IMPROVING DISCIPLESHIP ON SUNDAY MORNING:
INTERACTIVE TEACHING/PREACHING AS A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR ADULTS

A THESIS-PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY JILL M. RICHARDSON, MAY 2020

To Brent and Emily for living with me through this, and to the congregations of Resolution Church and Greenville Free Methodist Church for their belief in and assistance with the project.

We are like the hobbits who "liked to have books filled with things that they already knew, set out fair and square with no contradictions."

—Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching as Reminding*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project examines whether interactive preaching is a more effective method of discipling congregations than monological preaching. A review of literature on the subjects of adult learning, preaching, and discipleship suggests that adults learn better as they are invested in, make choices about, and participate in their own education, or discipleship. Interactive methods were tested on two groups in the summer and fall of 2019, concurrent with surveys about their experiences with learning from sermons prior to and after each experience. Data indicated that self-reported levels of discipleship and immediate application improved after the three-month study.

CHAPTER ONE

> The Christian life is a spiritual pilgrimage. It is a not a journey to a shrine which has limitations of space and time. It is a journey into life, a life so rich no limitation of space or time is able to contain it. But is this how we perceive the Christian life? We go to church, worship, study your Bible, etc. But where do they call for the high-adventure?
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> —Francis DuBose, *God Who Sends*

Introduction

Since the Reformation, Scripture and preaching have been central to the Protestant church. The style of preaching, for Western Christians, has almost universally been the monologue. It is historically believed that adults learn best, and are discipled most deeply, through a lecture format in church. This belief has permeated classroom pedagogy as well; it is a staple understanding in teaching/disciple making, whether the person is being discipled into the Christian faith or a particular field of study. This format in the church has traditionally focused on hearing the word of God and its explanation as the primary means by which people are discipled. The primary tool for explaining God's word is the sermon, though classroom teaching, missional communities or mall groups, and one-on-one relationships, for instance, also play a large part in discipling methods.

In other cultures, other senses are often employed to learn discipleship, and preaching can be more interactive. In Hispanic culture, according to Pedrito Maynard-Reid, there is an understanding that preaching is meant to touch mind and body, person to person, including the totality of the person, not merely her ears.[1] The same author reminds that ancient Israelite worship involved active participation and dramatic sensory detail.

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1 Pedrito Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African-American, Caribbean, and Hispanic Perspectives*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 1945, Kindle.

Henry Mitchell affirms that African and African American worship requires similar whole person attention. “Black preaching is inherently dependent on call and response. African . . . oral communication [is] characterized by considerable audience participation. The audience is deeply involved in the tale, which is presented in picturesque language and great animation. Even today, congregations of the Black masses feel cheated if no place for their response is provided.”[2]

Indeed, even in western culture churchgoers have a rich heritage of sensory detail in worship—the color and light of stained glass, the penetrating odors of incense, the touch of a pew Bible and smell of its pages. Maynard-Reid summarizes his discussion on cultural difference with the general belief that for everyone, “The member in the pew must hear, see, taste, touch and feel the sermon. The senses must be involved in the emotive process. When churchgoers complain that a sermon is boring and lifeless, in part they mean that it failed to appeal to most of their senses.”[3]

These experiences have largely been eliminated in evangelical culture, as churches moved toward more utilitarian buildings and fewer perceived barriers to people who might find the old traditions strange. Modern evangelical culture has turned its sensory experience into more of a stage experience—bright and/or colored lights, artistic slides, and contemporary music. Sensory details thus becomes less personal and more projected. This is not a judgment on that model—that is not at all the scope of this work. It is simply a statement of the reality behind the lack of personal sensory elements in preaching.

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2 Henry Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 31, Kindle.

3 Maynard-Reid, 846.

The best speakers learn to weave sensory details into the stories they tell—and they do tell good stories. In the words of Zach Eswine, truly effective preachers learn that, "To make true contact is to touch the real thing, to treasure the flower more than the picture of the flower, the person more than the memory, the actual moment more than potential moments. It is to outrun mirages, disrupt illusions and expose forgeries. Preaching is meant by God to do this rare thing."[4] What if preachers also wove these kinds of details into preaching in physical reality? What if they worked to make sermons alive with real smells, touch, sights, and even taste? What if preaching interwove the call and response mode of other cultures, inviting interaction and active investment?

The waves of change in this world, however, have not made a significant change in the way pastors preach. Perhaps they speak much shorter than their Methodist and Baptist predecessors' three-hour-standing-up sermons. The monologue, though, hasn't changed in essence or execution. Now, however, it has come up against a force that might change everything—the information overload age. People in the electronic culture have become less attentive, more apt to question facts, less interested in one person's thoughts, more interested in discovering varying opinions, less willing to sit at the feet of an expert, and more collaborative.

This reality will inevitably clash with history and traditions of preaching. If pastors desire to disciple all people and maintain their robust faith, it is time to experiment with new preaching methods to disciple and reach them.

Research Question: Will a pastoral teaching style that emphasizes interaction, hands-on activity/application, sensory detail, community, and collaboration better disciple congregations toward a robust, active faith?

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4 Zach Eswine, *Preaching to a Post Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with Our Culture,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 24, Kindle.

A. The Problem: Lack of Discipleship

1. Church Attendance as a Measure of Discipleship

Church attendance for the general population is declining, making discipleship through preaching far more difficult than it once was. The decline in church attendance means that a pastor's ability to disciple is often limited to Sunday mornings, and then sometimes alternate Sundays at best. Pew and Gallup research (2014) puts the percent of adults who attend once a week at thirty-six percent and the percentage who attend "once or twice a month/a few times a year" at thirty-three. The figures are a bit better for the evangelical protestant group, at fifty-eight and thirty percent respectively. For mainline denominations, those percentages are thirty-three and forty-three percent, and for black protestants, fifty-three and thirty-six. The same data for young adults is seventeen and twenty-five percent.[5]

Other sources place that attendance number much lower, however, citing the prevalent "halo effect" of people over-reporting socially acceptable behavior. Studies in 2004 and 2005 showed that "17.7 percent of the population attended a Christian church on any given weekend . . . Even with a broader definition of church attendance, classifying a regular attendee as someone who shows up at least three out of every eight Sundays, only 23–25 percent of Americans would fit this category."[6]

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5 Pew Research Center, "Religious Landscape Study: Attendance at Religious Services," perform.org, 2014, https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/, (accessed May 23, 2019).

6 Church Leaders, "7 Startling Facts: An Up Close Look at Church Attendance in America," ChurchLeaders.com, April 10, 2018, https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/139575-7-startling-facts-an-up-close-look-at-church-attendance-in-america.html, (accessed January 16, 2020).

While attendance numbers affect all generations, Pew Research has discovered younger churchgoers are especially represented in the drop. This is a worldwide trend, but the largest age differentials are in North America.

> Young adults are *more* likely to be religiously *un*affiliated. This is especially true in North America, where in both the U.S. and Canada younger people are less likely to claim a religious identity. These findings are in line with the rise of the religious 'nones' in the U.S., which is being driven largely by high levels of disaffiliation among young generations. . . . Lower attendance among young adults is especially pervasive in Latin America, where it is seen in 17 out of 19 countries, and in North America, where both the U.S. and Canada show substantial gaps.[7]

David Kinnaman explains that, to understand the statistics, leaders need to:

> Understand two simple facts: 1. Teenagers are some of the most religiously active Americans. 2. American twentysomethings are the least religiously active. The ages 18 to 29 are the religious black hole of church attendance; this age segment is 'missing in action' from most congregations. Overall, there is a 43 percent drop-off between the teen and early adult years in terms of church engagement. These numbers represent about 8 million twenty somethings who were active churchgoers as teenagers but who will no longer be particularly engaged in a church by their thirtieth birthday.[8]

Though some explain these numbers away by affirming that young people will return when they have families of their own, by 2019, Lifeway Research had changed its similar conclusion. "On some level, we can be encouraged that some return . . . while at the same time, we should recognize that when someone drops out in these years there is a 69 percent chance they will stay gone."[9] Kinnaman and Matlock echo this in 2019, citing an increase in the decade

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7 Pew Research Center, "Young adults around the world are less religious by several measures," pewforum.org, June 13, 2018, http://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/young-adults-around-the-world-are-less-religious-by-several-measures/ (accessed January 12, 2019).

8 David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 22.

9 LifeWay Research, "Most Teenagers Drop Out of Church as Young Adults," lifewayresearch.com, January 15, 2019, https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/01/15/most-teenagers-drop-out-of-church-as-young-adults/, (accessed May 23, 2019).

since *You Lost Me* was published, to "nearly two-thirds of all young adults who once were regular churchgoers."[10].

Even for those who return, the absence of young adults from their faith community is a serious issue regardless of if and when they return. If in the important decade of their twenties they are not discipled well, the effects could last throughout their lives and the lives of their children. Kara Powell and Steven Argue explain why:

> While there are some indicators that the young adults will find their way back to the church, the migration often doesn't happen until after they get married or have children of their own. Given the trend toward emerging adults waiting longer to become spouses and/or parents, it seems that their church attendance gap could be 10 years or more. The absence of religious input during the period when young people are making crucial life decisions may significantly impact their future spiritual trajectories.[11]

If people are not in church to disciple, reason says their chances of meaningful challenge and teaching that will shape their faith toward a Christ-centered life lessen greatly as the influence of their culture increases.

Current traditional practice is set up to succeed more at inspiration than discipleship. Designed during times when many congregants could not read, the method of inspirational monologue worked well. When churchgoing was required in the social contract of a community, as well as the best source of entertainment and connection in town, lecture format met those goals.

None of these things are reality anymore. If pastors have only an hour, or less, to do all the things a congregation needs (teach, disciple, equip, and inspire), they want to use the time in the best possible way to achieve that outcome.

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10 David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation To Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon*, (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Books, 2019), 15.

11 Kara Powell and Steven Argue, *Growing With: Every Parent's Guide to Helping Teenagers and Young Adults Thrive in Their Faith, Family, and Future*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 39.

The literature which will be discussed in this paper suggests that discipleship cannot be accomplished effectively in a lecture format. It can't be accomplished *effectively* with only preaching and only Sunday morning attendance either, no matter what the format. Other factors are key to discipleship as well, particularly the participation of the community. The preaching event, however, can change in order to meet a changing context and be one stronger element in the puzzle pieces that form a healthy discipleship.

Dissatisfaction with preaching methods is hardly the sole driver creating the church exodus. Although a significant percentage of people do not attend church because they are dissatisfied with sermons (between fifteen and twenty percent),[12] the reasons for this dissatisfaction are not given. One question to explore, however, is—would better discipled adults choose to remain in their church community? Is it possible we're missing an opportunity for deep discipleship that might affect these statistics by not taking a close look at common preaching practices?

