

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background**

Interest in this research has been triggered by my own background that has been influenced and shaped by the realities of our country, and by my personal family and ministry experience.

#### **Contextual Realities**

South Africa is a nation of contrasts that has elements that characterize both the North and the South in terms of the quality of life of its citizens. It is a nation of extremes in terms of the existing disparities in how wealth is distributed. There is a minority within the population that lives in relative comfort and privilege. On the other hand the majority of the population live in dire poverty. This kind of impoverishment seems to be increasing, while the gap between the rich and the poor is widening in disturbing proportions.

#### **Personal Family Experience**

I have the experience of being raised in hardship by a single parent taking care of a family of six children, not forgetting to mention regular guests from our extended family. It is out of this upbringing in poverty, living in a four-roomed [one bedroom] municipal house in the township, that I was nurtured into adulthood in the most difficult circumstances. I learned to make do with bare necessities in terms of clothing and food in an overcrowded dwelling. We had to survive on the meagre income of a single parent

who had seasonal jobs as a domestic worker, cleaner at a supermarket, fruit and vegetable hawker and a traditional healer. To these problems were added those difficulties that almost every Black South African had to endure in the previous dispensation of segregation and oppression.

### **Personal Ministry Experience.**

I started working full-time for a church on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1996. The office of the church was a garage built for a car, which was shared by four staff members. This garage also served as a storeroom for household goods that could not be accommodated in the house. This was my small beginning in the ministry in an ill-equipped 'garage office' in the township of Soweto. Ministry was rough in the heyday of apartheid whilst I worked for a small independent Charismatic Evangelical church known as Grace Bible Church. At first, we congregated at a school hall, and then moved to a rented church sanctuary that we also shared with another church that met on Saturdays. Subsequently, we moved to the classrooms of Hlengiwe Secondary School that had been burnt down during the student upheavals in White City Jabavu. These classrooms had roofs without walls, since the sides were destroyed. Then, we moved to a larger exhibition stall, which also was without walls, and it became our church sanctuary for seventeen years. We just became a pilgrim church moving from one bad situation to an even worse one. Conducting ministry at the height of apartheid was hard in Soweto, since we were not only confronted with the issues of poverty, but also of injustice, police brutality, educational disruptions, and a long list of other societal problems. Theological tensions emerged along the way, since we were in a broader Evangelical movement that shunned socio-political issues and taught a gospel that was heavenly but irrelevant to people facing social tensions. Many of us began to question and reject such apolitical spirituality since we had been politicised by defiant students movements like the 1976 uprising from the time when I was a learner in Tlhatlogang Higher Primary a school next door to Morris Isaacson High School [which I attended in the late seventies for two years after it was reopened when the unrests subsided. It was closed indefinitely when our group once again became involved in protest action]. I was politically socialized by the Azanian Student Organization

(AZASO) [as student at the Soweto College of Education], which was affiliated to the United Democratic Front. Also, I was affiliated to other youth movements like Youth Alive Ministry and other civic organizations. Then later on, one was seconded to work in Orange Farm, which is situated to the south of Johannesburg. I worked there, in an informal settlement, for ten years facing conditions of squalor. Subsequently, I was appointed as head of a department coordinating missions for five years. My job responsibilities caused me to spend long hours working in previously disadvantaged communities. When working within those communities I was confronted with serious social problems, like poverty.

## **1.2 The Problem Statement**

### **1.2.1 Growing National Poverty**

Our nation is facing a crisis of rampant poverty. Throughout the country we have to deal with problems like malnutrition, unemployment, and homelessness. A sizeable section of our citizenry is living under inhumane conditions. The irony is that South Africa is rated as one of the richest and best-developed nations in Africa. The big question is; “What is the nature of the Christian witness within a nation that is a young democracy, that is facing the challenges of deprivation?” Poverty is a point of concern, because it is affecting almost half of the South African population. The question of destitution is a dilemma that is a concern to all conscientious citizens in this country. It is not just a theoretical or fictitious difficulty. Poverty is about existential problems faced by real people in their struggle to free themselves from the powerlessness and marginalization that is destroying their lives. It is these ordinary people who are feeling the actual pain, inconvenience, shame and prejudice of poverty.

