectrum of disciplines. Every facet of life was influenced by some aspect of modernism. Thompson (2000:10) argues that modernism was not merely a period of temporal duration, but was a period committed to the

advancement of the Enlightenment worldview. This brief synopsis of both the pre-modern and modern periods facilitates a better understanding of the development and tenets of postmodernism.

4.3.1.3   Post-modernism

Science, reason and progress were regarded by proponents of modernism as humankind's source for emancipation from the shackles of pre-modernity. Utopian expectations produced by the Enlightenment, however, failed to materialise. Therefore, by the 20th century the optimism that characterised modernity began to fragment. Digressing social, economic and moral conditions resulted in a cynicism toward the utopian expectations associated with modernism. Reaction to the prevailing state of affairs became a catalyst for the transition from modernism to post-modernism. Proponents of post-modernism abandoned long held positions established by the scientific method of the Enlightenment.

Disillusionment with modernism was only one factor contributing to the emergence of post-modernism. The influence of philosophy was integral to the process. The philosophical roots of post-modernism began to materialise in the constructs proposed by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Deviating from modernity's established notion that language conveyed truth, Nietzsche proposed that individual interpretation of language was instrumental to understanding human existence. Nietzsche sought to validate his philosophical leanings by asserting the *death of God* hypothesis.

According to Thompson (2000:14-15), several philosophical contributions facilitated the transition from modernism to post-modernism. First, *egocentrism*, the preoccupation with self, rather than God, came to be the philosophical reference point. As a result selfism became one of post-modernity's many religions. Second, was the transition from egocentrism to *existentialism*. Here, the concepts such as intrinsic value, universal morality and a legitimate meta-narrative are deemed to be

only mythical. Third, egocentrism and existentialism inevitably led to *nihilism*, the belief that absolute truth is impossible to ascertain. Nihilism asserts that human existence has no clear explanation or purpose, ultimately producing a mindset that resists moral accountability and personal responsibility. Consequently, post-modernism can be characterised as a complete denunciation and departure from the Enlightenment worldview. The result is a worldview that elevates the individual to the status of becoming his or her own god.

The above tenets—products of post-modernism—communicate the environment of the 21st century church. Just as the sons of Issachar understood the times of ancient Israel, that is, the social, moral and economic context in which they lived, an understanding of contemporary times will facilitate effective Christian ministry.

4.3.2   <u>The characteristics of post-modernism</u>

Contemporary culture is not the first to encounter the influence of post-modern characteristics, for both the Old and New Testaments provide a parallel. The early period of Israel's assimilation into the demography of Canaan is recorded in the Old Testament book of Judges. In Judges 17:1—21:25 a specific period of religious, civil and moral disorder is depicted. The chronic refrain of this period is found in Judges 21:25 (NASB), *In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes*. An assessment of this period reveals several characteristics that parallel post-modernism.

    (1)   Rejection of divine authority
    (2)   Religious relativism
    (3)   Moral instability
    (4)   Social and political fragmentation
    (5)   Pragmatism

The New Testament book of Acts (17:16-34) depicts the narrative of Paul's ministry in the city of Athens, Greece. Paul discovered the extreme religious and philosophical pluralism, as well as the moral debauchery that dominated the city. Athens was an intellectual and cultural think tank, where, according to Acts 17:21 (NASB), participants would *spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new*. The Athenian context also reveals characteristics that parallel post-modernism.

(1)   Pluralism

(2)   Relativism

(3)   Rejection of absolute truth

A brief overview of post-modernism, observed within the framework of its social and philosophical antecedents, is foundational for understanding the contemporary context of the church. Christianity at large has been profoundly influenced by the secular world in which it resides. Although this thesis does not attempt to offer an exhaustive treatment, an overview of certain salient tenets of post-modernity is offered. The transition to post-modernism in American culture occurred during the 1960's and 1970's. These tumultuous decades produced a generation that rejected cultural norms, ultimately affecting almost every segment of American society. While not a comprehensive list, the following characteristics help define post-modernism, the general context of this research.

4.3.2.1   Privatised faith

Religious belief and practice, once hallmarks of communities at large, become in post-modernism expressions of the individual. While the number of Americans who view themselves as Christians is in the eighty percentile (84%), only half (47%) consistently attends church or participates in organised religion. Terms such as *post-church* and *churchless* have been coined to describe post-modernism's

tendency to reject organised religion, opting rather for the private expression of faith. Because of this, the church has become largely irrelevant to many.

The privatisation of faith has led to a sort of spiritual individualism where self reigns supreme. In this context no particular faith is more authoritative or relevant than another. The observance of religion has not been eradicated from the public arena; rather, it has been privatised within the lives of individual believers. The privatisation of faith lends itself to religious pluralism.

4.3.2.2 Pluralised belief

Perhaps the most defining tenet of post-modernism is its rejection of the notion that truth can be known in absolute terms. In pre-modernism, the concept of truth was the culmination of faith in God or gods. Modernism lifted up empiricism via the scientific method as the valid source of truth. In post-modernism, however, truth is contextually subjective. The individual (or group) sets his or her (its) own standard of what is acceptable and what isn't. The Reformation concept of *sola scriptura*, in post-modernism, is replaced with *tolerance*. The expectation is to be tolerant of any and all belief systems.

Within the parameters of this characteristic, all belief systems are viewed as valid expressions of faith. The post-modern worldview embraces Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Wicca, Hinduism, and any and all or no belief system at all, with the same level of legitimacy. Since individual or group dynamics have replaced established truth patterns, everyone is right, and no one is wrong.

4.3.2.3 Marginalised religion

The exclusion of religious faith from the public arena, which is the inevitable outcome of privatised faith and pluralised belief, eventually leads to the demise of religious observance and a resultant secularism. Non-sectarian perceptions of morality are also discarded in favour of neutrality in such matters. At this point in

the paradigm shift almost every societal norm is affected. Art, education, politics, social constructs, all are expunged of religious influence. Even among those sympathetic to maintaining some semblance of religious influence, fear of litigation is often a mitigating factor in their refusal to do so.

Gallup and Jones (2000:24) correctly observe that in the marginalisation of religion, current contextual entities often play the role of devil's advocate. For example, the media often delights in portraying the religious—especially evangelical Christians—as bigoted, mean-spirited and hateful. When the portrayal is sympathetic at all, it is intentionally biased. While tolerance is touted as the expected norm, it is not equally distributed to all involved. Evangelical Christians are expected to be tolerant of all others, yet are often not extended the same level of tolerance.

4.3.2.4   Relativised values

The privatisation of faith leads to pluralism of belief, both of which lead to the marginalisation of religion in the public sector. When religion is no longer allowed to influence culture, the basis for absolute values is destroyed. This leads to the gradual implementation of relativised values, based not upon religious principles, but upon existential and pragmatic tenets. Once such criteria are established as the guiding principles for values formation, everything becomes relative. Barna (1998:59) argues that this line of reasoning leads to living for the moment with nothing more than a loose set of ideals – ideals that are often in conflict with one another and are frequently abandoned if the situation warrants.

As values become increasingly relative, individual or group dynamics reign supreme. Accepted norms from prior generations or cultures are no longer viewed with the same vigour. Since adaptation to newer norms is never immediate, the process of values clarification is necessary. This alienates religious influence from the equation, leading those involved further from the moorings of absolute truth.

4.3.3 The opportunities of post-modernism

While post-modernism does indeed present many challenges for the American church, it also offers numerous opportunities. Thompson (2000:38-39) suggests at least three.

4.3.3.1 Proclamation of the gospel

Post-modernism, first, presents an opportunity for the proclamation of the Christian gospel. Modernity's claim that reason and the scientific method are the criteria for discovering truth is rejected by the post-modernist. Instead, alternate sources for discovering and knowing truth are given consideration. In the post-modern context, revealed truth or truths again become an option. Presented as an alternate source to the claims of modernity, the Christian gospel can be given credence, which inevitably allows for its proclamation. This mandates the church to articulate an apologetic that adequately engages the current plethora of truth claims.

4.3.3.2 Commitment to pluralism

Post-modernism's commitment to pluralism offers a second opportunity for the American church. Pluralism, with its myriad paths to enlightenment projects a certain animosity toward the Christian faith. Tolerance of each and every belief system, often to the exclusion of Christianity, is expected. Although post-modernism is often unsympathetic toward Christians, it is often sympathetic to Jesus. If, as pluralism suggests, all religious systems are valid paths to enlightenment, then Christianity warrants equal consideration. Anything less violates the post-modern allegiance to tolerance. Therefore, an opportunity exists for the American church to facilitate expansion of the K ingdom of God on earth.

4.3.3.3 Quest for spirituality

Inherent within post-modernism is a quest for spirituality. This presents a third opportunity for the American church. According to Gallup and Jones (2000:42), the American penchant for spirituality has produced a mixed bag of traditional and

experimental, mainstream and fringe, Christ-centred and syncretistic. This climate of ambiguity, produced by post-modernism's inability to satisfy the spiritual appetite of the soul, offers an opportunity to present Jesus Christ as the only legitimate source of spirituality.

4.4   Conclusion

The purpose of Chapter 4 has been to present the general context of this research, namely, the American church in the context of a post-modern society. Statistical data has been incorporated to document the current state of the American church. The context of post-modernism has been addressed, noting its unique characteristics, challenges and opportunities.

In Chapter 5 the specific context of the research will be addressed, that is, Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA. An empirical study (quantitative research) will be conducted to investigate spiritual growth issues at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA. Research data will be analysed, evaluated and documented. Based on the research in Chapters 2-5, Chapter 6 will offer a practical strategy (ministry model).

Chapter 5

An empirical survey relating to the need for a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle at the Harvest Hills Church, Burlington, North Carolina, USA

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter an attempt will be made to achieve the following three objectives related to the research project:

(1) To identify key areas in the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) that parishioners of Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA regard as lacking in practical application.

(2) To investigate the main factors that hinder parishioners from implementing the key areas of the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) identified in objective 1.

(3) To determine the negative impact of each of the following six major worldviews on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the Church: Hedonism, Individualism, Pragmatism, Materialism, Humanism and Atheism.

An empirical study (both qualitative and quantitative) will be conducted to facilitate these objectives. A questionnaire will be used to collect data from parishioners of Harvest Hills Church. The data will then be collated, documented and examined for relevant information relating to the research project. Feedback will then be offered.

5.2 Background of the research project

The theme of this research originated over twenty years of pastoral ministry, in which the researcher often observed minimal correlation between biblical guidelines for Christian living and the lifestyle practices of parishioners. Therefore,

this research project attempts to examine this theme with the prospect of offering a possible solution to the problem.

5.2.1   Needs assessment: A literature review

Broad research has been conducted in the areas of spiritual growth, Christian behaviour and lifestyle. The following sources have been extremely helpful in accentuating the need for a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle:

5.2.1.1   George Barna 2006. *The state of the Church*

This sixty-two-page document contains the most current statistical data from the Barna Research Group regarding the state of the American church. The document offers a profile of American perceptions regarding belief and behaviour. Section I highlights eighteen areas of religious belief, providing valuable data for research in this area. Section II focuses on eleven areas of religious behaviour, and how belief affects behaviour. Section III concludes the document by offering Barna's reflections on the state of the church.

5.2.1.2   Rebecca Barnes and Lindy Lowry 2006. *Special report: The American church in crisis*

This article polls prominent researchers, missiologists and church leaders regarding church attendance trends in America. The survey culminates with seven specific assertions designed to reveal the complexities of America's religious context, in order to offer objectivity for effectively engaging the culture for Christ.

5.2.1.3   Audrey Barrick 2007. *Survey: Departure from God is cause of America's moral decline*

This survey, conducted in December 2006 by the Culture and Media Institute, polled a total of 2,000 Americans regarding moral issues and the state of American society. The survey reveals pertinent information relating to the complex societal issues of contemporary American culture.

5.2.1.4 Robert H. Bork 1996. *Slouching towards Gomorrah: Modern liberalism and American decline*

Former United States Attorney General Robert H. Bork, provides an enlightening volume regarding the decline of American values and morality. Bork traces this decline to the 1960's, a decade in which America's moral integrity experienced frontal assault, and from which the nation has never recovered.

5.2.1.5 George Gallup Jr. and Timothy Jones 2000. *The next American spirituality: Finding God in the 21st century*

This work offers relevant data regarding the state of spirituality in America. Gallup and Jones offer insight into America's current religious climate, the inherent quest for spirituality, as well as insight into personally engaging the culture with the message of Jesus Christ.

5.2.2 Needs assessment: A personal observation

The researcher has served as senior pastor of the Harvest Hills Church, Burlington, North Carolina, USA since 1 May 2000. During this time, coinciding with the current spiritual climate in America, a general lack of spiritual growth has been observed among parishioners in key areas of the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document. Examples observed by the researcher among some parishioners include, but are not limited to the following: 1) a general lack of commitment to spiritual matters, 2) little or no involvement in impacting the culture for Christ, 3) a lack of emphasis on issues of personal integrity, and 4) a decrease in emphasis on the topic of moral purity.

5.2.3 Problem statement

The general lack of spiritual growth in key areas of the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document, along with the current spiritual climate in America,

reveals the need for a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle at Harvest Hills Church, Burlington, North Carolina, USA.

5.3   Research methodology

Data was collected via a survey, using a three-part questionnaire as the research instrument (See Appendix 1). The questionnaires were distributed via post.

5.3.1   Research approach and design

5.3.1.1   Research approach: Quantitative and qualitative approaches

The research project incorporated both quantitative (a self-administered questionnaire) and qualitative research (semi-structured comments) in order to obtain substantive data.

5.3.1.2   Research design: The distribution of questionnaires to participants

The questionnaires were mailed to each participant via post, along with a cover letter (See Example, Appendix 2) that explained the purpose of the survey.

5.3.2   The questionnaire

5.3.2.1   The design of the questionnaire

     (1)   Self-administered questionnaire (Sections 1 and 2) (Quantitative research)

Section 1 of the questionnaire involved rating the negative impact of six major worldviews on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church. Section 2 involved identifying four of the seven Church of God *Practical Commitments* that are perceived by the respondents as being most lacking in spiritual growth.

(2)   Semi-structured comments (Section 3) (Qualitative research)
        Section 3 of the questionnaire involved rating the four areas selected
        in Section 2, from the greatest lack of spiritual growth to the fourth
        greatest lack of spiritual growth. The participants were then asked to
        explain, in each of the four areas, why they believed there was a lack
        of spiritual growth. Participants were then asked to offer possible
        methods for promoting spiritual growth in each area.

5.3.2.2   The development of the questionnaire (Literature review)

According to Berdie, Anderson and Niebuhr (1986:2), each study using
questionnaires is unique and must be tailored to fit the individual circumstances of
that study. A literature review was conducted to obtain information that would
assist in tailoring the questionnaire to meet the objectives of this research project.
The following sources were helpful in this process:

(1)   Rick Warren article: Six worldviews you're competing against
        Warren (2007:1) argues that Christians in the 21st century compete
        with myriad worldviews, each of which is in conflict with biblical
        Christianity. Warren's idea served as a catalyst to develop Section 1
        of the questionnaire.
(2)   *Practical Commitments* document
        The Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) was
        used as the basis for Sections 2 and 3 of the questionnaire.