2. Behavioral Change as a Measure of Discipleship

In 2018 Pew Research, 44 percent of non-attenders cited that they "practice their faith in other ways" than in a church body.[13] The fact that so many believe leaving the church community is an acceptable alternative seems to beg the question—are people being discipled well? If their belief system allows the idea that faith can be a solitary journey, that iron sharpening iron no longer has meaning, and that face-to-face relationships aren't required for spiritual growth, discipleship has fallen down drastically at some point.

12 Church Leaders, 2018.

13 Pew Forum, "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services," perform.org, August 1, 2018, https://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-services/, (accessed January 16, 2020).

David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock find this to be statistically true. "In a study we conducted for Navigators, *The State of Discipleship*, we discovered that people, especially young Christians, believe that discipleship can be accomplished as a solo effort. Forty-one percent of Christians say, 'I believe my spiritual life is entirely private,' and 37 percent say they want to be discipled 'on my own.'"[14] That this is biblically impossible has not entered their experience. That they have been "discipled" through an American individualistic approach to worship—songs that emphasize personal experience and emotion, and sermon applications that ask, "How does this apply to me?" doesn't assist in attempts to create a community-oriented basis for faith. Matthew Kin explains the need for a community sense of discipleship:

> The American church context is hyperindividualistic. We read the Bible passage and instantly ask ourselves, "So, what does this mean to me, and what should I do about it?" Whereas Western Christians drift toward personalized application, many ethnic or non-Western congregants also expect some biblical application that influences the entire church, neighborhood, and especially the family. Heightened awareness of communal application will benefit churches in the long run.[15]

Yet later research reveals that the most faith-filled young Christians, what Kinnaman and Matlock call "resilient Christians," consider a community of fellow disciples the most important variable in their faith. "The top relational predictors of resilient Christians are these: I feel connected to a community of Christians; the church is a place where I feel I belong; I feel loved and valued in my church; I feel connected to people older than me in my church."[16] So one mark of poor discipleship is the fact that these young adults are not present in a faith community.

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14 Kinnaman and Matlock, 119.

15 Matthew Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons, (*Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 737, 741, Kindle.

16 Kinnaman and Matlock, 131.

If discipleship can be measured, at least in part, by a set of "Christian" behaviors, then one could determine a level of success based on a survey of some of those behaviors. Those measures indicate failure.

> In virtually every study we conduct, representing thousands of interviews each year, born-again Christians failed to display much attitudinal or behavioral evidence of transformed lives. Based on the study released in 2007, we found that most of the lifestyle activities of born-again Christians were statistically equivalent to those of non-born-agains. When asked to identify their activities over the last 30 days, born-again believers were just as likely to bet or gamble, to visit a pornographic website, to take something that did not belong to them, to consult with a medium or psychic, to physically fight or abuse someone, to have consumed enough alcohol to be considered legally drunk, to have used an illegal, nonprescription drug, to have said something to someone that was not true, to have gotten back at someone for something he or she did, and to have said mean things behind another person's back. No difference.[17]

3. Worldview and Wisdom as a Measure of Discipleship

The same authors go on elsewhere to show that not only by the measure of behavior is discipleship failing but also when considering believers' intellectual and social judgments.

> If two thirds of young adults have made a commitment to Jesus before, how many do you think possess a biblical worldview? Our research shows only 3%. That is just one out of every 22 young adults who have made a commitment to Christ. Although older adults are more likely to have such a perspective, it is also a small slice– only 9% – who do. We will not be effective if we do not address the problem of superficial faith.[18]

The authors make a connection between thinking and behavior—noting that the former is "one of the most consistent influences"[19] on the latter. If people are not being discipled into a distinctly Christian worldview, their behavior will not be distinctly Christian, either.

Kenda Creasy Dean, in her landmark study of teens and faith, explains that the majority of young people within the church believe in "moralistic therapeutic deism" rather than actual

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17 David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 47.

18 Kinnaman and Lyons, 75-6.

19 Kinnaman and Lyons, 81.

Christianity. They believe that God exists, mostly to make them happy, and that there are some moral rules to follow that makes them "good people." Beyond that is mist that looks remarkably like the rest of the world's point of view. "Apart from 'being nice,' teenagers do not think religion influences their decisions, choice of friends, or behaviors. Most religious communities' central problem is not teen rebellion but teenagers benign 'whatever-ism.'"[20] Churchgoers' lives are not changed by moralistic therapeutic deism—indeed, "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism makes no pretense that it's changing lives; it is a low commitment, compartmentalized set of attitudes aimed at 'meeting my needs' and 'making me happy' rather than bending my life into a pattern of love and obedience to God."[21] The study's conclusions are most disturbing in that these attitudes and beliefs are not the product of modern culture, technology, or rampant secularism in schools and media. The blame lies at the foot of the church's teachers who have not offered them much else.

> What if the blasé religiosity of most American teenagers is not the result of poor communication but the result of excellent communication of a watered-down gospel so devoid of God's self giving love in Jesus Christ, so immune to the sending love of the Holy Spirit that it might not be Christianity at all? Perhaps young people lack robust Christian identities because churches offer such a stripped-down version of Christianity that it no longer poses a viable alternative to imposter spiritualities.[22]

As Thom and Joanie Schultz explain, "Research shows that churches that encourage thinking produce more Christians with mature faith. However, those churches are in the minority."[23] Lest anyone think this is a young person only problem, remember that Dean's

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20 Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church,* (London: UK, Oxford University Press, 2010), 28.

21 Dean, 38.

22 Dean, 12, 36.

23 Thom and Joanie Schultz, *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church: And How To Fix It*, (Loveland: CO, Group Publishing, 1996), 110.

teenagers are now in their twenties and early thirties, and the young people the Schultzes queried are older.

Beyond measures of moral behavior, orthodox worldview, and a clear understanding of who Jesus/God is, discipleship can and should be measured by the ways in which people interact with the world. Do Christians embrace and embody the values and character of Christ? Are they living wisely as believers in exile, and are pastors equipping their people with the skills to discern the next right steps when answers aren't obvious? Have they internalized a Christ-centered way of life that allows them to understand the nuances of decision-making, filter the voices that cry out for their notice, and choose well? David Kinnaman explains how this wisdom matters more than any information in the current age:

> The third arena in which the church must rethink its approach to disciple making is helping the next generation learn to value wisdom over information. Mosaics have access to more knowledge content than any other generation in human history, but many lack discernment for how to wisely apply that knowledge to their lives in the world. Wisdom is the idea of skillful living. It entails the spiritual, mental, and emotional ability to relate rightly to God, to others, and to our culture.[24]

If believers are to be discipled effectively, churches need to be offering the skills to navigate through the fog of information overload and filter the massive amounts of input people of all ages receive. Knowles refers to this in his secular mind by affirming, "growth depends upon internalizing events into a storage system that corresponds to the environment."[25]

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24 Kinnaman, *Lost Me*, 30.

25 Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: the Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development,* eighth edition, (Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, New York: NY, 2015), 14.

There is not a lack of interest in deep discipleship—on the contrary, there is a great desire for it. Deep discussion is the number one item on the wishlist of young people interviewed for the Growing Young project.[26]

> The knowledge you have, the ways you have sustained your faith over the years, the discoveries you've made along the way—these are invaluable to us. We want our faith to be connected to the trajectory of church history, and we can't do that without you. When you see us heading toward murky waters, don't just warn us off or ignore us; tell us what you know. We really will listen. There is so much uncertainty in the Inventive Age. And while that's exciting in all kinds of ways, it can freak some of us out. We need to know that other people see what's good in us, that people who have held on to their faith in times of crisis or doubt hold out hope that we can do the same.[27]

While these quotes refer to intergenerational mentoring more than preaching, the desire remains the same across the board. People *do* want to be discipled deeply. The job of the preacher is to disciple. If pastors can do this through discussion, allowing congregation members to offer up that life experience—knowledge, faith, and discoveries—during actual teaching times, why would churches not utilize this valuable resource?

The conclusions of *Church Refugees*, an extensive discussion with/study of people who have left the church but who retain their interest in and commitment to Christ, are that, "We must admit the possibility that our churches are somehow enabling many people to stall out on their journey toward deep, transformative faith."[28]

The next question, to borrow from Peter Greer and Chris Horst, is to discover why (rather than how or what) discipleship-oriented preaching, as an important cog in this discipleship

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26 Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 1524, Kindle.

27 Doug Pagitt, *Church in the Inventive Age,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014), 81.

28. Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are DONE with Church but Not Their Faith,* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2015), 314, Kindle.

wheel, is failing and to be willing to effect the change necessary. ("Everything flows from why.")[29] Then, one can ask how—how has preaching contributed to this state, and how should or can it change the reality?

4. Preaching as a Means to Discipleship

"It is the hope of every preacher that every sermon will be used by the Spirit to move Christians to grow from point A to point B, in the direction of the life modeled by Jesus Christ."[30] This statement accepts the mandate of preaching as discipleship, that this is the essence of its purpose. To rely solely on a hope, however, fails to take that mandate seriously. Preachers should be intentional about ensuring discipleship happens through their preaching.

The Scripture suggests that discipleship is the point of learning God's word— "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16)[31]. This covers both behavioral and worldview aspects of a Christian's training. According to Scott Gibson,

> The outcome of this engagement with the Scripture results in changed lives: 'so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' If more preachers came to the responsibility of preaching . . . with the understanding that they are nurturing disciples, their preaching might be different. Perceiving preaching as discipleship gives preachers a more meaningful way of approaching those to whom they speak.[32]

Jeffrey Arthurs beautifully outlines the purpose of preaching as re-membering—"Our world and the unity of the human race and our own identities have been shattered, have been dis-

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[29] Peter Greer and Chris Horst, *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches,* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2014), 71, Kindle.

30 Mitchell, 165.

31 All Scripture quotations are taken from the New Living Translation, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996) unless otherwise noted.

32 Scott Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan: Sermon Strategies for Growing Mature Believers,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 16.

membered. In preaching, the body of Christ is re-membered."[33] He speaks of the biblical meaning of the word *zakar*—remember—as calling things to mind with the intent that the audience (congregation) acts on those memories in the present. Thus, a preacher's work is not to impart information but to create action that leads toward discipleship, based on reminding people of what God has said and they have known. "A remembrancer is a servant who brings things from the storehouse, a farmer who helps the listener harvest memories previously planted. One of the preacher's main callings is to make knowledge, values, and experience present once again. Ministers must serve as the Lord's remembrancers because things learned can be buried, lost, amputated, or corrupted."[34] If the preacher isn't stirring memory so that buried things are unearthed and changed, she is not fulfilling the purpose of preaching.

