

Hunter III, George G. Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry & Evangelism. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003.

**Online responses to Dr. William Payne's questions concerning Dr. Hunter's book
Radical Outreach**

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Chapter 1: *Western Christianity's "Corinthian" Future*

Question:

"Too often, underneath the veneer, the agenda has changed. The laity now obsess over their own needs and interests, maintaining the institution and perpetuating traditions as ends in themselves; whereas, too often, the clergy are protecting their jobs or advancing their careers or pursuing 'politically correct' agendas or preparing for retirement. They are no longer a Christian people on a mission, in any sense, that the early apostles would recognize. Indeed, they have redefined Christianity's main business to fit their changed agendas." (P. 29)

According to Hunter, what is the "main business" of the church and why does he call it apostolic? How have modern churches hijacked the church and diverted it from the main business? Hunter uses the term "dysfunctional" to describe Old Corinth. He says that there is a parallel between it and the modern church in America. Do you agree with his assessment?

Finally, Hunter believes that pathological churches become healthy by engaging in apostolic ministry. He says that three populations in America are most ripe for the apostolic witness of the local church: secular people with little or no Christian memory, those that the traditional church has rejected and does not think will respond to the Gospel, and recent immigrants. Based on your experience and the content of chapter one, how does apostolic ministry transform local churches?

Response

Date: Wednesday, April 6, 2005 4:18pm

The "Main business" of the church certainly is the Great Commission and I would agree that modern churches have diverted the Church from its primary business. The parallel between the church at Corinth and today's church are easily seen in Dr. Hunter's discussion.

I would like to supply a specific example of this dynamic that can be found in most evangelical churches today. A program that saw incredible growth in churches in the early part of this century. It started as an outreach program for children who worked in

factories during the week, those that were immigrants with no access to formal education and those children of the down and out who worked on the farms in the 1860s and 1870s in America. This missionary work was called the Sunday School. Men such as David C. Cook (a school teacher and Christian) were concerned regarding the needs of children in their community, and developed Sunday School Missions in an effort to rebuild communities that were ravaged in many of the same ways that Dr. Hunter describes in today's America.

Secular people, with no spiritual background, the rejected and recent immigrants were all ministered to through the Sunday School (Missions) of Cook's time (he alone taught 3-4 classes of 300 or more children each week!). This program was begun as a missionary work to meet the needs of the people of that time. It was an example of what Dr. Hunter calls an Apostolic ministry. I would agree with him that our Churches need new vital ministries that are relevant to our societies needs!

When was the last time your Sunday School was viewed as a work of mission by your church to meet the needs of your community? Do you simply have a program for educating "Church Kids" or one that is a mission work that has your teachers trained in teaching ESL (English as a second language), or how to help children with learning disorders or ADD? Is your church willing to minister to dirty unwashed, unruly kids with learning, health and traumatic family problems? Would people in your church say "we don't like the types of kids that you are bringing here." (A church actually told me that once when I was a youth minister!)

That's the transforming power of the Apostolic Church (I think). When we are truly sharing in the work that Jesus modeled for us. That's when we aren't protecting our programs and the status quo and we are taking on the larger mission, sharing Christ's love in word and deed with the whole world.

Jesus made disciples. The disciples shared in the work He did and we are to continue His work, for that is what disciples do.

Chapter 2: *A Short History of Apostolic Ministry*

Question:

"Christ calls his churches to love, believe in, serve, reach out to, welcome, and received those people and populations that society's 'establishment' regards as unlikely or even hopeless, and to deploy their converts in witness and ministry. A church devoid of this redemptive vision may well provide good 'chaplaincy service' to a gathered colony of conventional believers. Indeed, this characterizes the main business of at least a quarter million churches in the U.S.A. alone, and the apparent objective of most divinity schools' curriculums is to provide more 'chaplains' for such churches. So most pastors consider themselves not as 'fishers of men' (and women), but as 'keepers of the aquarium.' Indeed, it has not even occurred to most of the pastors who claim to be ordained in 'apostolic succession' that they are thereby called to succeed the ancient apostles in ministry to pre-Christian populations."