5.3.2.3   The validation of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to five persons serving in leadership at Harvest Hills
Church for validation and analysis. Regular consultation with the supervisor
allowed for further validation.

5.3.2.4   Pilot test of the questionnaire

According to van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001:1), a pilot study is a small-scale version, done in preparation for the major study, designed to pre-test a particular research instrument. The pilot study was conducted per this description.

<u>Participants, procedures and results</u>

Five key persons currently serving in leadership at Harvest Hills Church were asked to participate in the pilot study, which took place on 30 December 2007. The following persons agreed to participate: 1) youth pastor, 2) two elders, 3) intercessory prayer coordinator, and 4) family service coordinator. The participants were informed about the research project and the importance of the pilot study for making the questionnaire as understandable as possible. Each participant was given a copy of the questionnaire to read and offer feedback. The documented observations and suggestions provided by the participants, along with further consultation with the supervisor, allowed for a final version of the questionnaire that was more user-friendly and easier to understand.

5.4   Description of the empirical survey

5.4.1   <u>Procedure</u>

On Sunday, 6 January 2008, the parishioners of Harvest Hills Church were informed of the research project, and that a questionnaire would be mailed via post to participants of the study. Questionnaires (See Appendix 1) were mailed on Tuesday, 8 January 2008, along with a pre-stamped envelope for return mail. A cover letter (See Appendix 2) was included that explained the purpose of the survey, specific instructions regarding target dates, and a request that the questionnaire be completed and mailed to the researcher by Monday, 21 January 2008. This allowed two weeks for the completion of the questionnaire.

Contact was made via phone with the participants on Monday, 14 January 2008 and Friday, 18 January 2008, as a reminder of the importance of the research project. The participants were also encouraged to complete the questionnaires by the deadline and return them via post. The overall results of the survey were documented in the form of text and graphs, with a conclusion offered at the end.

5.4.2 Sampling method

Probability sampling was the method of choice for this research project, specifically, systematic random sampling via a survey. According to Schultz and Schultz (2005:45), probability sampling is well suited for research that utilises surveys. In systematic random sampling, a beginning point is chosen from the target population, with selections made at pre-determined intervals. Hunt and Tyrrell (2004:1) assert that systematic random sampling spreads the sample more evenly over the target population.

An alphabetical list of parishioners who attend Harvest Hills Church was compiled, excluding those under the age of 16, those in nursing facilities and hospitals, and shut-ins. The list contained a target population of 150 persons. From the alphabetical list, the second name on the list was chosen, along with every second name thereafter. This allowed for a total of 75 persons, evenly spread over the target population of 150 persons.

5.4.3 Sample size and response

A total of 75 questionnaires were mailed via post on 8 January 2008 to the selected parishioners at Harvest Hills Church. The participants who responded returned the questionnaires via post and were collected by 25 January 2008. Of the 75 questionnaires mailed, 49 were returned, all of which were usable for the study. This comprised a 65% response rate.

5.4.4   Data collection, collation, analysis and documentation

5.4.4.1   Data collection
As the questionnaires arrived via post, the date of each was recorded. The data from the questionnaires was collected, documented and stored for analysis.

5.4.4.2   Data collation and analysis
When all questionnaires had been received, data collected from each questionnaire (Sections 1 & 2) was documented by the researcher, and then consolidated and collated into percentages for comparison and comment. The semi-structured comments (Section 3) were documented and categorised for analysis per frequency of use and overall thematic comparison.

5.4.4.3   Documentation of the results
All the data was carefully documented to assure accurate conclusions. Once documented, collated, analysed and recorded, the results were placed in the form of a report, using text and graphic charts for the purpose of better understanding the findings.

5.5   Presentation of the data (Research findings)

5.5.1   Biographical details of respondents
The biographical details of the survey participants are noted in the following charts, regarding gender, age, marital status, current area of service, and years of church involvement.

5.5.1.1 Gender

Participants in the survey were requested to specify their gender (See Figure 1).

Gender
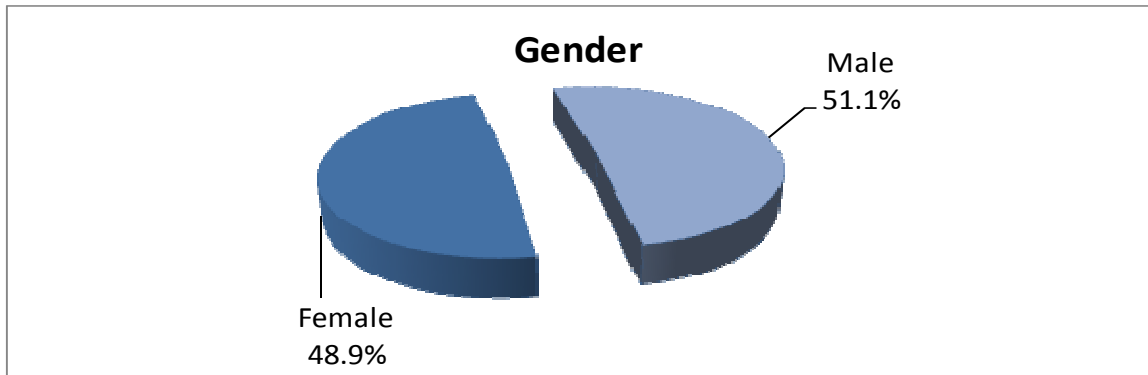
Male
51.1%

Female
48.9%

Figure 1: Distribution of participants per gender

The number of male participants was only slightly higher than female participants, which made the gender distribution of respondents almost evenly proportioned.

5.5.1.2 Age

Participants were also requested to specify their age per four specific age groups (See Figure 2).

Age

55+
54.5%

16-25
9.1%
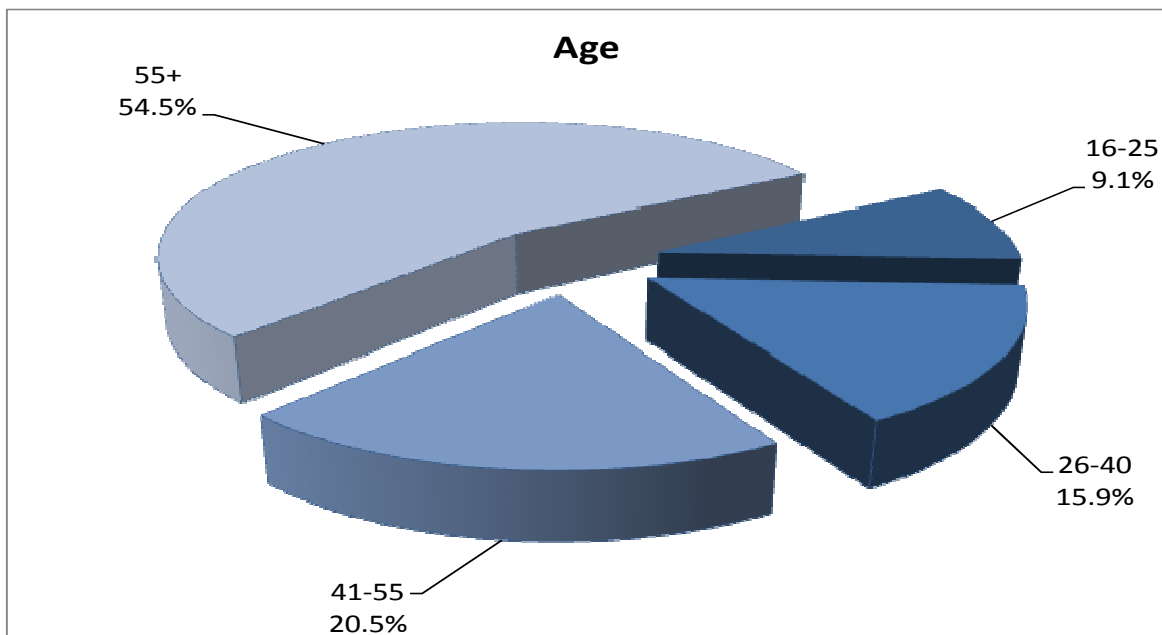
26-40
15.9%

41-55
20.5%

Figure 2: Distribution of participants per age

Just over half the participants were from the age group 55 or older. The 26-40 and 41-55 age groups were somewhat evenly proportioned, while the 16-25 age group represented a smaller percentage of participants.

5.5.1.3   Marital status

Participants were requested to specify their marital status (See Figure 3).
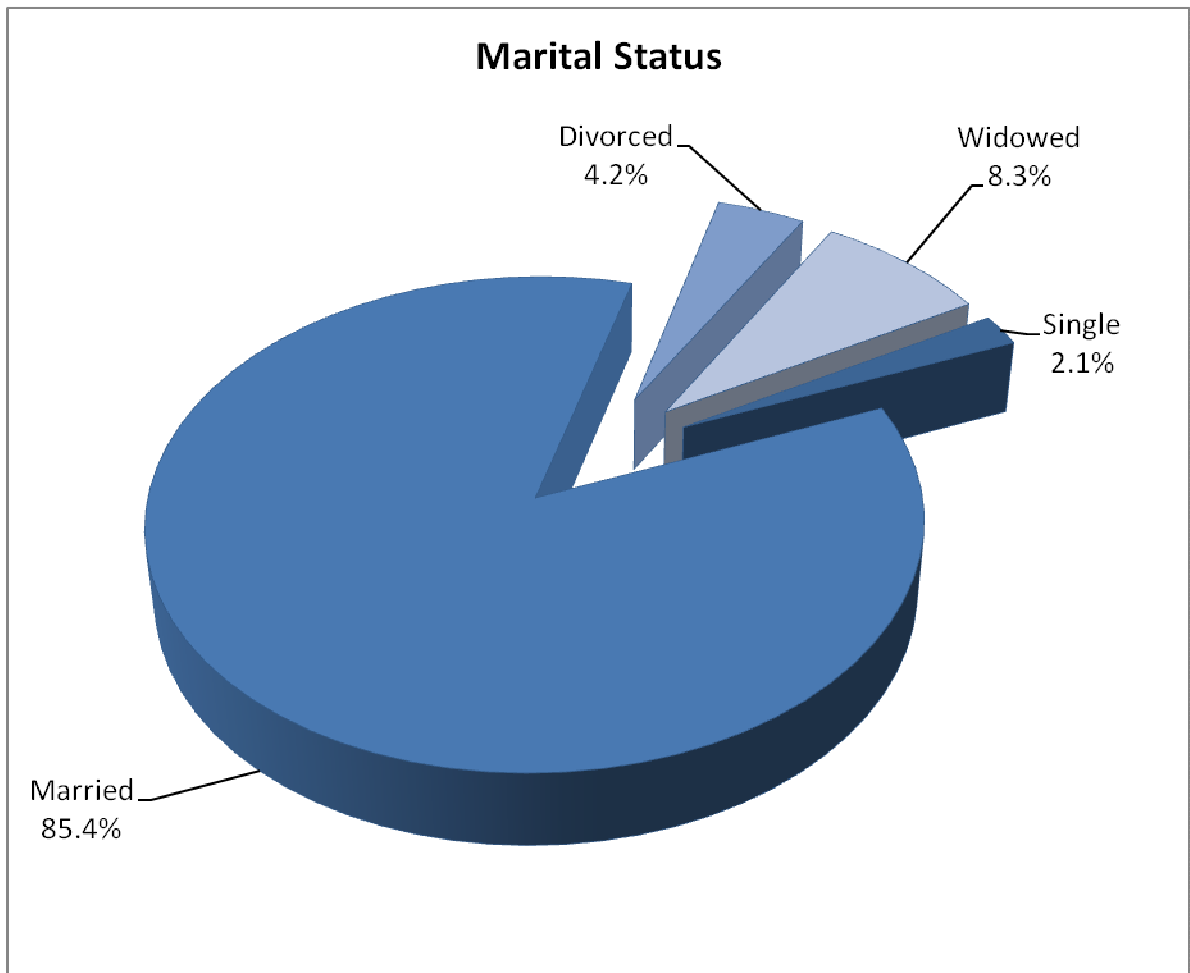
Figure 3: Distribution of participants per marital status

The survey revealed that most of the participants were married, with only a small percentage widowed or divorced. An even smaller percentage was single.

5.5.1.4   Current church involvement

The questionnaire contained a category requesting the participants to list their current involvement in the ministries of Harvest Hills Church (See Figure 4).
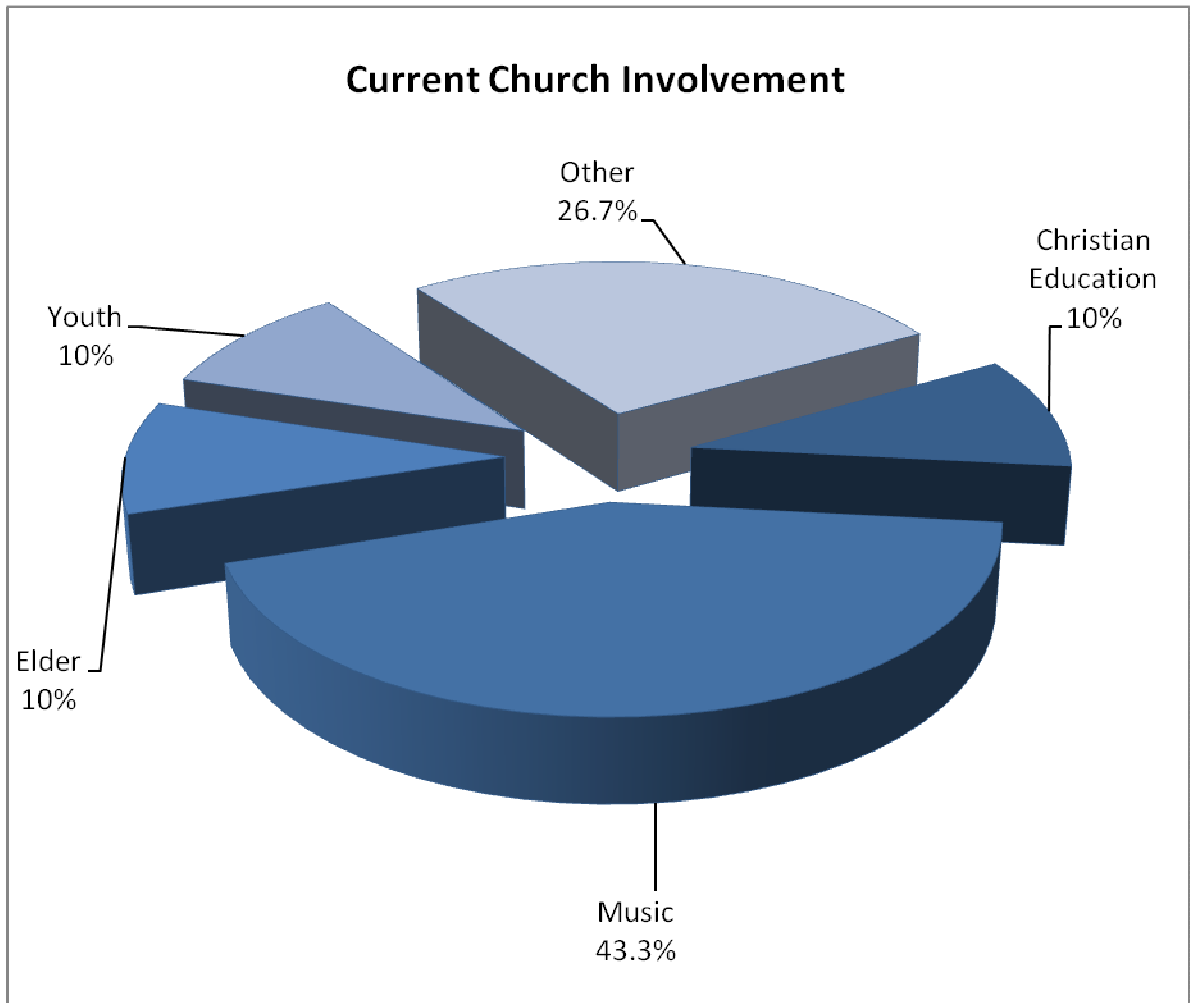
Figure 4: Distribution of participants per current church involvement

A large percentage of survey participants were involved in the music ministry. Involvement in Christian education, youth and eldership was evenly proportioned, while 26.7% of participants were involved in other ministries.

