

# Fundamental Baptists and Quick Prayerism

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## Introduction

Speaking very broadly and generally, I thank the Lord for the fundamental Baptist church movement. It represents a variety of congregations that hold certain things in common, chiefly (again, speaking very generally) sound Bible doctrine, independence from denominational structures, a stand for biblical separatism. Or at least this used to be the case. Fundamental Baptist churches have exhibited a tremendous zeal for evangelism and world missions. Multitudes throughout the world have been saved because of this zeal.

Fundamental Baptist churches have been at the vanguard for the defense of the truth in these end times. George W. Dollar, one of the foremost historians of the fundamentalist movement, made the following observation:

“Increasingly, independent Baptists have dominated the scene of Fundamentalism from 1935 onward. Their hard-hitting evangelism produced some large churches; their constant emphasis on soulwinning and the erection of independent Baptist schools, with a strong push from interdenominationalism, have given them a commanding place on the American continent. ... One added factor in this new situation has been the deepening apostasy among organized Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. Fundamentalists among the last two groups have had great difficulty in getting many people to leave the old-line denominations. In fact, few Presbyterians and Methodists have been

willing to leave at all, even in the face of outrageous apostasy and Liberalism” (Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, third edition 1989, p. 213).

These positive factors aside, in recent decades, a great error has swept through many realms of the fundamental Baptist movement (though it is by no means limited to that movement). I call it QUICK PRAYERISM.

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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 the presentation and even if they give no biblical evidence of having been born again.

Frequently, Quick Prayerism incorporates psychological salesmanship manipulation.

In Quick Prayerism, an empty “sinner’s prayer” has too often replaced 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. Schaap has reported many thousands more saved since then. 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.

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Thus, after allegedly winning nearly a million people to Christ, the church’s faithful members can 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.

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 spiritual and biblical depth.

Jack Hyles was one of the greatest promoters of Quick Prayerism. He promoted it through his bus ministry, his soulwinning courses, and his Pastor’s Conferences.

He 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, that entire region would have been dramatically affected. The reality is that most of the numbers were empty professions, and the

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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 antirepentance 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

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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, perhaps unconsciously, on the fact that a lot of people are “polite” and can be manipulated into praying a prayer.

I read about 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 about 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!”

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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”.

And this is a church and school that claims to be serious about repentance and “real” soul winning!

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

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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. He 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 knows.

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.

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

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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, 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 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 made 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 conversions 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.

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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 not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

There is no example in the New Testament of someone who was saved and whose life did not radically change.

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### **The Carl Hatch Squeeze**

One of the hallmarks of Quick Prayerism is its psychological salesmanship approach to soul winning.

This is epitomized by the Carl Hatch Squeeze. Hatch was called "the world's greatest soul winner" by Curtis Hutson and Jack Hyles.

In a seminar at Bob Gray's Texas Baptist University, which I have on DVD, Hatch taught the following technique. Carl Hatch said:

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 reverse psychology and 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. 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 keep 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 don't ask people; 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.

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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.

(The previous is from a Carl Hatch soul winning seminar at Texas Baptist University).

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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.

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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 He 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 (Luke 13:1-5). He told the people that only those who continue in His Word are true disciples (John 8:30-31). Jesus and the evangelists in the early churches knew absolutely nothing of the "Carl Hatch Squeeze".

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### **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 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 fundamental Baptist church, and the one I joined as a new Christian certainly was far from perfect. Yet 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 helped 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". In practice, demanding repentance and looking for Holy Spiritwrought conviction was not part of the technique. It focused, rather, on getting people to admit that they were sinners

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(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 of those "saved" people 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" being reported 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

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and although -- unlike the conversions we see in Scripture -- the individual appeared to be itching to get away from us and to go about his or her business. 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 then would announce 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 or repentant of his sin against God, not even very interested in God, in fact, when 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 godly man described the following scene to me recently, which is similar to ones I have personally witnessed many times. While visiting a large fundamental Baptist church in California, he went on visitation with the most notable soul winner in the church. 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 gloriously 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

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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 Thess. 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 Cor. 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 over 35 years ago, and I reject it even more

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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 New Evangelicals and Emergents who do so.

This unscriptural methodology has permeated a large segment of the independent Baptist movement during the past three decades.

Though many men have been guilty of promoting this, I believe the one man who has wielded the largest influence is the late PASTOR 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.

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### **The Zenith of Quick Prayerism**

"Quick prayerism" reached it's 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.

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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.

(Before his death Hyles was preaching on repentance and a change of life. He did this at the Wally Beebe Bus Conference in January 2000, for example. But if he truly changed his mind about repentance and decided to define repentance biblically and historically as a change of mind that results in a change of life and if he became convinced that it is important to look for genuine repentance and conversion in a professor's life, then he should have publicly renounced his former statements about repentance and his former shallow practice and numbers madness, but he did not. He should have publicly renounced his unscriptural "doyou- want-to-go-to-Heaven-then-pray-this-

prayer” methodology which has filled the land with unconverted professors, but he did not. He should have renounced the outrageous claim that more people were saved at his church on May 3, 1998, than were saved on the day of Pentecost, but he did not. It is great hypocrisy and incredible confusion for a man to say he believes in biblical repentance while at the same time claiming thousands of empty prayers as “salvations”. A man who says 15,000 people were saved at his church in one day when he knows very well that large numbers of them were not born again, DOES NOT REALLY BELIEVE IN BIBLICAL REPENTANCE, NO MATTER WHAT HE SAYS WITH HIS MOUTH).

