

FUNDAMENTAL BAPTISTS

and
Quick

PRAYERISM



DAVID W. CLOUD

Fundamental Baptists and Quick Prayerism

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*Fundamental Baptists
and Quick Prayerism
David W. Cloud*

Introduction

In recent decades, a great error has swept through fundamental Baptist churches (though it is by no means limited to fundamental Baptists).

I call it QUICK PRAYERISM.

Quick Prayerism is an evangelistic methodology that is quick to get people to pray a sinner's prayer after a very shallow gospel presentation and usually without any hint of the necessity of repentance. It is quick to pronounce those people saved and give them "assurance" and to try to baptize them even if they *barely show any interest in Jesus Christ* and even if they give no biblical evidence of having been born again.

Quick Prayerism incorporates psychological salesmanship manipulation.

In Quick Prayerism, an empty "sinner's prayer" replaces Holy Spirit conviction and miraculous regeneration.

Quick Prayerism is characterized by soul winning reports that are grossly exaggerated, since the number of real conversions (as evidenced by changed lives) are minute compared to the overall statistics.

For example, Jack Hyles claimed that First Baptist Church of Hammond saw thousands saved every year he was there, amounting to something like three-quarters of a million souls won to Christ under his ministry through 2001. His successor and son-in-law, Jack Schaap, reported many thousands more saved (before he went to prison for molesting an underage girl). What is the reality as reflected in the active membership of the church? In the United States, a church's active membership is reflected pretty closely by its Wednesday evening crowd. A preacher friend who visited a mid-week service at First Baptist on March 14, 2012, told me that there were no more than 700 people in attendance.

Many of those would be Hyles-Anderson students who came there from other churches.

After allegedly winning nearly a million people to Christ, the church's faithful members could be counted in the mere hundreds.

That is Quick Prayerism.

We realize that not everyone that professes Christ will "pan out." There will be false professions in any ministry, but Quick Prayerism is characterized by the fact that *the vast majority* of its professions are empty.

And we are not talking about any sort of sinless perfection on the part of converts. We know that believers grow at different rates and exhibit different levels of discipleship and bring forth different levels of fruit. What we are warning about is a program that counts people as saved when there is ZERO evidence thereof, *zero* change, *zero* discipleship, *zero* fruit.

I call it "prayerism" because it focuses on a prayer. I call it "quick prayerism" because it specializes in quick presentations and quick decisions and an overall lack of biblical depth.

Jack Hyles was one of the greatest promoters of Quick Prayerism. He promoted it through his bus ministry, soul-winning courses, Pastor's Conferences, and books.

Hyle claimed that tens of thousands were saved every year he was in Hammond, though these numbers did not reflect any level of reality in the active church family.

If three-quarters of a million people had actually been saved at First Baptist over the years of Hyles' pastorate, as he claimed, that entire region would have been dramatically affected. The reality is that most of the numbers were empty professions, and the apostle Paul plainly said that a profession must have evidence. The following is an apt description of the majority of the products of Quick Prayerism:

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16).

The following are two of the many testimonies we could offer to illustrate the Quick Prayerism that was practiced under Hyles’ ministry:

“I was at Fairhaven Baptist Church and College (Chesterton, Indiana, graduated in Spring 2000), and I saw firsthand instances where people from Hyles’ school would come to where we had bus kids, go through the entire area, gimmick them to a Saturday ‘church party,’ and baptize them all to count them as ‘saved.’ It made me and my fellow bus workers very angry! Thankfully, they would then abandon them so that we could continue to take them to church and teach them the gospel of repentance and faith in Christ. There was one time that they did this in a project we picked kids up in, and they baptized practically everyone, except for one kid who we picked up regularly. We asked this kid why he did not get baptized and he told us that they had baptized him twice already and he did not want to be baptized again. He did not understand the gospel, so he was not born again. Anyway, I say all this to say that I am in agreement with you about the soul-damning results of Hyles-Anderson methodology and their anti-repentance theology.”

“I am also one of those converts of Jack Hyles’ bus ministry back in 1981. I was in the Navy stationed at Great Lakes NTC, when approached by two men from Hyles’ Church. They ‘whizzed’ me through the Scriptures and kept asking, ‘Do you believe?’ I said ‘Yes’ out of politeness, but it was all so fast. It seemed like we went through the salvation plan in less than three minutes, then all the sudden we were praying and I was told I was going to go to Heaven. Wow! I felt like I had been dragged to salvation. I had no clue what I had just agreed to! I even went to the church and was baptized

that Sunday. I don't ever remember saying or agreeing I should do this, but I found myself in this long line of men being baptized. I remember saying to myself, 'You better get baptized; you would not want to hurt anyone's feelings.' It was all at a very manic pace."

The statement, "It was all at a very manic pace," epitomizes Quick Prayerism.

Note, too, that the young Navy man wanted to be polite and didn't want to offend. An effective Quick Prayerism soul winner banks on the fact that a lot of people are "polite" and can be manipulated into praying a prayer.

In an online video of Hyles-Anderson preacher boys giving soul winning testimonies under the leadership of Jack Schaap, Hyles' son-in-law and successor, one young man told an amazing story. He and a fellow student decided to approach a Catholic school and witness to "kids on the playground." A Jesuit priest quickly stopped them, but after some time he and three other priests invited them to look over their facilities. As they did, one of the teachers, a nun, invited them into her class, and they "immediately started soul winning." The student continued, "Before it was all said and done with, all of the kids in the class, 21 of them, were saved, and also the teacher." Hearing this, the other men shouted and whistled, not asking how these Catholics understood the gospel so quickly and whether there was *any biblical evidence whatsoever* that they had actually "gotten saved."

Quick Prayerism has been promoted in countless churches through Hyles' Phoster Club, a women's soul winning program.

Consider Cindy Hyles Schaap, Hyles' daughter and the wife of Jack Schaap, a man who was personally trained by Hyles and who took the pastorate of First Baptist after Hyles died. There is a video online of Cindy giving her testimony about soul winning. She said that her parents allowed her to

start going on the teenage soul winning visitation when she was 11, and between then and graduation from high school she won 2,500 souls. Two thousand five hundred! Before graduating from high school! At the time she gave that testimony, she had won 5,000.

Another online testimony of Foster Club soul winners features an 81-year-old lady named Betsy. After only a few weeks she won 55 people to the Lord.

In another testimony, a Native American lady said that she had won 180 souls, including 70 Navaho Indians.

I read of a pastor who reported 4,000 professions in five years of ministry, but the church only grew from 98 to 100.

That is Quick Prayerism.

I read of a first-year missionary who reported over 738 professions of faith ... and 25 baptisms.

That is Quick Prayerism

One evangelist comments:

“How could you even pen those words without asking yourself if there isn’t something wrong with that picture? I seem to remember 3,000 saved at Pentecost, and 3,000 baptized! The most refreshing missionary that I have heard in a long time gave his update to our church recently. He has been in Poland for 14 years and to date knows of only five people who have been saved under his ministry. Just like at Pentecost, he only counts the ones who have been saved, baptized, and are in the church. Most of our ‘one, two, three, pray after me’ fellows would have dropped his support a long time ago! Myself, I would drop the guy with 738 saved and 25 baptized and shift the support to the fellow from Poland!”

An example of Quick Prayerism was communicated to me some time back by a pastor friend who had the following experience at a prominent independent Baptist church which operates a large Bible college. The soul winner in question is

a veteran Independent Baptist missionary to Japan, a man with significant influence in the Independent Baptist movement.

“We went out with their staff on Saturday morning for soul winning. We were immediately partnered up with some of the veterans. The first door we went to, we spoke to a friendly Catholic guy and to my surprise, the guy got ‘saved’ before my very eyes as ----- took him from a few scripture passages to the sinner’s prayer so smoothly that I was caught off guard. I caught myself and while ----- was recording this man’s contact details and writing it down, I asked the man whether (1) he believed that he was a good person and (2) that it is possible to go to Heaven by being a good person. This man who had just got ‘saved’ told me ‘YES.’ I looked around and the other two men beside me said nothing and did nothing. We went to a few more places and eventually reached a home with a Roman Catholic young lady who came to the door. She said she was a professing Christian. Even though she said that all churches were the same ----- gave her assurance of salvation by quoting 1 John 5:13.”

This methodology has spread throughout the world. In March 2018 I received the following testimony:

“Thank you for Way of Life. The article today (‘The History of How Evangelism was Corrupted Among Independent Baptists’) was excellent - so true and a great blessing. The article really hit home with me. For many years, I attended a church pastored by a Hyles-Anderson College grad, and it fits so perfectly what was described in the article. There WAS a ‘frenzy for bigness.’ ‘Soul winning’ was ALL and the pastor’s opinions were placed on the same level as Scripture. We were taught to be good ‘heaven salesmen’—selling heaven like some cheap reward for saying a prayer. It was always, ‘If you died today, are you 100% sure you’d go to heaven?’ And we didn’t take ‘yes’ for an answer.

We were basically taught that anyone who didn't attend our church probably really didn't know, so we should go through 'the plan' with them. And then the manipulation: we were told not to let our converts drive themselves to church. We were to pick them up. And call them Sat. night to remind them, and also call the Sunday morning. **We were to sit with them, and, at the invitation, tell them that WE wanted to go forward and ask them to go with us.** Then we would tell men at the front that this person was saved last week, and they would be told that they needed to get baptized. Thus, we had good numbers, but very, very few had the results spoken of in Acts 2:42. So few had any real change in their lives, so the next time we went by, they still weren't 100% sure, and they went through 'the plan' again. Questioning any of this [allegedly] revealed a rebel's criticizing heart. The so-called spiritual members didn't want to discuss the Bible or blessings from their Bible study ... they wanted to talk about how many hours they put in 'soul-winning' or how many they saw 'saved.' We also heavily went after children because they were so much easier to manipulate into saying prayers. We had scores of children 'saved.' Criticizing this brought sharp rebuke because 'a child has as much of a soul and needs salvation as much as an adult.' It is to the Lord's glory and honor that he opened my eyes to the man worship and cult-like atmosphere there."

The churches that have adopted this unscriptural method of evangelism have produced *millions* of false professions and have given a false hope to the same multitude. There are many churches that can show only a handful of new creatures in Christ for every hundred or even thousand converts they claim.

I have a friend who pastored a fundamental Baptist church in northern Indiana near First Baptist of Hammond. In 1980, a Hyles-Anderson student in his church obtained roughly

1,000 decision cards from First Baptist Church's visitation ministry. They diligently followed up on these individuals but were extremely disappointed to find that *not even one was interested in the things of Christ*. The batch of professions was entirely void of spiritual reality. This pastor testified to me that this opened his eyes to the danger of the Hyles approach to evangelism and underscored the duplicity of the reports that are published by First Baptist. I will not give his name, because I don't want him subjected to the carnal harassment to which I have been subjected; but I have it on record, and the Lord is witness.