5.5.1.5   Years of church involvement

Participants were then requested to specify the number of years they had been involved in the life of the church, per five specific categories (See Figure 5).
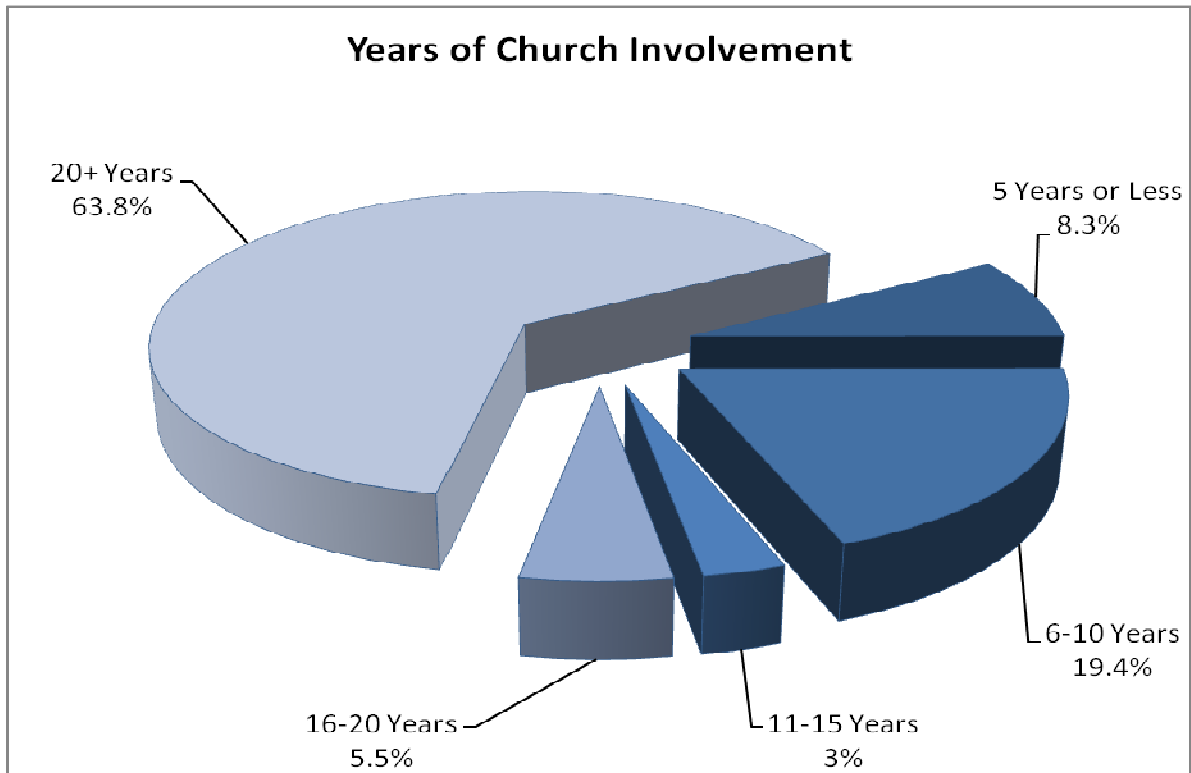
Figure 5: Distribution of participants per years of church involvement

Over half of the survey participants had been involved in the church for 20 years or more, with 14% of those surveyed having 6-10 years of involvement. Participants in the 5 or less, 11-15 and 16-20 categories were somewhat evenly distributed in smaller percentages.

5.5.2   Results of the six major worldviews and their negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church

Section 1 (See Appendix 1, Page 2) of the empirical study utilised a quantitative approach to obtain information regarding the negative impact of six specific worldviews on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church. The researcher employed an article by Rick Warren describing the impact of specific

worldviews on the lives of those to whom Christian pastors minister. Warren (2007:1) argues that individuals must change their secular worldviews, i.e., their way of perceiving the world as a whole, and embrace a biblical worldview for effective change to occur.

Participants in the survey were asked to rate each of the six major worldviews in terms of its negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church, especially as it affects the Christian's lifestyle and behaviour. A rating scale of 1-100 was used, with 1 being a very minor negative impact, and 100 being a very major negative impact. The results were averaged and converted to percentages for the purpose of comparison and analysis.

5.5.2.1   Graphic representation of the findings

The following graph (See Figure 6) summarises the results of Section 1.
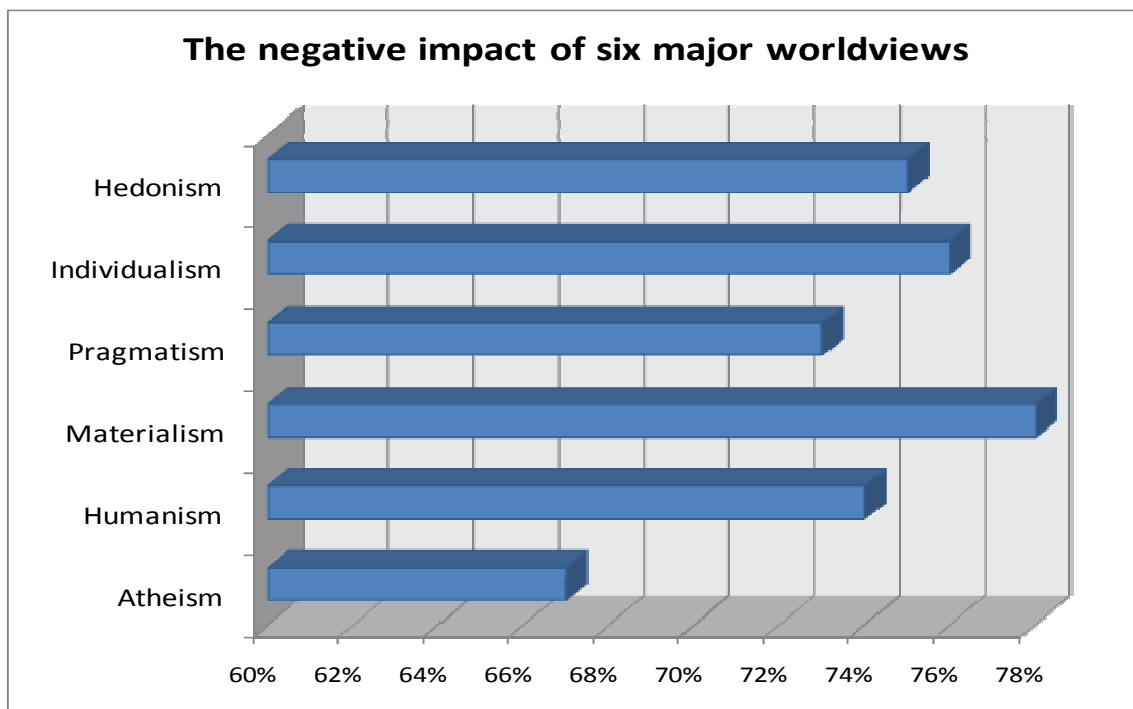
Figure 6: Distribution of the negative impact of six major worldviews

5.5.2.2   Rankings of the obstacles to Christian commitment

Individual perceptions in Section 1 were diverse, with each category containing ratings ranging the full scale of 1-100. The following are the rankings of the six worldviews as obstacles to the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church, as perceived by the respondents from Harvest Hills Church, Burlington, North Carolina, USA:

(1)   Materialism (78%)

The one with the most toys wins! The only thing that really matters in life is acquiring things. Life's highest values lie in material well-being and the things I possess!

(2)   Individualism (76%)

I've got to think of me first! A self-centred, individualistic way of life that says that I should ignore the community and other people, because all values and rights originate in the individual.

(3)   Hedonism (75%)

Do what feels good! The ultimate goal and objective in life is happiness and pleasure, to feel good, be comfortable, have fun and be entertained.

(4)   Humanism (74%)

You are your own God! A special value is assigned to human beings and their activities and achievements. Because life is centred on human values, humanism rejects the need for God.

(5)   Pragmatism (73%)

Whatever works for you! It doesn't matter if it's wrong or right or whether or not it hurts anybody. Everything in life is determined by its practicality.

(6)   Atheism (67%)

God doesn't exist! A rejection of belief in God. Because God does not exist, I am an accident of nature and my life has no value, meaning or purpose.

5.5.2.3 Summary of findings from the results

The results of the empirical study in Section 1 indicate that each of the six major worldviews was perceived as having a negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church. Although perceptions varied from low to high in each category, the average percentage for each worldview gave it a negative impact rating from 67% to 78%. The worldview with the highest perceived negative impact was materialism (78%), which corresponds with the current cultural emphasis in the same area. This could also be said of the other worldviews, which would seem to indicate that certain facets of American culture do indeed have a negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church.

The results of Section 1 reveal the need for a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle at Harvest Hills Church, in which a biblical worldview is emphasized as the foundation for successful Christian living and behaviour.

5.5.3 Results of the key areas lacking in spiritual growth using the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document

The Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) is divided into seven key areas relating to Christian lifestyle and behaviour, with each offering biblically based guidelines for practical Christian living (See Appendix 3). This document provided the basis for Sections 2 and 3 of the empirical study.

A quantitative approach was used in Section 2 (See Appendix 1, Page 3) of the empirical survey. The objective was to ascertain key areas among the parishioners of Harvest Hills Church where there was a perceived lack of spiritual growth. The

Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) was used as the basis for this objective.

Participants were asked to select four of the seven areas in the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document, which they regarded as the main areas where there was a lack of spiritual growth. The results were documented, collated and given a percentage for the purpose of comparison and analysis. The following graph (See Figure 7) details the results of Section 2.

5.5.3.1   Graphic representation of the findings
The following graph (See Figure 7) summarises the results of Section 2.
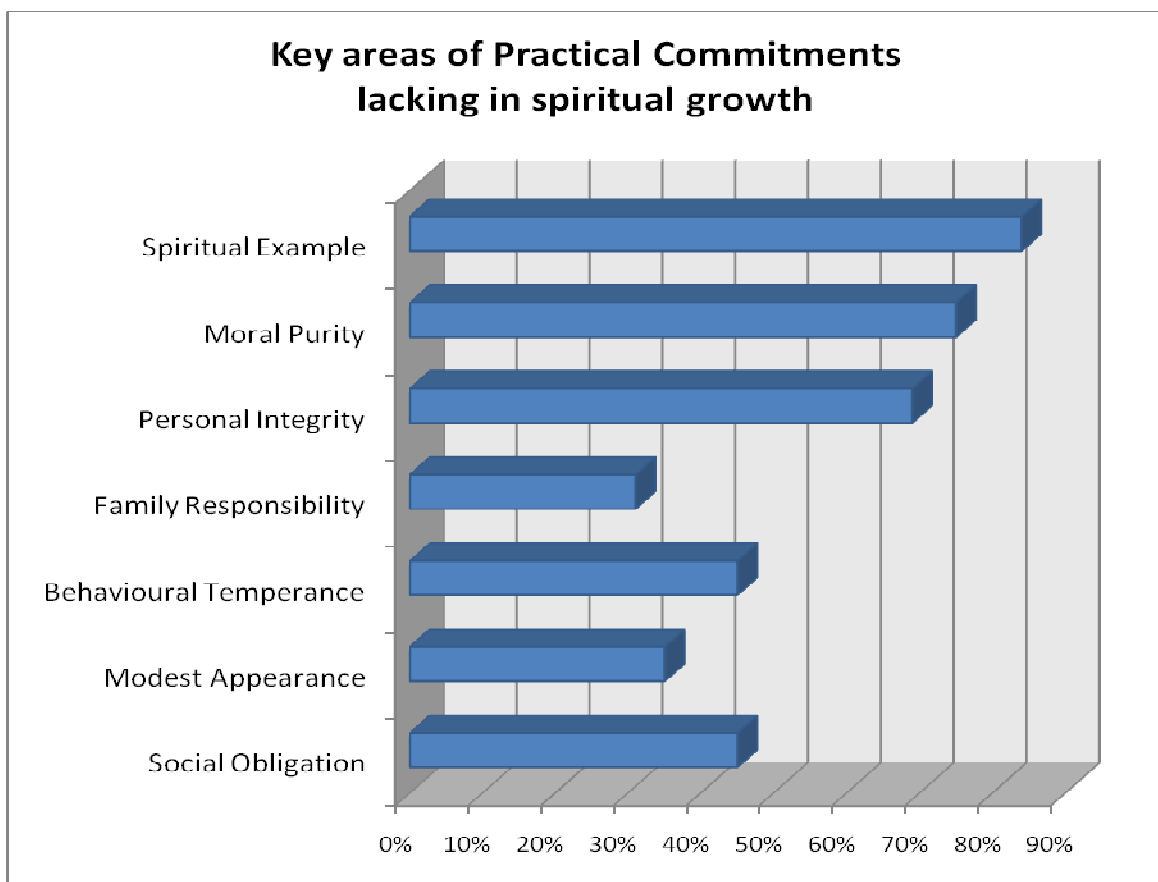
Figure 7: Distribution of key areas of Practical Commitments lacking in spiritual growth

5.5.3.2 Rankings of the key areas of Practical Commitments lacking in spiritual growth

Each area of the *Practical Commitments* document (2007) is important to one's spiritual growth and development, therefore, warranting emphasis. However, the empirical study revealed that certain areas were indeed lacking in spiritual growth, and therefore needed attention. The following are the rankings of the key areas of *Practical Commitments* lacking in spiritual growth, as perceived by the respondents from Harvest Hills Church, Burlington, North Carolina, USA:

(1)   Spiritual example (83.7%)

We will demonstrate our commitment to Christ through our practice of the spiritual disciplines; we will demonstrate our commitment to the body of Christ through our loyalty to God and commitment to His church; and we will demonstrate our commitment to the work of Christ through our being good stewards.