That action, not simply knowledge, is the touchstone of discipleship appears in most of the reading, and certainly Scripture resounds with it.

> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. (James 1:22-25, NIV).

In Gregory Hollifield's words, "The test of a preacher is that his congregation goes away saying, not 'What a lovely sermon,' but, 'I will do something!'" [35] Secular learning experts also adhere to this criteria for determining if teaching has met its goal: "There is a remarkable agreement

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33 Jeffrey Arthurs, *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness,* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2017), x, Kindle.

34 Arthurs, 5-6.

35 Gregory Hollifield, *Preaching in Red and Yellow, Black and White*, (Memphis, TN: GKH, 2013), 856, Kindle.

upon the definition of learning as being reflected in a change in behavior as a result of experience."[36] This same source agrees as well with the need for both changes in behavior and changes in attitudes—as noted earlier in the discussion on discipleship being measured by both orthopraxy and worldview.

> Learning as a process emphasizes what happens during the course of a learning experience in obtaining a given learning product or outcome. Learning as function emphasizes certain critical aspects of learning, such as motivation, retention, and transfer, which presumably make behavioral changes in human beings possible . . . learning theorists see learning as a process by which behavior is changed, shaped, or controlled. Other theorists prefer to define learning in terms of growth, development of competencies, and fulfillment of potential.[37]

It's not an either/or but a both/and.

Another aspect of preaching beyond imparting information and memories that stir people to action is to bring the people into an experience of God. In this, too, the church appears to be falling down, as Barna research explains: "Among adults who regularly attend a church services, 1/2 admit that they haven't experienced God's presence at any time during the past year."[38] Of course, this is not solely the result of preaching but of the entire worship service and community. Yet, if it is the preacher's job to usher people into that presence in some way, she or he must come to grips with these statistics and ask—why? Herrington and Absalom quote churchgoers with a similar experience:

> "Sometimes I find our church services to be deeply frustrating. While there are weeks where I meet with God in worship and find my mind and spirit fed by the sermon, I often have this nagging feeling of, 'Is that it? Is that the best way we can do and be the church?' . . . "When I read the Bible's descriptions of church life, I have trouble matching

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36 Knowles, 13.

37 Knowles, 71, 14.

38 George Barna, "Worship in the Third Millennium," in *Experiencing God in Worship*, ed. Michael Warden, (Loveland:CO, Group Publishing, 2000), 14.

> that with our pastor's insistence that what we are doing on a Sunday morning is the same thing."[39]

If what Viola and Barna says is true—that, "We Christians are not transformed simply by hearing sermons week after week. We are transformed by regular encounters with the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who minister are called not only to reveal Christ by the spoken word, but to show their hearers how to experience, know, follow, and serve him,"[40] then a preacher cannot focus solely on imparting information about God but must consider that the sermon event requires an effort to transform people through an encounter with God.

5. Problematic Discipleship Models

One difficulty in discipleship through current methods of preaching is sheer capacity of the human mind. The Schultzes cite common research that explains, "People forget 40% of a speaker's message within 20 minutes. They forget 60% after a half day. And after a week they lose 90%."[41] These statistics don't bode well for discipleship if listening and remembering in the church is not very different. Unfortunately, it's not, according to the same source.

> We polled adult church attenders to learn their perceptions of the sermon time. Here's some of what we discovered: just 12% say they usually remember the message. 87% say their mind wanders during sermons. 35% say the sermons they hear are too long. 11% of women and 5% of men credit sermons as their primary source of knowledge about God. . . It's a paradox. Parishioners often cite the sermon as the pinnacle of the worship service, yet they retain very little from it.[42]

If people do not receive their primary source of knowledge about God from sermons, where are they receiving it? Gregory Hollifield admits that, "A hearer's attention waxes and wanes

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[39] Herrington and Absalom, 48-49.

Practices, (Carol Stream: IL, Tyndale House Publishing, 2012), 100.

41 Schultz, 245.

42 Schultz, 241-2.

repeatedly throughout a sermon," but his answer is to train preachers better in recapturing attention through tricks within the monologue every few minutes, not in substantial formative change.[43]

This inability to pay attention and to recall, too, can be partially linked to the need for sensory experience, as mentioned by Mitchell, "The mind senses what is happening in a human context by means of reports from the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and touch. Every experience is in interaction with a specific person, place, or thing. Abstract ideas may flit through the rational mind, but the well-remembered experience of the whole person (body, mind, and spirit) begins always with sense-reported data."[44] With only an emphasis on aural learning, pastors are capturing little of an audience's innate ability to remember. Mitchell goes on to explain that this relegation of faith to left-brained reason not only makes it more difficult for hearers to retain, it negates both Jesus' teaching and modern psychology.

> No matter how much they may affirm sermon impact on the 'heart,' typical [sermon] preparation has yet to be directed to the feelings. That is, professionally recognized training tends to prepare preachers to address the mental faculties. Period. In fact, there is great need for much new insight about preaching that addresses the totality of human beings in a manner consistent with Jesus' affirmative and holistic summary in the first Commandment . . . Modern researchers are saying that it [faith] resides in the intuitive region, that great, right-brain storehouse, whose ideas have not been entered into the human data bank by rational criteria and processes.[45]

Eswine relates this need for sensory imagery to the image-richness of this age, explaining that, as the culture has become permeated with image over word, "postmodern preachers should

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43 Hollifield, 1613.

44 Mitchell, 287.

45 Mitchell, 2363, 2412.

draw on image-rich narratives and stories to present the gospel and make it clear."[46] Knowles acknowledges this need as part of understanding different learning styles of adults and catering teaching so that as many styles as possible are engaged.[47]

It's difficult to put into practice, and to export into a person's worldview, something he cannot even remember. Much of discipleship, if not most, is "caught" by being in community with mature believers. However, this research suggests that, first, other believers are not guaranteed to be mature, and second, communal remembering is required before communal transformation. Mature disciples cannot model what they haven't committed to long-term memory and have not practiced. Gibson defines the need in a clear summary: "Discipleship, then, is developing mature, well-rounded Christians who not only are fed through preaching and the wider ministry of the church but also are able to feed others and themselves well."[48]

6. Interactive Discipleship Models

One barrier to discipling adults through the sermon event is their innate tendency to question authority, coupled with current technology's ability to foster that skepticism. For instance, Millennials and those coming after them do not readily assume that a person standing in front of them has the last word on a topic. They are used to googling anything and crowdsourcing information and advice. Therefore, the respect given to authority in previous generations can no longer be assumed by a pastor. A pastor has to earn the right to be heard in today's church if she or he wants the church to reach and disciple its people.

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46 Eswine, 61.

47 Knowles et al, 196.

48. Gibson, 13.

David Kinnaman enumerates some of the new issues clouding and changing the attitudes of people toward authority:

- Teachers and pastors can be fact-checked in real time.
- Personal news isn't "real" until it has been shared on Facebook or Twitter.
- Young people expect to participate as well as consume.
- Young people do not see the church as the sole arbiter of spiritual content.
- Constant access—everyone is an expert—creates a "my-sized" epistemology.
- Expectation of flattened structures of hierarchy.[49]

Some argue that distrust of authority has always been an issue with whatever generation comes along, and therefore no change is necessary. Witness this quote from *Time Magazine* circa 1968: "Today, more and more U.S. clergymen are letting the people in the pew talk back by experimenting with 'dialogue sermons' as an alternate to the pulpit monologue. One reason for this communal approach to the exposition of God's word is that today's educated congregations are unwilling to put up with authoritarian preaching that lacks the stamp of credibility."[50]

This argument fails to address the reality that, if congregations of the 1960's and 70's distrusted authority, how much more might they now with the advent of the information age, when congregations know of all the church's and pastor's failings almost before they do? It also accepts the reality that all adults, not only young ones, inherently wish to ensure for themselves that what they hear is true. This is not a bad thing. Too, the argument fails to consider the influence of technology and a global community that has not existed prior to this generation. The ability to have an online discussion with any number of people who might not agree with a

49 Kinnaman, *Lost Me*, 43.

50 "Preaching: Backtalk from the Pew," *Time Magazine*, Vol 91, No. 20, May 17, 1968, 80, as quoted in Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2007, Kindle Edition, 273.

pastor's proclamations, even as she or he or speaks perhaps, colors the light in which people now view their pastor and her or his assurances.

As Gabe Lyons, mentions, "Without warning, the technological revolution shook hands with the industrial age, and the resulting peak in accessibility to information pushed us into unknown territory. . . The implication is that anyone can claim 'expert' status. In a matter of minutes, any preteen can set up a website or blog and gain a global hearing . . . More 'expert' voices leads to more institutional skepticism."[51]

Contributing to this is the loss of trust in experts that also permeates current thinking, as opposed to trust in "hive mind" collaboration for answers. Previous generations turned to the experts for advice and assurance. Witness the abundance of self-help books that lined shelves in the 80's and 90's. Publishers see a large downsizing of this type of work in this century—in favor of memoir and creative nonfiction that answer the same type of questions but in a more community-oriented, less dictatorial manner. This reality changes the pulpit experience as well. The pastor-as-expert no longer captures the allegiance he or she once did.

Technology has fueled the belief among people that they are not passive receptacles of culture and instruction but active participants. They believe they have a contribution to make in their own learning, and they insist on being seen doing so. Dean finds this particularly true among her constituents.

> Media scholar Henry Jenkins calls the early 21st-century's global vernacular *participatory culture*, which forms the dominant division of reality presented to young people through channels like open source technology, Wikipedia, reality television, YouTube, and so on. These technologies . . . have reframed young Americans expectations for social relationships, educational, and cultural understandings, and have even altered their neurological functioning. Teenagers no longer view themselves primarily as consumers of culture but as

51 Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians,* (New York, NY: Doubleday Religion, 2010), 19-20.

> creators of it. While most teenagers do actively create cultural content, what seems to matter more is there their sense that their participation is welcome and, when offered, appreciated.[52]

Another factor is changes in schooling and workplaces, where adult are now accustomed to environments of a more collaborative nature. This expectation bleeds over into church, where they will also expect some give and take and sharing of ideas in order to come to conclusions that once only the pastor's word needed ensure. As interactive learning and self-directed communication choices move into the norm of their social and educational interactions, this desire for a more collaborative sense of faith will increase.