Longview Baptist Temple in Longview, Texas, claimed on its website in 2000 that more than one million people had been won to Christ in 25 years. Yet on an average Wednesday evening service, which is the truest reflection an American church's active membership, you will only find a few hundred people in attendance. Literally hundreds of thousands of these souls that have been "won" are nowhere to be found.

When we were given the "decision" cards to follow up on a county fair ministry in Oklahoma in about 2000, of the hundreds of professions that were recorded we could not find *even one person* who gave any evidence of salvation or was even interested in attending church.

A pastor friend followed up on the more than 100 "salvation decisions" that were made at a county fair ministry in Kentucky in 2011, and he *did not find one soul who was even interested* enough in Christ to attend church.

Pastor Thomas Watson of Warren, Michigan, says that he practiced Quick Prayerism for years before repenting of it. He would ask people if they wanted to go to heaven when they died and when they indicated that they did, he would lead them in a sinner's prayer. During that time he led "hundreds" in a sinner's prayer, but he does not know of one person who showed evidence of salvation. The last time he did this, he was dealing with a young black man. He stood at

the man's door and led him in a sinner's prayer. After walking off the man's porch, he returned and called the man back to the door and asked him, "You just prayed a sinner's prayer. Be honest with me; do you believe anything has changed; do you believe you are saved?" The young man replied, "No, man, I just wanted you to leave."

Pastor Watson went soul winning with another preacher in those days and three teenage girls came to the door. They had been playing loud rock & roll but turned the music down before answering the door. One girl was standing in the doorway, and the other two were standing behind her. The preacher told them about hell and the judgment to come and then asked them if they wanted to go to heaven when they died. They said yes, and he said that he was going to pray and then he was going to lead them in a prayer. Pastor Watson kept his eyes open, and the girls were laughing and mocking the preacher who was praying. It was a big joke to them. As soon as the preacher finished, they shut the door and the music was immediately blaring again. When the preacher started rejoicing in his new converts, Pastor Thomas told him about the girls' actions during the prayer. The preacher was not shaken one bit, saying, "You will never convince me that they didn't get saved."

There is something wrong with this picture. It is a great confusion and a very serious error.

For years I have observed the sad fruit of this technique: multitudes of false professions, confusion about salvation, indifference to biblical truth, agnosticism, reprobate living, a weakening of the significance of church membership, lukewarm churches, neglect of church discipline, and blasphemy against God.

In many communities a large percentage of the population has prayed a sinner's prayer through the outreach of churches practicing Quick Prayerism, though vast numbers of these have never been born again and they are now almost inoculated to biblical salvation. When challenged about their

lifeless spiritual condition, they commonly reply, "I have done that," meaning they have gone through a Quick Prayerism Romans Road plan of salvation, prayed a sinner's prayer, and been given assurance of eternal life by the soul winner. Since they were not told that God requires that they repent, they are comfortable and self-assured that they have a ticket to heaven even though there has been no change.

Those who observe these things are left to think that salvation means little or nothing in relation to one's manner of life.

Another aspect to Quick Prayerism is the refusal to acknowledge that someone is not saved if there is no change. Practitioners of Quick Prayerism tend to justify the lack of change that is evident in the majority of their converts. In churches that practice Quick Prayerism, people tend to get upset if the reality of the "salvations" is questioned.

I met a missionary in England who told me that many people were "coming to Christ" through their evangelism outreach, but he also admitted that they weren't seeing much church growth. When I questioned the reality of the "decisions" he got upset and said that "we cannot know who is saved or lost."

Though we cannot know infallibly who is saved or lost, we do know that there will be clear evidence because the Bible plainly says so.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth no these commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

There is not one example in the New Testament of someone who was saved and whose life did not radically change.

My Personal Experience

I was saved at age 23 by God's grace in the summer of 1973 and soon joined a fundamental Baptist church. Having grown up Southern Baptist, I was overjoyed to find churches that took the Bible more seriously, that did not want to soft-sell God's requirements for Christian living, that were genuinely zealous for biblical truth and were willing to stand for the truth and AGAINST error.

I was devouring the Bible and had read the New Testament through three or four times the first few months after I was saved, and I knew that this was the type of church that God wanted me to join. There is no perfect church, and the one I joined as a new Christian certainly was far from perfect. Yet it was zealous and bold for the Lord, having been established by some people who had come out of a nearby Southern Baptist congregation because they were fed up with compromise and worldliness. I was thrilled to find a home there, and they disciplined me and helped establish a proper foundation in my Christian life.

A year later I attended a fundamental Baptist Bible School to further my education in the Scriptures and to prepare my life for the Lord's service. I didn't know what the Lord was calling me to do, but I knew that serving the Lord effectively in any capacity required a strong foundation in His Word. While there, I worked in the bus ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and preached at and eventually pastored a chapel associated with that church. I was trained in soul-winning techniques that were designed to produce a high number of "professions of faith." Preparing souls through the patient teaching of law and gospel, demanding repentance, and looking for Holy Spirit-wrought conviction was not part of the technique. It focused, rather, on getting people to admit that they were sinners (without taking the time to clarify exactly what that meant),

to acknowledge that they would like to go to heaven when they die, and to pray a sinner's prayer toward this end. It was all about "going to heaven." It had little or nothing to do with living in this world. Those who prayed the prayer were immediately told they were saved, were given assurance of salvation, and were reported as saved, though the vast majority demonstrated no biblical evidence of the new birth.

I witnessed this type of thing many times. A group of soul winners would return to the church claiming to have won ten people to Christ, but, typically, not even one would show any further interest in the things of God. If this type of thing happened once or twice, no one would think much of it. No church can avoid false professions entirely; but the reporting of massive numbers of empty professions is the standard procedure for these churches. No one seems disturbed that only a tiny percentage of the "salvations" exhibit any evidence of regeneration.

For several weeks in 1977, my wife and I followed up on a Phoster Club soul-winning program in another fundamental Baptist church. Though the Phoster Club ladies reported many salvations, we did not find even one person who demonstrated biblical evidence. (I know that some people are saved through these programs, but the large statistics do not reflect reality.)

During my first year at Bible school when I went out witnessing with various "expert soul winners," I observed this type of thing repeatedly. The soul winner would take someone through the "Roman's Road" although the individual usually showed no interest in what was being said and appeared to be eager to get away from us. In spite of the lack of any evident Holy Spirit conviction or repentance, the soul winner would manipulate the person into praying a prayer and would then pronounce them "saved" and would go on to give them assurance of "salvation."

I always cringed at this technique. How could the person be saved when he or she was obviously not convicted of or

repentant of his sin against God, not even very interested in God, when, in fact, by all appearances he had only prayed a prayer merely hoping for an easy ticket to heaven which would require no change on his part and wanting also to get rid of the soul winners?

A preacher friend described the following scene to me recently, which is similar to ones I personally witnessed. While visiting a large fundamental Baptist church in California, he went on visitation with a notable soul winner. A lady answered the bell at one house and stood impatiently behind the screen door while the soul winner went quickly through the plan of salvation. She wanted to attend to her child, who was fussing in the background, but he begged her to listen to the presentation. During the entire time, she was looking back into the house, severely distracted. At the end of his presentation, he boldly demanded that she open the door partially and take his hand. She seemed shocked by his request, but she cautiously did as he said. He then asked her if she wanted to go to heaven when she died. When she answered in the affirmative, he asked her to pray after him the sinner's prayer, which she did. He announced her saved, and she immediately closed the door and went about her business.

This is what I call Quick Prayerism. This lady, and millions like her, have prayed the sinner's prayer without Holy Spirit conviction of sin, clear understanding of the gospel, or repentance toward God and saving faith toward Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to imagine the apostles and preachers in the early churches acting like this, and I have refused to follow this practice in my own ministry. I learned many biblical things at Bible school and I praise the Lord for the good things that I gained from my years there, but God tells me in His Word to "prove ALL things" (1 Th. 5:21), and that includes the things that I was taught at a fundamental Baptist Bible school. I have every right and responsibility to reject

things that are not in accordance with the Bible even while “holding fast that which is good” in my training.

It is not uncommon for Bible schools to try to require unquestioning loyalty from their graduates, and those who question and reject things the school teaches or stands for are held at arm’s length or even “blacklisted.” That is absolutely unscriptural and ungodly. The only One to whom we can give unquestioning loyalty is the Lord Jesus Christ. No other man or institution is beyond being tested by the Word of God. Every preacher is to be proven by the Scriptures (1 Co. 14:29). Pastoral authority is real authority that requires submission by the church members (Heb. 13:7, 17), but the submission is not unquestioning or blind. The Scriptures limit the pastor’s authority; he has no authority whatsoever to lead in ways contrary to the Word of God, and it is wrong for pastors (or Bible college leaders, etc.) to treat people as enemies when they, in good conscience and in a godly attitude, refuse to follow things that they believe are not scriptural.

I rejected the unscriptural evangelistic methodology when I was first taught it nearly 45 years ago, and I reject it even more vehemently today. It is not the type of evangelism we find in the New Testament, and I refuse to follow man-made theology and practice regardless of what label it bears and regardless of how many of the brethren support it. Truth is not determined on democratic principles. Baptists and fundamentalists who teach and practice contrary to the Bible are as wrong as Protestants and Pentecostals and New Evangelicals and Emergents who do so.

This unscriptural methodology has permeated a large segment of the independent Baptist movement.

Though many men have been guilty of promoting this, I believe the one man who has wielded the largest influence is the late JACK HYLES. His influence waned a bit in the 1990s before his death, but in the 1970s and 1980s, his influence

was vast through Hyles-Anderson College, his books, and the annual Pastor's Schools. In fact, his influence is still vast.

Hylescost: The Zenith of Quick Prayerism

“Quick prayerism” reached its apex on May 3, 1998, when Jack Hyles claimed that more people were saved and baptized at his church on that day than were saved and baptized on the day of Pentecost or on any other day in church history. Hyles estimated that around 15,000 people were saved on that day and 5,112 were baptized.

When the events at Hyles’ church are compared with those of Acts chapter two, though, five serious discrepancies appear.

First, Peter preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, whereas Hyles preached on Heaven. In his invitation, Hyles told the people that even if they had the slightest interest in going to heaven, to come forward. Well, who doesn’t want to go to heaven?

Second, Peter demanded repentance, whereas Hyles did not even mention repentance or even hint that it might be necessary for salvation.

Third, those saved on the day of Pentecost were added to the church, whereas those who prayed on Hylescost were not allowed to join the church.