In this chapter and in his book "Church for the Unchurched," Hunter argues that apostolic churches exist to bridge the unchurched to God. They should define their corporate cultures and ministries to reflect this overarching core value. However, most of the people in the pews think that the church exists to serve them and make them feel good. They pay tithe like YMCA clients pay membership fees. Unfortunately, many pastors get sucked into this mind set and become very good chaplains. It is the unwritten job description for most pastors. As long as pastors and denominations enable this expectation to exist, pastors will continue to be held captive to it.

Do you agree with Hunter? If you do, how will you keep from becoming a chaplain to an institutionalized church? If you have already fallen into this trap, how will you attempt to transform your congregation? If you are an apostolic pastor, how have you avoided the trap?

Has your experience and education at this seminary equipped you to become an apostolic pastor, or is ATS similar to the divinity schools that Hunter mentioned? If you had a voice in the curriculum review that ATS is undergoing, what would you say in regards to Hunter's observations and your experiences here?

Response

Date: Thursday, April 14, 2005 8:49am

Do you agree with Hunter? I do agree with Hunter from a big picture perspective. The mandate given by Jesus, to go and make, certainly requires this.

In this chapter I found several of Hunter's arguments to lack credibility and be irrelevant and unnecessary to his thesis. For brevity here I will quickly try to list these points.

1) The characterization of Church leadership as Exaggerating and forgetful, not discovering and never-knowing the true power of salvation and sharing this with others. While the "pre-Christian" (the almost saintly) are searching in earnest for Jesus and the evil church is holding back. This is an over characterization made to make a point.

2) "Jesus was making a profound social statement by including Matthew as a prominent

member of the twelve” (Hunter, 47). Jesus ‘LOVED’ Matthew! Jesus saw the heart and not the career or stereotype; do we make social statements or see people? I believe the fact that Jesus was not making a social statement and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit makes this a more compelling argument.

3) “Luke’s focus in the Acts of the Apostles is regrettably selective.” (Hunter, 53). Do I need to comment on what I think of this sentence? Hunter thinks we are fortunate to have later traditions, although they embellish the truth (I’d say manufacture stories). So we pick from these writings the themes we want to bolster our claims and discard the rest. This is tasteless to me and unnecessary as Hunter has already made his argument firm through the teaching of Jesus in the gospel accounts.

4) Hunters’ final two examples in this ‘history’ are from the Baptist and Pentecostal movements. Neither of these movements support apostolic succession and neither follow the Apostles or are a creedal people in their theology. Both traditions seek to follow only the example Jesus, and canonized scripture as we are taught and guided by the Holy Spirit. Neither group, I would guess would categorize themselves as being followers of the apostles, but direct followers of Jesus.

So to finish answering the questions now (I feel better after getting that stuff off my chest!). How do I keep from avoiding the trap? Easy answer, follow the example of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I believe authentic ministry does not allow us to see distinctions between people in the way the world does. For example: in the eyes of Jesus who is poor in the world? Those who are wealthy are poor if they do not know Christ. Who is hungry? Those that do not have the bread of life. Who did Jesus call? People who were in spiritual need, regardless of social status or economic need. Jesus sends us out to reach ALL. We are not the children of the apostles, we are brothers with Christ.

The diversity of ATS and the encouragement of spiritual formation and team-based ministry have given encouragement to me as I continue in my journey to seek to serve our savior. The care for scripture and drive to relationship found at ATS are awesome.