### **1.2.2 A Theological Challenge**

The Christian faith has a foundation of a kind of spirituality that is pro-poor. According to Escobar and Driver (1978: 38 – 39),

“Poverty and wealth are not accepted anymore as a kind of natural order, and with rising expectations has come an awareness that these differences are man-made differences that have developed in the process of history. The concept of a divine hand behind the economic process, giving much to those who worked hard and deserve the fruit of their labour, is being questioned... Poverty is no longer a simple datum you consider neutrally. Missions have to do something about it. After all, they could be part of the system that produces poverty or maintains it.”

The issue of the Christian’s response to poverty needs to be addressed adequately. Poverty should not continue unabated in the presence of the Christian community, which has a calling to minister to the poor. “The Bible is packed with numerous injunctions and commands calling the people of God to minister to the foreigner, alien, fatherless, widow and the poor. Such ministry on the part of the church is not optional – it is commanded by our Lord”(Christian 1999: IX). Throughout the centuries, the Church was challenged to minister to the distressed population. The challenge has not disappeared; it is still a summons to Christians of our generation. In our time, in our country, also in the circles of Charismatic Evangelical Christians, we are called to respond to the cry of the poor.

### **1.3 Goal of Study**

The goal of the study I am individually undertaking, is to ultimately discover how the Charismatic Evangelical Church can become an authentic agent of the gospel, participating in poverty eradication within our society. This brand of Christianity should have some form of compassion, driving it to serve the have-nots. According to Bosch (1980:53 –54),

“Compassion is also the essence of the New Testament message, especially that of Jesus... It is striking to note the way in which the people on whom Jesus had compassion are described. They are referred to as the poor, the blind, the crippled, the leprous, the hungry, those who weep, the sick, the little ones, the widows, the captives, those who are lost, those who are weary and heavily burdened with legalism, the lost sheep.”

This is the constituency that the Charismatic Evangelical Christians should prioritise in their witness.

I intend to use a contextual approach to this study, since, when we preach, teach, and engage in social action we do all these activities in a particular situation. This is what is called our socio-economic and political context. Therefore, our ministry activities, programmes, theories, social analysis, prayers, proclamation and participation are pursued in that context. Thus, our mission must be concretised to be suitable to the context of our ministry.

Charismatic Evangelicals have been known in the past for being apolitical and often socially irrelevant in their witness, despite the clear injunctions of the Scriptures that have outlined the mandate of the church as a mission that embraces social issues. This negative perception is compounded by the fact that very little has been written about their ministry in response to poverty. In the past, the Church has often failed to become an effective agent of social change in society. “Most evangelical groupings with their narrow view of life and their fundamentalistic approach to the Bible tend to uncritically support existing oppressive systems”(Concerned Evangelicals 1986:15). In essence, it has a legacy of having failed the poor. I wish to explore the fact that Christians can rise to the challenge of having a credible witness and ministry that contributes significantly to either the alleviation or the eradication of poverty amongst the destitute in our society, especially in the context of what Jesus said, "For the poor you have with you always"(John 12:8). If this is the case, can we claim plausibly that our ministry meaningfully contributes to either the alleviation or eradication of poverty? Poverty, it seems will continue to be a human challenge.

In the course of this thesis, I therefore propose to give attention to the following:

- To investigate if the Charismatic Evangelicals’ witness within the context of poverty is compatible to the mission mandate that Jesus Christ gave to the church. It has not been the tendency of the Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa to

document their ministry activities, therefore not much is known about their actual witness in response to the circumstances of impoverishment in this country.

- To discovering alternative responses to poverty alleviation/ eradication. To explore the possibility of finding an appropriate, relevant, and practical Charismatic Evangelical Christian witness in the face of deprivation.
- To define the theological and biblical responses when there are apparent contradictory contextual realities characterized by widespread impoverishment.
- To search for an authentic ministry that will empower the poor. To analyse whether their contribution should be focused on poverty alleviation or eradication.