I believe it is carnality that allows Quick Prayerism to dominate a church’s evangelistic program. Why follow a methodology that produces massive numbers of empty professions? Why report empty prayers as salvations? I

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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 have 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 selfpromoters 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

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these men have turned out to be adulterers, thieves, liars, perverts, and charlatans. (I praise the Lord, on the other hand, that there are fundamental Baptist pastors of 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 contemporary 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 strictly 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 service”. 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.

## Changing the Doctrine of Repentance

The widespread adoption of Quick Prayerism has resulted in a change in the doctrine of repentance. One of the errors of the method of evangelism that produces large numbers of empty professions is the failure to preach and demand biblical repentance, or it is the redefinition of repentance to mean a mere change of mind that does not necessarily result in a change of life.

Consider the following examples of this change in the definition of repentance:

“What makes the wrath of God abide on a person? Believing not! So, from what must a person repent in order to be saved? He must repent of that which makes him lost. Since ‘believing not’ makes him lost, ‘believing’ makes him saved. The repentance there is a turning from the thing that keeps him from being saved to the thing that saves him. ... In order to believe, you have to repent of unbelief” (Dr. Jack Hyles, *Enemies of Soulwinning*, 1993).

“[We had] 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” (Bob Gray, “A Message from the Pastor”, *The Soulwinner*, January 1996, Longview Baptist Temple, Longview, Texas).

“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” (Brent Neal, “Is Repentance an Attack on Soulwinning?” *The Baptist Contender*, June 1996).

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“The many false conditions of salvation [include] water baptism and repentance” (Fred Afman, “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; Dr. Afman was a teacher at Tennessee Temple).

“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” (Tolbert Moore, “Repentance and Lordship Salvation”, *The Gospel Preacher*, September 1996).

“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” (Curtis Hutson, “Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach?” *The Sword of the Lord*, 1986, p. 16).

These statements represent serious error. I do not believe this is a light matter. To say that repentance has nothing to do with turning from sin, to deny that it is a change of mind THAT RESULTS IN a change of life, and to claim that repentance does not have to be preached is false teaching. If it doesn’t need to be preached, why did the Lord Jesus Christ and Peter and Paul and the other Bible preachers preach it! If it merely means to turn from unbelief to belief, why did both John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul demand “fruits meet for repentance”?

“Bring forth therefore FRUITS MEET FOR REPENTANCE” (Matthew 3:8).

“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 26:20).

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I am convinced that this change in the doctrine of repentance is merely a justification for the unscriptural methodology that has risen to prominence during the past three decades.

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## **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 thereof: “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” (Matt. 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 Peter 3:9). Paul, too, preached repentance to the unsaved pagans of his day. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but

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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 modern Quick Prayerism in the evangelism practiced by the apostles and the early churches.

### **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, even visiting the Alps in northern Italy where they lived, and it has been very edifying and challenging. My library contains 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:

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“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

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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”.

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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. Matt. 28:19; Rom. 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 independent Baptists today 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 their missionary brethren who have carried this unscriptural evil beyond the shores of America. Yea, I have seen it with my own eyes.

During our 20 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 eagerly pray a prayer or go through any other religious ritual with that desired end,

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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 that dark part of the 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 effectively disciple false converts. I have never understood the motivation to get people to pray empty prayers, unless it is to impress men.

We have worked with 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 and patiently 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 accept Jesus Christ

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as God but not as the only Lord and Saviour. They do not renounce idolatry. They try to add Jesus to their other 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 Thess. 1:9-10).

The churches we have started are careful in dealing with those who profess Christ and who want to join the church. They require some evidence that the individual is born again (Acts 26:20). If they did not do this, if they accepted anyone in that culture who wanted to “profess Christ”, the churches would quickly become overrun with unregenerate “Christianized Hindus”. And this is precisely what you find in many of the other churches.

One church in the States that is famous for the many “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 the 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

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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

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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 probably millions of 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

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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. The same was true of Temple Baptist Church of Detroit.

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

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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

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God from sin as exemplified in 1 Thessalonians 1:9. They knew that true repentance results in a change in a person’s life, and they would have been amazed that a fundamental 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 allsufficient 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;

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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 Sigtler, *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

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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 RE P E AT ED S T A T E M E N T W I T H O U T 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).

NOTE FROM BRO. CLOUD -- Since Curtis Hutson changed the definition of repentance during his tenure as editor of *The Sword of the Lord* and since the *Sword* has been so supportive of those who practice Quick Prayerism, it is not surprising that they stopped publishing Maurer’s excellent book.

“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

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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).

NOTE FROM BROTHER CLOUD: This book, too, is no longer published by the *Sword*, even though it was written by the founder.