Chapter 3: *Apostolic Ministry through “Cultural Relevance”*

Question:

In the incarnation, God clothed himself in the culture of a Galilean Jew. From that context, he communicated the immutable truth of God in culturally specific ways. In turn, his disciples took Christ's message and reclothed it in the cultural categories of other peoples as they witnessed to Christ from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. As such, the Christianity that spread from India to Spain looked differently on the outside (form), but remained the same on the inside (meaning). In other words, as the gospel was contextualized, the disciples used the cultural forms of the people to whom they witnessed as they communicated the unchanging message of truth to them.

According to Hunter, this basic principle has been key to the apostolic nature of the church in every age. He uses the examples of the Celtic church, the Wesleyan revival, and Pentecostalism to illustrate his various points. That is why he argues so vehemently for cultural relevancy and against cultural imperialism as exemplified by the Jewish preachers who attempted to make every Gentile convert Jewish. He believes that culturally relevant churches will be able to evangelize the unchurched populations in America for the same reasons that the early church turned the world upside down for Christ. Furthermore, he argues that every church is culturally relevant to someone. Unfortunately, traditional churches no longer speak the language or understand the culture of the unchurched masses. The cultural distance between the traditional churches and the unchurched populations continues to grow. In many cases, a new convert in a traditional church has to be converted to the church culture before he or she can be converted to Christ.

Hunter does not want to do away with traditional worship. If it meets the spiritual needs of a congregation and a local population, it should be continued. Even still, a traditional church cannot stop there. Traditional churches have an obligation to evangelize the unchurched masses. In so doing, they must seek the lost and attempt to communicate the truth of God to them in the same way that Christ incarnated the truth of God to Palestinian Jews. In so doing, they must meet real needs and become culturally relevant.

Finally, when a congregation takes its focus off itself and attempts to engage the apostolic mission of the church, things have to change. Change causes resistance. Some have argued that the resistance is too great. Instead of changing the focus of traditional churches, they argue that we should plant new churches and start new worship services that are culturally relevant with the understanding that these congregations will replace the traditional ones after the traditional ones die a natural death. Already, many churches follow this rule when dealing with declining Sunday school classes and other types of small groups in the local congregation. Everything has a life-cycle.

In what ways do you agree with the principle that Hunter advocates and the implications that are associated with it? Key in on some aspect of this summary and discuss the content of Hunter's book.

Response

Date: Wednesday, April 20, 2005 1:36pm

To try to stay on point and answer this question as briefly (and interestingly) as possible. I have divided it into three parts.

1) In what ways do I agree with the Hunter's principle which states that these congregations will replace the old structure after the non-working models of church ministry die a natural death?

The only way new ministries succeed is if the heart of God is at work within the ministry. Dr. Hunter has some good things to say. But God's work is not found in models or ministries, it is found in the hearts of His people. I have a greater sense as I read these pages of how the hearts of God's people need to experience His transforming love, for them and for others.

2) What implications are associated with this theory?

That people will figure out what works, when they see other things not working. Perhaps if God's people cry out for revival and are transformed internally this will be the case. Without the Holy Spirit's power, this does not stand a chance.

3) Key in on some aspect of this summary and discuss the content of Hunter's book. The key implication that I see in your summary is much the same implication that I got from this chapter. How do we change the Church to make it relevant?

Dr. Hunter provides a fine discussion of what does not work and provides insight in what would work within the Church's way of doing business. I feel however, that there is something missing in this chapter. Something more personal than changing the way the Church (as a body) does business and this is what he finds in his concluding piece of this chapter. We face the resistance of the individual to change, for this is what the Church is made up of after all. I would say that we cannot transform the ministry of the Church without being intent on first witnessing the transformation of the individuals in the Church.

As Dr. Hunter keys on the Pentecostal movement to make a point he does not really mention the unavoidable and incredible personal transformation stories that individuals from this movement invariably tell.

I am glad that Dr. Hunter mentions the importance of having a "religion of the heart" When he speaks of "the Pentecostal movement's aggressive openness to different cultures" (Hunter, 89) I hope that he realizes the reason for this is that individuals are being transformed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of scripture how to be selfless lovers of others.