Fourth, the only “methodology” used at Pentecost was prayer, the preaching of the Word of God, personal testimony, and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit; whereas Hyles used a multiplicity of man-made promotions and gimmicks to attract people to his meetings and to manipulate people into making “decisions” and submitting to baptism.

Fifth, those saved at Pentecost “continued steadfastly in doctrine, fellowship, and prayer,” whereas very few of those who were counted in Hyles salvation statistics exhibited such plain evidence of salvation.

Following is the sad and frightful testimony of a preacher who personally participated in Hylescost when he was a student at Hyles Anderson. This provides a glimpse into the carnal, shallow, unscriptural inner workings of Quick Prayerism.

“One of the churches I attended years ago decided to try to replicate the day of Pentecost. ... My little part in this mission was to take an empty bus to the worst projects in town. I was to fill it up and drive to the church with fifty or so unsaved young people. I was to deliver these young people to a rented sports arena where the preacher would give a salvation message. Before returning the kids to the bus and thus to home, **we were instructed to ensure that all of these young people were baptized after the invitation had been given.**

“Imagine for a moment the scene. Thousands of people unused to church were crammed into a building not acoustically designed for church. The average worker to rider ratio was about one to thirty. The service stayed just this side of pandemonium only with the help of **frequent promises of cash prizes.** At the invitation, **all the people were instructed to repeat the sinner’s prayer after the preacher. From the pulpit, instructions were given to the workers to herd their charges toward the swimming pools for baptism. ...**

“Later that evening after all the activities of the day were over, the pastor of the church solemnly opened an envelope. To a cacophony of cheering and shouting, he told us that we had baptized more than three thousand people that day. Then turning to a guest speaker on the platform he said, ‘And all of these people were dealt with one on one out of an open Bible.’

“I sat there stunned in my seat. I was not stunned by the number but by the assertion that all of this was done carefully. ... The preaching was plain and clear. But the service was mass chaos, there was zero actual

conversational give-and-take to ensure understanding, and the mass assent was printed and impersonal” (Tom Brennan, *Schizophrenic: A Diagnosis of the Independent Baptist Movement*, pp. 206, 207).

Brennan does not name names in his book, which greatly weakens its effectiveness, but it is clear that he participated in Hylescost and that “the pastor of the church” was Jack Hyles. (For more about Hyles see *The Hyles Effect*, which is available as a free eBook from www.wayoflife.org.)

Why follow a methodology that produces massive numbers of empty professions? Why report empty prayers as salvations? I believe the answer often lies in the carnality of the leadership. Pride (using inflated numbers to exalt themselves) and the exaltation of man (following men of reputation rather than God and His Word alone and allowing men to exalt themselves above that which is Scriptural and decent) are the product of carnality.

The same carnality that has allowed Quick Prayerism to permeate many independent Baptist churches has born unspiritual fruit in other areas. There has been a Pharisaical emphasis on externals and busyness accompanied by a gross neglect of genuine holiness and godly discipleship. Multitudes--yea, multitudes--of independent Baptist preachers have been involved in moral scandals, often leaving their congregations in shambles. Countless church members have become embittered by these incidents and are steadfast enemies of biblical fundamentalism today because of the carnality and unscriptural nonsense they observed in independent Baptist churches. (I am not excusing these people, because they should have had their eyes on the Lord rather than on men; I am merely pointing out a fact.) Many of the largest churches have collapsed and have closed their doors or are a mere shell of their former “glory.”

Men who are willing to employ unscriptural techniques of “soul winning,” who are willing to use human manipulation

to produce questionable professions of faith, who are willing to turn the house of a holy God into a carnival, who report large numbers of converts even though the vast majority of them exhibit no evidence of salvation, who are self-promoters and braggarts or who condone self-promoters, are carnal men. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption..." (Gal. 6:8). It is no surprise that many of these men have turned out to be adulterers, thieves, liars, perverts, and charlatans. (I thank the Lord, on the other hand, that there are many fundamental Baptist pastors who are godly, humble, compassionate, Christ-centered men, and I am privileged to be associated with some of these men.)

Many other large independent Baptist churches have adopted unscriptural New Evangelical church growth philosophies (employing a positive message, adapting "Christian" rock music, letting the people set the standards of living, associating with Promise Keepers and other ecumenical organizations, using a hodgepodge of modern versions, etc.). This, too, does not surprise me. Too many independent Baptist pastors have been consumed with a pragmatic approach to church building. The pragmatist uses whatever method will most effectively achieve the goal of building a large church, regardless of whether or not that method is scriptural or glorifying to Jesus Christ. I see little difference between the independent Baptist who uses carnival gimmickry to build a large church and a New Evangelical who uses a contemporary, "come as you are" program. Both are unscriptural and neither glorifies Jesus Christ. In light of the pragmatism that has permeated independent Baptist church growth philosophy the past 40 years, it is not surprising that so many today are adopting New Evangelical methodology. Thirty years ago some of the largest churches in the country were independent Baptist; today the largest are New Evangelical and Charismatic. The pragmatist sees that, and jumps on the most successful bandwagon without consideration of the teaching and

example of the New Testament Scriptures. His first concern is not truth but numbers, money, and prestige.

What Baptists Have Traditionally Believed about Repentance

How did fundamental Baptists get to this point? To claim that thousands are being saved when there is no evidence whatsoever in the majority of the lives is confusion. This is not what fundamental Baptists believed and practiced in the past.

John the Baptist

It is plain that the first “Baptist,” the one named John, did not practice any sort of Quick Prayerism. He preached repentance and demanded evidence:

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. . . . But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Mt. 3:1, 2, 7, 8).

The Apostolic Churches

It is also plain that the Lord’s apostles and the first churches did not slight repentance. Peter demanded repentance on the day of Pentecost: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). In his second epistle, Peter described salvation as coming “to repentance” (2 Pe. 3:9).

Paul, too, preached repentance to the unsaved of his day. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now

commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:29-30). He obviously would not be impressed by the argument that the term repentance should not be used because unsaved people do not understand it or that repentance should not be preached because it is not mentioned in the Gospel of John!

Furthermore, Paul demanded evidence of repentance from those who professed faith in Christ:

“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that THEY SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD, AND DO WORKS MEET FOR REPENTANCE” (Acts 26:19-20).

There was not the slightest hint of Quick Prayerism in the evangelism practiced by the apostles.

The Waldensians

The Waldensians are an example of separatist, New Testament baptistic churches that existed through the “Dark Ages” and that were bitterly persecuted by the apostate Roman Catholic Church. I have done extensive research into these ancient churches, including visiting the Alps in northern Italy where they lived, and it has been very edifying and challenging. I collected dozens of histories on the Waldensians, some very rare.

The ancient Waldensian churches of Italy and France, as representatives of separatist Bible-believing churches of the Dark Ages, preached repentance and required evidence of repentance of those who professed Christ. The following is from a Waldensian Confession of Faith from 1544:

“We believe that in the ordinance of baptism the water is the visible and external sign, which represents to us that which, by virtue of God’s invisible operation, is within us -- namely, the renovation of our minds, and the mortification of our members through [the faith of]

Jesus Christ. And by this ordinance we are received into the holy congregation of God's people, PREVIOUSLY PROFESSING AND DECLARING OUR FAITH AND CHANGE OF LIFE" (Jones' *History of the Christian Church*, vol. II, "Waldensian sentiments and practices, collected from their own writings").

It is obvious that the ancient Waldensian churches would have rejected with abhorrence the modern idea that repentance does not necessarily result in a change of life and that churches can receive members who have no testimony of salvation other than a mere prayer that they have muttered.

Roger Williams

Hundreds of examples could be given of Baptists in England and America during the last few centuries to demonstrate that they have commonly stood for biblical repentance. As an example of what Baptists thought about repentance and conversion in the early history of America, we turn to Roger Williams. He founded what is widely considered the first Baptist church in America. Though Williams later disassociated himself from the Baptists and other organized churches, he was very bold about the necessity of genuine conversion. In his *Reply to George Fox* (founder of the Quakers) of 1676, Roger Williams observed that "a Gospel Church must be made up of such regenerate men, and calls them actual believers, true disciples and converts, living stones, such as can give some account how the grace of God hath appeared unto them and WROUGHT THAT HEAVENLY CHANGE IN THEM" (Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, 1890).

This change he called "that gallant and heavenly and fundamental principle of the true matter of a Christian congregation, flock or society." In his tractate "Christenings make not Christians," published in 1645, Williams warned

boldly against false professions and a failure to preach and demand genuine spiritual conversion. He told his readers that he could have made multiplied thousands of “converts” among the natives of New England if he had been willing to use unscriptural means:

“I know it to have been easy for myself, long ere this, to have brought many thousands of these natives, yea, the whole country, to a far greater antichristian conversion than ever was yet heard of in America.”

After repeating that he could so have converted the Indians, he asked the following searching question, “Why have I not brought them to such a conversion?” to which he replied:

“I answer: Woe be to me, if I call light darkness, or darkness light; sweet bitter, or bitter sweet; woe to me, if I call that conversion unto God, which is, indeed, subversion of the souls of millions in Christendom, from one worship to another, and the profanation of the holy name of God, his holy Son and blessed ordinances. ... It is not a suit of crimson satin will make a dead man live; take off and change his crimson into white, he is dead still. Off with that, and shift him into cloth of gold, and from that to cloth of diamonds, he is but a dead man still. For it is not a form, nor the change of one form into another, a finer and a finer and yet more fine, that makes a man a convert—I MEAN SUCH A CONVERT AS IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD IN JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE VISIBLE RULE OF HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT. I speak not of hypocrites, which may but glitter, and be no solid gold, as Simon Magus, Judas, etc. But of A TRUE EXTERNAL CONVERSION.”

On pages 17-18, Williams more fully defined what he held repentance and conversion to be:

“First, it must be by the free proclaiming and PREACHING OF REPENTANCE and forgiveness of sins (Luke 14) by such messengers as can prove their lawful sending and commission from the Lord Jesus to make disciples out of all nations; and so to baptize or wash them, into the name or profession of the Holy Trinity. Mt. 28:19; Ro. 10:14,15. Secondly, SUCH A CONVERSION, so far as man’s judgment can reach, which is fallible, AS WAS THE JUDGMENT OF THE FIRST MESSENGERS, as in Simon Magus, etc., AS IN THE TURNING OF THE WHOLE MAN FROM THE POWER OF SATAN UNTO GOD. Acts 16. Such a change, as if an old man became a new babe (John 4); yea, as amounts to God’s new creation in the soul. Eph. 2:10.”