#### **1.4 Research Methods**

- I intend to review all relevant publications on poverty, as well as on the Christian's response to poverty, since my research would be descriptive.
- I have conducted a field study of various Charismatic Evangelical Churches and movements involved in poverty eradication or alleviation programs in urban and rural communities. This research sampling of Charismatic Evangelicals is critical because in my preliminary investigation I discovered that very little has been published about their witness amongst the poor.
- I have interviewed key leaders within the Charismatic Evangelical Church. These leaders are at different levels of leadership; some are leading nationally whilst others are leading locally within the Charismatic-Pentecostal Evangelical movement. The purpose has been to study various Charismatic Evangelical churches in their broad and diverse presence within the South African Christian community.
- The interviews were conducted according to a preset interview schedule that had questions that were asked and the reason why they were asked. The interview schedule had five sections to solicit relevant information from the interviewees responses on the following issues: the interviewees experience of poverty, theology or teaching in relation to poverty, response to poverty, the relationship between poverty and the work of the church and other general issues. For a complete interview schedule refer to the Appendix.

## 1.5 Definition of Terms

### 1.5.1 Concept of Poverty

Poverty may be an overused word, but in our times it is still an explosive term. It is a word that evokes various emotions amongst its different users. It is a word that has been encumbered by various ideologies, philosophies and beliefs, each with its own agenda. “Poverty is a complex phenomenon. It is a value-loaded concept involving evaluative judgments regarding minimum, basic needs and desired levels of living”(Christian 1999:17). Poverty is a phenomenon that has many stakeholders; therefore each stakeholder would look at it from a different perspective.

#### Poverty as Lack

Poverty depicts a scenario where people experience a shortage of essential resources and services necessary for their survival as human beings. Many definitions have been used to describe poverty. According to Myers (1999b: 578) view,

“Poverty results from lack of things. It is obvious that poor people do not have enough to eat, a place to sleep or clean water. We also recognize that some poor people lack knowledge and skills. Their land is poor, there is no water for irrigation, the roads are poor and there are no schools for their children.”

The lack we are referring to is a shortage of the basics necessities of life to live a decent human life. “Poverty as defined here is the unfulfilment of the basic human needs required to adequately sustain life free from disease, misery, hunger, pain, suffering, hopelessness and fear, on the one hand, and the condition of defenceless people suffering from structural injustice on the other.”(De Santa Ana. 1979:76). Those who are disadvantaged live a life of dependency in which they survive owing to the goodwill of others rather than self-support. Humbert says, “The poor person is, therefore, *ebyon*, the one who desires, the beggar, the one who is lacking something”(Gutierrez 1988:165). In terms of the scriptures they are deprived, without self-reliance. Barclay (1975:91) further explains,

“In Hebrew the word is *ani* or *ebyon*. These words underwent a four-stage development of meaning. (i) They began by meaning simply poor. (ii) They went on to mean, because poor, therefore having no influence or power, or help, or prestige. (iii) They went on to mean, because of having no influence, therefore downtrodden. (iv) Finally, they came to describe the man who, because he has no resources whatsoever, puts his whole trust in God”.

This is the reason why the poor, out of their scenario of lack, are called the have-nots.

### Poverty as Limited Options

Other authors describe poverty as having limited options. Even when poor people have the God-given power to make their own decisions about improving their livelihood, they have few alternatives available to improve their present maladies. Like Perkins (1982: 11–12) who says, “Poverty, you see, is much more than lack of money; poverty is the lack of options. For millions in our land there is no justice. For them, ‘equal opportunity is at best an elusive dream; at worst a cruel taunt.’” To be poor means to have limited options. One has to qualify to have access to opportunities. Many are aspirant entrepreneurs but they have limited access to seed capital to launch their self-empowering initiatives. They do not qualify for loans that are granted by commercial banks since they are considered as a higher risk because they have no collateral. For some, jobs are available but they do not have the required vocational qualifications. Therefore, their options are limited as job seekers and they become domestic workers, gardeners, cleaners, shop assistants, and labourers in the building industry and factories. The worlds of the rich and of the poor are marked by great contrasts when you compare the options available to them. Nicholls says:

“The difference between the poor and those who are rich is not that some suffer and others do not. Both the rich and the poor may be subject to physical pain, emotional stress, and spiritual depression. But the rich have greater control over themselves and their situations. They are free to make choices. Not so with the poor. They have little or no freedom over their bodies and lifestyle, and little hope for the future”(Nicholls & Wood 1996:1).