(2)   Moral purity (75.5%)

We will engage in those activities which glorify God in our body and which avoid the fulfilment of the lust of the flesh. We will read, watch and listen to those things, which are of positive benefit to our spiritual well being.

(3)   Personal integrity (69.4%)

We will live in a manner that inspires trust and confidence, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and seeking to manifest the character of Christ in all our behaviour.

(4)   Behavioural temperance (44.9%)

We will practise temperance in behaviour and will abstain from activities and attitudes which are offensive to our fellowman or which lead to addiction or enslavement.

(5)   Social obligation (44.9%)

It should be our objective to fulfil our obligations to society by being good citizens, by correcting social injustices, and by protecting the sanctity of life.

(6)   Modest appearance (34.7%)

We will demonstrate the scriptural principle of modesty by appearing and dressing in a manner that will enhance our Christian testimony and will avoid pride, elaborateness or sensuality.

(7)   Family responsibility (30.6%)

We will give priority to fulfilling family responsibilities, to preserving the sanctity of marriage and to maintaining divine order in the home.

5.5.3.3 Summary of findings

The results for Section 2 of the empirical study revealed that of the seven areas covered in the *Practical Commitments* document (2007) - those perceived by the respondents as most lacking in spiritual growth - were spiritual example (83.7%), moral purity (75.5%) and personal integrity (69.4%). Two areas gleaned equivalent percentages (44.9% each) as the fourth greatest lack of spiritual growth, namely, behavioural temperance and social obligation. Each of the top three areas received a high percentage of perceived lack of spiritual growth.

These findings correspond to a large extent with today's general cultural and religious climate of American society. In particular, they correlate with Barrick's study (2007), which showed that the majority of Americans (74%), from the Orthodox and Independent Churches, believe that the moral values in America are weaker than they were 20 years ago. This lends support to the notion that certain facets of American culture do indeed have a negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church.

The results of Section 2 reveal the need for a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle to be implemented and emphasised at Harvest Hills Church. Building upon the foundation of a biblical worldview, special attention is warranted in the areas of spiritual example, moral purity and personal integrity.

5.5.4 Themes and sub-themes relating to the top four obstacles to spiritual growth (Comments/Suggestions)

A qualitative approach was employed in Section 3 of the empirical study (See Appendix 1, Page 4). Participants were asked to reflect on the four main *Practical Commitments* selected in Section 2, and rank them in order of lack of spiritual growth. That is, the first selection would reveal the area that had the greatest lack of spiritual growth, the second selection would reveal the area with the second greatest lack of spiritual growth, then the third and fourth.

Each participant was then requested to respond to each of the four selections per the following: 1) Comments: Briefly explain what you believe are obstacles to spiritual growth in this area; and 2) Suggestions: What would you suggest as a possible method for promoting spiritual growth in this area?

When the results were documented and collated for comparison, several themes emerged. Listed below are the four main areas selected by the survey participants, the percentage of participants who made the selection, along with recurring comments and suggestions.

5.5.4.1 Theme 1: Perceptions of spiritual example - The greatest lack of spiritual growth (83.7%)

The following sub-themes were identified:

Comments: The main obstacles to spiritual growth in this area

(1) Lack of spirituality

"Taking spiritual growth lightly; other things are more important."

"Lack of Christ-likeness."

"Lack of spiritual lifestyle."

(2) Lack of commitment

"Failure to attend all services or tithe faithfully."

"Lack of commitment to church attendance and stewardship."

(3) Lack of involvement in ministry

"Fail to embrace opportunities to minister."

"Not speaking to people about the Lord."

The following sub-themes were identified:

Suggestions: Ways for promoting spiritual growth in this area

(1) Public emphasis on spirituality

"Regular pulpit emphasis on the importance of church attendance."

"Leadership should set the example."

(2) Promote discipleship

"Implement a discipleship training program."

(3) Practice of spiritual disciplines

"Prayer, fasting, meditation."

"Follow Jesus' prayer life and example."

"Pursue a godly life."

"Prioritise and put God first in all things."

5.5.4.2 Theme 2: Perceptions of moral purity - The second greatest lack of spiritual growth (75.5%)

The following sub-themes were identified:

Comments: The main obstacles to spiritual growth in this area

(1)   The influence of television

"Bad TV/music choices."

"Yielding to carnal temptations, e.g., TV, movies, etc."

"Yielding to the lust of the flesh."

(2)   The influence of the world

"Church is often influenced by culture."

"Societal trends negatively impact the lifestyles of some."

"Appears to be a gradual acceptance of worldly views."

(3)   Negative role models

"Lifestyle of members does not always reflect godliness."

The following sub-themes were identified:

Suggestions: Ways for promoting spiritual growth in this area

(1)   Regular devotion to Christ

"Spend more time pursuing spiritual things."

"Daily prayer; identify weaknesses and avoid when possible."

"Read, watch and listen to things that would inspire to purity of life."

"Look to Jesus and follow his example."

(2)   Attention to God's Word

"Seek to renew the mind via God's word."

"Pay more attention to modesty; be God-fearing; read Proverbs."

"Periodic emphasis from pulpit."

(3)   Courage of one's convictions

"Have the courage to stand for godly morals even when unpopular."

5.5.4.3   Theme 3: Perceptions of personal integrity: The third greatest lack of spiritual growth (69.4%)

The following sub-themes were identified:

Comments: The main obstacles to spiritual growth in this area

(1)   Influence of culture

"Some seek acceptance of world rather than doing what is right."

"Culture often sets the example for the church."

(2)   Inconsistent lifestyles

"People tend to live one way at church, another outside the church."

"Personal lives not in line with God's word."

"Lack of consistent Christian living."

"Lack of commitment to faithful church attendance."

(3)   Selfishness

"Selfish desire to better one's self leads to lying and deceit."

The following sub-themes were identified:

Suggestions: Ways for promoting spiritual growth in this area

(1)   Pursue Christ

"Focus on personal relationship with God, constant self-examination."

"Pursue a lifestyle pleasing to Christ."

"Pursue every opportunity to impact others by one's life."

(2)   Example from leadership

"Leadership training emphasizing the importance of integrity."

"Leadership should be held to the highest standards."

(3)   Intentional devotional life

"Seek the fruit of the Spirit and apply the fruit through prayer."

"Daily prayer and devotions to meditate on one's behaviour."

5.5.4.4   Theme 4: Perceptions of behavioural temperance/social obligation: The fourth greatest lack of spiritual growth (44.9% in each area)

The following sub-themes were identified:

Comments: The main obstacles to spiritual growth in these areas

Behavioural temperance

(1)   Uncontrolled behaviour

"Addictions among some; struggling with past behaviours."

"Generational bondage, hidden sins, wrong attitudes, criticism."

"Some live carnal and uncontrolled lives."

"Backbiting, cursing, talking negatively about others."

(2)   Influence of world

"Influence of world's vices."

Social obligation

(1)   Lack of involvement

"Lack of involvement in community affairs."

"Lack of commitment to social responsibilities."

"Lack of involvement in outside issues."

(2)   Lack of concern

"Failure to evangelise the community."

"Ignoring the needs of those outside the church; the sick and shut-ins."

The following sub-themes were identified:

Suggestions: Ways for promoting spiritual growth in these areas

Behavioural temperance

(1)   Intentional ministry

"Support groups; prayer for deliverance from addictions/habits."

(2)   Biblical teaching

"A clear understanding of the biblical teaching in this area."

(3)   Focused devotional life

"Through prayer and obedience, discipline and control behaviour."

"Personal devotion and Bible study."

"Seek to be Christ-like and different from the world."

<u>Social obligation</u>

(1)   <u>Adequate spiritual preparation</u>

"Be filled with the Holy Spirit and boldness."

"Prayer groups on behalf of the community."

(2)   <u>Provide opportunity for involvement</u>

"Emphasise opportunities for involvement."

"Community projects for the entire church."

(3)   <u>Personal commitment to ministry</u>

"Become involved in evangelism."

"Become personally involved."

 "Visit sick/shut-ins."

5.6   Key findings, conclusion, recommendations and further research

This section will offer findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the empirical study described in the previous sections. The empirical study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to accomplish three objectives: (1) to identify key areas in the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) that parishioners of Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA regard as lacking in practical application; (2) to investigate the main factors that hinder parishioners from implementing the key areas of the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) identified in objective 1; and (3) to focus on six major worldviews and their negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church.

5.6.1 <u>Key findings</u>

From analysing the results of the empirical study, several key findings were observed:

(1)   Of the six major worldviews noted in Section 1 of the questionnaire, each has a negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church, especially as it relates to Christian behaviour and lifestyle practices. The dominant worldview is materialism (78%), followed by individualism (76%), then hedonism (75%), and finally humanism (74%).

(2)   Of the seven areas listed in Section 2 of the questionnaire, the dominant area lacking in spiritual growth is spiritual example (83.7%). This is followed by moral purity (75.5%), then personal integrity (69.4%), and finally, both behavioural temperance and social obligation (44.9%).

(3)   Of the four major areas lacking in spiritual growth, participants in the empirical survey offered relevant comments and suggestions to effectively address the areas of concern. The researcher will utilise these key findings to develop a ministry model (practical strategy) in Chapter 6.

5.6.2 Conclusion

After documenting, collating and analysing the results of the empirical study, it is evident that spiritual growth concerns do exist at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA. This is especially true regarding Christian behaviour and lifestyle practices, where belief and behaviour do not always complement each other.

5.6.3 Recommendations and further research

5.6.3.1 Recommendations

From the results of the empirical study, it is recommended that the leadership of Harvest Hills Church focus on the following, in order to facilitate intentional growth among the parishioners:

(1) Training designed to inform parishioners regarding the various major worldviews, and their negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church. Integral to this training should be specific instruction on what constitutes a biblical worldview.

(2) Didactic sessions designed to emphasise the correlation between one's belief and behaviour, especially as it relates to the Christian. The Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) should be used as a catalyst for these sessions.

(3) From the comments and suggestions provided in Section 3 of the survey, and the identified themes and sub-themes, a ministry model (practical strategy) should be developed and implemented to enhance spiritual growth among the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church.

5.6.3.2 Further research

The specific context of this research project fosters the need for further research in this area. Successfully living the Christian life is no easy task. Several biblical passages suggest that it will become increasingly difficult to do so as our Lord's return draws near. The following topics for further research could prove advantageous as it relates to successful Christian living.

(1) The correlation between specific worldviews and a biblical worldview, and to what degree this affects the Christian's decision-making process

(2) An empirical study on the current level of evangelism in pluralistic society

(3) An empirical study focusing on the correlation between one's personal involvement in the ministry of the church and one's spiritual growth

Based on the research findings from Chapters 2-5, the researcher will offer in Chapter 6 a ministry model (new *praxis*) for promoting spiritual growth at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA.

PART III

A MINISTRY MODEL FOR PROMOTING A CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE
AT THE HARVEST HILLS CHURCH

Chapter 6

Towards a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle and the spiritual growth of the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA

6.1   Introduction

This thesis has investigated the relationship between belief and behaviour, specifically as it relates to the Christian lifestyle. In Chapter 2 a theological basis for Christian ethics was presented. Chapter 3 examined the biblical foundations for a Christian lifestyle. Chapter 4 described the general context of the study - the American church within post-modern society. Chapter 5 detailed the results of an empirical study (specific context) that revealed spiritual growth concerns at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA. The aim of Chapter 6 is to present a ministry model for promoting spiritual growth among the parishioners of Harvest Hills Church. The following aspects relating to the ministry model will be discussed:

(1)   Biblical foundations for a ministry model that promotes spiritual growth.

(2)   A ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle - the spiritual growth of the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA.

6.2   Biblical foundations for a ministry model that promotes spiritual growth

According to Barackman (1998:376), spiritual growth is enhanced by Christians submitting to God's instructions. For this reason the ministry model presented in this chapter requires a biblical foundation. Each of the following four components (6.2.1, 6.2.2, 6.2.3, 6.2.4) of the ministry model will be analysed in terms of:

   (1)   Its biblical foundation
   (2)   Its role as a means for spiritual growth

6.2.1   Preaching and teaching (*Kerugmatic*)

6.2.1.1   Biblical foundation for preaching and teaching

The proclamation of God's Word is an important and essential aspect of the Christian faith. According to Erickson (1995:1056), from its inception the Christian Church has used preaching as a means of personal and corporate instruction. Paul instructs Timothy to devote himself *to preaching and to teaching* (I Timothy 4:13, NIV). Paul also notes that there are some within the church *whose work is preaching and teaching* (I Timothy 5:17, NIV). Barackman (1998:424) observes that those given the responsibility of preaching and teaching engage and enhance the community of faith by,

   (1)   Warning of sin
   (2)   Exhorting to do what is right
   (3)   Caring for spiritual needs
   (4)   Protecting from false teachers
   (5)   Equipping for local church ministry

6.2.1.2   Preaching and teaching as a means of spiritual growth

Through preaching and teaching, spiritual growth is both individually and corporately facilitated. The dynamic of teaching (and by implication preaching), according to Paul is,

> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV).

Huffman (2008) asserts that the *kerugmatic* (proclamation) dynamic involves preaching coupled with teaching, exhortation, and application to all of life. The aspect of application makes this component vital to a ministry model for promoting spiritual growth.

6.2.2   Fellowship (*Koinoniac*)

6.2.2.1   Biblical foundation for fellowship

One of the characterisations of the early church is recorded in Acts 2:42 (NIV), where *they devoted themselves … to the fellowship* [*koinonia*]. The term, as used here, denotes more than superficial human interaction. According to Verbrugge (2000:698), *koinonia* is used to illustrate the following relational dynamics:

(1)   Fellowship with Christ (I Corinthians 1:9, NIV)
(2)   The fellowship of the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 13:14, NIV)
(3)   Partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:5, NIV)
(4)   Sharing the faith (Philemon 6, NIV)

Arrington (1999:549) corroborates this concept of *fellowship* in the following observation:

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Fellowship involves more than a communal spirit that believers share with one another. It is a joint participation at the deepest level in a spiritual fellowship that is in Christ. On the human side believers share with one another, but the quality of their fellowship is determined by their union with Christ.

6.2.2.2   Fellowship as a means of spiritual growth

Fellowship is fundamental for healthy spiritual growth. This type of growth is achieved through understanding and walking in the light of God's Word. One's growth in fellowship with God enriches one's fellowship with other believers, thereby facilitating the spiritual growth in others by one's example and ministry to them (Swindoll and Zuck 2003:1064). As believers mature in their fellowship with Christ, it is manifested through interpersonal relationships with others. This, in turn, facilitates the process of spiritual growth, subsequently influencing Christian behaviour and lifestyle.