That staunch old warrior for religious liberty was warning about the great crime of making and accepting Christian “converts” who are not truly converted. It is obvious what Roger Williams would think of the practice among many independent Baptists whereby multiplied thousands of people throughout the world are proclaimed “saved” merely because they have prayed a prayer. Many Baptist missionaries have described to me the terrible confusion that has been wrought in various parts of the world through the practice of Quick Prayerism by missionaries who have carried this unscriptural evil beyond the shores of America. Yea, I have seen it with my own eyes.

During our nearly 40 years of missionary work in South Asia, we could have gotten massive numbers of “decisions” and “prayers” had we been willing to use the methodology of Quick Prayerism. What Hindu does not want “to go to heaven when he dies?” The Hindu will pray a prayer or go through any other religious ritual with that desired end, as long as he is not required to give anything up in this present life! In reality, though, what they are commonly doing when they “pray the prayer” through the Quick Prayerism program

is merely adding Jesus to their other gods because they are not ready to repent of their idolatry and self-love.

Our vision and passion in missionary work is to see churches started that will be the pillar and ground of the truth in a dark world (1 Timothy 3:15). You can't build sound churches with Quick Prayerism. We want to see souls genuinely converted by God's miracle-working power so we can disciple them in the ways of Christ. You can't disciple false converts. I have never understood the motivation to get people to pray empty prayers, unless it is to impress men.

In the past, we worked with some Asian university students in Oklahoma City, and at a gospel meeting I was talking with one of them. We had known him for a year and a half and had spent many hours with him and had carefully explained the gospel to him. He had attended several churches and had heard the gospel many times. He told me that day that he had come "to accept Jesus Christ as God and Savior." At that point a Quick Prayerism soul winner would have gotten him to pray a "sinner's prayer," but such haste is folly when we are dealing with the eternal souls of men. I said, "That is great; what do you think about the Hindu gods now?" He replied: "They also are gods. There is one God but he has many manifestations and ways of worship. For me, I like the Christian way of worship."

This is typical of the path many Hindus take when they become interested in Christianity. They do not renounce idolatry. They try to add Jesus to their gods. When a Hindu (or anyone else, for that matter) is ready to be saved, he is ready to turn from idolatry and to receive Jesus Christ ALONE as God and Savior. He will emulate the former idolaters in the church at Thessalonica who "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Th. 1:9-10).

We are careful in dealing with those who profess Christ and who want to join the church. We require evidence that the individual is born again (Acts 26:20). If we did not do this, if we accepted anyone in that culture who wanted to

“profess Christ,” the churches would quickly become overrun with “Christianized Hindus.” And this is precisely what you find in many of the churches.

One church in the States that is famous for the great number of “decisions” that are generated by its evangelistic program has followed up on some of my wife’s Asian contacts in that area. In some cases, they have gotten the Asians to pray a salvation prayer and they have gotten some of them “down the aisle and into the baptismal pool.” Yet they remain unregenerate and unrepentant of their idolatry. We once had a meal with one of the Asian couples who had prayed a sinner’s prayer. Prominently displayed on a living room wall were Hindu gods. The lady told my wife that, yes, they still pray to them—yet they are baptized members of a fundamental Baptist church! It is not surprising to find a Hindu who wants to add Jesus to his or her gods, but what should be surprising is to find a church that claims to believe and obey the Bible but which accepts such empty professions as “salvations” and counts them on its reports and even on its membership roles.

Baptist Forefathers Required an Experience of Regeneration

It was the common lot of the early Baptist churches in North America to take salvation seriously and to require evidence thereof from those who were baptized. Pastor David Benedict published his *General History of the Baptist Denomination in America* in 1813. He labored eight years on this monumental work, during the process of which he traveled nearly 7,000 miles through the southern and northern states and into Canada, gathering information on the churches. Most of these journeys were alone, on horse back, and in wilderness regions of the country.

His history frequently mentions the caution with which the Baptist churches received members. They had a custom

called “hearing the experience,” which preceded baptism. The following, for example, is a description of a revival that took place in 1807 in Argyle, Nova Scotia:

“Many were wounded to their hearts, and made to groan under the weight of their sins. The last Sabbath in March, twenty came forward and were baptized. I must conclude with adding, that one hundred and twenty have been baptized. There were five baptisms in the winter season. Twenty-four have TOLD THEIR EXPERIENCES, who are not yet baptized, and a number of others are under hopeful impressions. The work is still going on in this place, and spreading rapidly in different parts of the province” (Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination*, vol. I, chapter 8).

We see many important differences between the method of evangelism practiced by these Baptist forefathers and that practiced by many independent Baptists today. First, they looked for Holy Spirit-wrought conviction of sin. Second, they required a clear testimony of salvation of those who would be baptized. They required that the professors “tell their experiences” before the church. It is obvious that they were looking for more than mere lip service. Third, they did not count mere professions but they counted the baptisms of those who gave evidence of salvation. Fourth, they did not confuse “hopeful impressions” with genuine salvation. They knew that a person can be interested in Christ and can even be convicted of his sin without being genuinely saved. We see many examples of this in the Gospels.

J. Frank Norris

Let’s come up closer to our own time. In the 1930s, 40s, ‘50s, and ‘60s, there were multitudes of aggressive fundamental Baptist churches that saw a great many souls saved by the grace of God. J. Frank Norris, for example, pastored two large churches at the same time from 1934 to

1947—First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, and Temple Baptist Church of Detroit, Michigan. Through the efforts of Norris and his co-worker, Dr. Louis Entzminger, the Sunday Schools of these two congregations became the largest in the world at that time (15,000 and 10,000 respectively). They discarded quarterlies and used only the Bible as the textbook in the Sunday Schools. Norris developed an aggressive house-to-house visitation program. In his memoirs, Entzminger would write,

“From the human standpoint the secret of the growth of these churches may be summed up in one word ‘Visitation’” (*The J. Frank Norris I Have Known for 34 Years*, p. 255).

The men went out on Monday evenings, coming directly to the church from work at 6 p.m., where they were served a warm supper prepared by the church ladies. At 6:30 they were given cards and went out to visit homes two by two. At 9 p.m. they would meet back at the church to give reports. The women went out on Thursday mornings, gathering at the church at 9:30, visiting in homes until 12:30, then meeting back at the church for lunch and fellowship, followed by reports on the visitation and a short message by Norris.

Those two churches, in turn, produced dozens of other churches. By the year of Norris’s death (1952), First Baptist of Fort Worth had established more than 20 thriving churches in and around that one city alone.

J. Frank Norris once preached an entire week on the subject of hell without giving an invitation. Only after a full week of such preaching did he give an invitation, and more than a hundred and fifty were saved. HE BELIEVED IN PLOWING THE GROUND OF SINNER’S HEARTS WITH THE LAW OF GOD TO PREPARE THE SOUL FOR GENUINE CONVICTION AND REPENTANCE. This is one of the missing elements of evangelism today. Norris

never gave men the idea that they could be saved and go to heaven without repentance concerning their sin toward God. In his message, "Is There a Hell?" he proclaimed:

"Jesus said, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' There is the one truth that saves a man from hell--repentance. Men don't go to hell because of their sins, but BECAUSE THEY DON'T REPENT OF THEIR SINS."

Norris obviously believed in repentance *from sin*. In a series of messages titled "What Do Fundamental Baptists Believe," preached at the American Baptist Association annual meeting in 1935, Norris stated plainly that repentance is "turning to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy" and that the "proper evidence" of the new birth "appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life." He warned about those who instructed people to make mere "decisions" for Christ and who invited sinners merely to come forward for prayer. Of this kind of preaching, he said it "did not have enough gospel in it to save an ant." (J. Frank Norris, *What Do Fundamental Baptists Believe*, an address delivered at the annual meeting of the American Baptist Association at First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, 1935).

There was no Quick Prayerism in Norris's ministry or in the ministry of other fundamental Baptist preachers of old. They never gave the idea that people could be saved by muttering a prayer without evidencing a change of life.

Hundreds of other examples could be given of aggressive evangelistic fundamentalist and independent Baptist churches that existed during the first half of the twentieth century.

The point I want to make is that while these churches had great zeal for evangelism, they did not practice the methodology of Quick Prayerism and they would doubtless have renounced it. Norris and others of that day counted

salvation statistics, but they did not give outrageous reports of empty professions of faith.

(Statements on repentance by a wider range of Christians from the past 500 years are given in the book *Repentance and Soul Winning*.)

In the past, most fundamental Baptists preached biblical repentance, and they taught that repentance is a turning to God from sin as exemplified in 1 Thessalonians 1:9. They knew that true repentance always results in a change in of life, and they would have been amazed that a Bible-believing Baptist would deny this. They did not believe that repentance is a works salvation, but they knew that true repentance always produces good works. They believed that repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of life. They understood repentance properly and they preached repentance boldly.

Consider the following examples.

“To repent literally means to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to TURN FROM YOUR SINS, earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. You can see, then, how the man who believes in Christ repents and the man who repents believes in Christ. The jailer repented when HE TURNED FROM SIN to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” (John R. Rice, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?* 1940).

“Baptists preach the gospel of REPENTANCE FOR SIN. They preach and practice the very same gospel of repentance, of salvation, of baptism, as the first Baptist preacher we have any record of whose name was John and who came from God” (J. Frank Norris, *Lectures on Romans*, c. 1947).

“We believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness,

and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession and supplication for mercy at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour” (**Baptist Bible Fellowship**, Articles of Faith, 1950).

“Recognizing his guilt, there is a TURNING FROM SIN. There is a turning to God. The actual word ‘repentance’ means a turning completely around: a change of course; a change of mind. ... TO THINK OF REPENTANCE THAT DOES NOT CAUSE THE SINNER TO TURN GLADLY FROM HIS SINS IS IMPOSSIBLE. ... I know that we have a shallow religious movement in our times that will allow men to profess faith in Christ and at the same time continue to live in the world. Such a shallow religious faith is not real. These are mere professors and have no part with God in salvation” (**Harold Sichtler**, *Chastening and Repentance*, 1963).

“Repentance toward God -- that’s TURNING AWAY FROM ALL YOUR SIN and everything you know to be wrong, and TURNING RIGHT ABOUT FACE, then trusting Jesus Christ as your complete Redeemer” (**B.R. Lakin**, *Prepare to Meet Thy God*, 1964).

“Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. REPENTANCE IS A FORSAKING OF SIN. REAL REPENTANCE IS PUTTING YOUR TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST SO YOU WILL NOT LIVE LIKE THAT ANYMORE. Repentance is permanent. It is a lifelong and an eternity-long experience. You will never love the Devil again once you repent. You will never flirt with the Devil as the habit of your life again once you get saved. You will never be happy living in sin; it will never satisfy; and the husks of the world will never fill your longing and hungering in your soul. Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is

absolutely essential if you go to Heaven” (**Lester Roloff**, *Repent or Perish*, 1965).