The poor cannot exercise their preferences in terms of their quality of life; rather, they always have to settle for things that are mediocre. They have no better alternative in their choices of food, accommodation, transportation, medical care, employment, education and neighbourhood. The products they have access to are usually substandard.

#### Poverty results in Broken Relationships

Marginalization also means alienation from other fellow human beings. It implies living in a context of animosity that disrupts the harmonious relationships that should exist within the family, community, workplace and any other human arena. According to Myers (1999b: 579-580):

“Poverty involves being excluded. We make poor people when we label them as other, the outsider, and the outcast. We begin the process of exclusion when we say people are lazy, dirty, uneducated, crazy or unsafe to be around. When we withdraw because one has leprosy or AIDS, is homosexual, has a different colour or comes from a different culture, we impoverish them and ourselves. Labels and stereotypes devalue the image of God in people. This kind of poverty is both powerful and debilitating for those who do this and as for those to whom it is done.”

When you are disadvantaged you become a social outcast. Your deprivation makes it difficult to fit well in all the facets of life in society. Poverty makes you stick out in society as the odd one out, whose appearance and quality of life are below those of everyone who is empowered.

#### Poverty's Consequence as Subjection to Abusive Power

In society today people are poor as a result of exploitation by the rich and the powerful. Their rights are violated almost with impunity. Therefore, many of the poor are victims of violence, especially the women and children. They are constantly subjected to physical, emotional and spiritual abuse in their relationships. Myers (1999b: 580) says,

“When those who have power over others use it to benefit themselves, poverty results... People in positions of social privilege are often tempted to use power for personal advantage, ignoring the consequences of their decisions for those who

have less power. Managers can misuse the power they have over subordinates. Pastors can misuse the power they have over lay people. Even if we desire to be fair and righteous, we continually face temptations to believe that we are due to certain privileges because of the position we hold... It means we too, are part of the causes of poverty.”

The poor continue to be exposed to changing circumstances in a society where they are vulnerable to ill treatment at the hands of the affluent and powerful. “The rich by definition have power, while the poor are powerless; they are pawns in the hands of others. They are subject to institutionalised structures”(Nicholls & Wood 1996:1). Those who are disadvantaged have little or no power to contend with forces that marginalize them.

#### Absolute Poverty and Relative Poverty

A distinction should be made between absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty is closer to the New Testament description of destitution. The Greek word is “*ptochos* which describes absolute and abject poverty.... *ptochos* describes the man who has nothing at all”(Barclay 1975:90). This is a state of utter helplessness and extreme powerlessness. Grigg (1999:583) writes, “Absolute poverty is a term used to describe poverty when people have an absolute insufficiency to meet their basic needs – food, clothing, housing. Indeed many who are in absolute poverty starve to death. Within this category there are many levels.” The poorest of the poor are stripped to their bones in terms of their resources, dignity and power to improve their lives favourably. They are in a state of total desperation, being unable to cope with demands of meeting their overall subsistence responsibilities. In contrast, Grigg (1999:583 –584) states,

“The measure of this relative poverty or secondary poverty is often in terms not of material or economic level, but own capacity to own and consume goods and services and to have opportunities for development. It is often an exclusion from opportunity and participation, a marginalization from society.”

Those who experience relative poverty are better off than those facing absolute poverty, since; they are just being sidelined from various avenues of more empowerment and upward mobility. According to Nicholls and Wood (1996:76):

“The relative poor are those who live above subsistence level who ought to be approached in a different way from the paupers. They would welcome material support and other assistance which enable them to climb up the social ladder to middle or upper class...Their immediate and primary need is restoration of their dignity and justice because they suffer more from social discrimination and injustice than from material destitution.”

The absolutely poor are experiencing a worse situation of poverty than their relatively poor counterparts.

#### Poverty Causes Psychological Stress

Deprivation has stressful and detrimental psychological consequences. It subjects people to trauma that goes beyond mere material inconveniences out of lack. Impoverishment has a negative effect on the mental, emotional and spiritual health of the impoverished. According to Nicholls and Wood (1996: 70):

“What makes poverty still more painful is its social and psychological effect. The poor feel not only helpless, desperate and angry but they are also ashamed of themselves. They feel inferior, and deprived of their human dignity. The sense of shame and indignity is subjective but depends to a great extent on the attitude of others towards them.”