Church members misunderstand the need for change in the corporate body, when they themselves aren't undergoing any changes.

I think that a loving heart is, more important to ministry, than new programs or methods. When people love God and love others new ministries will pop up left and right. (Regardless of what is there already). Once people learn how to love those that God seeks and loves (marginalized, unclean, sinful), vital ministry will happen.

Chapter 4: *Apostolic Ministry through an Empowered Laity*

Question:

In this chapter, Hunter contrasts Baxter's model of pastor dominated ministry to the apostolic model of lay ministry. He illustrates the apostolic model with many examples. Particularly, he uses early Methodism to show the distinction between Baxter and the apostolic model. According to Hunter, what is Baxter's model? What is the apostolic model that Hunter avers in this chapter related to the ministry of the laity? How does this model take Luther's concept of the priesthood of all believers to its logical conclusion? Try to illustrate your responses with personal experiences?

Response

Date: Thursday, April 28, 2005 8:05am

1) Baxter's model states that virtually all ministry that matters, such as evangelism, church planting and mission to others is assigned to ordained priest. This need for the clergy to carry out the vital ministry efforts is looked upon by Hunter as narcissistic and self centered. Although Hunter has so negatively framed Baxter, there appears to have been some fruit produced by his work. "The number of converts that filled his church far exceeds his evangelistic efforts".

2) The apostolic model that Hunter covers in this chapter relates to the ministry of the laity as they are involved in ministry. Both involvement in small groups and involvement in a ministry within the church are needed for the individual Christian to mature and have their needs met appropriately within the church.

Hunter repeatedly refers to the positive aspects of apostolic ministry as the Wesley model. I should say this; I'm not really in agreement with Hunter's disdain for Baxter and love for Wesley. In my opinion Wesley brought organization to Methodism during the Great Awakening (with the tutelage of men such as George Whitefield). The Great Awakening was a work of God that Wesley responded to, although his desire would have been to have a greater ability to educate both the laity and clergy, he was flexible to meet the needs of the church. Much of his planning and organization were wrapped around finding ways to provide leadership by the clergy to the laity.

The Baptist tradition grew as quickly as Methodism during this time and the Baptist model is completely ignored by Hunter. The Baptist model was less structured than Methodism and centered on the reliability and authority of scripture, direct and personal preaching, the universal need for spiritual rebirth and a direct call for repentance and faith in Christ,

followed by the acceptance of Christ's final commission as a mandate for personal witness and world mission.

3) I have in some way already stated that I do not believe that Hunter's Wesley model takes the priesthood of all believers far enough. The Baptist tradition in my opinion during this time came more closely to Luther's premise.

4) Personally I have seen pastors be 'successful' utilizing both models. I am not convinced that the model alone is the key factor involved here. To be a mature Christian you do the work of the pastor. So therefore the Pastor can't get out of doing the work by giving it to others. A Pastor modeling the work can be vital to the teaching and instruction of others. Sometimes the model of a pastor is caught by others and mimicked, even if his goal was not to teach this model. The Holy Spirit plays a key role here in the receptiveness and transformation of those in the church as the laity are prepared to do ministry. God likes seepage (Hunter dislikes); it shows that no model can contain God. God works outside of both good and bad models; he is a living being not caught in a model, not needing to use a model.

I do believe that Wesley had 'high expectations' for the church. Clearly high expectations assist people in responding positively. Churches with low expectations simply do not motivate people for service. One of the highest expectations we can have for others is that they be transformed by the gospel. That God can change us is amazing, worth sharing and helpful. That He can be present with us, is the cornerstone to what I believe apostolic ministry really is about. Apostolic ministry needs to be about presence more than a model, after all the twelve were known as Apostles because of their presence with God. This is what makes small groups effective and evangelism happen, the presence of God without this no model will work.