“The very moment that soul that is dead, cut off, alienated from the very life of God, sees himself as a hopeless, helpless, Hell-deserving, and Hell-bound sinner; when that soul sees that Jesus Christ is the only Way, the only hope, and when he looks away from self; when he REPENTS OF HIS SIN and looks to the finished work of the crucified, buried and risen Lord for salvation -- that very moment, instantaneously, the Spirit of God operates” (**G. Beauchamp Vick**, *The Biblical Faith of Baptists*, Vol. II, Regular Baptist Press, 1966).

“True repentance is sorrow for sin committed against a holy God and not only sorrow for sin, but TURNING FROM SIN, FORSAKING SIN AND TURNING TO GOD. Sin nailed the Savior to the cross and certainly that fact alone is sufficient reason why ALL WHO HAVE GENUINELY REPENTED HATE SIN AND FORSAKE SINFUL WAYS” (**Oliver B. Greene**, *Commentary of Acts of the Apostles*, Acts 2:37-38, 1969).

“A ROTELY MEMORIZED PRAYER OR SOME REPEATED STATEMENT WITHOUT TRUE REPENTANCE AND FAITH NEVER SAVES ANYONE. He must be very serious about it and really mean it. ... Consider a case where the person being dealt with is going to repeat a prayer after the soul winner as he calls on the Lord to save his soul. Here is a pattern which can be followed merely as an example: ‘Lord, I realize I am a sinner. I am lost in my sin. I TURN FROM MY SIN. I repent of my sin. Right here and now I do trust the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour...’ (**Leon F. Maurer**, *Soul Winning: The Challenge of the Hour*, Sword of the Lord, 1970).

“What do I mean by repent? I mean TO TURN YOUR HEART FROM YOUR SIN. Turn from sin in your heart and start out to live for God. ... A penitent heart

that TURNS FROM YOUR SIN and turns to Jesus” (**John R. Rice**, “Repent or Perish,” *Sword of the Lord*, March 3, 1971).

“Repentance is one of the lost notes in modern day preaching. It has long since been absent from the pulpits across America and across the world. As a result our churches are filled with people who have never known repentance in their hearts. ... Repentance simply means a change of mind about myself and my spiritual state, ABOUT SIN, and about God. ... The fruit of repentance is TURNING TO GOD FROM SIN. ... The prodigal son had a change of mind, and he arose and came to the father, leaving the hog pens behind. So is everyone who has truly repented of sin. THEY TURN FROM SIN to serve the true and living God (1 Thes. 1:9)” (**Charles Boone**, “The Necessity of Repentance,” *The Witness*, June 1971).

“There ought to be plain preaching against sin. People ought to be taught TO TURN FROM SIN in genuine repentance” (**John R. Rice**, Dr. Rice, *Here Are More Questions*, Vol. II, p. 425, 1973).

“Repentance is doing an ‘about face,’ A TURN-AROUND. Repentance involves self-judgment which produces a CHANGE IN THE MIND TOWARD SELF, SIN and the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Until a person repents, he will be satisfied living in sin and will die and go to hell” (**Gene Hooker**, “What Is Repentance,” Rock of Ages Prison Ministry, n.d.).

“The Greek words [for repentance] mean ‘A CHANGE OF MIND WHICH RESULTS IN A CHANGE OF ACTION.’ When that refers to man, there is a sorrow for sin involved. This definition is substantiated both by the scholarship of Trench and Thayer, as well as by the New Testament usage” (**Bruce Lackey**, *Repentance Is More Than a Change of Mind*, 1980).

The History of How Evangelism Was Corrupted

Prior to the 1970s, Independent Baptist churches in general were spiritually stronger than today (though never strong enough, in our estimation), and one reason was that they were more careful about salvation.

Consider some prominent examples:

John R. Rice, 1940 - "To repent literally means to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to turn from your sins, earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you" (*What Must I Do to Be Saved?* 1940).

Baptist Bible Fellowship International, 1950 - "We believe that Repentance and Faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession and supplication for mercy at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour" (Baptist Bible Fellowship, Articles of Faith, 1950).

Harold Sightler, 1963 - "To think of repentance that does not cause the sinner to turn gladly from his sins is impossible" (*Chastening and Repentance*, 1963).

B.R. Lakin, 1964 - "Repentance toward God--that's turning away from all your sin and everything you know to be wrong, and turning right about face, then trusting Jesus Christ as your complete Redeemer" (*Prepare to Meet Thy God*, 1964).

Lester Roloff, 1965 - “Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. Repentance is a forsaking of sin. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore. Repentance is permanent. ... Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is absolutely essential if you go to heaven” (*Repent or Perish*, 1965).

Highland Park Baptist Church c. 1965 - “Here are some things the sinner must do to be saved. He must want to be saved (Isa. 1:18-19). He must be willing for God to save him (Rev 22:18). He must acknowledge himself a sinner (Ps. 51:3; Lu. 15:17). He must repent - turn his back on sin and turn to God (Acts 20:21; Lu. 13:2). He must believe on Christ and His finished work of Redemption (Act 16:31; Joh. 1:12; Ro. 10:10; Joh. 3:16)” (*Handbook for Our Members*, Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, p. 32).

Leon Maurer, 1970 - “A rotely memorized prayer or some repeated statement without true repentance and faith never saves anyone” (*Soul Winning: The Challenge of the Hour*, The Sword of the Lord, 1970).

When these men talked of turning from sin, everyone in those days knew what they meant. They weren’t talking about reformation or a works salvation. They were talking about something that occurred in the heart. They were talking about a radical change of mind that put the individual on a new path.

Independent Baptists after the 1970s

Soul winning changed dramatically in the 1970s.

There was a frenzy for bigness, and this was the motivation for a change in soul winning doctrine and methodology.

The Sword of the Lord promoted the “biggest” and “the fastest growing” concept. This is the way that preachers were

often introduced at Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, in the 1970s. I was there. I heard the introductions.

A new evangelistic program was introduced and spread rapidly. I experienced this program at Highland Park as a student at Tennessee Temple from 1974-1977.

Jack Hyles was by far the most influential teacher of the new soul winning and church planting methods, but it was *The Sword of the Lord* that gave his teaching a very wide promotion. In the 1960s, *The Sword of the Lord* published Hyles' *Let's Go Soul Winning* and *Let's Build an Evangelistic Church*. The influence of these books exploded in the 1970s.

Second in influence, beginning in the late 1970s, was Curtis Hutson, who became the editor of *The Sword of the Lord* upon the death of John R. Rice in 1980. Hutson's book *Winning Souls and Getting Them Down the Aisle* (*Sword of the Lord*, 1978) was very influential. Hutson's mentor was Jack Hyles.

Jack Hyles taught that every church problem could be solved by his soul winning program:

“Soul winning is the basic secret of every other problem in the church. For example, here a church is having cold services. There is no warmth. There. The Lord does not meet with them. Now how do you overcome it? Get to winning souls. If somebody walks down the aisle every Sunday and professes their faith in Christ, that will warm the service up a great deal. Here is a church having trouble with its business. It doesn't have enough folks who know business. It is having trouble handling its legal affairs. It doesn't have enough wisdom. The Bible says, “He that winneth souls is wise.” So God gives extra wisdom to those who win souls” (Hyles, *Let's Build an Evangelistic Church*, p. 34).

This soul winning program, which I call “Quick Prayerism,” has the following characteristics:

1. An emphasis on “going to heaven when you die”

One of the things that happened in the 1970s to corrupt the practice of evangelism was that the emphasis changed to “going to heaven when you die.”

This was the heart and soul of Jack Hyles’ soul winning program.

“It may be done thusly. ‘Now, Mr. Doe, let me ask you a question: Do you know that if you died this minute you would go to Heaven?’

“‘No, I don’t believe I do.’

“‘Let me ask you this: Would you like to know? Don’t you think it would be fine if you could know that if you died you would go to Heaven?’

“‘Yes.’

“Well, let me ask you this: If I could take the Bible and explain to you how you could know beyond any shadow of a doubt, that you could know right now, and you could see it and you could understand it, would you believe it? Would you do what the Bible says?’

“Do you see what I’m trying to say? It is good to get him committed that he will do it; then you have gone a long way toward getting him saved before you ever present the plan. So these three questions: (1) ‘Do you know that if you died today you would go to Heaven?’ (2) ‘Would you like to know?’ (3) ‘If I could show you how you could know, would you do it?’” (Hyles, *Let’s Go Soul Winning*, Sword of the Lord Publishers).

The most atrocious example of this we have seen is My John 3:16 Book: Lola Mazola’s *Happyland Adventure*. The cover depicts a gleeful child on a roller coaster holding a Bible. Children are taught that heaven is an exciting place, sort of like an eternal Disneyland, and they can go there “when they die” by saying a sinner’s prayer. It includes a “commemorative certificate” that is signed and dated to

proclaim the child's eternal security. The cover says, "Best-selling author Robert J. Morgan has told this story to children for years and personally witnessed hundreds of them in turn express faith in Jesus."

Not once in the book of Acts do we find a preacher saying, "Do you want to go to heaven when you die? If so, you need to do this..." There is not a hint of that type of thing in Scripture.

Preachers in the New Testament promised eternal life through Jesus Christ, but they never used the "do you want to go to heaven" approach in evangelism. The emphasis, rather, is on knowing and serving Christ in this present life. The emphasis is on discipleship in the here and now rather than obtaining a ticket to heaven. It is on doing works meet for repentance (Ac. 26:20). It is on being ordained to walk in good works (Eph. 2:10). It is on living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:12).

2. The "sinner's prayer" became the focus.

Another thing that happened in the 1970s to corrupt the practice of evangelism was that the sinner's prayer became the focus in soul winning.

An example of a sinner's prayer is the following from the gospel tract *God's Simple Plan of Salvation*:

"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner; I know I deserve hell for my sins. I believe You died for me, and I am trusting You to save me from hell and give me the gift of eternal life. Thank you Jesus for saving me. Amen."

The sinner's prayer can be traced to about the middle of the 20th century. The American Tract Society was founded in 1825 during the Second Great Awakening, but it was not until 1955 that it published its first tract containing a sinner's prayer.

Billy Graham popularized the sinner's prayer in his gospel tracts, beginning in the 1950s with *Steps to Peace with God*.

The sinner's prayer was also popularized by Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ.

It was Jack Hyles who popularized sinner's prayer soul winning among Independent Baptists. This was the emphasis of his soul winning books and annual Pastor's Schools. He said, "You must try to get them to pray."

At a Bible conference a few years ago, some men challenged me, saying, "What about the sinner's prayer? Do you believe in using the sinner's prayer?"

My reply is simple: "Show me the sinner's prayer in the New Testament."