6.2.3   <u>Service (*Diakoniac*)</u>

6.2.3.1   Biblical foundation for service

According to Kittel (1964:87-88), service (*diakonia*) is especially oriented to the Gospel, with its New Testament usage understood from three perspectives:

(1)   The waiting of tables or provision for bodily sustenance
(2)   The discharge of a service
(3)   The discharge of particular obligations to the community

Imparting to others some form of Christian *diakonia* fulfils the law of Christ. Jesus personified *diakonia* by teaching that when acts of service are rendered to other persons, *whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me* (Matthew 25:40, NIV). This verse emphasises that Christian service has a

biblical foundation. Verbrugge (2000:315) notes that every form of *diakonia* finds its ultimate meaning and fulfilment in the organic unity of the body of Christ (Romans 12:7).

6.2.3.2   Service as a means of spiritual growth

As a means of spiritual growth *diakonia* is especially important. In Galatians 5:13 (NIV) the believer is instructed, *do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love*. Barackman (1998:404) observes that this aspect of *diakonia* belongs to every believer, and includes the following basic acts:

> (1)   Prayer (John 14:13)
> (2)   Living a consistent Christian life (I Peter 1:15)
> (3)   Giving (Ephesians 4:28)
> (4)   Witnessing (Acts 1:8)

Furthermore, Christian service is the result of obedience to the mandate of God's Word. Obedience inevitably leads to sanctification and spiritual growth in the life of the believer (Romans 6:16, 19, 22).

6.2.4   Worship (*Leitourgic*)

6.2.4.1   Biblical foundation for worship

One of the primary functions of the believer is to render worship to God. Both Old and New Testaments declare the importance of worship (Psalm 29:2; John 4:23, NIV). Genuine worship, according to Williams (1996:90-101), includes the following essentials:

> (1)   Reverence and awe
> (2)   Praise and thanksgiving
> (3)   Humility and contrition

     (4)   Supplication and intercession

     (5)   Consecration and dedication

Worshiping God is both a personal and corporate exercise. Worship occurs on a personal level when one renders to God, from the heart, praise and exaltation. In corporate settings the entire body of believers participates in the rendering of worship.

Liesch (1996:169) describes *leitourgia* in terms of corporate worship:

> *Leitourgia* is usually large-group worship … Whereas *kerygma* is done to people, and *koinonia* is for people, *leitourgia* is primarily response by people. The primary question the people ask themselves is: 'Did I meet God?'

6.2.4.2   Worship as a means of spiritual growth

It is clear that genuine worship facilitates the process of spiritual growth. Barackman (1998:403) observes that worship promotes spiritual growth by requiring the following essentials:

     (1)   The examination of one's life for any known sin that needs to be dealt with through repentance and confession

     (2)   The giving of oneself to the Holy Spirit for his direction

     (3)   The expression of gratitude for the privilege of worshiping God

     (4)   The confidence that God will accept one's spiritual sacrifices

Worshipping God according to biblical guidelines inevitably leads to spiritual growth, development and maturity in the life of the believer.

6.3 A ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle - the spiritual growth of the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA

The empirical study described in Chapter 5 revealed the need for a ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle, subsequently facilitating the spiritual growth of the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church. The following ministry model is designed to facilitate change in the existing *praxis*, that is, the present practice, which hinders spiritual growth in the context of this study. According to Heitink (1993:113), the Zerfass hermeneutical model for practical theology leads to change by focusing on the renewal and improvement of the existing *praxis*. Three areas will be emphasised in this section:

(1)   The role of the pastor
(2)   A ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle
(3)   The planned outcome of the ministry model

6.3.1   The role of the pastor

A successful ministry model within the local church intrinsically involves the pastor. Williams (1996:177) notes that the pastoral role includes an equipping ministry for the local church. The pastoral role is designed to prepare God's people to become mature for the purpose of attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:10-13, NIV). Becoming a mature Christian requires spiritual growth. To achieve this objective the pastor should be both a model and a mentor.

6.3.1.1   The pastor as a model

By virtue of his position the pastor serves as a model for Christian living. Paul instructs Timothy as a Christian pastor to set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (I Timothy 4:12, NIV). As a model for those under his/her care the pastor's life should be characterised by a sincere faith, a good conscience, a godly lifestyle, purity of heart and love (Williams 1996:186-

190). An effective ministry model for promoting spiritual growth among the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church must first be modelled by the pastor. Spiritual maturity modelled by the pastor is an essential component of an effective ministry model for promoting spiritual growth.

6.3.1.2   The pastor as a mentor

The Uncommon Individual Foundation, an organisation that conducts mentoring research, asserts that mentoring is the third most influential relationship for influencing human behaviour, behind marriage and the extended family unit (Johnson 2000). When serving as a mentor the pastor is in a strategic position to influence the belief and behaviour of parishioners. Nelson (1988:254) writes:

> As mentor, the pastor is one who can be relied upon to assist as a reliable guide; one who knows the terrain and can point out both rocky hillsides and lovely paths; one who—most of all—is available for conversation.

As with modelling, here too the pastor is instrumental in the successful promotion of a ministry model that facilitates spiritual growth.

6.3.2   A ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle

According to Cowan (2000:1), one of the fundamental concepts within practical theology is to contribute to the world's becoming what God intended it should be. Engaging a specific context with this concept involves providing a ministry model for *transforming the present situation into the preferred scenario* (Song and Woodbridge 2007). The objective of the ministry model (the new *praxis*) offered in this chapter is to facilitate the transformation of the present situation—the lack of spiritual growth among parishioners at Harvest Hills Church—into the preferred scenario where parishioners are experiencing spiritual growth and where a Christian lifestyle is promoted and encouraged. The ministry model utilises five

components for promoting a Christian lifestyle and facilitating spiritual growth among the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church.

6.3.2.1   Preaching

The first component of the ministry model focuses on the use of biblical preaching as a means of promoting a Christian lifestyle and encouraging spiritual growth. According to Hughes (1989:83), Spirit-inspired preaching, points people to God, subsequently encouraging them to a deeper level of Christian living. This component will utilise two series of sermons to emphasise the importance of the following areas: 1) ethical issues, and 2) a challenge to holy living.

6.3.2.1.1   Biblical sermons on ethical issues

The first three-part sermon series of the ministry model is an adaptation of Bucknell's (2008) critique of Christ's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7. The three sermons present the basic principles of the ethics of Jesus. Each sermon concludes with a set of questions for reflection and discussion.

6.3.2.1.1.1   Establishing new standards (Sermon 1)

The title of the first sermon is *Establishing new standards*, taken from Matthew 5:1-16. Bucknell (2008) asserts that in this passage Jesus presents the eight founding principles of God's kingdom. When appropriated, these principles (beatitudes) allow God's people, as salt and light, to have a powerful ethical influence upon culture.

I.   Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)
   A.   The poor in spirit (5:3)
   B.   The mourners (5:4)
   C.   The meek (5:5)
   D.   The spiritually hungry (5:6)
   E.   The merciful (5:7)

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   F. The pure in heart (5:8)

   G. The peacemakers (5:9)

   H. The persecuted (5:10-12)

 II. Salt (Matthew 5:13)

   A. The character of salt (5:13)

   B. The purpose of salt (5:13)

   C. The danger of empty ethics (5:13)

 III. Light (Matthew 5:14-16)

   A. The character of light (5:14)

   B. The place of light (5:15)

   C. The purpose of light (5:16)

Sermon 1: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Dray (2004) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Sermon 1. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1) What do these verses teach me about being a disciple of Christ?

(2) Can you explain the purpose of the beatitudes?

(3) There is much talk in the church today about celebration (a happy time). But people should be saddened about sin too. How can both exist in the life of a believer?

(4) Which of the beatitudes is most needed in your personal life?

(5) What effect should humble people have on the church and on the world? There are people who live for God. What effect should the lives of godly people have on the church and on the world?

(6) How can the attitude of the peacemaker facilitate spiritual growth?

(7) Non-Christians notice the lives of believers. How can application of the beatitudes assist believers in leading non-Christians to Christ?

6.3.2.1.1.2 Emphasising scriptural foundations (Sermon 2)

The second sermon, entitled *Emphasising Scriptural foundations*, highlights Matthew 5:17-48. In this passage, according to Bucknell (2008), Jesus declares that His teachings are founded upon the truth of God's Word. This sermon calls attention to the foundational principles for ethical decision-making.

I.   Proclaiming Christ as truth (Matthew 5:17-20)
     A.   Christ, the fulfilment of the law (5:17-18)
     B.   Law and obedience (5:19)
     C.   Christ our righteousness (5:20)
II.   Persistently correcting untrue beliefs (Matthew 5:21-48)
     A.   Murder - Anger (5:21-26)
     B.   Adultery - Lust (5:27-30)
     C.   Divorce - Covenant breaker (5:31-32)
     D.   Oaths - Lack of Integrity (5:33-37)
     E.   Retaliation - Bitterness (5:38-42)
     F.   Relationships - Self-focused (5:43-48)

Sermon 2: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Dray (2004) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Sermon 2. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   Do you have the same love for the Old Testament as Jesus did?
(2)   Should Christians teach the laws of the Old Testament or Jesus' way of life and behaviour?
(3)   Is there anyone for whom you feel extreme anger? If so, how can this be resolved?

(4)   It is very important that there should not be conflict between believers. Does this mean that believers must always agree on everything?

(5)   Do you ever consider engaging in wrong behavioural practices? If so, do you enjoy doing this? How do you think Jesus feels about it? What can you do to improve things?

(6)   Should a Christian ever tell a lie? Is there any situation where it might be acceptable to tell a lie?

(7)   A thief steals some important equipment from the church. Should the people of the church forgive him? Should they call the police? Or should they do both?

6.3.2.1.1.3   Explaining right living (Sermon 3)

The third sermon, entitled *Explaining right living*, emphasises Matthew chapters 6 and 7. Bucknell (2008) observes that in this passage Jesus uncovers false lifestyles so that His disciples will be shielded from them. The sermon presents concepts for the life application of Christian ethics.

I.   Distinguishing motivations (Matthew 6:1-18)
        A.   Giving (6:1-4)
        B.   Praying (6:5-15)
        C.   Fasting (6:16-18)
II.   Discerning hearts (Matthew 6:19-34)
        A.   Treasures (6:19-23)
        B.   Anxieties (6:24-34)
III.   Discriminating attitudes (Matthew 7:1-12)
        A.   Critical (7:1-5)
        B.   Gracious (7:6-12)

     IV.   Determining mindsets (Matthew 7:13-29)

          A.   Decisions (7:13-14)

          B.   Tests (7:15-23)

          C.   Foundations (7:24-29)

Sermon 3: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Dray (2004) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Sermon 3. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   Think about the times when you pray for something. Do you really want God to answer you? If God does answer your requests, what changes will need to occur?

(2)   What are God's ambitions for you? Are you following them?

(3)   What do you think about discipline? Is discipline important?

(4)   What place should fasting have in today's church? What might fasting include, in addition to not eating?

(5)   Some Christians tend to worry more than others? Would that help them? How can Christians help each other in this matter?

(6)   Teaching in some churches today may be sincere, but false. What dangers are there in churches like this?

(7)   Someone might say that he or she is a Christian, but how could you know if that claim is true?

(8)   Someone might say, "Jesus was a great moral teacher, but nothing more." How would you respond to this person?

6.3.2.1.2   Biblical sermons that challenge to holy living

According to Hughes (1989:125), holiness is not merely a doctrine to believe; it is a life to live. Both the Old and New Testaments mandate holy living for the follower of God. *Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do* (I Peter 1:15, NIV).

This mandate provides the basis for the second three-part sermon series of the ministry model, designed to promote holiness of life among the parishioners of Harvest Hills Church. Each sermon concludes with a set of questions for reflection and discussion.

6.3.2.1.2.1   The call to holy living (Sermon 1)

Thomas (1996:139) writes that the presence of sin in the body of Christ is a serious matter. Scripture validates this statement by calling the believer to holiness of life. The first sermon is entitled, *The call to holy living*. It is developed from Romans 12:1 (NIV), where Paul presents the principle of complete surrender and yielding to God for the purpose of living a consecrated lifestyle.

     I.   The challenge (Present your body)

          A.   Present: To place at one's disposal

          B.   Body: The essence of one's person

     II.   The cause (By the mercies of God)

     III.   The consecration (A living sacrifice)

          A.   A living sacrifice is on the altar of God in every context

          B.   A living sacrifice is a constant sacrifice

          C.   A living sacrifice surrenders its desires to God

          D.   A living sacrifice is devoted to serving God

     IV.   The conditions (Holy and acceptable to God)

          A.   Holy: Something set apart

          B.   Acceptable: Well pleasing and satisfying

Sermon 1: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from *The cleansed life* (Campus Crusade for Christ 2007) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Sermon 1. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1) What characterises a life that is out of fellowship with God?

(2) The call to holy living is the call to separate oneself from sinful living. What is the result of sin in one's life?

(3) Has sin in your life ever affected your relationship with God?

(4) Ask God to reveal any areas of sinful practice or behaviour in your life that would displease him. How will you respond to anything that breaks fellowship with God?

(5) In what ways can you offer yourself as a living sacrifice to God?

(6) Does God require holy living from all Christians, or only those serving in positions of leadership and influence?

(7) How can a godly lifestyle facilitate leading others to Christ?

6.3.2.1.2.2 The commitment to holy living (Sermon 2)

Romans 12:2 (NIV) provides the basis for the second sermon entitled, *The commitment to holy living*. The sermon is an adaptation of Carr's (2003) treatment of Romans 12:1-2. In this passage Paul cautions the believer regarding conformity to the world system. He then transitions to the mandate of being transformed into the image of Christ.

    I.   Conformed
        A.   The world's model
        B.   The world's morals
        C.   The world's music
        D.   The world's materialism
    II.   Transformed
        A.   The sensual
        B.   The soul (Intellect and emotions)
        C.   The spiritual

III.   God's will

    A.   It is pleasant

    B.   It is perfect

    C.   It is proven

Sermon 2: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from *Victorious in spiritual warfare* (Campus Crusade for Christ 2007) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Sermon 2. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   Sin is the result of disobedience. It gives Satan a stronghold in one's life. Have you confessed all known sin in your life?

(2)   Paul warns of conformity to the world. Have you centred your affections on Christ and surrendered to his Lordship?

(3)   A commitment to holy living requires an act of one's will. Have you, through an act of your will by faith, been made free in Christ?

(4)   The Holy Spirit empowers one for holy living. Are you walking in the Spirit, living in the Spirit, and asking to be filled with the Spirit on a daily basis?

(5)   Understanding God's Word is crucial for holy living. Are you studying God's inspired Word every day?

(6)   Sincere prayer is essential for holy living. Are you experiencing daily the power of prayer?

(7)   God-given faith allows one to maintain one's commitment to holy living. Are you daily living by faith?

6.3.2.1.2.3   The criteria for holy living (Sermon 3)

The final sermon in this three-part series is entitled, *The criteria for holy living*. The sermon is an adaptation of Willmington's (1999:734) review of I Peter 2, where guidelines are provided for practical decision-making regarding holy living.