Chapter 5: *Recovery Ministries As a Prototype for Outreach Ministries*

Question:

In this chapter, Hunter makes a passionate case for recovery ministries. Obviously, he is very serious about ministry to people with addictions. He calls them the new barbarians and believes that apostolic churches should attempt to reach people like those suffering from addictions.

Hunter's involvement with the recovery movement began when his son was a senior at a Christian high school. He took a few drags off a joint after he had been injured in a soccer game. At that moment, he became a drug addict. Immediately, it consumed him. After many long years of recovery and lapsing, his son finally found freedom in Christ and a Christian community. That is one of the main reasons that Hunter is so enthusiastic about recovery ministries in churches.

In some sense, every unregenerate person is addicted to something. Sin is an addiction. That is the reality of our fallen humanity. Addiction is very similar to the sin of idolatry. Read the 12 steps on page 134 and substitute the word "sin" where it says alcohol. Could you develop an evangelism ministry that reflected the 12 step program? Does this formula expose the reality of most sinners?

Our journey with Christ leads us away from the bondage to sin and into the freedom of salvation. Repentance is central to salvation. Even though repentance is an event, the road to Christlikeness and healing may take a lifetime. In an effort to make the Gospel more appealing to middle class America, have we downplayed the radical nature of sin and the need for a 12 approach to discipleship?

Response

Date: Wednesday, May 4, 2005 12:40pm

1) Could you develop a ministry of evangelism that reflected the 12 step program? Does this formula expose the reality of most sinners?

To this question I would say that this formula exposes the reality of all people. Everyone is a sinner. Everyone is still in some way broken and needs either an initial transformation, or further transformation to reach the likeness of Christ?

To continue, everyone needs to live in community and have accountability. How many scripture references come to mind regarding the importance of realizing your weakness and turning to Christ, weekly, daily and hourly for His strength and not your own? (Paul penned more than a few).

2) Have we downplayed the radical nature of sin and the need for a 12 step approach to discipleship?

Yes, yes we have. I would say in fact that we have not only downplayed the thoroughness of what sin is in our being we actually hide our unwillingness to truly let it die and be transformed into the likeness of Christ through a charade of theological terms and good looks. Like the prodigal son who stayed home we think we are perfect, but

refuse to rejoice in our brother's return. That's sin too; Jesus taught often about how important avoiding pride was and is. It robs us of our need for a savior and tells us we can do it on our own.

I am a good enough Christian; I do not need to be in a 12 step program! Small groups are not for me or I do not really need to examine myself and identify areas of my life that need to change. I do not drink, smoke or do drugs like those bad people do, I'll just stay home and not appreciate the wealth and protection of the Father. This is an attitude that we rarely speak of as a problem in the church, but it is there.

I thoroughly enjoyed this section of Hunter's work. He is correct to point out the need for recovery ministries to be supported by the church. If we stay away from organizations that move people toward God, how can we create new doors for people to join our church's and learn more about God and most importantly a fellow sufferer and our redeemer, Jesus. I have several friends who are recovering alcoholics and AA members, and I was raised in a family that owned a tavern for many years, so I know what Hunter says to be true. People in need; see their need for God (we all are in need!).

Broken, humble and honest people who realize their weaknesses daily and thus understand their need for God are what a recovery ministry is all about. In my opinion that is exactly what all of us as recovering sinners need to be. No one is "good" except for our Lord. The brokenness of recovery shows His goodness and mercy, and this is a sure source or revival. Thank you Dr. Hunter.

Chapter 6: First Baptist Church, Leesburg, as a Church for Everyone

Question:

A Tale of Two Churches

My experience with Leesburg, Florida goes way back. I met my wife there in the early 1980s. Later, the largest UMC in the town asked me to join its staff. Leesburg is not a typical American town. It has a large population of native Floridians. Many of them are country folks who are into farming and blue collar jobs. Poverty related lifestyles are common. In recent years the town's population has swelled with winter visitors. If you try to eat at the local Sonny's Real Pit Barbecue in the winter season, you will wait a very long time. Migrant workers have also penetrated the town. They work on the large farming cooperatives that are owned by multinational companies. Many stay in migrant camps because they move with the crops. Others have tried to settle down and compete for blue collar jobs. Consequently, you have four very distinct populations in the town, Hispanics, country folk, northern transplants, and professionals who have moved to the town to serve the needs of the other groups.