The above-mentioned negative experience of the poor is also affirmed in the Scriptures. Proverbs 19:7 reads; “All the brothers of the poor hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him! He may pursue them with words, yet they abandon him.” Poverty is just a vicious spiral of humiliation and this is the reason it hurts so much.

#### **1.5.2 Definition of Charismatic Evangelicals**

Evangelicals, like any other Church that is within the Protestant tradition, have a tempestuous history. They have experienced strenuous divisions over the years that they have tried to resolve. Despite those taxing divisions, the Evangelicals have shown a commitment that has given birth to unifying global movement amongst them. There have been many groupings with the Evangelicals namely: the Fundamentalist,

Dispensationalist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Ecumenical and Non-Orthodox Conciliar Evangelicals. According to Warren (1962:1):

“The General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, offered a helpful definition of evangelicalism when he said that it consists of ‘a particular balance’ in the following cluster of biblical themes: (1) unquestioned submission to the trustworthiness and authority of the Scripture as the Word of God; (2) the essentiality of the atonement of Christ; (3) an existential saving encounter with the Holy Spirit; (4) a concern for the proper, scriptural use of sacraments. Most evangelicals would add the obligation to evangelize non-Christians throughout the world.”

According to Glasser, “the Charismatic Evangelicals whose grouping ranges from the traditional Pentecostals to newer mainline Charismatics.... Charismatics are burdened to bring renewal to all the churches whether within the WCC, and whether Catholic or Protestant”(Anderson 1991:70). They seek to revive a kind of spirituality and ministry that characterized the early Church; to revive those charismatic gifts, worship, signs and wonders that it assumed had subsided in the church. Driver (1997:222) says,

“The church’s participation in God’s mission must also be pneumatic and charismatic, in the power of the Spirit and dependent on the gifts of his grace...A people willing to live and survive by the grace of God, whose character bears the stamp of God’s Spirit, will by the very nature of things be an effective witness.”

It seem that secularisation had dampened the Church’s beliefs and practices of the evangelical element of *Charismata*. Therefore, they sought renewal, so that the Church should return to the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit. The Charismatic Evangelicals believe in the work of the sanctifying and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit within the lives of believers as witnesses for Christ in the world. Just like the Pentecostals, this experience of the phenomenon of the Spirit is manifested with the practice of speaking in other tongues. According to Thompson (2004:129),

“Charismatic Christianity in the 1990s has come to provide meaning for a diversity of South Africans who believe in Jesus Christ as the saviour, healer and friend. This knowledge of God, mediated by an experiential spirituality, has led to a personal charismatic piety open to the power of the Spirit – a shaping of

perceptions and values by means of the immediacy of the miraculous, a literal interpretation of the Bible, and oral theology reiterating the unchanging nature of God (as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in an uncertain world. Yet, Charismatic Christianity in South Africa has its fluidity shaped by its Pentecostal and mainline church pasts, a “third way” spiritual economy, and a cultural adaptability of the discourse of the Spirit. Each of these factors has enabled changing, even contradictory, charismatic responses to the social and political context during the years of the end of apartheid and the birth of the New South Africa.”

But, they go further than the Pentecostals, to emphasize the exercising of Charismatic gifts to edify the church and expand the kingdom of God in the world. These Charismatic gifts are not just the domain monopolized by a select group of individuals, who are ordained for ministry, rather, they continue to be exercised by all the Spirit-filled believers as inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit as He wills. Within the Charismatic Evangelicals, you find varying practices of certain aspects of their theology and positions on socio-economic matters. These are to a great extent determined by a specific context of Charismatic Evangelicals in question. Whether they are placed in a situation of poverty or wealth, maybe of high political activism for justice or non-political engagement.