I.   The renouncing (I Peter 2:1-3, 11)

    A.   What we are to renounce (2:1, 11b)

    B.   What we are to receive (2:2-3)

II.   The relationships (I Peter 2:4-12)

    A.   Christians defined (2:5, 9a, 10-11a)

    B.   Christ defined (2:4, 6-8, 9b, 12)

III.   The respect (I Peter 2:13-20)

    A.   Civil authorities (2:13-16)

    B.   Employers (2:18-20)

    C.   Everyone (2:17)

IV.   The role model (I Peter 2:21-25)

    A.   Who He is (2:21-22)

    B.   What He did (2:23-24a)

    C.   Why He did it (2:24b-25)

Sermon 3: Questions for reflection and discussion

All decisions regarding lifestyle and behavioural issues should be based on biblical principles. To facilitate holy living the following questions adapted from Bratcher (2006) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Sermon 3. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   Who is the model for all your decision-making?

(2)   Will this decision compromise your faith and commitment to God?

(3)   All decisions have consequences. Will this decision ultimately bring glory to God?

(4)   How will this decision affect others?

(5)   Is this decision fair to everyone involved?

(6)   How will this decision affect your standard of integrity?

(7)   Will this decision enable you to live a lifestyle that pleases God?

6.3.2.2   Teaching

The second component of the ministry model involves two teaching programmes, the first comprised of seven sessions, the second comprised of three sessions, both designed to emphasise the correlation between belief and behaviour, especially as it relates to a Christian lifestyle.

6.3.2.2.1   Teaching on the Practical Commitments document

The Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006:74-81) provides biblical guidelines for practical Christian living. The *Practical Commitments* document is not an attempt to legislate moral conduct or behaviour, nor does it constitute an exhaustive list of ethical guidelines. Rather, the guidelines proposed in the document offer parameters for a lifestyle based on a biblical ethic. The first teaching programme is comprised of seven sessions, with each highlighting one area of emphasis from the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document. Each area contains three sub-divisions that provide scriptural and explanatory notation, which will comprise the lecture outline for each session. The lecture, class interaction, dialogue and challenge for application will all be derived from the lecture outline for each session.

6.3.2.2.1.1   Spiritual example (Session 1)

The Church of God's *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006:74-76) provides the following scriptural guidelines on "spiritual example" for practical Christian living:

> We will demonstrate our commitment to Christ through our practice of the spiritual disciplines; we will demonstrate our commitment to the body of Christ through our loyalty to God and commitment to His church; and we will demonstrate our commitment to Christ through our being good stewards.

The first session of the series on *Practical Commitments* deals with the following topics:

I.   Practice of spiritual disciplines
      Spiritual disciplines involve such practices as prayer, praise, worship, confession, fasting, meditation and study (Matthew 6:5-15; James 5:13-18).

II.   Loyalty to God and commitment to the church
      Christian discipleship calls for the fulfilment of our duties to the body of Christ. We are to unite regularly with other members of the church for the purpose of magnifying God and hearing His Word (Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:25).

III. Being good stewards
      In the Scriptures, thrift and simplicity are honoured, but waste and ostentation are solemnly prohibited (Matthew 6:19-23).

Session 1: Questions for reflection and discussion
The following questions adapted from Lemons (1988:28-29) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 1. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   According to I Timothy 4:12 (NIV), in what specific ways did Paul instruct Timothy to be a spiritual example?

(2)   What biblical guidelines should be followed in order to promote being a spiritual example?

(3)   Does God require all Christians to be a spiritual example, or only those serving in leadership?

(4)   Does each Christian have a responsibility to his or her fellow believers?

(5)   As a basis for spiritual example, what strengths and weaknesses do you see in your personal life?

(6)   Is faithfulness in church attendance important to one's spiritual example?

(7)   How does one's spiritual example or lack thereof impact one's capacity to lead others to Christ?

6.3.2.2.1.2 Moral purity (Session 2)

The Church of God's *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006:76) provides the following scriptural guidelines on "moral purity" for practical Christian living:

> We will engage in those activities which glorify God in our body and which avoid the fulfilment of the lust of the flesh. We will read, watch and listen to those things, which are of positive benefit to our spiritual well being.

The second session of the series on *Practical Commitments* deals with the following topics:

I.   Glorifying God in our body
       Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are to glorify God in our body (Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31).

II.   Reading, watching and listening
       The literature we read, the programmes we watch and the music we listen to profoundly affect the way we feel, think and behave. It is imperative, then, that the Christian read, watch and listen to those things, which inspire and challenge to a higher plane of living (Romans 13:14; Philippians 4:8).

III.   Benefiting spiritual well-being

The use of leisure time in the life of a Christian should be characterised by those activities, which edify both the individual and the body of Christ (Romans 6:13; I Corinthians 10:31-32).

Session 2: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Wilson (1988:43) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 2. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   What relationship do you see between the current moral climate and the contemporary attitude regarding morality?

(2)   To what extent, if any, does the current moral climate affect the lives of Christians?

(3)   What do you see as the most serious consequences of the declining moral standards? Why?

(4)   How would you constructively address the problem(s) identified in question number 3?

(5)   Why is it important to have a correct understanding of moral purity?

(6)   What relationship do you see between presence of the people of God in the world and maintaining biblical standards of moral purity?

(7)   What should be the Christian's primary concern while living in the world?

6.3.2.2.1.3 Personal integrity (Session 3)

The Church of God's *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006:77) provides the following scriptural guidelines on "personal integrity" for practical Christian living:

We will live in a manner that inspires trust and confidence, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and seeking to manifest the character of Christ in all our behaviour.

The third session of the series on *Practical Commitments* deals with the following topics:

I.   Trust and confidence

A Christian should be trustworthy, dependable and a person of his word (Matthew 5:37; I Peter 2:11-12).

II.   Fruit of the Spirit

If we live in the Spirit, we will manifest the attitudes and actions of the Spirit and will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:22-25).

III.   Character of Christ

Love for others is the hallmark of the Christ-life (I John 4:7-11).

Session 3: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Bishop (1988:61-62) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 3. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   What is the biblical definition of personal integrity?

(2)   Why is personal integrity essential for personal wholeness?

(3)   Why is personal integrity dependent upon true Christ-likeness?

(4)   How does one become Christ-like?

(5)   Why is it impossible to have wholesome relationships with other people without personal integrity?

(6)   What are some examples of the kinds of problems Christians, who try to maintain personal integrity, may encounter in the workplace?

(7) How does personal integrity impact one's capacity to effectively evangelise the lost?

6.3.2.2.1.4 Family responsibility (Session 4)

The Church of God's *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006:77-78) provides the following scriptural guidelines on "family responsibilities" for practical Christian living:

> We will give priority to fulfilling family responsibilities, to preserving the sanctity of marriage and to maintaining divine order in the home.

The fourth session of the series on *Practical Commitments* deals with the following topics:

I.   Priority of the family
     The family is the basic unit of human relationship and as such is foundational to both society and the church (Genesis 2:18-24).

II. Sanctity of marriage
     Marriage is ordained of God and is a spiritual union, in which a man and a woman are joined by God (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:7).

III. Divine order in the home
     When God created man, He created them male and female. He gave them distinctly different characteristics and responsibilities (Genesis 1:27; 3:16-19; I Corinthians 11: 14-15; I Peter 3:1-7).

Session 4: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Culpepper (1988:85-86) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 4. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1) From the biblical account of creation, what are some of the major points we should understand regarding the family?

(2) What are the basic biblical reasons for marriage?

(3) Give some biblical reasons why one should regard the family as God's most fundamental institution?

(4) What implications does the Incarnation have for the family?

(5) What is the relationship between authority and submission?

(6) Define biblical submission?

(7) In what ways, if any, can the family impact the church?

6.3.2.2.1.5 Behavioural temperance (Session 5)

The Church of God's *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006:78-79) provides the following scriptural guidelines on "behavioural temperance" for practical Christian living:

> We will practise temperance in behaviour and will abstain from activities and attitudes which are offensive or which lead to addiction or enslavement.

The fifth session of the series on *Practical Commitments* deals with the following topics:

I. Temperance

One of the cardinal Christian virtues is self-control (Titus 1:8).

II. Offensive behaviour

The Bible speaks clearly that we are to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others as a demonstration of our love (Philippians 2:3-5).

III. Addiction and enslavement

One of the primary benefits of our liberty in Christ is freedom from the domination of negative forces (John 8:32, 36; Romans 6:14; 8:2).

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The following questions adapted from Atkinson (1988:108-109) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 5. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   What is the relationship between self-control and Christian discipleship?

(2)   Why is a disciplined attitude more important to God than one's natural or acquired abilities?

(3)   How does one maintain a disciplined attitude?

(4)   Why should the Christian avoid words and conduct that are offensive to other people?

(5)   What common relationship do you see between gluttony, gambling and the use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco?

(6)   How does drug addiction or alcoholism make it impossible to live under the complete Lordship of Christ?

(7)   According to Romans 12:1-2 (NIV), what is the biblical answer for all addictions, enslavements and sinful practices?

6.3.2.2.1.6   Modest appearance (Session 6)

The Church of God's *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006:79-80) provides the following scriptural guidelines on "modest appearance" for practical Christian living:

> We will demonstrate the scriptural principle of modesty by appearing and dressing in a manner that will enhance our Christian testimony and will avoid pride, elaborateness or sensuality.

The sixth session of the series on *Practical Commitments* deals with the following topics:

I. Modesty

Modesty is an inner spiritual grace that recoils from anything unseemly and impure, is chaste in thought and conduct, and is free of crudeness and indecency in dress and behaviour (I Timothy 2:9).

II. Appearance and dress

Our life, character and self-image are reflected by our apparel and mode of dress (Romans 12:2; I Thessalonians 5:22-23).

III. Pride, elaborateness, sensuality

As godly people we are to avoid dressing in a manner that encourages immoral thoughts, attitudes and lifestyles (Galatians 5:13-21; I Peter 2:11).

Session 6: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Land (1988:136-137) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 6. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1) What is the biblical concept of modesty?
(2) What fundamental relationship does the concept of modesty have with the Christian lifestyle?
(3) What attitudes are prevalent in the church regarding modest appearance and the social trends of contemporary culture?
(4) What is the biblical position, if any, regarding the use of cosmetics, jewellery and other forms of external adornment?
(5) What is the biblical position on the clothing styles of the Christian?
(6) How should the Christian determine his or her mode of dress?

(7)   What impact, if any, does the concept of modesty have on the mission of the church in the world?

6.3.2.2.1.7   Social obligation (Session 7)

The Church of God's *Practical Commitments* document (*Church of God minutes* 2006:80-81) provides the following scriptural guidelines on "social obligation" for practical Christian living:

> It should be our objective to fulfil our obligations to society by being good citizens, by correcting social injustices, and by protecting the sanctity of life.

The seventh session of the series on *Practical Commitments* deals with the following topics:

I.   Being good citizens
        Obedience to God requires us to act in a responsible manner as citizens of our country (Mark 12:13-17; Romans 13:1-7).

II.   Correcting social injustices
        Recognition of the equal worth of all men in the sight of God should compel us to take steps to improve the situation of those who are underprivileged, neglected, hungry, homeless and victimised by prejudice, persecution and oppression (Matthew 22:39; Romans 13:8-10; I John 3:17).

III.   Protecting the sanctity of life
        Since God alone confers life, we are responsible to God to care for our physical life and that of others. Since God alone confers life, God alone must decide when it is to be ended (Genesis 1:1-31; Psalm 31:14-15).

The following questions adapted from Duncan (1988:155) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 7. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1) Explain why Christians do not have to make a choice between evangelism and social ministry, but should choose to engage in both?

(2) From a biblical standpoint, how can one justify that believers have a social obligation to fulfil?

(3) Should Christians be concerned about global warfare?

(4) In what kind of situations, if any, would non-violent civil disobedience be the right course of action for a Christian?

(5) What are some specific ways in which Christians should be more actively involved in pursuing righteousness, justice and equity for all persons?

(6) What is the church called to do in the midst of the world in terms of its social obligations?

(7) How might the answer to question number 6 help the church to fulfil its mission of preaching the gospel?

6.3.2.2.2   Teaching on the nature and dangers of the *isms*

The second teaching programme is comprised of three sessions designed to address the myriad *isms* that impact the belief and behaviour of believers. Each session concludes with questions for reflection and discussion.

6.3.2.2.2.1 A biblical worldview (Session 1)

According to Barna (1998:144), a worldview provides a mental filter that influences everything related to one's perspective on life, truth and meaning. For this reason Session 1 draws attention to the vital importance of a biblical worldview.

I. A worldview defined

II. A modern worldview defined

III. A post-modern worldview defined

IV. A biblical worldview defined

V. Why a biblical worldview matters

Session 1: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Barna (2003:2-8) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 1. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1) What is truth?

(2) Can you define a biblical worldview?

(3) Do we really need a biblical worldview?

(4) Are people held accountable for their worldview?

(5) Does a biblical worldview influence one's belief system?

(6) How does a biblical worldview affect one's behaviour and lifestyle?

(7) How can a biblical worldview facilitate winning the lost to Christ?

6.3.2.2.2.2 Secular worldviews examined, part 1 (Session 2)

Warren (2007) writes that worldviews have consequences and that our culture is daily affected and influenced by them. For this reason Sessions 2 and 3 draw attention to six major worldviews and their negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church.

I. Materialism

The one with the most toys wins! The only thing that really matters in life is acquiring things. Life's highest values lie in material well-being and the things I possess!

II.   Individualism

I've got to think of me first! A self-centred, individualistic way of life that says one should ignore the community and other people, because all values and rights originate in the individual.

III.   Hedonism

Do what feels good! The ultimate goal and objective in life is happiness and pleasure, to feel good, be comfortable, have fun and be entertained.

Session 2: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Sire (1988:17) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 2. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   Is it true that only material objects exist?

(2)   If only material objects exist, how does one explain human nature?

(3)   What happens to a person's body (material) and soul (spiritual) at death?

(4)   Do all values and rights originate in the individual? If not, how does one determine right and wrong?

(5)   Is the pursuit of happiness and pleasure the ultimate goal in life? If not, what is the ultimate goal in life?

(6)   How does one make sense of all the pain and suffering in the world?

(7)   What is the meaning of human history?

6.3.2.2.2.3 Secular worldviews examined, part 2 (Session 3)

Sessions 3 concludes with an assessment of six major worldviews and their negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church.

I.   Humanism

You are your own God! A special value is assigned to human beings and their activities and achievements. Because life is centred on human values, humanism rejects the need for God.

II.   Pragmatism

Whatever works for you! It doesn't matter if it's wrong or right or whether or not it hurts anybody. Everything in life is determined by its practicality.

III.   Atheism

God doesn't exist! A rejection of belief in God. Because God does not exist, I am an accident of nature and my life has no value, meaning or purpose.

Session 3: Questions for reflection and discussion

The following questions adapted from Davis (2006) provide guidelines for reflection and discussion of Session 3. Additional questions may be added according to individual needs.

(1)   Are human beings any different than animals? If so, what special value does the Bible assign to human beings?

(2)   Does man have the capacity to build a worthwhile life for himself and his fellows here and now without depending on God?

(3)   What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? What is my purpose?

(4)   Is everything in life determined by its practicality? Does the situation always determine what is right or wrong?

(5)   Is it possible to make moral decisions apart from the Bible? What makes the Bible more valid than other religious writings?