Most traditional churches in Florida have grown rapidly in recent years by targeting winter visitors. This population is very churched and easy to reach during the months that it remains in Florida. Plus, it has disposable income. Additionally, its values and cultural preferences resonate with those of the traditional churches. Because of this, it is very tempting for churches to build their evangelism programs and worship services around this group. Unfortunately, this population tends to dominate any church

that reaches out to it. This population is accustomed to pastoral chaplains, traditional worship and programmed based ministry. Because it lives in adult communities that exclude people under 55, it does not have meaningful contact with the other populations.

In recent years, most of the churches in Leesburg have attempted to grow by tapping into the growing community of northern transplants. In the midst of this, First Baptist Church has become very large because it targets the other populations in town and attempts to build its ministries around their felt needs. In the early 1980s, Morrison Memorial United Methodist Church was the largest congregation in town. It tried to reach out to other populations. However, that effort was resisted by its traditional clientele. Today, it lives in the shadow of the Baptist church with an aging membership and the memories of missed opportunities.

What are the characteristics of the First Baptist Church that point to its apostolic nature? Why did it choose to take the road less traveled and reach out to the “barbarian” populations? What are the characteristics of its pastor? Is there hope for the United Methodist Church? Are Hunter’s criticisms of the Baptist church valid?

Response

Date: Thursday, May 12, 2005 1:17pm

1) What are the characteristics of the First Baptist Church that point to its Apostolic nature?

I will answer this in part by listing some of the parts that stood out to me as “things the Apostles did”. The expository preaching from God’s word, reliance on the Holy Spirit and seeking God’s vision and guidance for what this ministry should be certainly are apostolic in nature. Also the brokenness of the pastor, and his observed need to be dependant on and give credit to God alone for the work done at FBC signals the depth of his relationship with God. The pastors’ and the congregations desire for all people, from the down and out to the up and out to experience salvation are also truly apostolic, or better yet “Jesustolic” in their nature.

2) Why did it choose to take the road less traveled and reach out to the “Barbarian” populations? What are the characteristics of its pastor?

These two questions I have bunched together, because I believe they ask the same thing. As a pastor this man is clearly broken and usable by God. He has experienced the need first hand in his life for God and knows what it is like to be without a savior. The vision that God has given this church is clear, not because of this pastor’s strength, but rather because of his weakness and need.

Casting the vision is only a part of the work; clearly God has sent others to this congregation who have understood the vision and been faithful to follow it. Clearly knowing what God has done for us and fearing Him more than those that try to stand in the way of the vision is in evidence here. Also the brokenness of relying on God motivates us to rely on others and gets them involved in ministry.

3) Is there hope for the UMC?

Not being a part of the UMC, I don't know. I do know that there is always hope for God's church regardless of the denomination. God will be victorious and His people with Him.

4) Are Hunter's criticisms of the Baptist church valid?

Ideally perhaps Hunter is correct, although the world that we live in is never the "ideal". The reality of transforming the institution of the church into a place of true ministry that effectively gets to the heart of the gospel message is not easily done. Especially when we are battling a tremendous and dark foe that seeks to ruin us.

My favorite aspect of this chapter was that I saw several of the church's that I have worked for directly in similar positions to FBC Leesburg. This is my general experience in the Baptist church. I appreciate the encouragement that Dr. Hunter provides.

When we know that even one of the best, in Hunter's opinion still struggles in some areas we should be encouraged in our attempts to cast a vision for the Apostolic church. The humility of FBC's leadership to utilize Dr. Hunter's feedback shows how teachable they are and ready to do what it takes to reach out to others. What a testimony to God!