### **1.5.3 The Concept of Missions**

The word ‘mission’ too, has different connotations in the Christian community. I prefer to use the word mission as a collective term to describe all the words and actions of the Church, in its efforts to spread the whole gospel of the kingdom of God to the world. “Mission means being sent to proclaim in deed and in word that Christ died and rose for the life of the world, that he lives to transform human life (Rom 8:2) and to overcome death”(Bosch 1991: 400, c.f. Memorandum 1982:459). The church has been given a mandate, in terms of the great commission by Christ, to be involved in God’s enterprise to transform the world, with the full gospel of the kingdom of God that addresses all essential aspects that characterize human existence. Christians, have a role in extending the Kingdom of God in society. Apple said,

“To spread the Kingdom of God is more than simply winning people to Christ. It is also working for the healing of persons, families, and relationships. It is doing the deeds of mercy and seeking justice. It is ordering lives and relationships and institutions and communities according to God’s authority to bring in the blessedness of the kingdom. The presence of the kingdom of God is the means of renewal of the entire world and all dimensions of life”(Sider, Olson & Unruh 2002:45).

The idea is to approach mission from an all-embracing position. Therefore, I prefer a holistic understanding of the concept of mission. According to Kritzinger and Saayman (1994:36) view,

“The Christian mission is a comprehensive ministry with various dimensions which can be distinguished, but never separated. We believe, therefore, that the goal of mission can only be accomplished through a holistic approach... The various dimensions of this comprehensive approach were expressed in terms of the church’s task of *kerygma* (proclamation), *diakonia* (ministry of service), and *koinonia* (communion or fellowship). Under these three rubrics, it was argued, the total mission of the Church could be accommodated: preaching, witnessing, healing, teaching, developing, and the building up of the Church. The threefold goal of mission, as we have described it here, can indeed largely be accommodated in this approach. We will, therefore, link up with this approach, but wish to extend it by adding a fourth rubric: *leitourgia* (public worship service of God).”

This comprehensive mission definition is currently accepted by almost all missiologists, since; it embraces elements of *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *koinonia*, and *leitourgia*.

The word ‘mission’ also expresses the evangelistic fervour of the church. The church in its witness in society has a task to evangelize. Therefore, according to Bosch (1991:11 – 12):

“Mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin, and inviting

them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit."

The consequence of Christian mission is that those who have welcomed God's saving grace are assimilated into the Christian community, to be co-workers with other active members of this community, to be engaged in ministering to those who have various needs in society. Samuel proposes, "Building up communities of change. The emphasis of the gospel as transformation is on change and hope. The book of Acts for example is not about merely calling individuals to Christ"(Samuel & Sugden 1999: 231). When we receive Christ, we might have a personal experience of that encounter, but we are called into a larger family of God with those who have also responded to the call of Christ. Together as a Christian community, we are assigned to usher God's transformation into other communities so that they may become part of this changed Christian community. "When you accept and experience Christ there has to be a transformation of your relationships. Without that commitment to community building there is no transformation in the long haul"(Samuel & Sugden 1999:231). Our encounter with Christ through the gospel should ultimately result in the renewal of our communication and interaction with others. If those relationships have been disrupted, there should be some move towards reconciliation; on the other side the relationships that have been ordinary should become better.

Evangelism is the testimony of the Church to the world about God's redemptive acts of grace that have been and are being accomplished for the benefit of the world. According to Bosch (1991:412):

"Evangelism involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do.... Evangelism is announcing that God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Saviour, and Liberator. In this Jesus, incarnate, crucified and risen, the reign of God has been inaugurated."

As Christians we tell a story about the incredible love of God that has been shown through the entirety of Jesus' life, that God has made provision for us to live a new life

through him, enjoying Christ's freedom, forgiveness, love and our service to him. Therefore, through witnessing, we extend an invitation to others who have not as yet received this new life that Christ has given to us.

The Church as a witnessing community that heralds the good news is expected to exemplify to society through the message it bears. "Evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelises is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle"(Bosch 1991:414). As a Church, part of our evangelistic endeavour is to incarnate the gospel. Our behaviour must be compatible with the message we are preaching to the world; otherwise we lose our evangelistic potency. Just as the scriptures purport, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"(Matt 5:16). "If the church is to impart to the world a message of hope and love, of faith, justice and peace, something of this should become visible, audible, and tangible in the church itself"(cf. Acts 2:42 – 47; 4:32 –35) (Bosch 1991:414). The church has a challenge to portray the integrity of the gospel in its life as a witness to this holistic gospel.