Jesus Christ never led an individual in a sinner's prayer, and Paul never led anyone in a sinner's prayer.

In our evangelism course *Sowing and Reaping*, we urge people to do their own studies of the following passages to learn how to deal with people in a biblical way. Study these passages and write down every lesson you can find about evangelism.

- Nicodemus - John 3:1-16
- The Woman at the Well - John 4:1-43
- The Rich Young Ruler - Mark 10:17-27
- Zacchaeus - Luke 19:1-10
- The Ethiopian Eunuch - Acts 8:26-39
- Lydia - Acts 16:14-15
- The Philippian Jailer - Acts 16:23-40
- The Athenians - Acts 17:14-34

In these passages of Scripture, you will find biblical "soul winning." Instead of focusing on a sinner's prayer, it has the following characteristics:

Biblical evangelism presents the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Ro. 1:16). The job the Lord has given His people as ambassadors of Christ is to preach the gospel to every person on earth. The gospel is defined in a nutshell in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. This is the message that must be proclaimed and explained. A sinner does not have to become a theologian to

be saved, but he does have to understand and receive the gospel. To understand the gospel, the individual must come to understand the character of God as a holy judge. He must understand that he is a sinner according to the Bible's definition, meaning that he is not good and has no righteousness that is acceptable to God. He must understand who Jesus Christ is and the significance of Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice. He must understand that Christ rose from the dead. He must understand what it means that Christ died and rose "according to the Scriptures."

The soul winner's job is to explain the gospel. How long this takes depends on the listener's religious background, receptivity, and other factors.

Biblical evangelism is bringing sinners to wholehearted faith in Jesus Christ (Ac. 8:36-37). Salvation is not a prayer; it is a personal relationship with God in Christ. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Joh. 17:3).

Biblical evangelism urges sinners to call on Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Ro. 10:9-13).

Here salvation is described as confessing the Lord Jesus with the mouth, believing from the heart that God has raised Him from the dead, and calling on Him.

The word "Lord" is mentioned three times in this key passage. To say that a person can receive Christ as Saviour

and not as Lord has no biblical support. Jesus is Lord, and every soul will bow to Him as Lord, either in salvation or in judgment.

To believe on Christ savingly after the fashion of this passage (to confess Him, to believe unto righteousness, to call upon Him) requires that the individual understand and believe the gospel that Paul preached in Romans 1-3: man's totally condemned condition before a holy God and his inability to save himself by good works and law keeping (Ro. 1:18 - 3:20) and Christ's work of atonement for man's behalf on the cross (Ro. 3:21-29).

To call on the Lord in the sense of Romans 10:13 is not a "sinner's prayer" in the way that sinner's prayer evangelism has been taught. It is simply a personal receiving of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

A sinner's prayer might be helpful to some people who don't know what to say to the Lord in calling on Him for salvation. My wife was helped by a sinner's prayer when she got saved as a teenager. But a sinner's prayer is not the goal of evangelism. To get the sinner to receive the living Christ is the goal. If a sinner's prayer is used at all, it must be used very carefully and wisely at the right time and with the right person.

And if a sinner's prayer is used, it must be a good sinner's prayer that helps the individual express biblical repentance and faith. Most of the sinner's prayers that we have seen neglect repentance.

3. Plowing the soil was traded for a quick salesmanship program.

Another thing that happened in the 1970s to corrupt the practice of evangelism was that the biblical concept of plowing the soil of the sinner's heart with the law to prepare it for salvation for a quick salesmanship program.

When we refer to plowing the soil, we refer to sowing the seed of the gospel, carefully explaining it, using the law to

show the sinner his plight, praying over it, and patiently waiting for the fruit that comes only by God's Spirit.

The law of Moses was given to show man his fallen condition and to lead him to the Saviour (Ga. 3:24-25).

In Romans 1-3, we see Paul's use of the law in this manner. He spends nearly two full chapters exposing man's fallen condition and God's righteous judgment upon all men before he mentions anything about the grace of God in Christ's atonement.

This is the true "Romans Road"! It is careful to get the sinner totally and thoroughly lost before it tries to get him saved.

We think of those who were saved on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand were saved that day, but they were Jews who were steeped in the law of God! They knew about the one holy Creator God; they knew about the fall, about sin and righteousness; they knew about the necessity of an atonement; they knew the prophecies. The law had prepared them to understand the gospel.

The "old" Baptists believed in plowing the soil with the law to cause the sinner to see himself as exceedingly sinful and undone. We have seen how that J. Frank Norris preached a full week on hell before giving a salvation invitation and Harold Sighter preached 25 messages in a row on the wrath of God.

Charles Spurgeon said,

"The hard heart must be broken, or it will still refuse the Saviour who was sent to bind up the broken-hearted. There are some things which men may or may not have, and yet may be saved; but those things which go with the ploughing of the heart are indispensable; there must be a holy fear and a humble trembling before God, there must be an acknowledgement of guilt and a penitent petition for mercy; there must, in a word, be a thorough ploughing of the soul before we can expect the seed to bring forth fruit."

But this careful, patient preparation is done away with in the “Quick Prayerism” program.

Jack Hyles taught dozens of psychological tricks. Consider how he used prayer to manipulate individuals:

“There are several ways to do this, but you must try to get them to pray. If he is really ready, say, ‘Could I pray for you, and while I pray, would you pray and ask God to save you today?’ Maybe he is not quite that ready. Maybe you don’t know. You could say, ‘Could I pray that you will get saved?’ Maybe you don’t think he will let you pray for him to get saved. Then you say, Could I have a word of prayer with you before I go?”

“Anyway, to get your head bowed is good. If you are talking to him, he might interrupt, but if you are talking to the Lord, he won’t. You can preach him a little sermon in the prayer. If you can’t win a fellow to Christ, and if he won’t let you present the plan to him, the best way to tell him how to be saved is to tell the Lord and let the sinner hear you.

“I go into a home and say, ‘Sir, would you like to know how to be saved?’

“‘No, don’t have time for it. The wife’s sick and I’m busy.’

“‘Could I have a prayer for your wife before we go, that she will get well?’

“‘With his wife lying there sick, a man would be a fool not to let the preacher pray for her. He says, ‘Well, O.K.’

“‘I pray, ‘Dear Lord, bless this wife and make her well, and help this man to know that Romans 3:10 says, ‘As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.’ And if people die in their sins, according to Romans 6:23 ‘the wages of sin is death.’ O dear Lord, show him that Romans 5:8 is true when it says that ‘God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners...’

“Pray him the plan. He won’t interrupt you. You can get by with a lot of things talking to the Lord that you wouldn’t talking to him. ...

“I stop abruptly in my prayer. I pray a simple prayer. Never pray a big prayer. You must pray a prayer so simple that he won’t mind his prayer following yours.

“But you can pray this, ‘Dear Lord, here is a fellow who needs to get converted. I pray You will help him get saved. May he receive Christ. You love him, dear Lord...’ ‘Now fellow, will you pray?’ You pray like that, and he can pray his little prayer in a minute.

“I always stop in the middle of my prayer. I say, ‘Dear Lord, lead this man to be saved. You led me here and I pray that he will be saved today. May his wife have a Christian husband and the little children a Christian daddy. May this be the day of his salvation.’ Now while our heads are bowed in prayer, ‘Mr. Doe, would you be willing today to ask God to forgive you and tell Him you want to get saved?’

“See, you stop in the middle of your prayer and lead him to pray. Let me say this: Fifty per cent of the time when you get this far the lost person is going to pray” (Hyles, *Let’s Go Soul Winning*).

That is cheap psychological manipulation. It is tricky. It is dishonest. If you tell a man that you want to pray for him, but your goal actually is to preach to him and get him to pray a sinner’s prayer, that is deception. We see no hint of this in the Gospels or Acts.

Consider the following example of this methodology. Carl Hatch was called “the world’s greatest soul winner” by The Sword of the Lord editor Curtis Hutson and by Jack Hyles:

The Carl Hatch Squeeze

I don’t ask anybody if they want to be saved. If you want a positive answer you must ask a positive question. If you want a no answer ask a no question. If

you want a yes answer ask a yes question. **Soul winning is positive. And in soul winning you use a lot of psychology.**

For instance, if you are lost and I say, “Mr. Smith, let me ask you a question. You don’t want to go to hell, do you?”

He will answer, No.

I say, “Wonderful, you want to go to heaven, don’t you?” He will say, Yes. I will reply, “Sure you do. Sure you do. Sure you do. I thank God for a man that doesn’t want to go to hell.”

Did you get that? I am reinforcing the fact that he wants to go to heaven. I’m keeping everything positive.

I don’t say, “Can I show this to you?” or “Do you mind if I read the Bible to you?” That’s negative and you will probably get a negative answer. I just say, “I’m so glad you don’t want to go to hell and I will just take a minute here to show you some verses. I don’t have long and I know you don’t, either. There’s three things that you need to know. First, Jesus died for you. Isn’t that wonderful? Two, Jesus loves you. Isn’t that wonderful? Three, Jesus wants you to go to heaven. Isn’t that wonderful? And I’m so glad that you want to.”

See, I am being positive.

He may say he has a lot of questions, but unsaved people don’t have questions. **Don’t get on unsaved people’s questions. Tell them that you will answer their questions later**, but first you want to read a few verses of Scripture. Unsaved people don’t have questions. If you get them saved, that answers all of them.

Let me tell you how to deal with someone who has a dumb spirit who bucks getting saved. You share the gospel and get them to the point of praying the sinner’s

prayer, but they stop. How do you get that type of person saved? Now, this will work in most cases. If he is a man, put your hand on his shoulder and say, “Mr. Jones, I want to have prayer for you. I’m thrilled you want to go to heaven. God has been good to you. Bow your head with me. Then I pray, “Lord, I’m so thankful for this man that doesn’t want to burn in hell. I’m so thrilled he wants to go to heaven and not take his kids to hell. I thank you for this man. And I pray you will help him to see that need.”

While our heads are still bowed, I say, “Mr. Jones, if you want heaven as your home and Christ as your Saviour, pray this prayer. Lord Jesus.” And **if he doesn’t repeat that and tries not to pray, I squeeze his shoulder.** I use this technique. If I am dealing with the president of the bank, I take his hand and when it comes time for him to pray, I squeeze his hand. We’ve titled that the Carl Hatch squeeze. **It works.** If I am dealing with a woman, I ask her to put her hand on the Bible, and when it comes time to pray I just tap her hand gently. **It works; it works!**

(This is from a Carl Hatch soul winning seminar at Texas Baptist University. Hatch was called the world’s greatest soul winner by *Sword of the Lord* editor Curtis Hutson and by Jack Hyles.)