Chapter 7: Witness Through Ministry, Hospitality, and Conversation

Question:

In this chapter, Hunter says that the average American church lives as an island in a sea of unchurched people. In fact, he says that America is a mission field. Based on that, he argues that the church should employ a missional strategy when attempting to evangelize its communities. He describes the target population as secular and has called it an unreached people group. Some of his insights were informed by his evangelism internship on Muscle Beach in the 1960s. In the intervening years, he has attempted to define who secular people are and how the church can reach them. Churches that reach this population and make great strides in discipling them are called apostolic.

How does Hunter describe this population and in what ways does the examples of Jesus inform his strategy for reaching them? Like any unreached people, Secular America contains many types of unchurched people. Each has its own characteristics and will respond in accordance to unique felt needs. Pick an unchurch population that you know. Based on Hunter's material, describe who it is and how you would reach it if deployed in ministry.

Finally, Hunter says, "Evangelism does not end with conversion. People need to be rooted in the faith and the community, socialized into a Christian worldview, and have validating experiences, for conversion to stick; without reinforcement, the person usually becomes a nominal Christian or reverts to the world." How should this insight inform your definition of evangelism?

Response

Date: Wednesday, May 18, 2005 5:46pm

1) How does Hunter describe this population and in what ways do the examples of Jesus inform his strategy for reaching them?

Hunter states that this population has no Christian background or memory, although they have had ancestors that were deeply involved in the Christian faith. They have never been substantially influenced by this faith and are the products of abusive and dysfunctional families. They often have low self esteem, depression and dependency issues and struggle in their personal lives. Finally Hunter says that they are seekers, some of the time and asked religious questions in their own language.

Hunter utilizes the Woman of Samaria (John 4) as an appropriate Biblical model to demonstrate the strategy of Jesus in reaching this type of person (Hunter, 183). Jesus went where she was, engaged her in conversation, stayed within her vocabulary, treated her with respect, and he listened, responded and related to her with understanding (Hunter, 188-189).

2) Describe an un-Churched population that you know and based on Hunter's Material describe this population and how you would reach it if you were deployed in ministry.

This is quite easy for me as I do this already on a daily basis. I work in a gym and also train there regularly. Many of the "gym rats" are as Hunter describes them. Generally conversations begin during a workout or while I am spotting someone or being asked for training advice. Members and co-workers usually are quite interested when they find that I am taking courses to complete a masters degree in "religion and philosophy" (this is as understandable as I have been able to be regarding what an MDIV is). They usually ask if I am going to teach, and I say "yes".

During breaks I do go to the "smoking area" outside and 'hang' with people there. The smoke does not bother me and in fact I have told people that they do not have to stop smoking around me or come to my church. I have told people that Jesus himself said that nothing that enters your mouth makes you unclean, but only what comes out of your heart does. I have found in these moments that many "sinners" have "good in their hearts", much like the woman at the well.

Perhaps I will be labeled a blasphemer or lover of sin here, but I agree with Hunter that far too many people worry about the exterior of the unclean than the hurt of their hearts ("Do we believe that people matter to God") (Hunter, 187). When I assure people that they need to seek God first in their own way without judging them or making them feel dirty the heavy packs are eased off of their backs. I let people know that I pray for them and that I care as does God, not about the legality of the church, but the truth of His love. I agree with people that the Church can seem scary and that Church people can be mean and look down on you at times. I also encourage them that Church people have problems in life too and that they are seeking and insecure at times also, so

they should “ease up on the Christians”.

Several co-workers and gym members have started either attending Church, or at least begin to seek God in their own way as we have conversed. God convicts us of sin and changes us in ways that the projected legalism of the church cannot. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to love not judge, to seek the lost not raise the bar to support the hypocrisy of the righteous and clean who do not really exist.