I prefer to use the term *Christian witness* to express my view of missions. For me, it is a more appropriate word to articulate our ministry as Christians and to describe the way we reach out to our own society with good news and good works. Myers (1999a:4) explains the term in this manner:

"*Christian witness* is the term I use to describe this news that Christians are compelled by the love to share. I deliberately choose the phrase *Christian witness* over *evangelism* for several reasons...First...evangelism is also a loaded phrase. Images of street evangelists yelling through the megaphones and of crusade evangelists exhorting stadiums full of people come to mind.... Second, and more important, evangelism tends to refer to verbal proclamation of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I need a phrase that includes proclamation, but that is not limited to it. I understand *Christian witness* to include declaration of the gospel by life, word and deed. By *life* I refer to the fact that Christians are the message. We are the sixty-seventh book of the Bible. People read our lives, our actions and our



words and believe they know what being a Christian means. By *word* I refer to the need to say what the gospel story is and to invite others to make it their story. By *deed* I refer to the fact that the Christian faith, at its best, is an active faith, engaged with the world and seeking to make it more for life and for enjoyment of life... Christian development promoters are witnessing all the time.”

Within Charismatic Evangelical circles, the term evangelism is sometimes understood in a narrow and stereotypical way, as simply punting the message of the Bible to people without necessarily incarnating that gospel. There is a tendency to emphasize preaching to convert souls, without the accompanying actions that model that message to those who are being reached. The gospel is both proclamation and deeds. These two should go together; otherwise we cease to have an authentic Christian witness.

## **1.6. Overview**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the overall thesis. It clarifies the scope of the study by providing the background, motivation, problem statement, relevance and purpose, and the planned methodology behind this study. At the end of the chapter, some definitions of key concepts that are explored in this research are offered.

Chapter 2 describes the many faces of poverty in South Africa. I reflect on state of the poor in South Africa, with the intention to give a human face to the phenomenon of deprivation. It also indicates the occurrence and the extent of poverty, which forces us to look at poverty as a critical theological and social problem. Poverty is not merely an issue for political, social, economic and theological debate and reflection. It is a human reality that affects real people who have names, aspirations, feelings and hopes. Impoverishment is about people who are desperate, whose image has been marred and dignity dented by pauperisation. There is also an exploration into the factors behind poverty in South Africa. This is followed by notes on the practical experiences and the worldview of the poor. Finally, it looks at the dehumanising effects of destitution. Poverty is not just a material inconvenience. It has terrible outcomes for the poor. These disadvantaged members of society still remain the people of God, despite their being downtrodden.

Chapter 3 offers a theological and biblical reflection on poverty, looking at various theological and biblical concepts such as: God and the poor, salvation, the Kingdom of God, and the Church and the poor. Those concepts are discussed to point the missiological implications that should shape the Christian witness within conditions of deprivation. They form the theological foundations of the Church and its witness amongst the poor. These foundational principles are imperative in defining the Church's mission, message and ministry.

Chapter 4 is devoted to a theological reflection on key aspects of poverty eradication in the world. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, discussions on poverty eradication revolved around the issues of relief, development, transformation, and eventually sustainability. Theologians and missionary strategists followed these discussions closely, providing a theological reflection on these issues, and on how the mission of the Church is continually shaped and reshaped by them.

Chapter 5 is a historical overview of the emergence of Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa. Linking the growth of the movement to its global connections. It includes a brief exposition of Charismatic Evangelical teaching and theology, indicating on how their missiological thinking when dealing with questions of poverty and the way it is influenced by that teaching and theology. This chapter concludes with a critique on Charismatic Evangelicalism in South Africa.

Chapter 6 offers an account of an empirical investigation of various Charismatic Evangelical Churches response to poverty. It reports on the outcome of a number of interviews that were conducted with a selected group of eminent national and local leaders within the Charismatic Evangelical Community, referring to the positions of five national leaders on poverty. Issues are discussed, followed by a comparative analysis of the various perspectives of these leaders. The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of the positions of leaders at a local church level, their respective ministries amongst the poor.

Chapter 7 is the closing chapter of the entire research. By way of conclusion to re-conceptualise the Christian witness to the poor, offering a number of challenges in this regard, also, indicating other areas for further research.