This is nothing more than cheap salesmanship. It might be a good way to sell a used car, but it is a bad way to win souls to Christ. There is not a hint of such a thing in Scripture.

We can’t imagine the Lord Jesus or the apostles doing such a thing. When Jesus dealt with the woman at the well, He didn’t ask a bunch of leading questions to keep the subject positive. He is the one who brought up the woman’s immoral lifestyle. When Christ dealt with Nicodemus, He confronted the man with his need of the new birth, which Nicodemus didn’t find positive at all. Christ told the rich young ruler to sell everything he had and follow Him. He told people if they

didn't repent they would perish, which is a very negative approach (Lu. 13:1-5). He told the people that only those who continue in His Word are true disciples (Joh. 8:30-31).

The Carl Hatch Squeeze is a damnable practice that turns biblical evangelism into cheap salesmanship. Hatch didn't take the time to deal carefully and clearly with any part of the gospel. Who and what was Christ? What is sin? What does it mean that Christ died for my sins? What does it mean that He died according to the Scriptures? What does it mean that He rose from the dead? And Hatch didn't even hint at repentance.

Jesus and the evangelists in the early churches knew absolutely nothing of the "Carl Hatch Squeeze."

4. A quick program

Another thing that happened in the 1970s to corrupt the practice of evangelism was to develop a quick program.

Jack Hyles' soul winning books encouraged evangelists to try to lead a complete stranger in a sinner's prayer after just a few minutes. Many times he told of leading people in a sinner's prayer in 10 or 15 minutes.

One afternoon I went soul winning with a pastor who was trained in this method. He is a man of God, but he has unthinkingly adopted the methodology he was taught. At each door he would go through Hyles' plan. He would ask the individual if he or she would like to go to heaven when he died and if he would listen while he told him how to do that. None of them even let us into the house, as I remember, and they showed zero interest in Jesus Christ. But when they didn't actually close the door, the pastor would quickly go through the most basic points of the "Romans Road" (e.g., you are a sinner, the wages of sin is death, the gift of God in Christ is eternal life). After that presentation, which took only a few minutes, he said, "Do you have any questions?" None did. And then he asked, "Would you like to pray now to receive Christ as your Saviour?" None of the people were

interested enough even to let us into their houses and they had no questions, but he was ready to lead them in a sinner's prayer in such a circumstance. That is Quick Prayerism. And these were mostly university students who were steeped in evolution and humanism. Later I asked the pastor why he didn't even hint at repentance in his presentation, and he said that he hadn't thought about it.

Following is the full content of Jack Hyles' Romans' Road:

I always use the following: "Now, Mr. Doe, there are only four things you must know to be saved. First, you must know that you are a sinner. For example, Romans 3:10 says, 'As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.' Let me illustrate. If there is none righteous, that means I'm not righteous, doesn't it? (Notice, I didn't get him unrighteous first; I got me unrighteous. Never put the sinner below you. You always let him know that but for the grace of God you would be in the fix he is in. You get yourself lost first.) So if there is none righteous, I'm not righteous. If there is none righteous, then Mr. Doe, you are not righteous. Also, it says, 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' Now if all have sinned, that means I've sinned--right? That means your wife has sinned, and that means you have sinned."

If he still acts like he is not a sinner, you just list a few sins and you will catch him. A lot of times I say this: "You do realize that you are a sinner? For example, the Bible mentions some sins such as evil thinking, bad literature, ugly disposition, etc." Somewhere along that line there will be something that he does. Show him that he is a sinner.

Second, show him the price on sin. Romans 5:12: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin..." What kind of death? All death, both spiritual and physical death, the sum total of death. "... and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is

death...” So there is a price on sin. What is that price? Death. What kind of death? That includes the second death of Revelation 20:14, and that second death is the Lake of Fire. So ultimately a person who is a sinner must pay for it by going to Hell. That is the basic price on sin.

Third, the next thing we must do is show that Jesus paid the price. So I say this: “Mr. Doe, God looked down from Heaven and saw that you were a sinner. He saw that you were in debt. He saw that you and I deserved to go to Hell. He wanted to save us and made a plan to do it. He came to the world Himself. His name was Jesus. He was God in a human body. For thirty-three years He lived here in this world. He did not commit one single sin. This is important. Mr. Doe, suppose that Jesus Christ had sinned one time only. The price on sin being death or Hell, where would Jesus have had to go when He died? The answer is Hell, but He did not sin. He did not commit one sin, but He went to the cross, and on the cross He suffered spiritual death when He said, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ He suffered the same thing that a lost person will have to suffer in Hell. I’ll go farther than that. I believe that He suffered as much in that moment on Calvary as the sum total eternal suffering of all the lost people who will ever go to Hell to stay forever. Actually He was paying our price for our sins. He was becoming our substitute.”

Fourth, “If we will receive that price as our hope for Heaven and receive Him as our Saviour from sin, He will make us His children and take us to Heaven when we die” (Hyles *Let’s Go Soul Winning*).

This is not even the complete gospel, because Hyles says nothing about Christ’s resurrection.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose

again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Co. 15:3-4).

But even if the Hyles plan included the resurrection, it is an extremely shallow presentation of the gospel. It might be enough for someone who has grown up in a Bible-believing church in the Bible Belt of America and has been taught the principles of the Bible all his life. But it isn't enough for an individual who has never heard the gospel. It isn't enough for an atheistic Humanist, a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Muslim. It's too shallow, too basic, too quick.

Consider the fact that man is a sinner. No one can be saved if he does not believe and acknowledge that he is a sinner, and that he is *such a sinner* that he absolutely *deserves* eternal hell.

When asked if they believe they are a sinner, many people will answer in the affirmative simply because they know that they are not perfect, but at the same time, they do not believe that they are so wicked as to deserve God's wrath. Most people will admit that they aren't perfect, but they also think of themselves as basically good or at least that their good can outweigh the bad. They know they have done wrong, but they don't think of themselves as deserving of hell. In their minds, they redefine "sin" to be a lack of perfection or a lack self-esteem or (if Catholics) they divide sin into "categories" of mortal and venial, or some such thing.

They do not believe that they are sinners from conception by nature (Psalm 51:5) and that even their very righteousness is as filthy rags before a holy God (Isaiah 64:6).

An example of *not* plowing the ground sufficiently was told to me by a pastor friend who had the following experience at Lancaster Baptist Church in Lancaster, California:

“We went out with their staff on Saturday morning for soul winning. We were immediately partnered up with some of the veterans. The first door we went to, we

spoke to a friendly Catholic guy and to my surprise, the guy got ‘saved’ before my very eyes as ----- took him from a few scripture passages to the sinner’s prayer so smoothly that I was caught off guard. I caught myself and while ----- was recording this man’s contact details and writing it down, I asked the man whether (1) he believed that he was a good person and (2) that it is possible to go to heaven by being a good person. This man who had just got ‘saved’ told me ‘YES.’ I looked around and the other two men beside me said nothing and did nothing. We went to a few more places and eventually reached a home with a Roman Catholic young lady who came to the door. She said she was a professing Christian. Even though she said that all churches were the same ----- gave her assurance of salvation by quoting 1 John 5:13.”

It is unconscionable to deal with people in such a shallow way. The “Catholic guy” acknowledged that he is a “sinner,” but he didn’t mean by that that he was deserving of hell. He didn’t mean what the Bible means. He still thought of himself as basically a good person deserving of heaven because of his “good deeds”! Obviously he wasn’t ready to get saved and should not have been led in a sinner’s prayer. It was all too hasty and shallow.

One time I was on visitation with a man in Oklahoma City when a woman invited us into her house. Her teenage children were in the living room, so we accepted the invitation and my partner began to talk to her. Though it was soon evident that her language was Portuguese and her English was very rudimentary, he proceeded to give her the Romans Road and try to lead her in a sinner’s prayer. I stopped him and suggested that we should obtain a Portuguese Bible and find someone who speaks her language.

Jack Hyles told of a man in Texas who supposedly led a hitchhiker to Christ even though the man was deaf and dumb and couldn’t read!

“He picked up a hitchhiker and tried to witness to him. The hitchhiker shook his head. He then talked real loud, but the hitchhiker pointed to his ears and shook his head. So this new convert started writing the Gospel out and the hitchhiker pointed down and shook his head. He couldn’t read, he couldn’t hear, he couldn’t talk. So this soul winner, who went to the third grade and couldn’t even spell Jesus, stopped the car and got out, took his Bible, pointed to the Bible, pointed to his heart, pointed to Heaven, made a motion to open your heart and let Him come in, got on his knees and began to pray. The deaf and dumb fellow got on his knees and mumbled a bit, got up with a smile of Heaven on his face, pointed to the Bible, pointed to Heaven and pointed to his heart” (*Let’s Build an Evangelistic Church*).

This isn’t biblical evangelism; it is blind mysticism.

This evangelistic methodology is so brief and quick that it is expected to produce salvation during the few minutes of a gospel invitation in a church service or an evangelistic meeting. I recall the practice of Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Every Sunday morning people would come forward for “salvation,” be dealt with in the front of the auditorium, be led in a sinner’s prayer, and then be baptized after answering a few simple questions in the affirmative, all in the space of a few minutes.

I have always thought that this program is unscriptural and even ridiculous. At the very least, seekers should be taken to another room and dealt with carefully, for as long as it takes, and there should be no pressure whatsoever.

5. Not looking for evidence

Another thing that happened in the 1970s to corrupt the practice of evangelism was to stop looking for evidence.

I was discussing the doctrine of repentance with a missionary some years ago in England. He had told me that many people were being saved through their soul winning

outreach, but when I asked about the church services, he said that they had a small number of people in the services and admitted that most of the people being “saved” were not interested enough even to attend the services. I challenged him about the claim that the people were actually being saved. I asked, “How can you say they are saved when there is no evidence of it in their lives?” He became agitated and strongly countered that I had no right to judge the salvation of people who were making professions through his ministry. He said, “You cannot know who is saved.” This man had recently attended Hyles Pastor’s School, and he said the featured topic that year was repentance!

The idea that you cannot tell if someone is saved is heresy. It is possible, of course, for a person to show false signs of salvation and to deceive people, as Judas did. And we are not saying that a genuinely saved person will suddenly be sinlessly perfect or that every true believer is equally zealous to serve Christ or that a saved person immediately makes “Jesus Lord of his entire life.” But the Bible is clear that if someone is genuinely saved, there will definitely be evidence in his or her life. I don’t know of one example of conversion in the New Testament that did not result in a dramatically changed life. Do you?

For several weeks in 1977, my wife and I followed up on a Phoster Club soul-winning program in a fundamental Baptist church. Though the Phoster Club ladies reported many salvations and had a stack of cards representing “decisions for Christ,” we did not find even one person who demonstrated biblical evidence. In fact, most of the people we tried to follow up on didn’t even invite us into the house for a talk.