> Our research reveals that many young people feel the church is too small a container in which to carry their doubts. 36% agree that 'I don't feel that I can ask my most pressing life questions in church.' This statistic signals one of the challenges that the next generation of Christians brings to the church. They are used to 'having a say' in everything related to their lives. Communication, fueled by technology, is moving from passive to interactive. Yet the structure of young adult developments in most churches is classroom style instruction. It is passive, one-sided communication–or at least that's the perception most young people have of their religious education. They find little appetite within their faith communities for dialogue and interaction.[53]

Related to the desire for collaborative learning is a feeling that humans create their own destinies, and therefore they want the autonomy to do so. Doug Pagitt explains that the important future question is no longer, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" But "What do I want to make of my life? What will I contribute?" The need to contribute runs deep in a culture steeped in creating at least as much as consuming content. "These aren't questions about vocation; they are questions about impact, about meaning. We sense that there is no end to the options and that the future is ours to make . . .The Inventive Age is one in which inclusion, participation,

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52 Dean, 125.

53 Kinnaman, *Lost Me*, 192.

collaboration, and beauty are essential values."[54] It is not surprising that the poetic touchstone of this generation resounds in the late Mary Oliver's lines: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"[55] Increasingly, people want to discover this meaning and to discover it themselves, not be told in a speech in which they have not participated. Yet they want to know and are open to those who will explore the question with them.

Not only is collaboration and input what people want in their discipleship, it's the method professional educators believe in as well. The Schultzes asked "professional persuaders" how they would go about preaching a sermon to convince a group of people toward a certain change, and the professionals unanimously said that they would involve the people rather than talk at them. "Ask them to talk with a partner or small group of three or four. Turn to a partner and explain the concept in your own words. Allow time for questions at the end. Use visuals. In order to ensure the message sticks, people need to see it."[56]

Knowles details the history of pedagogy and the differences used when teaching adults. He delves into teachers as diverse as Lau Tsu, Jesus, and Sophocles, determining that,

> The ancient Chinese and Hebrews invented what we now call the case method; in which the leader or one of the group members describes a situation, often in the form of a parable, and together with the group explores its characteristics and possible resolutions. The Greeks invented what we now call the Socratic dialogue; in which the leader or a group member poses a question or dilemma and the group members pool their thinking and experience to seek an answer or solution. The Romans were more confrontational; they use challenges that forced group members to state a position and then defend them.[57]

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54 Pagitt. 29-30.

55 Mary Oliver, "The Summer Day," Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/133.html.

56 Schultz, 247.

57 Knowles, 18.

Jesus used interactive methods as well, inviting Peter to walk on the water, asking questions in place of answering them, and perhaps even sifting sand between his fingers as he spoke of building houses on rocks.

Pagitt discusses interaction as a discipleship method in the early church.

> In the first century church, the governing purpose of the church meeting was mutual edification. The regular meetings of the church envisioned in Scripture allowed for every member to participate in the building up of the body of Christ. Unlike today's practice, the teaching in the church meeting was not delivered by the same person week after week. Instead, every member had the right, the privilege, and the responsibility to minister in the gathering. Mutual encouragement was the hallmark of this meeting.[58]

Viola and Barna agree, explaining how the Reformation changed the church to focus on one leader, one voice, and one sermon as central to the meeting and organization, whereas, "According to the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ is the leader, director, and CEO of the church meeting. According to Paul and Corinthians, Christ speaks through his entire body, not just one member."[59]

Knowles' findings on adult education indicate that in order to learn optimally, adults need to be self-directing, to have life-experience application, and to seek those applications in a collaborative situation. "Experience is the richest resource for adults learning: therefore, the core methodology of adult education is the analysis of experience. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing; therefore, the role of the teacher is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry with them rather than to transmit his or her knowledge to them and then evaluates their conformity to it."[60] He maintains that adult learning responds to questions of why—why do I need this information?

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58 Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Reimagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*, (Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan, 2005), 52.

59 Viola and Barna, 69.

60 Knowles, 22.

What is the purpose of my learning it? When those questions are answered, learners engage. However, some of Knowles work displays a troubling aspect of preaching that others notice as well. Churchgoers are used to sermons. They think they're important. They say they value good preaching above anything. Because of this, they are loathe to change that system, despite not being discipled by it. Knowles notes this problem in the classroom:

> Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions. They develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction. This presents a serious problem in adult education. The minute adults walk into an activity labeled education or anything synonymous, they hark back to their conditioning in their previous school experience, put on the dunce hat of dependency, fold their arms, sit back, and say 'teach me.' As adult educators become aware of this problem, they make efforts to create learning experiences in which adults are helped to make the transition from dependence to self-directing learners.[61]

As preachers become aware of this dependency problem, they should do the same in order to equip people. The natural motivation of adults to learn gets stunted, according to Knowles, by their past bad experiences and disbelief in their own abilities. Other writers note this in the church as well. Doug Pagitt discusses at length the problem created when congregants both assume they know what they've been taught and also believe they are inadequate to enact it.

> Rather than helping people become more tuned into the Bible, speaching *(sic)* has created a distance between Christians and scripture. Because they know they'll be told what is important each week, many Christians feel little need to explore the Bible on their own. Because speaching signals a general mistrust in the layperson's ability to understand the things of God, many Christians believe they are incapable of taking much from the Bible. At the same time, the same Christians tend to believe they know and understand Scripture because they have heard it presented so many times. So these people leave church after a really good speech feeling like their faith has been strengthened. But when they try to put those same ideas into play in the real world, they can't quite figure out how to do it. They begin to think they are the problem.[62]

People who believe they are the reason they aren't learning don't learn.

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61 Knowles, 44.

62 Pagitt, *Preaching Reimagined,* 190.

The lack of participation is vivid in many churches today, and thus the lack of people taking responsibility for their own discipleship. When people don't contribute, they don't feel invested. When they don't feel invested, they don't problem solve. When they don't problem solve, they don't grow. Kinnaman captures the modern spectator mindset perfectly—

> I am convinced that both the church and Art are fully realized when they are fully participatory. I'm afraid our quest for 'excellence in worship,' which has been a focus in the church for several years now, has sets the stage for congregants to sit in our services like Simon Cowell, deciding over lunch what part of the service had the 'X factor,' instead of asking themselves how they might engage and contribute.[63]

Perhaps the problem of lack of discipleship brought on by a spectator mindset could be remediated through interactive preaching, once a congregation is convinced they what they are used to is not what is best. That adaptive change discussion will come later.

7. Discipleship and Kingdom Implications

Choices of vocation, marriage partner, lifestyle, and personal values are largely made in the twenties—and when these choices are made without the input of a spiritual community, they could negatively affect one's faith long term.

Thus, discipleship of persons in their thirties and forties becomes even more difficult as their values and beliefs have been informed, and they are already raising the next generation with a faith that may not be as robust as it needs to be. Habits and values that run contrary to true gospel will be much more difficult to "disciple away" when an adult is entrenched in their thirties or later. Their children, by extension, will be taught those watered down, even anti-gospel values as "religion," even while their parents bring them to church, and the negative trend will worsen.

63 Kinnaman, *Lost Me*, 218.

This erosion of true gospel teachings can be seen already in culture, where news stations and Facebook groups form opinions on important life issues more than scripture does. For instance, according to both Pew and Lifeway research, only twelve percent of evangelicals cite the Bible as foundational to their views on immigration, and only about half say they know what the Bibles says about this issue.[64] The damage done to the church when people are not discipled is damage to the gospel itself and the kingdom agenda.

Research coming in now explains that, when people become unmoored from their church, their values and opinions grow more extreme.[65] Unleashed from a discipling body, people are likely to increase the current national divide, not heal it. Where there is great division, there is little accommodation for the true gospel of Christ to reconcile and restore.

Kinnaman summarizes this eloquently:

> The next generation is caught between two possible destinies–one moored by the power and depth of the Jesus-centered gospel and one anchored to a cheap, Americanized version of the historic faith that will snap at the slightest puff of wind. Without a clear path to pursue the true gospel, millions of young Christians will look back on their twentysomething years as a series of lost opportunities for Christ.[66]

Like the explorers mentioned in *Failure of Nerve*, perhaps in changing traditional preaching leaders might discover far more than another attempt at maintaining the waning

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64 Pew Research, "Few Say Religion Shapes Immigration, Environment Views," pewforum.org, September 17, 2010, https://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/17/few-say-religion-shapes-immigration-environment-views/, (accessed May 25, 2019).

65 Peter Beinart, *The Atlantic*, "Breaking Faith: The culture war over religious morality has faded; in its place is something much worse," April, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/04/breaking-faith/517785/, (accessed March 14, 2019).

66 Kinnaman, *Lost Me*, 28.

attention span of the people—they might discover that people are being discipled and making disciples.[67]

B. The Setting: The Resolution Church Context

A church planter founded Resolution Church ten years ago with an attractional model. Its opening day saw about 300 people, but that was the largest attendance it has ever experienced. Within the first year, the church decreased by more than half and seven years later had an attendance of around thirty-five. The average age at present is thirty-four.

The church is situated in a far suburb of Chicago, and the town has an average age of thirty-four as well. It likely skews younger because its distance from the city and relative newness make it more affordable for young families than many surrounding suburbs. As recently as fifteen years ago, Oswego was farm fields and a small downtown. Now, it's enjoying a booming housing industry. The community is predominantly white, though there is a massive Hispanic population in the neighboring town.

In surveys of the congregation given in 2017, most members expressed a good understanding of the full meaning of the gospel. This indicates that they do retain important information and are able to integrate it into a whole understanding of Jesus' purposes and their own. That survey data showed that the people in Resolution understood the terms "missional" and "gospel" slightly better than the members of the other church being used as a measure.

67 Edwin Friedman*, A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix, (New York:* NY, Church Publishing, 2007), 818.

The previous pastor's focus on gospel as a whole arc of biblical history, rather than a "pray the prayer get out of hell free" moment, did burrow itself into peoples' understanding by a fifty-seven percent margin, compared to thirty-seven percent of the other church's members.

The knowledge that being incarnational meant being Jesus in the community was there. Sample answers to the request to define incarnational included: "Living with a purpose, where every action is dedicated to fulfilling that purpose," "To be there in the flesh representing Jesus to whomever we encounter," and "Showing Jesus' love, grace, and hope."

The ethos the past two pastors have attempted to install in Resolution has taken root. It has moved from an attractional church based on getting people in the door to one focused on getting themselves out the door to listen to neighbors. In the process, it has shrunk drastically. That does not mean it was a bad process; on the contrary, those who remain have shed or are attempting to shed the concept of consumer church and believe in church as a sent, discipled body.

The other positive point of the survey is that most people have also absorbed what has been taught about the purpose for church. When asked to choose the top three reasons why the local church exists, four answers of the twelve stood out. To worship God and to bring others to Christ were the top priorities; to love our neighbors and to teach the truth tied for third and fourth.

C. The Proposal: Sunday Morning Interactive Worship Events

Though the church at large has experimented in recent decades with different music styles, looser expectations, and new liturgies, its preaching has not changed significantly. Given the massive cultural changes it has faced, it could be time to revisit some of the well-established assumptions about Sunday mornings, particularly the preaching.