(6)   What are the classic arguments for the existence of God? What makes God more valid than all other gods? Can one personally know and relate to God?

(7) How can an understanding of secular worldviews enable the Christian to effectively win the lost to Christ?

6.3.2.3   Fellowship

The third component of the ministry model utilises the biblical aspect of fellowship (*koinonia*), especially small groups, to accomplish the objective: to facilitate and promote the Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth. According to Danker (2000:552-553), Biblical *koinonia* is defined by the following:

(1) A close association involving mutual interests and sharing (I Corinthians 1:9; Acts 2:42, NIV)

(2) An attitude of goodwill that manifests an interest in a close relationship (Hebrews 13:16; II Corinthians 9:13, NIV)

(3) A sign of fellowship or proof of brotherly unity (Romans 15:26, NIV)

(4) Participation and sharing (Philemon 6; Philippians 3:10, NIV)

Using the above definitions as the biblical basis of fellowship and small groups as the methodology, this component of the ministry model has two objectives: 1) to promote spiritual growth in the Christian life, and 2) to promote accountability.

6.3.2.3.1   Facilitating spiritual growth in the Christian life though fellowship

The use of small groups to facilitate intimacy, interaction and instruction is fundamentally biblical (Matthew 5: 14-16; John 4:34-38; 6:43-45, NIV). According to Krejcir (2004b), small groups are designed to,

> meet the deepest relational and learning needs of the congregation. Small groups can help provide the framework for people to be challenged to worship God with joy, passion, and conviction by learning whom they are in Christ so they can develop the trusting faith in Jesus as Saviour and LORD. We will

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be better able to build Christ-centred friendships, and then be equipping others to impact the world—all for our Lord's Glory. Thus … we will have a life that is triumphant and joyful, fulfilling and exciting, and rewarding in that we become the blessed to be a blessing to those around us.

This component of the ministry model utilises small groups (groups of 8-12 in number) to foster both understanding and application of biblical passages relating to the Christian lifestyle. The small groups meet once per week for thirteen weeks. Each session is 1½-hours in duration, using the following adaptation of Krejcir's (2004b) model as its format:

I. Prayer

II. Read the biblical passage

    A. Preselected passages relating to the Christian life

    B. One passage per week

III. Ruminate on the passage

    A. What does it say?

    B. What does it mean?

    C. What is God telling me?

    D. How can I be changed so I can learn and grow?

III. Reflection

    A. Listen to each member of the group

    B. The group is not about looking good, but learning to be good

IV. Refocus

    A. The key to spiritual growth is the desire to grow

    B. How can this passage change me?

V. Resources

    A. Listening is essential

B.　　Allow gentle dialogue
　　VII.　Prayer

6.3.2.3.2　Promoting accountability

The second objective of this component of the ministry model is to foster accountability among the people of God for the purpose of promoting spiritual growth. Accountability is a biblical concept promoted in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Proverbs 25:12; 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:8-12; Romans 14: 13-23; Hebrews 3:13, NIV). According to Krejcir (2004a), accountability

> allows us to be answerable to one another, with the focus on improving our key relationships … Accountability will also enhance our integrity, maturity, character relationships in general, and our growth in Christ.

Each member of the small group is asked to choose an accountability partner, one in whom he or she feels comfortable for the purpose of sharing in the process of spiritual growth. The accountability partners are encouraged to communicate once per week, preferably in person, for the purpose of fostering accountability in the process of spiritual growth. If person-to-person meetings are not possible, e-mail or phone contact is encouraged. The following questions, adapted from Krejcir's (2004a) model, provide guidelines for the accountability sessions. Additional questions may be added according to the individual needs of the persons involved.

　　(1)　What has your week been like?
　　(2)　Are there specific situations that you are dealing with?
　　(3)　What is God doing in your life now?
　　(4)　What is preventing Him from working in you?
　　(5)　How is your Bible reading and study going?
　　(6)　How is Satan trying to work in your life?

(7)   What temptations/sins/habits are you dealing with? How are you going to resolve them?

6.3.2.4   Service

The fourth component of the ministry model focuses on service, that is, obedience to the scriptural mandate regarding personal involvement in some aspect of ministry (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV). The objective of service is to promote spiritual growth in the life of the believer as a result of such obedience (Romans 6:16, 19, 22, NIV). To facilitate this objective the parishioners of Harvest Hills Church will be asked to participate in the following areas: 1) service within the church, and 2) service outside the church.

6.3.2.4.1 Promoting the Christian life through service within the church

Each parishioner will be asked to choose one area of service and commit to serve within that area for a period of one month. Following is a list of possible areas of service:

(1)   Library
(2)   Office
(3)   Nursery
(4)   Media
(5)   Building and grounds maintenance
(6)   Custodial services
(7)   Bus and van ministry
(8)   Senior adult ministry
(9)   Youth ministry
(10)   Food and clothing pantry
(11)   Liturgy preparation
(12)   Music

Once an area of service is selected the parishioner will serve under the auspices of the ministry leader of the chosen area. Primary accountability within this component will be to the ministry leader who will serve as a mentor by providing the following:

    I.   A biblical basis for ministry in the chosen area
    II.   Practical hands-on instruction for effectively serving
    III.   Opportunities for service
    IV.   Feedback, interaction, dialogue and encouragement
    V.   Prayer

Through discipline, sacrifice and a spirit of humility, parishioners will be encouraged to assume the posture of a servant, thus exemplifying the model of Christ (John 13, NIV). Focusing on the needs of others within the family of faith will assist in engendering commitment and fostering spiritual growth.

6.3.2.4.2   Service in obedience to the Great Commission

The Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) challenges believers to *go and make disciples of all nations*. The implication of this mandate is *as you go participate in expanding the kingdom of God on earth*. This aspect of Christian service is personal in nature. Part of the mandate instruction, *as you go,* is fundamentally connected with one's individual context. The context of Harvest Hills Church and the American church at large is characterised by the following traits of post-modernism (See Chapter 4):

    (1)   Rejection of divine authority
    (2)   Religious relativism
    (3)   Moral instability
    (4)   Social and political fragmentation
    (5)   Pragmatism

Although the above traits negatively impact the context, they also provide the opportunity for participation in the Great Commission. Post-modern culture lends itself to the power of story - focusing on narrative presentations of faith (Kimball 2007). The parishioners of Harvest Hills Church will be encouraged to participate in the Great Commission using the narrative approach. This approach has its origin in the scriptural admonition to *always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have* (I Peter 3:15, NIV).

Using the *as you go* mandate as a reference point, parishioners will be encouraged to pray for and look for specific opportunities to share their story with unbelieving relatives, friends and acquaintances. An adaptation of the approach proposed by Mittelberg, Strobel and Hybels (2007:51-65) will be used. Parishioners will be encouraged to appropriate the following guidelines for sharing their story:

(1)   Take the initiative in the conversation

(2)   Talk to people one-on-one

(3)   Engage in dialogue rather than monologue

(4)   Present the story incrementally

(5)   Make the most of split-second opportunities.

(6)   Pray for the Holy Spirit to present opportunities

Three primary aspects of the narrative should be understood and utilised as the Holy Spirit provides opportunity for sharing.

(1)   Pre-conversion (Acts 26:4-11)

What was your early spiritual background, and how did it affect you as you grew up—your feelings, attitudes, actions, and relationships? What caused you to begin to consider following Christ? Share this with the person you are speaking with.

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(2) Conversion (Acts 26:12-18)

What realisation did you come to that finally motivated you to receive Christ? Specifically, *how* did you receive Christ? Share this with the person you are speaking with.

(3) Post-conversion (Acts 26:19-23)

How did your life begin to change after you trusted Christ? What other benefits have you experienced since becoming a Christian? Share this with the person you are speaking with.

Appropriating this aspect of the ministry model will ultimately strengthen each parishioner's commitment to Christ.

6.3.2.5 Worship

The fifth component of the ministry model involves utilising worship to facilitate the Christian lifestyle and promote spiritual growth. Worship from the heart relieves the stress of everyday life by replacing fear, doubt and hopelessness with faith, assurance and affirmation. This type of worship inevitably leads to spiritual growth, development and maturity in the life of the believer. The following criteria for authentic worship are instrumental in assessing this component of the ministry model (Barackman 1998:403):

(1) The examination of one's life for any known sin that needs to be dealt with through repentance and confession

(2) The giving of oneself to the Holy Spirit for his direction

(3) The expression of gratitude for the privilege of worshipping God

(4) The confidence that God will accept one's spiritual sacrifices

Using the above criteria this worship component focuses on two objectives: 1) consecration through worship in song, and 2) worship that promotes godly living.

6.3.2.5.1 Consecration to Christ through worship in song

The first objective of the worship component of the ministry model is to promote consecration to Christ by encouraging personal worship in song. This objective incorporates the following worship criteria of Barackman (1998:403): 1) expressions of gratitude for the privilege of worshiping God, and 2) confidence in God's acceptance of our spiritual sacrifices. Although many Christians participate in congregational singing, Eastman (2005:94) asserts that few have discovered the joy of one of the most neglected aspects of personal worship—singing alone in God's presence. This practice finds biblical precedent in Psalm 100:2 (NIV), *worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs*. As part of their daily devotional practice parishioners will be encouraged to incorporate singing unto the Lord as an act of worship. An adaptation of Eastman's (2005:96-101) model will be used to facilitate this objective:

Parishioners will be encouraged to set aside a particular time period each day for the purpose of personal worship in song. The following suggested guidelines will be promoted as a model to make worship in song meaningful and productive.

(1)   Pause in the devotional time to sing a specific song unto the Lord

(2)   Select a special theme for the song. The Psalms offer at least six distinct themes for singing unto the Lord

   1.   Songs of praise
         Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant (Psalm 135:3, NIV)

   2.   Songs of power and mercy
         I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble (Psalm 59:16, NIV)

   3.   Songs of thanksgiving
         Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving (Psalm 147:7, NIV)

4. Songs of God's name

I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving (Psalm 69:30, NIV)

5. Songs of God's word

Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge (Psalm 119:54, NIV)

6. Songs from the heart

I will sing a new song to you, O God (Psalm 144:9, NIV)

(3) Ask the Holy Spirit to create new melodies in your heart so your song is truly a *new song*

(4) Don't hesitate to sing songs of thanksgiving for specific blessings or victories you believe God has given or will give

(5) Suggested hymns that promote personal consecration to Christ

1. O Jesus, I have promised (Osbeck 2002:11)

O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end;
Be forever near me, my Master and my Friend.

2. I am thine, O Lord (Osbeck 2002:223)

I am thine, O Lord - I have heard thy voice, and it told thy love
to me; but I long to rise in the arms of faith and be closer
drawn to thee.

3. When I survey the wondrous cross (Osbeck 2002:103)

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of
Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt
on all my pride.

6.3.2.5.2   Worship that promotes commitment to godly living

The second objective of the worship component of the ministry model is to encourage worship that facilitates godly living. This objective incorporates the following worship criteria of Barackman (1998:403): 1) examination of one's life for any known sin that needs to be dealt with through repentance and confession, and

2) giving of oneself to the Holy Spirit for his direction. True worship, that is, worship that is biblically correct, cultivates godly living. The words of Psalm 15:1-5 (NIV) clearly support this thesis:

> *LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbour no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, who despises a vile man but honours those who fear the LORD, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.*

Since genuine worship has such a positive impact on one's behaviour and lifestyle, parishioners will be encouraged to implement the following practical guidelines (Perry 2008, adapted) to enhance worship:

(1)   Worship through prayer

Think about the issues you usually pray about. How much of your prayer life is about you and how much of it is about God? God wants us to be able to share everything that is going on in our life. But He also wants us to get to know Him better.

(2)   Develop a regular habit of reading the Bible

The Bible says we worship God "in spirit and in truth." How can we ever worship God without a clear understanding of who He is? Knowing the truth about God is essential to worship. Pay special attention to the book of Psalms.

(3)   Obey God

Christians need to build the habit of obedience into our lives. Take practical steps to see that this is a part of your life. Whenever you

sense God is speaking to you, make it a regular practice to respond immediately. Don't let procrastination weigh you down.

(4)   Tithe

The Bible teaches the important lesson that *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Matthew 6:21, NIV). God wants us to surrender our entire being to Him. One way to show your dedication is by making Him Lord of your pocketbook. If you are already a committed tither, look for missions' projects to give toward, in addition to your tithe.

(5)   Build deep relationships with other Christians

The Bible teaches that God designed us to live in community with other Christians. We bring God pleasure by getting to know others and being known by them.

(6)   Build into your life the attitude of thankfulness

This requires looking at the world through a different set of eyes. When we look through the lens of thankfulness, we see our lives as gifts from God. Develop your own spiritual exercise each morning of thanking God for all of the good things in your life.

(7)   Begin turning over to God areas of your life that you have never committed to Him. The heart of worship is total surrender to God. You might have been a follower of Jesus for years, but you still have areas of your life that you are holding back from Him. What are those areas? Do they honour God?

(8)   Live a life of purpose

God has a reason for your existence. In fact, He has five: fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism and worship. You please God when you live in step with His purpose.

Section 6.3.2 has presented the five components of the proposed ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle and facilitating spiritual growth among the

parishioners at Harvest Hills Church. In the next section attention will be given to a summary of the planned objectives of the ministry model.

6.3.3 <u>A summary of the planned objectives for the ministry model</u>

The title of this study indicates that the primary purpose of the proposed ministry model is to promote a Christian lifestyle and the spiritual growth of the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA. The primary purpose of the ministry model can be divided into the following three planned objectives, each building on the other:

(1)   A renewed commitment to pursue spiritual growth
(2)   A renewed emphasis to live a biblical lifestyle
(3)   A renewed focus on Christian ethics

6.3.3.1 Renewed commitment among parishioners to pursue spiritual growth

As cited in section 6.2, spiritual growth is facilitated when one submits to God's instructions as recorded in His Word (Barackman 1998:376). The first planned objective of the ministry model is that spiritual growth will be facilitated among the parishioners of Harvest Hills Church by implementing the following five components of the ministry model:

(1)   Preaching
(2)   Teaching
(3)   Service
(4)   Fellowship
(5)   Worship

Through the preaching and teaching of both God's Word and supplemental biblically-based teaching programmes, opportunities for service, fellowship and

worship, the ministry model promotes among parishioners a renewed commitment to move forward in the new *praxis* towards spiritual growth.

6.3.3.2   Renewed emphasis among parishioners to live a biblical lifestyle

The second planned objective of the ministry model is to facilitate renewed emphasis among parishioners to live a lifestyle based on biblical guidelines. Several components of the ministry model encourage such renewal. Significant portions of both the preaching and teaching components are directed at this objective by offering criteria to distinguish between worldly (carnal) and biblical (spiritual) lifestyles. The presentation of various worldviews and the highlighting of a biblical worldview facilitate discernment in this regard. Specific guidelines are presented, along with scriptural support of each that provides insight and instruction for living a biblical lifestyle. In addition to the preaching and teaching aspect of this outcome, opportunities for fellowship, service and worship are also instrumental in promoting a biblical lifestyle.