"Repentance is doing an 'about face,' A TURNAROUND. 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).

"For too long there has been taught in some circles that we are out to get souls saved when we go soul-winning. Friend, understand clearly, that no man, no preacher, no one, has any ability or any authority to save anyone, or even convict, anyone of their sin. ... Without conviction there can be no conversion. Without repentance, there can be no regeneration. ... if God Almighty hasn't worked in your heart and life, my friend, it doesn't make any difference how many times you raise your hand in a meeting like this. IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU WALK AN AISLE, OR PRAY A PRAYER ... ONE CAN PHYSICALLY AND VERBALLY SAY A PRAYER, BUT IF ONE'S HEART ATTITUDE IS NOT RIGHT WITH GOD, THERE IS NO SALVATION. It doesn't make any difference how many times you sign a decision card, or get dunked in somebody's baptismal pool, or join a church! If God the Holy Spirit has not done

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His work of conviction in your heart, there is no salvation" (Evangelist Ken Lynch, *The Forgiveness of Sin*, c. 1985).

"The word repentance means a 'change of mind'--an inward turning. One's view is altered concerning God, sin and himself. The change of mind produces a CORRESPONDING CHANGE IN HEART AND ACTION. ... Though repentance has been largely forgotten by our generation, it has not been forgotten in Heaven. 'And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent'" (Evangelist Harold Vaughan, *Christ Life*, March/April 1987).

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### **A Change in Evangelism Methodology Led to A Change in Doctrine**

It is obvious that fundamental Baptists have traditionally defined repentance as a radical change of mind that results in a change of life. They have defined it as turning to God from sin and idolatry.

I believe the change in the definition of repentance among some fundamental Baptists is the product of the change in evangelism methodology that has spread throughout fundamental Baptist circles. It is a justification for an unscriptural, manipulative, salesmanship-like, man-centered, Heaven-centered, pressurized, numbers-oriented methodology of soul winning.

If a man claims that hundreds or thousands are getting saved through his ministry when only a tiny percentage of the "salvations" demonstrate any evidence of regeneration, it is not surprising that he would want to redefine repentance to mean a mere change of mind or a change from unbelief to belief.

The change in the definition of repentance occurred in the 1980s.

In his 1986 booklet *Repentance: What Does the Bible Teaching?* Curtis Hutson, who assumed the editorship of *The Sword of the Lord* following the death of its founder John R. Rice, boldly proclaimed that “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” (Curtis Hutson, *Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach?* *Sword of the Lord*, 1986, p. 16).

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This pamphlet has been distributed in large quantities and has had a major influence in fundamental Baptist churches. It was still in print and for sale on the *Sword*'s web site when I checked on August 21, 2011.

In his 1993 book *Enemies of Soulwinning*, Jack Hyles claimed that repentance as defined traditionally (as a change of mind in relation to God and sin that it results in a change of life) is one of the enemies of soul winning. He redefined repentance to mean a mere change from unbelief to belief. These two men have had a vast influence on the thinking of fundamental Baptists in the matter of repentance. Most others who have changed the traditional biblical definition of repentance have done so upon the “authority” of these men. How did Dr. Hyles and Dr. Hutson get to that point in their thinking? As we have seen, this is not what fundamental Baptists have traditionally taught about repentance. Their old friends John R. Rice and Lester Roloff certainly did not define repentance as merely a change from unbelief to belief. They defined it biblically as turning to God from sin.

John Rice said: “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”.

Evangelist Lester Roloff said: “Repentance is a forsaking of sin. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore”.

Obviously, John Rice and Lester Roloff did not think that by so defining repentance they were teaching some sort of works salvation. That idea is a straw man that was set up by those who want to change the historic definition of

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repentance. They did not consider repentance so defined as an “enemy of soul winning”!

By changing the doctrine of repentance and by calling the old doctrine of repentance the “enemy of soul winning”, I believe Dr. Hyles was acknowledging 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).

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Some readers might be thinking, “Of course, Brother Cloud, it is wrong to claim people are saved who merely pray a prayer without evidence of regeneration, but does anyone really make such a claim?”

The answer is, absolutely, there are large numbers of men making such a claim. Every man who claims that hundreds of people got “saved” through a church outreach or a county fair outreach or a missionary outreach when most of those “statistics” are nowhere to be found is making the claim that people can be saved by merely praying a prayer.

I was discussing the doctrine of repentance with a missionary a few 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 attending. I challenged him about the claim that the people were actually being saved. I said, “How can you say they are saved when there is no evidence of it in their lives”. He became very upset at me and strongly countered that I had no right to judge the salvation of people who were making professions through his ministry. This man had attended Hyles Pastor’s School only a few weeks before we met, and he said the featured topic that year was repentance!

The idea that you cannot tell if someone is saved is unscriptural nonsense. It is possible, of course, for a person to show false signs of salvation and to deceive people, as Judas did the other apostles. 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. But on the other hand the Bible is clear that if someone is

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genuinely saved, there will definitely be evidence of it 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. The believers in the churches at Jerusalem and at Thessalonica were typical:

“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” (Acts 2:41-42).

“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

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).

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### **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 have 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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