Adult learning literature indicates that a lecture format is not effective in imparting information to adults nor in effecting life change.

> Adults have a deep need to be self-directing; therefore, the role of the teacher is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry with them rather than to transmit his or her knowledge to them and then evaluates their conformity to it . . . Not only the content of the courses, but the method of teaching also must be changed. Lectures must be replaced by class exercises in which there is a large share of student participation. 'Let the class do the work,' should be adopted as a motto. There must be ample opportunity for forums, discussions, and debates.[68]

Preaching/teaching in monologue format is traditional, but it follows from this research that it is not the most effective manner in which to disciple adults toward Bible literacy or life change.

When one considers the previously mentioned need for people to feel appreciated for their contributions, it becomes clearer that monological teaching fails not only at engaging those who want to have a stake in their learning but those who are used to learning in a more give-and-take atmosphere.

"Another aspect of the digital shift is the expectation, especially among young people, that they can and should contribute, not just consume. . . If you consider how most churches deliver content–-appointing one person as the authority and encouraging everyone else to sit (consume) quietly while he or she speaks—It is easy to see how that delivery system may come into conflict with changing cultural expectations."[69]

The church at large has made changes in worship services to attract people, but that is not the same thing as discipling them. It has contributed to a consumer orientation toward church, the opposite of Christlike discipleship. Preaching often has become more of a contest to see who

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68 Knowles et al, 22, 26.

69 George Barna and David Kinnaman, *Churchless: Understanding Today's Unchurched and How to Connect with Them,* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2014), 19.

can deliver the best show rather than a time for equipping people for the kingdom. This is not necessarily intentional among preachers; it is more a byproduct of the competitive atmosphere among churches for "butts and bucks."

Perhaps this model was serviceable when young adults were funneled into Sunday school classes to learn their faith, and their mobility was limited such that most remained near home and the faith community in which they were raised. Now, adults create family and community far from their original faith home, and their new tribe may well not support their faith. If that faith never had the undergirding it needed, it's easy for it to bend to the values and priorities of the new surroundings.

Changes need to be made that are deeper and more structural--changes that will threaten tradition and sacred cows. The adaptive change necessary to alter the way in which pastors preach might be the largest barrier of all in church culture.

Yet adult learning literature and statistics suggest that **a pastoral teaching style that emphasizes interaction, hands-on activity/application, sensory detail, community, and collaboration can better disciple our congregations toward a robust, active faith.**

D. Chapter Overview

This chapter has outlined the problem and the research question: Will interactive teaching, accompanied by hands on activity and sensory enrichment, better disciple our adults?

Chapter two will discuss the theology behind this change. This includes an examination of the theology of church, leadership, preaching, and discipleship. What is the function of the church as Jesus left it? How has that worked itself out during two centuries? What absolute mandates exist that must remain, and what truths form our decisions about what church will look like? What is the history of preaching, and what is its purpose? What does preaching look like in

Scripture, and what parts and purposes of it are mandated by the Bible? What is the difference between preaching and teaching? What should a "theology of Sunday morning" look like? Finally, if a pastor's purpose is to equip people for the kingdom, what does that mean, scripturally? How does one recognize the sought after outcomes?

Chapter 3 explores some of the literature surrounding the areas of leadership, preaching, adult learning, and discipleship. Preaching styles are the subject of great controversy, and the authors studied here do not agree on the basic question of what the preaching event requires.

Some writers insist that traditional preaching is adequate, even always best, at what God intends for it. Others believe it is deeply flawed and must give way to other methods of delivering the gospel and equipping the saints. Some writers offer standard "rules" for preaching; others suggest that various ethnicities, ages, and stages require different methods. This leaves room for them to interact on the subject and for this project to draw a conclusion that, while still controversial, falls within the scope of some established work on preaching.

The literature on adult learning reflects a variety of methods for teaching adults and their effects. It studies how adults learn and retain information best as well as how they best act on what they have learned—a statistic of great importance to a pastor. Whether adults know the material and whether they act on it in a positive way are two different questions, and the latter matters significantly in discipleship.

There is a great deal of literature regarding the lack of discipleship in our churches and the reasons for it. This work will look at those reasons as well as how the departure of young people from our churches fuels that lack. Finally, the works compare how the preaching event should or should not be used to mitigate this problem.

Chapter four describes the experiments used to determine the validity of the thesis. For this part of the study, Greenville Free Methodist Church, a church which has a substantial population of young adults due to its being a Free Methodist church in a town with a FM university, was used as a pilot for different preaching methods. Individuals between the ages of 15-35 were asked to evaluate their current discipleship experience through a series of short answer and scale questions. The intent was to determine if they could define their discipleship goals and explain how they were or were not being met. The questions delved into their overall satisfaction with preaching as it pertained to young adults. Those surveyed varied. Some were church attenders; some were not. Some attended church elsewhere from where the project was performed.

The individuals were asked to attend a half dozen preaching events, and after each event, they completed another survey evaluating that sermon in terms of its ability to disciple them. After all the events, they completed a post-event survey, similar to the first.

Over this time period, elements of interaction that, according to adult learning literature, will enhance discipleship were present. The following methods were employed most often:

- Question and answer methods, asking the congregation for their input on questions raised in the sermon as well as what they believed applications to the sermon would be.
- Activities that would use as many senses other than hearing as possible. This included things like tasting and smelling real items that would add to the sermon.
- Activities that got the congregation out of their seats and physically active.
- Discussion groups that would work together to come to conclusions or ideas on the sermon topic.
- Visual and audio effects to engage a visual age group.

- Applications specific to a young adult perspective.

The hope was that the young adults found the type of preaching they encountered during the project was more effective at meeting their discipleship goals and allowing them to understand those goals.

The next step was to take information from the experiment with young people in another church and use it to help Resolution Church be better discipled. From the data gathered, the church planned a fall teaching schedule that emphasized interaction, using a four-week schedule to bring one point of discipleship to the congregation in four different ways.

The first week included a straight sermon with details about a scripture passage. The second week focused on one major point and subpoints through interactive and sensory work. The third week was a discussion on the topic. During the fourth, the congregation did hands-on application. This plan continued for the three months of September, October, and November. Finally, the congregation was surveyed with the same metrics used for the young adult study in Greenville. Did they remember what they had learned? Had they applied it in their daily lives? Could they explain it to someone else? Do they have a good grasp of what discipleship truly is?

The topics approached were basic discipleship topics. The congregation was asked to supply these questions, based on what they feel unequipped to do. The options chosen included: 1) How to know when God is leading you/know His will, 2) How to discern healthy boundaries and understand forgiveness, and 3) How to find peace and wisdom in an information-saturated culture.

Chapter five will offer conclusions from the experiment as well as some ideas for further research and uses of the data.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PREACHING AND DISCIPLESHIP

A design to change the way in which the church communicates God's word and truth from the pulpit cannot be met lightly, as if one was discussing changing the time of service. Making His word understandable and applicable to the people is the charge of a pastor shepherd, and he or she must consider it very seriously. This seriousness, however, would mandate change were it necessary. However, change should not happen for novelty's sake but should be carefully considered in light of the theological understanding of church, leadership, preaching, and discipleship.

What is the function of the church as Jesus left it? How has that worked itself out during two centuries? What absolute mandates exist that must remain, and what truths form our decisions about what church will look like? What does preaching look like in Scripture, and what parts and purposes of it are mandated by the Bible? What should a "theology of Sunday morning" look like? If a pastor's purpose is to equip people for the kingdom, what does that mean, scripturally? How do leaders recognize the outcomes they seek? Can pastors disciple and preach at the same time, and should they?

A. A Theology of the Church

A theology of the church must be centered in Scripture yet culturally applied. It must encompass the church of every time period, ethnicity, and place in society in order to be true. A theology of the church must be strong and yet flexible enough to take it into its future—one very different than its past. It must not only define the church but commission it for its purpose. How

one defines the church and its purpose also directly affects how one defines and describes preaching.

The "what" and the "why" of the church are intimately and irrevocably intertwined. A definition of the church would be nothing but a philosophical conversation, interesting but ultimately impotent, without a discussion of why she exists. Is church defined by its purpose or by its existence? Is it the church solely because it *is* or because it *does*? Does the fact that it is a called out community make it the church, or must it also commit it to be called out *toward* something?

John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul all make arguments for the latter. John confronts the Israelites, who believe they are part of God's family because of their heritage: "Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones" (Luke 3:8). To be considered members of God's family, people must choose to act like his offspring.

Paul continues this thought in Galatians 3:7: "The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God." For Paul and his hearers, "putting faith in God" is not a cerebral exercise. It is an act of trust with natural (or supernatural) consequences, a clear choice to tangibly live out that faith. Paul is reiterating what Jesus said himself, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!" (Matthew 12:48-50).

1. The Church as Called out Ones

The word translated "church" in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, a word that originally referred to bodies of people called out of the citizenry for a particular purpose, generally to

deliberate and decide on governmental issues. When this word refers to Christians it implies, then, that the Christian church is defined as an assembly of called out people. Called from what? From their allegiance to the kingdoms of this world to that of Jesus. If the Greek *ecclesia* was meant to determine rules of the kingdom, part of the "called outness" of the church was to determine kingdom plans and purposes.

In the Scriptures, this assembly performs several tasks and is called for several purposes. They are to pray, share communion, eat together, hear reports and teaching, and worship. Together they sent out missionaries, cared for the poor, appointed leaders, organized worship, and passed judgments. They are admonished to continue to "not neglect our meeting together" so they can "think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Scripture uses several metaphors to describe its equivalent of a congregation. The church is a body (1 Corinthians 12), a family (Galatians 6:10), a bride (Revelation 19), a team of athletes (2 Timothy 2, Hebrews 11), a building (1 Peter 2:5), and a chosen, called out people.

The e*kklesia* means an assembly of believers called out for the purpose of belonging to Christ, the kingdom, and one another. The church is an extension of the original calling God placed on Israel to be called out and, by definition, holy. Holy, too, means set apart, so the two words work together to define what the church is. Peter refers to believers as *eklektos*, chosen and called out, a holy "tribe," a people who belonged to God (1 Peter 2:9). He emphasizes a number of times the concepts of being called out and being called together, as he defines for this new people who, what, and whose they are. As he concludes this section, he compares the church to one last group of people, a comparison which should form a dominant metaphor for the changing church.

2. The Church as Exile

”Dear friends, I warn you as temporary residents and foreigners . . .” (1 Peter 2:11). The church is comprised of *paroykos* and *parepidemos*—aliens, strangers, sojourners who live and work alongside others in a land that is not home. Leadership in a changing context seems best suited to this metaphor that begins with Abraham—the metaphor of wandering exile. God tells Abraham, himself wandering toward a new land for many years, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land” (Genesis 15:13). He is immediately speaking of Joseph and his children in Egypt. However, since Paul refers to all believers as Abraham’s descendants (Galatians 3:7, 29), it is fair to assume God means this to be a metaphor that carries throughout Scripture.