Churches reported thousands of souls saved annually, though these numbers were not reflected in the active membership. Jack Hyles claimed that his church saw more people saved on May 3, 1998, than were saved and baptized on the day of Pentecost. He estimated that around 15,000

people were saved and 5,112 were baptized on that one day. But the Wednesday night crowd, which is the truest indication of the real church, was not more than several hundred, and that included Hyles-Anderson college students.

First Baptist Church's Spanish department reported 35,000 professions from 1977-1987, but the average attendance was never more than 1,400 (www.firesofevangelism.org/Origin.html).

Longview Baptist Temple in Longview, Texas, claims that more than one million people were won to Christ in 25 years, which is an average of 40,000 a year (www.lbtministries.com/Pastor/Meet_Our_Pastor.htm). Yet on an average mid-week service, which is the truest reflection of an American church's active membership, you will find only a few hundred people in attendance.

When we were given the "decision" cards to follow up a county fair ministry in Oklahoma in the late 1990s, of the hundreds of professions that were recorded we could not find *even one* person who gave any evidence of salvation or was even interested in attending church.

A pastor friend followed up on the more than 100 "salvation decisions" that were made at a county fair ministry in Kentucky in 2011, and he *did not find one soul* who was even interested enough in Christ to attend church.

Quick Prayerism with its empty statistics is not something that is practiced only by Independent Baptists.

In the 1990s, the Assemblies of God had an evangelistic outreach called "Decade of Harvest," and of the 3.5 million professions only five out of 100 actually joined a church, and much fewer than that proved to be true disciples of Christ.

The same is true for the Southern Baptist Convention. SBC Evangelist Jim Elliff says, "Our largest pizza supper may bring in a hundred new 'converts,' but we will likely get only a few of those on the roll. [And even the vast majority of

these will not become faithful church members.] In other words, if you compare all who we say have become Christians through our evangelistic efforts, to those who actually show signs of being regenerate, we should be red-faced” (“Southern Baptists, An Unregenerate Denomination,” ccwtoday.org).

6. Repentance was redefined.

Another thing that happened in the 1970s to corrupt the practice of evangelism was the redefinition of the doctrine of repentance.

We have seen that Independent Baptist preachers formerly taught a clear doctrine of repentance as a turning, a surrender, a change of mind that results in a change of life, but this changed.

Instead of repentance and faith as two different things, as Paul taught (Acts 20:21), repentance and faith became one thing. Repentance became faith.

Instead of a turning to God from sin and false religion, repentance became a *turning from unbelief to belief*.

Instead of repentance as something that always produces evidence (Acts 26:20), repentance became something that *might not be seen*.

Consider some examples:

Curtis Hutson - “The problem and confusion is not preaching repentance but attaching the wrong definition to the word. For instance, to say that repentance means to turn from sin, or to say that repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action, is to give a wrong definition to the word” (*Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach?* Sword of the Lord, 1986, p. 16).

Jack Hyles - “So, yes, there is a repentance from unbelief in order to believe. ... With your will you believe and rely upon Christ to save you. In order to believe, you have to repent of unbelief. That which makes a man lost must be

corrected” (*Enemies of Soulwinning*, 1993). Hyles taught that repentance *does not* mean “to turn from sin.”

Bob Gray - “10,446 professions of faith in 1995. ... Repentance is not a doctrine. The word ‘repent’ is not even found in the book of John. It is obviously assumed by God that ‘repentance’ is a part of ‘believing.’ ... Repentance is not turning from your sins. ... Repentance is to change one’s mind from unbelief to belief in Christ” (“A Message from the Pastor,” *The Soulwinner*, January 1996, Longview Baptist Temple, Longview, Texas).

Brent Neal - “The emphasis upon repentance has created confusion among preachers young and old. It has been a source of discouragement to soulwinners. ... I have two choices. I can follow those who wear their soulwinning pins and carry New Testaments, or I can follow those who are critical of leading people to Christ. May the critics repent and may the soulwinners realize that we are on the same team” (“Is Repentance an Attack on Soulwinning?” *The Baptist Contender*, June 1996).

Fred Afman of Tennessee Temple - “The many false conditions of salvation [include] water baptism and repentance” (“The Way of Salvation,” Sunday School class, Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, May 1996; quoted from Chris McNeilly, *The Great Omission*, pp. 25, 26).

Tolbert Moore - “If someone says: repent for sins and you are not saved, what do they mean by that? ... repentance in the true sense of the word really means to turn from being an unbeliever and to become a believer” (“Repentance and Lordship Salvation,” *The Gospel Preacher*, September 1996).

In the 1980s, during Curtis Hutson’s tenure, The Sword of the Lord stopped publishing Leon Maurer’s *Soul Winning: The Challenge of the Hour*, which said, “A rotely memorized

prayer or some repeated statement without true repentance and faith never saves anyone.”

The *Sword* also stopped publishing John Rice’s *Here Are More Questions*, in which Rice said, “People ought to be taught to turn from sin in genuine repentance” (Vol. II, p. 425).

Further, *The Sword Hymnal* was purged of many references to repentance.

By changing the doctrine of repentance and by calling the old doctrine of repentance the “enemy of soul winning,” Jack Hyles was saying that a biblical understanding of repentance got in the way of his program. The old doctrine of repentance is not the enemy of biblical soul winning; it is the enemy of the Jack Hyles-type soul winning.

A traditional biblical understanding of repentance does not allow a man to claim that thousands of sinners are being saved when most of them show no evidence of regeneration. A traditional biblical understanding of repentance does not allow a man to count a mere sinner’s prayer as salvation. It is one thing to say that 100 or 1,000 people prayed a prayer; it is another thing to say that those people are saved and to give them assurance of salvation.

If they are saved, there will be a change.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:19).

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak” (Hebrews 6:9).

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4).

The Bible warns that profession of salvation is not the same as possession.

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16).

7. The doctrine of eternal security was corrupted.

Another thing that happened in the 1970s to corrupt the practice of evangelism is that the biblical doctrine of eternal security was divorced from a life-changing salvation experience.

Consider the following passages carefully:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one” (Joh. 10:27-30).

Christ's promise of eternal life is not for everyone who prays a sinner's prayer; it is for those who hear his voice and follow Him. That is evidence, and eternal security is never divorced from a life-changing born again experience.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 Jo. 3:2-3).

Verse 2 describes eternal security, and verse 3 describes the evidence of the born again child of God who has eternal security.

See also 1 Co. 15:1-2; Col. 1:21-23; 2 Ti. 2:19; Heb. 6:8-11; 10:38-39.

But in the 1970s, eternal security was divorced from a change of life and the evidence of an obedient walk. The typical soul winning program aimed to lead someone in a sinner's prayer and then give him "assurance of salvation" immediately, even if there was no evidence that the person was even sincere in the prayer, even if the person would not so much as invite the soul winner into his house.

Once my wife was taken on "soul winning visitation" by a supposed expert who led a man in a sinner's prayer. While the expert was writing down the man's information, the man told my wife, "I don't really believe that stuff." Yet he was given "assurance" and reported as a convert.

Granting assurance of salvation is the work of the Spirit of God (Ro. 8:16; Ga. 4:6; 1 Jo. 5:10). We can show the individual where assurance is found, which is in God's Word, but we can't give the assurance. The Lord knows those that are His, and the believer's part is to demonstrate his salvation by departing from iniquity (2 Ti. 2:19).

8. A focus on "child evangelism"

Another thing that happened in the 1970s to corrupt the practice of evangelism was a focus on child evangelism.

A huge emphasis was placed on winning little children to Christ and baptizing them.

The Vacation Bible School program was geared toward this. It was at a VBS that I made an empty profession of Christ and was baptized when I was 10-11 years old.

In the Southern Baptist Convention, there was a 96% growth rate from 1970 to 2010 *in baptisms of pre-schoolers*. Consider the statistics for 2013: A full 60% of SBC churches baptized *zero* youth between ages of 12-17 and 80% baptized zero or just one young adult ages 18-29. But there was an explosion in the baptisms of "five and under" (*Annual Church Profile*, 2013).

That is Baptist infant baptism!

A child can believe on Jesus Christ savingly, but it is doubtful that a pre-schooler can do this.

We know that there were no small children baptized on the day of Pentecost, because all of the 3,000 who were baptized “continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). That is not the description of a five-year-old child.

I grew up under this type of ministry and philosophy, and the fruit was wretched. It plays a major role in building mixed multitude churches, meaning churches whose membership has a large percentage of unregenerate Christians. The vast majority of the children that got “saved” at a young age either fell away to the world in adolescence or stayed in the church as lukewarm, worldly Christians.

In the 1970s and 1980s, some church planters actually tried to build churches on child evangelism, driven by bus ministries and gimmicks, which is not what we see in Acts 13-14, and this is a passage of Scripture specifically given as the preeminent example of missionary church planting for the entire age.

Conclusion

Shallow, unscriptural soul winning and neglect of repentance have produced incredibly weak churches. It has produced churches that are mixed multitudes instead of churches of disciples.

If professing Christians are rebels against God’s Word and refuse to obey the preaching, refuse to be faithful, refuse to separate from the world, are insubordinate to pastoral authority, it is probably because they aren’t saved. As we have seen, the Bible is very clear on this point. See, for example, John 8:47; 10:27; Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:3-4.

Most churches are far too careless about salvation. They pronounce people, including children, saved on a mere profession with no regard for biblical evidence.

Long ago I rejected this tradition. My sole authority for faith and practice is the Bible, and in the Bible we see an emphasis on *genuine spiritual conversion with evidence*.

One of my first books was *Does Salvation Make a Difference?* For more than 40 years I have warned about the carelessness I have witnessed both in Southern Baptist and Independent Baptist churches. We want to follow the Bible, not human tradition, and the biblical example is Acts 2:41-42. This is a description of a church of born again disciples.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Many Are Rejecting Quick Prayerism

I thank the Lord that many preachers who were trained in the unscriptural evangelistic methodology of Quick Prayerism are turning away from it.

When I first published “Pentecost vs. Hylescost” in April 1998, I received the largest response from preachers that I had ever received for any other article or book to that time, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Since then hundreds of fundamental Baptist preachers have thanked me for speaking out about this error.

One Ontario pastor’s response was typical. He said:

“I have been to Hyles Pastor’s School many times; twenty years ago I would have rejected your statements as nearly blasphemous, but today I know that you are right and that it is important that this error of quick prayerism be exposed. I am thankful for your willingness to do so and praise the Lord for your *O Timothy* magazine.”

“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, THAT THEY SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD, AND DO WORKS MEET FOR REPENTANCE” (Acts 26:19-20).

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