6.3.3.3   Renewed focus among parishioners on Christian ethics

The third planned objective of the ministry model is to renew among parishioners a focus on the importance of Christian ethics. Because of the myriad dilemmas confronting and challenging the validity of Christian ethics in the contemporary world, such a renewed focus is necessary. Several components of the ministry model promote a renewed focus in this area. The strong emphasis in the areas of preaching and teaching affirm that God's moral revelation and standard for living are revealed in the absolute truth of his Word. The source of this standard is the very nature of God, with humankind being the intended subject and recipient of God's nature. The end result of a renewed focus on Christian ethics is that when such occurs the Christian lifestyle is aligned with God's intended purpose, and ultimately, the glory of God is revealed.

6.4   Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to present a particular ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle and the spiritual growth of the parishioners at Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA. This ministry model is not presented as the only model for accomplishing the planned objectives, but as one possible model.

It is the intent of the researcher that this ministry model will facilitate within the specific context of the study—Harvest Hills Church—what Heitink (1993:6) calls *the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society*.

Based on the research conducted in this thesis: the theological and biblical foundations of Christian ethics detailed in Chapters 2 and 3, the general and specific contexts detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter has followed the logical sequence of engaging practical theology in terms of the Zerfass model by proposing a ministry model for obtaining desired outcomes – a new *praxis.*

Chapter 7
Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The research for this thesis involved a contextual study of a particular ministry. The demographic of the study was the American church at large—and specifically, Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA—within the context of contemporary American culture. The American church has undergone dramatic change during the past few decades. Such change has influenced the belief and behavioural patterns of American Christians, often producing what Gallup and Jones (2000:32) refer to as *moral laxness and spiritual aimlessness*. Contemporary American culture finds a parallel with ancient Israel as recorded in Judges 21:25 (NASB), *In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes*.

In Chapter 7 the researcher will attempt to offer a synthesis of the research by 1) summarising the research findings, 2) offering recommendations and 3) indicating how it makes a contribution to a specific area of practical theology.

7.2 Summary of research findings

The specific context of this study was Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA. An empirical survey was conducted among the parishioners of Harvest Hills Church to obtain data regarding the Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth issues. The purpose was to determine the need for a ministry model to promote a Christian lifestyle. To facilitate this purpose the survey attempted to:

  (1)   Determine the negative impact of the following six major worldviews on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the Church: Hedonism, Individualism, Pragmatism, Materialism, Humanism and Atheism.

(2) Identify key areas in the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) that parishioners of Harvest Hills Church regard as lacking in practical application.

(3) Investigate the main factors that hinder parishioners from implementing the key areas of the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document identified above.

The empirical research revealed the following findings (summarised) regarding the perception of parishioners at Harvest Hills Church concerning Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth issues:

(1) Each of the six major worldviews discussed in the survey was perceived as having a negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and the church, especially as it relates to Christian behaviour and lifestyle practices.

(2) Of the seven focus areas in the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document, the dominant areas perceived by parishioners as lacking in spiritual growth were: spiritual example, moral purity, personal integrity, behavioural temperance and social obligation.

(3) In the above-mentioned focus areas, parishioners indicated the following as perceived realities and hindrances to a Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth:

1. Lack of Christ-likeness
2. Lack of commitment to spiritual matters
3. Lack of involvement in ministry
4. The negative influence of media (television, movies, etc.)
5. The negative influence of the world and culture
6. Negative role models

7. Selfishness

8. Lack of discipline regarding personal behaviour

9. Lack of concern

10. Inconsistent lifestyles

7.3 Strategies and recommendations

This research also attempted to answer the following questions: 1) is there a need at Harvest Hills Church for a ministry model to promote a Christian lifestyle? and 2) if so, what type of ministry model would be effective? In an attempt to answer these questions the following strategies were utilised:

(1) A theological basis for Christian ethics was presented (Chapter 2)

(2) A biblical foundation for a Christian lifestyle was provided (Chapter 3)

(3) A contextual study of the American church in a post-modern society was presented (Chapter 4)

(4) An empirical survey was conducted at Harvest Hills Church (Chapter 5)

(5) A ministry model for Harvest Hills Church was proposed (Chapter 6)

Recommendations for promoting a Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth are too numerous to receive exhaustive treatment in a single study. However, based on the strategies listed above, the following summary of recommendations contained in this study regarding a proposed ministry model for promoting a Christian lifestyle (based on Christian ethics) at the Harvest Hills Church is presented:

(1) Recommendations regarding worldviews:

1. Develop and implement a teaching programme designed to address the myriad *isms* that impact the belief and behaviour of believers.

2. Incorporate within the teaching programme the importance of developing and maintaining a biblical worldview.

(2) Recommendations regarding the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007):

1. Develop and implement a teaching programme designed to emphasise the need for a correlation between belief and behaviour.

2. Utilise the Church of God *Practical Commitments* document (2007) as a basic model for promoting a Christian lifestyle.

(3) Recommendations regarding a Christian lifestyle:

1. Develop and implement a preaching series that emphasises the importance of the ethics of Jesus, as a guideline for a Christian lifestyle.

2. Develop and implement a preaching series that emphasizes the necessity and importance of holy living.

(4) Recommendations regarding spiritual growth:

1. Develop and implement the use of small groups to facilitate intimacy, interaction, instruction and accountability for spiritual growth.

2. Provide opportunities for service, both inside and outside the church, for the purpose of promoting spiritual growth.

3. Provide instruction and opportunities for worship that promotes godly living and spiritual growth.

To summarise, the goal of the above recommendations is three-fold: 1) to promote a renewed commitment to spiritual growth, 2) to promote a renewed emphasis on living a Christian lifestyle, and 3) to promote a renewed focus on Christian ethics.

7.4 The contribution of the findings to practical theology

Since recommendations for promoting a Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth are too numerous to be treated exhaustively in a single study, this thesis does not engage the whole scope of practical theology. The research for this thesis is but one facet of the whole. Although the study was confined to the limited context of Harvest Hills Church in Burlington, North Carolina, USA, the research also covered a literature review of the theological basis for Christian ethics, and the biblical foundations for a Christian lifestyle. Furthermore, the empirical survey affirmed the need for a ministry model to promote both a Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth among Christians. These findings logically fit within the parameters of practical theology. It is the intent and hope of the researcher that the findings of this research, the proposed ministry model, will promote a Christian lifestyle (based on Christian ethics), not only in the context of this study, but also in the larger Christian community.

7.5   Conclusion

As a Christian pastor, the researcher is very much concerned about the issues of a Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth. Paul's admonition to Timothy (I Timothy 4:12-16, NIV) has presented a personal challenge to facilitate the areas of a Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth at Harvest Hills Church:

> *Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

The researcher is of the opinion that upon implementation of the recommendations of this study, the proposed ministry model (the new *praxis*) will promote a Christian lifestyle and spiritual growth and thus enable the Harvest Hills Church to move forward in a positive direction.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to: 1) Investigate six (6) of the major worldviews in today's society and their negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and to the Church (especially as it affects the Christian's lifestyle); 2) Identify key areas (amongst the people) in your church, in which there is a lack of spiritual growth using the Church of God Practical Commitments document; and 3) Identify obstacles to spiritual growth and possible methods to promote spiritual growth.

Name (Optional): _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Marital status: _____

Current church involvement (Elder, Music, Youth, Etc.): _____

Years of church involvement: _____

Date questionnaire completed: _____

- The purpose of this questionnaire is to facilitate the implementation of a basic lifestyle model at Harvest Hills Church.
- Please complete the questionnaire as honestly as possible.
- If you wish to complete the questionnaire anonymously, do not include your name.
- Please note that your questionnaire will be held in strict confidence.
- Thank you for your participation in this questionnaire.

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. It is my prayer and desire that Harvest Hills Church will continue to grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Russell A. Morris
Senior Pastor

Questionnaire (Section 1): Six Major Worldviews in Today's Society

1. Purpose of Section 1
- The purpose of Section 1 is to investigate six (6) of the major worldviews in today's society and their negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and to the Church (especially as it affects the Christian's lifestyle).

2. Explanation of Worldview
- **A worldview** is a comprehensive conception of the world, that is, a way of perceiving the world as a whole.

3. Instructions for Completing Section 1
- Once you have examined the six major worldviews, please rate each worldview below on a scale of 1-100, in terms of (what you regard as) the greatness of its negative impact on the Christian's commitment to Christ and to the Church (especially as it affects the Christian's lifestyle). Simply place the appropriate number (from 1 to 100) in the appropriate box below (Scale: 1 being a *Very minor negative impact* and 100 being a *Major negative impact*).

Worldview	Definition	Rating of 1-100
1. Hedonism	**Do what feels good!** The ultimate goal and objective in life is happiness and pleasure, to feel good, be comfortable, have fun and be entertained.	
2. Individualism	**I've got to think of me first!** A self-centred, individualistic way of life that says that I should ignore the community and other people, because all values and rights originate in the individual.	
3. Pragmatism	**Whatever works for you!** It doesn't matter if it's wrong or right or whether or not it hurts anybody. Everything in life is determined by its practicality.	
4. Materialism	**The one with the most toys wins!** The only thing that really matters in life is acquiring things. Life's highest values lie in material wellbeing and the things I possess!	
5. Humanism	**You are your own God!** A special value is assigned to human beings and their activities and achievements. Because life is centred on human values, humanism rejects the need for God.	
6. Atheism	**God doesn't exist!** A rejection of belief in God. Because God does not exist, I am an accident of nature and my life has no value, meaning or purpose.	

Questionnaire (Section 2): Practical Commitments and Spiritual Growth

1. ## Purpose of Section 2
   - The purpose of Section 2 is to identify key areas (amongst the people) in your church, in which there is a lack of spiritual growth using the Church of God Practical Commitments document.

2. ## Explanation of the Practical Commitments
   - The Church of God Practical Commitments offer biblically based guidelines for practical Christian living.

3. ## Instructions for Completing Section 2
   - Once you have studied the explanations below, please select 4 out of the 7 Practical Commitments, which you regard as the main areas (amongst the people) in your church, in which there is a lack of spiritual growth. Simply place a check in the appropriate 4 boxes.

The Church of God Practical Commitments	Top 4
Practical Commitment 1: Spiritual Example We will demonstrate our commitment to Christ through our practice of the spiritual disciplines; we will demonstrate our commitment to the body of Christ through our loyalty to God and commitment to His church; and we will demonstrate our commitment to the work of Christ through our being good stewards.	
Practical Commitment 2: Moral Purity We will engage in those activities which glorify God in our body and which avoid the fulfilment of the lust of the flesh. We will read, watch and listen to those things, which are of positive benefit to our spiritual well being.	
Practical Commitment 3: Personal Integrity We will live in a manner that inspires trust and confidence, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and seeking to manifest the character of Christ in all our behaviour.	
Practical Commitment 4: Family Responsibility We will give priority to fulfilling family responsibilities, to preserving the sanctity of marriage and to maintaining divine order in the home.	
Practical Commitment 5: Behavioural Temperance We will practice temperance in behaviour and will abstain from activities and attitudes which are offensive to our fellowman or which lead to addiction or enslavement.	
Practical Commitment 6: Modest Appearance We will demonstrate the scriptural principle of modesty by appearing and dressing in a manner that will enhance our Christian testimony and will avoid pride, elaborateness or sensuality.	
Practical Commitment 7: Social Obligation It should be our objective to fulfil our obligations to society by being good citizens, by correcting social injustices, and by protecting the sanctity of life.	

Questionnaire (Section 3): Promoting Spiritual Growth

1. Purpose of Section 3:
- To identify obstacles to spiritual growth and possible methods to promote spiritual growth.

2. Instructions for Completing Section 3
- Once you have selected the 4 main Practical Commitments in Section 2 (in which there is a lack of spiritual growth), please place them in order (from 1-4) from the area with the *Greatest lack of spiritual growth* (Number 1) to the area with the *Fourth greatest lack of spiritual growth* (Number 4).
- In the <u>second</u> column, briefly elaborate in one or two sentences what you believe is the main obstacle to spiritual growth in this particular area.
- In the <u>third</u> column, make a brief suggestion regarding a possible method (biblical and/or practical) for promoting spiritual growth in this area.

Column 1 The four main Practical Commitments that are lacking in spiritual growth.	**Column 2** Briefly explain why you believe there is a lack of spiritual growth in this particular area. (Main obstacle to spiritual growth)	**Column 3** What would you suggest as a possible method for promoting spiritual growth in this area?
Example *Practical Commitment #1* *Spiritual Example*	***Example*** ** Hindrances, and the sin, which so easily entangles (Hebrews 12:1)* ** Conforming to this world (certain worldviews)* ** The bad example of certain TV characters*	***Example*** ** Lay aside these things, endurance, focus on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2)* ** Renewing of your mind (a new attitude)* ** Regular Bible reading and prayer*
Number 1 *Greatest lack of spiritual growth* Practical Commitment #		
Number 2 Practical Commitment #		
Number 3 Practical Commitment #		
Number 4 *Fourth greatest lack of spiritual growth* Practical Commitment #		

Appendix 2

Sample of the letter sent to all of the respondents

January 9, 2008

Charles Allen
3168 Shelly Graham Drive
Graham, NC 27253

Dear Charles:

Christian Greetings!

I am conducting research that will assist in the ministry goals of Harvest Hills Church. You are among the seventy-five (75) persons at Harvest Hills selected by random sampling to complete the enclosed questionnaire. The research will assist in developing an effective lifestyle model for parishioners of Harvest Hills Church.

Please know that your completed questionnaire is very important to the success of this research, therefore, your participation is greatly appreciated. When you have completed the questionnaire, please mail it back to me in the enclosed pre-stamped envelope, no later than Monday, January 21, 2008. This will allow approximately ten days for completion.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time and participation in completing this questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Russell A. Morris
Senior Pastor

RAM/bd

Enclosures

Appendix 3

Church of God *Practical Commitments*

http://www.churchofgod.org/about/practical_commitments.cfm

Spiritual Example
We will demonstrate our commitment to Christ through our practice of the spiritual disciplines; we will demonstrate our commitment to the body of Christ through our loyalty to God and commitment to His church; and we will demonstrate our commitment to the work of Christ through our being good stewards.

Moral Purity
We will engage in those activities which glorify God in our body and which avoid the fulfilment of the lust of the flesh. We will read, watch and listen to those things, which are of positive benefit to our spiritual well being.

Personal Integrity
We will live in a manner that inspires trust and confidence, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and seeking to manifest the character of Christ in all our behaviour.

Family Responsibility
We will give priority to fulfilling family responsibilities, to preserving the sanctity of marriage and to maintaining divine order in the home.

Behavioural Temperance
We will practice temperance in behaviour and will abstain from activities and attitudes which are offensive to our fellowman or which lead to addiction or enslavement.

Modest Appearance
We will demonstrate the scriptural principle of modesty by appearing and dressing in a manner that will enhance our Christian testimony and will avoid pride, elaborateness or sensuality.

Social Obligation
It should be our objective to fulfil our obligations to society by being good citizens, by correcting social injustices, and by protecting the sanctity of life.

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