The people of God are “*ger*”— sojourners, aliens, foreigners, immigrants, or ones with no inherited rights. Adam and Eve were the first wanderers, forced to create a home and community in a place they had not been created for that did not feel like home. Abraham becomes the chosen wanderer when he is led out of his land toward one he didn’t yet know. His task, given by God, was to bless the surrounding areas and the nations (Genesis 12:2-3).

Joseph eventually lives in comfort in his exile, but he never forgets that he is not an Egyptian—he was once a slave and a prisoner. He sees his exile as an opportunity to do good for the people around him while still thinking of his home and remembering he is not there, despite his success.

Moses leads his people out of exile and is commanded never to forget their identity as *ger* (Exodus 22:21, Deuteronomy 10:19). They wander in the desert for forty years as sojourners. Their later attempt to create a kingdom rather than accept their identity as God’s *ger* in the world leads to their downfall. As a result of their refusal to treat the *ger* in their midst well and to live

in their identity as God's alien people, they become literal aliens again in a foreign land with their exile into Babylon and Assyria.

Jesus is the ultimate stranger in a strange land, one who left a homeland so far different from the one he came to that foreign cannot encompass it. He had nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9:58). He did not fit into sinful, human culture, and his refusal to claim the rights of his kingdom allowed for others to kill him, outside the gate, outside of belonging to their world (Hebrews 13:12).

He warned his disciples, speaking of them as he prayed—"They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:16-18). Peter insists that the church as "temporary residents and foreigners" is called out of darkness to be a set apart people (1 Peter 2:10-12). Finally, the writer of Hebrews describes God's people as ones who willingly go outside the gate with Jesus, because this world is not their permanent home (13:13-14).

Jeremiah epitomizes God's instructions to his church:

> This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: **"**Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:4-7).

The church should not feel comfortable. It should not feel at home and make itself like its surroundings. It should always feel like *ger*—exiled strangers, always longing for their home. Yet, the church's unique purpose is to be God's image wherever it is placed. It is her *raison d'etre* to be salt and light, working and praying for the well-being of her surroundings. The church as *ger* particularly cares for the less fortunate, as Jesus commanded and purposed (Luke 4, Matthew 25). It works for *shalom*—wholeness and peace in the spiritual and physical sense.

It might be possible to say the Israelites and those to whom Jesus spoke were individuals and not "church," but in the the Hebrew mind, the individual was inherently connected to everyone else, placing the group ahead of one person, as is common in many non-western societies. What God meant for one he meant for the household. What God commanded, he commanded corporately. The Old Testament wanderers were not Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but God's called out people, together. This is the very definition of church—called out ones.

A church living as a stranger in a strange land can speak into current situations, if it embraces its identity as God's *ger*, His sojourner, rather than holding staunchly to any confused cultural Christian identity. A church that sees itself as God's ambassador in that strange world considers first what its King would do or say rather than earthly identities or boundaries. It is anchored to its bedrock of identity as called out *ger,* making it adeptly flexible in this changing world. A church that understands itself to be a minority, a group of aliens trying to change culture from an in-but-not-of position, can become a quiet force in that world. If the church is in exile, it can disciple its people into becoming explorers and caretakers, intent on bringing the kingdom come to their world while always aware that the world is not theirs.

The church as exile resonates with the writer of Hebrews:

> They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 12:13-16)

3. The Church as Sent

Some believe that the church is to be missional because of the missional nature of God himself. Thus, since "sentness" is part of the nature of the Trinity, it is rooted in God's very existence. This finds its ultimate expression in the sending of Jesus, the second person of the

Trinity, to earth as the man/god. Finally, the Holy Spirit is also sent to believers in his many functions. Thus, the church being sent into the world is an extension of God's nature, not a mandate but a natural result of a people made in the image of God and striving to be like Christ.

Alan Hirsch applies sentness for individual praxis: "A missional theology is not content with mission being a church-based work. Rather, it applies to the whole life of every believer. Every disciple is to be an agent of the kingdom of God, and every disciple is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. We are all missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture."[1] Hirsch thus applies the incarnational concept of church outside building walls.

The New Testament continues the sent theme with Jesus being sent to the world (John 3:16-17, 1 John 4:9-10, Matthew 10:40, Mark 9:37, Luke 4:18, 43, John 5:36, 6:29, 6:57, 7:29, 8:42) and subsequently telling his disciples that he is sending them just as he was sent (John 17:18, 20:21). In several examples, he does send them out (Matthew 10:16, Mark 3:14, 6:7, Luke 9:2, 10:1-3) just as the newly birthed church continually sends out disciples later, and "sentness" is seen as obligatory to the kingdom (Romans 10:15). The verb *apostello*, used in these verses, means to send forth or off, or away from, implying authority on the part of the sender. The English noun "apostle" derives from this word, denoting one sent by God to proclaim his kingdom in word and deed.

The church in its entirely, as made up of apostles in the broader sense, is sent into the world. Jesus repeats this in his John 17 prayer, and he implies it when he tells his disciples that the gates of hell will not stand against the church—a church necessarily on the move *out* if this is to be the case.

[1] Alan Hirsch, "Defining Missional, www.christiantytoday.com/pastors, 2008, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/fall/17.20.html, (accessed June 2019).

Jesus demonstrated both the authority of a sender and the broadness of the sending in his great command--"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28.18-19). The church is a people meant to go. It is a people who should be already going, since a more accurate translation would be, "as you are going, make disciples."

Making disciples as one goes may mean going into places where the church is not traditionally comfortable. If Jesus went to Samaria, Peter went to Caesarea, and Paul went to Athens, the church will not always go to places it finds easy. Church at what Hirsch calls "the edge of chaos" is sometimes how church best fulfills its purpose. Going to the edges not only demonstrates obedience, it energizes the church that is obeying.

> Great missionary movements seem to always begin at the fringes of the church, among the poor and the marginalized, and seldom at the center. But there's more to it than just mission; most great movements of mission have inspired significant and related movements of renewal in the life of the church. And for this reason it becomes vital that the church move out of its safety zones and engage in real mission on the margins. It seems that when the church engages at its edges, it almost always brings life to the center.[2]

The early church drew attention and flourished partly because they did this. They went where no one else would go—to the sick, dying, poor, and outcast. Churches that do this find new life in communities outside their normal purview. As the church forms on the margins, it takes on a new appearance, but not a new definition. It is still a gathering of called out people.

This willingness to risk requires church to have what Heifetz calls an "experimental mindset" where one is willing to "improvise as they go"[3]—a willingness to try, fail, and explore

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[2] Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006), 847, Kindle.

[3] Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World,* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2009), 438, Kindle.

beyond the known and trusted. As Tod Bolsinger points out, when one is going where one has never been, the old maps and methods aren't of much use.

A church that is moving has to jettison unneeded baggage and travel light. It has to make some things up as it goes along. Always, it has to subject those decisions to its Christology and Jesus' incarnation work. At the edges, the sent church is also the church in exile. A gathering, sent church in exile takes its identity and uses it to adapt what it does, including preaching and teaching, to reflect what it means to continue going out. It changes its methods but not its identity.

B. A Theology of Preaching

Preaching in the church is in service to a larger theological purpose, and it must be considered in that reflection. That larger purpose can be found in its identity as exiles and sent ones. If the church is an exile, it can disciple its people into becoming explorers and caretakers, intent on bringing the kingdom come to their world while always aware that the world is not theirs.

Preaching in a *ger* church finds its proper place as a tool to disciple people toward living faithfully in exile. When the church views its purpose as a people sent to others, it learns to use preaching as a way to train disciples to bless others and to image God in a culture which finds Him strange. Such a viewpoint shifts the church from a sole focus on knowledge or conversion to one on deep discipleship that changes lives.

1. Preacher as Leader

If these three aspects of church (called out, exiled, sent) comprise the definition of the church pastors will lead, leaders must also discover a theological and Biblical understanding of

leadership in order to guide such a church into a brave new world. One characteristic of leaders is especially pertinent in leading a sent, exiled church.

"Their [church leaders] responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Theologically, a leader has always been called to disciple others into the basics of Christian faith and practice. A sojourning people need new skills for a new world. Equipping congregations to know and live their faith in a potentially hostile culture comes through preaching, among other areas.

In any area in which a leader calls people to change something significant—as well as sacrifice, step out of comfort, be vulnerable, forgive, or do something difficult—she should be the one leading the way. There is no tolerance in our culture for the semblance of inauthenticity. Distrust for church leaders is already the current cultural default, quite opposite from previous generations. As one late member of the Millennial generation hypothesized:

> I often wonder if the role of the clergy in this age is not to dispense information or guard the prestige of their authority, but rather to *go first*, to volunteer the truth about their sins, their dreams, their failures, and their fears in order to free others to do the same. Such an approach may repel the masses looking for easy answers from flawless leaders, but I think it might make more disciples of Jesus, and I think it might make healthier, happier pastors. There is a difference, after all, between preaching success and preaching resurrection. Our path is the muddier one.[4]

The preaching event can function as the foremost arena where a pastor goes first. Many professors and writers have discouraged pastors from being too vulnerable in the pulpit. For instance, Gregory Hollifield insists, "The preacher-as-herald speaks with authority. He stands with God and with his feet firmly planted in God's truth. In the pulpit he identifies more with the writers of the biblical texts from which his sermons are drawn than the recipients of those texts

4 Rachel Held Evans, *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church,* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 112.

or his own congregation."[5] Pastors have been told to put up emotional walls between themselves and the people, not allowing them to see too much of the pastor's personal or inner life.

In contrast, note now Paul poured out his heart to his listeners. In his "preached" letters, he displayed anger, pain, joy, discouragement, grief, and excitement in equal and honest measure. Paul's honesty makes could make church leaders uncomfortable, because pastors are too aware what might happen if they are this vulnerable from the pulpit. Indeed, it did happen to Paul—some hearers did mock him and leave him. Yet this personal hurt did not discourage him from what he knew to be the right course—honesty and transparency with those he considered his spiritual children. Preachers would do well to heed this biblical example. Pulpits can be places where pastors tell the truth—about themselves as well as Scripture. They can be places where honesty heals others, where preachers do as Paul did--"When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us . . . Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you" (2 Corinthians 1:4-6).

Honesty in the pulpit can lead to a healthy ability to preach interactively, because to preach this method well ego must be laid down and humility picked up. One cannot invite others to participate in the preaching event, asking questions and discussing their own insights, unless his need to be right and be seen as the authority has been taken captive by humility in the Spirit. Transparency and vulnerability about their own troubles only enhanced the teaching of people such as Paul, Peter, Jeremiah, and Hosea and encouraged their hearers.