I myself am a seeker and am on a journey. Yes, I have been saved, but my sin is worse than any of those I encourage because I own that and see it daily. Truthfully I disgust me more than anyone else ever could. If God will take me on a journey with Him (and what pure joy it is!), I know how much joy He will take in being with others.

3) How does Hunter’s warning that without reinforcement people return to being nominal Christians or return to their previous worldly ways impact your definition of evangelism.

This does not change my view. Simply put we need to be about creating disciples, this is the clear command. We do not create the “clean” or “holy”, but rather fellow workers who roll up their sleeves and travel with us as we journey together.

A part of this is our task to get others involved. Gift based ministry does this as well as small groups, or perhaps as Hunter would suggest “recovering sinner support groups”. However, part of the responsibility relies on the convert to take ownership of his or her faith. The Willow Creek model that Hunter mentions seems to take this into account and supplies the groundwork for the seeker to “own” his or her own faith journey with God, I believe it is important that people take responsibility for their faith and not just follow others who have easy answers.

Chapter 8: *Old East Side's Enormous Challenge The "Cultural Enclave"*

Question:

Hunter employs three examples to illustrate the main points of this chapter. One is from the ministry of Jerry Falwell and his cradle to grave Christian village. Another is from Donald McGavran's critique of the missionary compound. A third is from the example of Americans living overseas. When Christians isolate themselves from the dominant culture by withdrawing into their own enclaves, they lose their ability to transform society and reach lost people. Hunter avers that the church is called to be "in" the world, without being "of" the world. In other words, the church needs to minister to and intermingle with lost people without taking on their values or sinful lifestyles. Hunter believes that traditional churches have withdrawn from the world and no longer have meaningful contact with the secular people, immigrants and barbarians who live in their midst. Ironically, most of the people who populate the Old East Side churches of America are also secular and have a bad case of Sunday Christianity. How does Hunter use his examples to make his point? Is that part of his argument convincing?

According to Hunter, "The burden of this book is to demonstrate that, in this new secular mission field, local churches are called to be missionary congregations." What is a missionary congregation? Is it the same as an apostolic church? Contrast a missionary congregation to an Old East Side church.

Response

Date: Thursday, May 26, 2005 8:58am

1) How does Hunter use his examples to make his point? Is that part of his argument convincing?

Each of Hunter's three arguments displays for us our inherent desire to maintain the status quo. When we recreate the culture that we are comfortable in we are meeting our own needs of acceptance and safety within the cultural boundaries that we are used to. However Hunter's point is not why we do this but rather how it impacts those that we have been called outside of our "comfort zone" to love for Christ. Hunter's argument is very convincing and should be a daily reminder to each of us that we have been "saved" from this world, but still remain in it for a reason. This reason is no longer our protection for we are now safe, but to tell others of the safety we have now in Jesus.

Hunter's point here reminds me of a sermon illustration I have used. Here is the short version of this illustration. I know a boy who was once saved from a burning house by a fireman. As an adult he became a fireman himself. One may ask him why he would go into a dangerous burning house after he was almost killed by fire as a child and he would reply, "Because someone came in through the fire for me".

2) What is a missionary congregation? Is it the same as an Apostolic Church?

Dr. Hunter views a missionary congregation as a local church that has shifted its main business from chaplaincy to apostolicity. This does make the missionary congregation a part of the Apostolic Church.

3) Contrast a missionary congregation to Old East Side Church.

Old East Side views its main business as taking care of its people, while the missionary congregation views its main goal as reaching out to people who have not experienced the gospel's power for new life (Hunter, 198). One has an inward, self-focused and safe position, while the other is focused outward, on others and is actively taking risk.

I believe that risk taking is an essential element of those that wish to grow. God never intends us to find safety or security in this world. This building is on fire, all of it already. We may not see it, but to sit idly by in Christian communities while those around us die in the fire is unthinkable. We must follow the great commission with passion daily even when fellow Christians may view us as foolish we can say, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21)