This equipping must be done with a sensitive understanding that changing the preaching event is a massive adaptive change that will increase anxiety in the congregation. It requires the

[5] Gregory Hollifield, *Preaching in Red and Yellow, Black and White*, (Memphis, TN: GKH. 2013), 77, Kindle Edition.

person in the lead to turn her ear back to listen, process, and dialog with the people who follow. When the people in the pews fear losing something they are deeply used to—the comfort of an inspiring sermon, the history of knowing exactly how a teaching will be presented every week—equipping leaders can lead into change slowly, incorporating small changes incrementally. When members fear the idea of speaking up in public or participating in a discussion, a leader can offer specific criteria or instruction to make the transition less frightening.

A church in exile needs leaders with deep theology and skills adapted to the times. With appropriate leadership, the church that is a stranger in a strange land does not need to feel frightened at its plight but can feel powerful in the Holy Spirit to see kingdom work be done. To borrow from J.R.R. Tolkien, "Not all who wander are lost."[6]

The belief in pastor as equipper for a people in a strange new world necessarily affects the way one preaches and one's understanding of a theology of preaching. If the pastor's purpose is to equip, it follows that effective methods of doing so, barring any of them denying God's word, would be the optimal choice for preaching and teaching. If preaching is not the central event of a church's purpose but a tool for the central purpose, leaders can afford to assess the effectiveness of that tool in every age and culture. One would not build a house without analyzing tools to see if they would suit the purpose of building the best house possible. To progress in discussing the theology of preaching, leaders must agree to treat preaching as a tool, not an end in and of itself.

6 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, (New York, NY: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 1954), 167.

2. The Function of Preaching

In Romans, Paul asks how people can hear the gospel unless someone preaches it to them (Romans 10:14). Scripture establishes the importance of preaching God's word, here for conversion, elsewhere (2 Timothy 3:16) for instruction.

> John Stott writes: "Preaching is indispensable to Christianity. Without preaching a necessary part of its authenticity has been lost. For Christianity is, in its very essence, a religion of the Word of God" . . . Therefore, the church of this or any century must give attention to the preached word as a primary instrument of change and spiritual development. Although the world may reject the activity as vain babbling, it is the preached word, as far as it is true to the revealed word, through which God manifests his power (1 Cor. 1:17–29).[7]

a. Remembrance. Preaching/teaching fulfills several purposes in scripture. First, it aids people in remembering. As Jeffrey Arthurs writes, "One of the preacher's main callings is to make knowledge, values, and experience present once again . . . Remembrance is an understanding of the reality of the past in such a way that the events of the past become a force in the present, producing some activity of will or of body or both. Both *zakar* and *mimnēsko* demonstrate that memory is a whole-person activity.[8]

To remember for the Hebrew doesn't mean to reminisce fondly. It doesn't imply looking at a date on a calendar and filing away an intellectual fact. "Remember" in Hebrew is active. It gives hands and feet and voice to some event so that listeners do something about it in the present.

This is how God remembers. When Scripture speaks of God remembering someone, it always means that he *did* something for them. He rescued someone, gave someone a child,

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7 George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary Hebrews*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 1208, Kindle Edition.

8 Jeffrey Arthurs, *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 6,13,16, Kindle Edition.

blessed someone. Mary sings of His glory with the words, "He has helped his servant Israel and *remembered* to be merciful" (Luke 1:54). God's act of sending Jesus is an act of remembrance, the ultimate act of remembrance, in freeing his people.

The vital thing to understand is—it is an *act* to remember, not a thought. So Scripture repeatedly instructs readers to remember—and it is the preacher's function to remind his or her congregation of the things of God and to bring those things into the present all over again, every week.

b. Instruction. Preachers also instruct their congregations regarding truth. "Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives" (Colossians 3:16). "Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Teach the truth so that your teaching can't be criticized" (Titus 2:7-8). Their purpose is to make the teachings of the Bible clear to others so that they can obey them. As Peter admits, some of the Bible is difficult to understand. The church needs those dedicated to making it clear and reachable, maintaining integrity for the whole arc of Scripture.

c. Conviction. Preachers must sometimes confront sin in others. "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right" (2 Timothy 3:16). They obey the Holy Spirit in speaking of sin and allowing Him to convict those present. Confrontation and conviction, though unpopular, remain vital to a preacher's repertoire if he or she is to obey Paul's words to Timothy as well as the examples of the prophets.

d. Encouragement. Preachers' words encourage those in the congregation. "Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Leaders are instructed to build one another up and encourage one

another with our teaching. Their words also comfort hearers, bringing God's timeless truth to difficult situations.

e. Evangelism. Preachers sometimes use their messages to evangelize those who have not heard or responded to the gospel of Christ, seen in most of the preaching done by the apostles.

f. Discipleship. Pastors disciple through preaching, using their teaching to lead others into deeper knowledge of and fellowship with God. Their words should encourage others to want to follow Christ more closely, and they should give practical training in doing so. The many verses previously quoted on leaders teaching, discipling, and modeling Christlike lives all consider discipleship the summation of what women and men are doing when they preach.

g. Restoration. Finally, preaching ought to invite and create restoration. If life in Christ brings newness and reconciliation, then the preacher's job is to offer opportunity for that healing and restoration, individually and socially. Words from the pulpit should fulfill Jesus' self-identified agenda to set captives free, give sight to the blind, and bring healing and new life.

The purpose of this study, then, is to ask the question—how are these things best accomplished in the preaching event?

3. Preaching in Scripture

The preaching/proclamation one sees in the Old Testament consists largely of the reading of the law. People respond with prayer and praise, enjoying considerably more boisterous worship than the average American Sunday morning hour. The prophets give their messages from God—but these are not sermons the way modern culture understands a sermon. Their messages are, however, replete with sensory aids for remembrance. Jeremiah hauls a yoke on his shoulders. Ezekiel ate a scroll and lounged on his side on the ground for a couple years. Isaiah

walked around naked, and Hosea took his visual aid to perhaps the greatest extreme, marrying a prostitute to show God's love for unfaithful Israel. Old Testament "preachers" certainly knew the importance of making their message memorable and did not shy away from techniques other than speech to do so.

The New Testament, ushers in the age of the synagogue. Again, much is read, this time including the prophets and the wisdom literature. There is more emphasis on teaching from the words rather than simply reading them, although reading still takes priority. Jesus reads scripture in Luke chapter 4 as he leads the people.

Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom constantly, and he sent his disciples out to do so as well. His final words were a command to them to teach others—"Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus first carries out teaching and preaching, then sends his disciples to do so, and then his disciples subsequently train others to use the gift of teaching given to them. The early church devoted itself to this apostles' teaching (Acts 2).

Jesus' preaching occurs formally in only a few places, such as the Sermon on the Mount, John 6, and perhaps some use of parables in public. He blurs the line between teaching and preaching, and his work is generally called teaching rather than preaching, despite the moniker "sermon" on the mount. Scripture portrays him in various arenas, from large crowds to dinner gatherings to intimate times with his disciples. In the larger spaces, Jesus tends to focus on explaining how the kingdom of God works—giving instruction for the way of life he is initiating--or really re-creating from God's original intent. His public words center on this concept he asks his audience through parables and teaching—what can you truly expect the

kingdom of God to be (not perhaps what you do expect), and how are God's people to then live in that kingdom?

In private settings, Jesus does this as well, but he also works in a more pedagogical fashion with the disciples in order to prepare them for the time when he will be gone and this kingdom is theirs to continue. Here he clearly teaches, not preaches, and the difference appears that 1) the "audience" is far more intimate, and 2) his purpose has changed from one of dispensing general knowledge to specific mentoring. Thus, he "preaches" to the crowd of followers about general blessings in kingdom life and moral choices (Matthew 5), but he teaches the smaller group of disciples about preparing a place for them and waiting for the Holy Spirit (John 14)—both things they will need to know after the crucifixion. Matthew writes him moving from preaching a parable to teaching one person about wealth (and thus all who heard him) to a specific word to his disciples about his death (Luke 18) without seeming to care about defining the terms or narrowing his purpose.

Most preaching in Acts is evangelical in nature—almost all of the recorded speeches of Peter and Paul aim at an audience without knowledge of the Jesus story or even Judaic belief, in Paul's case. It is persuasion, argument, and logical proclamation with the intent to convert. One can witness this occasional preaching, such as Peter's Pentecost sermon and Paul's speech in Athens. Neither one, however, occurs in a church fellowship setting. They are evangelistic in nature and are therefore carried out in the public square. They are designed for the general public, not for "church." Those who already believed did not need this news preached to them; the preaching in public was for those who needed to believe. When readers see Paul teaching in his churches, they see it through his letters, not his personal appearance.

After Christ's resurrection, Christians continue to attend the synagogue, but post diaspora, they begin to meet in homes for worship. Worship changes considerably as they become their own distinct religion. They read God's word, share a meal together, sing the Psalms and other early Christian hymns, and sometimes read the letters of the apostles out loud. Corinthian worship meetings consisted of several elements, with a number of people allowed to speak, so long as order prevailed and everyone received a hearing.

> When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you . . . Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said. But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged (1 Corinthians 14:26-31).

Thus, in the early church, though Scripture does not offer a complete window into their practice, teaching seemed to consist of readings of the Old Testament and apostles' letters and free exhortation by a number of people. Sermons per se do not appear to be common practice, but a shared time of exhortation, prophesy, and encouragement prevails. This teaching of Paul's comes directly after his teaching on spiritual gifts, implying that his concept of church leadership meant believers using their gifts in ways that would edify the others—that edification (building up of faith) being the goal mentioned in chapter fourteen.

This format begins to change with the next generation. Meetings begin to take on the culture surrounding the new Christians—that of Rome rather than Jerusalem. Valeriy Alikin explains how the Romans commonly had meetings of affinity groups where speeches, music, and

food ordered the evening. This, then, became the organization for Christian worship as well.[9] Alikin summarizes the speaking portion of the meetings as a potential reading of one of the apostles' letters and an exhortation by the leader of the meeting.[10]

Paul admonishes Timothy to "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2), a term which means to proclaim with a sense of authority. He is exhorted to teach, meaning to explain the aspects of the kingdom whenever the opportunity occurs (in and out of season). This pastor, Paul's spiritual son and one who models his work after Paul's, learns that Scripture is the touchstone for life together—it is "useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work" (2 Timothy 2:16-17). Paul further requires that Timothy learn to "correctly explain the word of truth," working hard to "be approved"—a term from ancient coin making which means to handle the work with the greatest of integrity. Coin makers who didn't cheat, shaving off metal for profit, were approved by the government, and Paul makes the analogy that teachers must show themselves to be ones who will not use God's word carelessly. James agrees (3:1), explaining the gravity of being a teacher, a gift in the church listed in Corinthians and Ephesians, when the word of God is the subject and the people of God are affected.

The teachings of Christ, and the gospel story, must be handled with care and respect, and a teacher needs to carefully consider the ramifications of what he or she might teach. To have a detrimental effect on others because one did not "study to show oneself approved" is a very

9. Valeriy Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development, and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries,* (Boston, MA: Leiden Publishing, 2010), 31.

10. Alikin, 66.

serious thing. As the church moved into a more institutional age where fewer people who saw and heard Jesus remained, preaching by one authority began to take a greater role. Nevertheless, the pattern in New Testament gatherings appears much freer than currently employed models.

4. Defining Preaching and Teaching

Timothy is appointed as a preacher ("And I have been chosen as a preacher and apostle to teach the Gentiles this message about faith and truth," 1 Timothy 2:7). William Barclay defines this preacher in three roles, as "The herald who brought the announcement from the king . . . The one who was sent when two armies were opposed to each other, who brought the terms . . . The person whom a merchant employed to advertise the wares and invite people to come and buy."[11]

A preacher, then, bore a position of purpose—and his message typically meant evangelizing, not teaching. His/her point was to bring the good news of this new covenant from the king and to "invite people to come and buy." Studying the use of the word *kerux* (preacher) in the New Testament, one finds it used more often to denote an office than as an activity. Content and audience have more bearing on the designation of teacher or preacher. A *kerux* speaks the *kerugma*—the message of Good News. A teacher, however, fulfills a wider role.

A teacher, *didaskalos*, refers to one who offers knowledge to others in a number of forums. The gospel authors refer to Jesus as a teacher numerous places (often "Master" in English). Apostles, followers, strangers, and Pharisees call him Rabbi, a recognition that he has filled the role of teacher and a figure of authority. The Pharisees, however, do so in a cynical manner, hoping for entrapment, not enlightenment. Individuals and groups request information and explanation, such as "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Matthew 18:18) and "What shall we do with this adulterous woman?" (John 8). Even in larger, more formal settings, Jesus

11. William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew,* Vol. 1, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, Google Books, 87.

taught (*didasko*) the sermon on the Mount, not preached (Matthew 5:2). Though he does desire to draw others to himself, he is not evangelizing here. He is teaching anyone who will hear what the kingdom of God looks like.

Paul lists teaching as one of the parts of the Christian body (1 Corinthians 12:28), and one of the gifts to the church (Ephesians 4:11). Preachers are not listed in either place. Evangelists are in the latter list, and if preaching aligned most often with speaking the gospel to crowds, evangelist seems closer to the New Testament idea of a "preacher" than is anything else.

Paul appears to equate preaching and teaching roles in Timothy, as he admonishes Timothy to preach the word, but then talks about encouraging people with good teaching, all in the same verse (2 Timothy 4:2). Timothy sees himself in that dual role as well: "God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News" . . . "I have been chosen as a preacher and apostle to teach" (2 Timothy 1:11; 1 Timothy 2:7). In the first century, it is logical that Timothy would fulfill both roles, as most of Ephesus needed evangelism, and the budding church needed teaching.

The writer of Hebrews speaks of the people requiring teachers, because they have not become mature believers. This is another indication that teachers offered mentoring and explanation, not evangelism (Hebrews 5:12).

The differences between preaching and teaching appear to be: 1) audience—are the listeners believers or unbelievers? 2) position—are they appointed roles or gifts in the church? and 3) purpose—evangelism or edification?

5. Preaching for a New Age

Preaching from the early church on has altered numerous times depending on its audience, culture, and setting. As Christianity navigates its way through the information age and

into what Doug Pagitt calls the Inventive Age,[12] it must once again adapt preaching methods for discipleship. Barely a century ago, a good preacher enjoyed little competition. No radio, television, and certainly no internet offered any diversion or distraction from church. The preacher led the best show in town, and people enjoyed a monologue for entertainment's sake at least. If he was a bad preacher, they enjoyed discreetly laughing at him and being with other people for one day rather than at work in the fields or factory. Church was still a social obligation, as well as one of the only places people gained community.

Times have changed. A great deal competes with church for time and attention—from entertainment to youth sports—and the preacher is hardly the most interesting show in town anymore. If a person wants to hear entertaining preaching, he only needs to cruise the internet from his bed on Sunday morning. Church in North America is no longer a social expectation, nor is it the only place people can be together. People find their community now amid like-minded organizations and on the web. Most young people surveyed believe church is the last place they will find community because it is judgmental and exclusive.[13]

Pagitt defines the needs of each age: "Every cultural age has four components: how people think, what they value, a collection of aesthetic preferences, and a set of tools by which people do what they need to do. Today's churches need to decide how they want to fit into the Inventive Age and develop the components needed to live well."[14] One of those components includes preaching and teaching that involves the listener in ways they are used to learning. In the Inventive Age, people think communally, they value efficiency, they prefer simplicity, and

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12 Doug Pagitt, *Church in the Inventive Age,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 2014.

13 David Kinnaman, and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 172-4.

14 Doug Pagitt, *Inventive Age,* 2.

they use tools to help shape their own purpose in a confusing world. These are truths with which the church needs to come to terms when it teaches.

Pagitt continues to argue his case for a new system by explaining the most recent age society has passed through—the Age of Information. Coming on the heels of the Industrial Revolution, where what one manufactured mattered most, information became king in the new age.

> The culture no longer valued what you made. It valued what you knew. The more you knew, the more power you had . . . The belief that the educational model was the best way to pass the faith on to the next generation translated into camps, Vacation Bible School, curricula, and training conferences for Sunday school teachers. It grew to include adult education classes in the fellowship hall and large, interdenominational crusades where Christians gathered to learn more about their faith. Churches became learning centers. If you weren't learning anything, you left.
>
> The Information Age gave us the pastor as teacher and eventually pastor as CEO. His sermon topic was advertised on a sign outside the church — it was the message, the lesson for the day that was important. A church was judged by the power of the pastor's teaching, his ability to leave the members of his congregation nodding their heads and taking notes like good students . . . So the gospel became not a long, messy series of stories about God made flesh, but a lesson you could learn in a tract about steps and spiritual laws, or in a didactic sermon.[15]

Peoples' well-documented shorter attention span means that they no longer learn well by means of a long monologue. Recent studies put the human attention span at 8 seconds.[16] People listen for very few moments before they're distracted, and seminaries are teaching preachers to pull people back in every five minutes or less in order to keep their attention.

According to the Harvard Business Review *in 1957*,

> "Extensive tests led us to this general conclusion: immediately after the average person has listened to someone talk, he remembers only about half of what he has heard—no matter how carefully he thought he was listening. What happens as time passes? Our own testing

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15 Pagitt. *Inventive Age*, 22-23.

[16] Kevin McSpadden, "You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish," time.com, May 14, 2015, https://time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/, (accessed July 5, 2019).

> shows—and it has been substantiated by reports of research at Florida State University and Michigan State University—that two months after listening to a talk, the average listener will remember only about 25% of what was said. In fact, after we have barely learned something, we tend to forget from one-half to one-third of it *within eight hours;* it is startling to realize that frequently we forget more in this first short interval than we do in the next six months.[17]

Adult learning literature testifies that all adults learn better with a few key tools in a lesson. Some characteristics of the millennial generation make this especially true for them. Though these characteristics, and the discussion of adult learning, might not seem like a theology of preaching, if the task of preachers is to equip the people, theology should lead to understanding how the people learn.

If it is the message that holds the authority, can the message change over time to adapt to how people best learn? No, the message remains unchanged if it is the authoritative word of the King. However, certainly the delivery could. Preachers have used different styles throughout the centuries. Johnathan Edwards did not preach like Billy Graham who did not preach like Billy Sunday who did not preach like John Wesley who did not preach like John Chrysostom. Preaching has always changed to suit the culture. The early church changed it, conforming to Roman meeting mores rather than Jewish. So might a change away from a monologue toward interactive teaching still be called the biblical gift and calling of a preacher/teacher?

The purpose of delivering the message is that the message be understood and acted upon. Yet if a herald delivers the king's message in Mandarin while he stands in the middle of Paris, has the message really been delivered? Is the herald functioning as the king intended him to? The message must be in the language of the hearer, and today's language is collaboration and invitation.

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17 Ralph Nichols and Leonard Stevens, Harvard Business Review, "Listening to People," September 1957, https://hbr.org/1957/09/listening-to-people, (accessed July 5, 2019).

This new language also distrusts authority, another reason to delve deeper theologically into the definition of preacher and where authority ultimately lies. Current suspicion of authority makes people wary of a one-person monologue. Yet the distrust of authority alone doesn't explain some peoples' desire for dialog. It is, to them, a biblical question. "Our respondents' resistance to the top-down conversation model wasn't simply about style or ego. They expressed a distinctly theological and spiritual rationale for wanting to have authentic conversations."[18] The belief of many Christians, especially younger ones, resonates with what is seen in Corinth—leadership by gifting and collaborative learning. Their desire for this is not simply preference—it is biblically sound.

Another aspect of new language is that people have access like never before to many opinions and ideas. People in church can compare their faith with other faiths. They can air their doubts online when they are afraid to do so in church. Church members can fact check their pastor as they sit listening. Those who listen on Sunday mornings are used to a plethora of voices on any topic—so the belief that one preacher is all they need stretches credibility. One of the preacher's jobs is to help her people to hear the One right voice in the cacophony.

Those under forty, especially, have spent their entire educational life learning by collaboration. They have been taught the importance of many people working together to come to a conclusion. They have been encouraged to listen to other viewpoints and find knowledge as a group. This experience also contradicts the notion that they will learn all they need to learn about their faith from one person in a thirty-minute speech.

18. Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are DONE with Church but Not Their Faith,* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2015), 1356, Kindle Edition.

The question of changing to interactive preaching methods is a theological question as well as a practical one. Are Christians to adhere to one authority alone? Is "touch not God's anointed" really a Biblical truth for how the body is to treat preachers? Or are believers, as the Bereans and others, to fact check leaders to ensure they are being taught the truth? Scripture teaches respect for leaders, but it does not teach the unerring, celebrity cult following that often happens in the American church. The apostles demanded the people to whom they spoke *not* worship them because they were only human, not gods, a warning preachers would do well to recall. Leaders are taught by James to be very careful before they become teachers--"Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. Indeed, we all make many mistakes" (James 3:1-2). The willingness to be corrected, questioned, and held accountable are hallmarks of a mature Christian, preacher or congregant. The apostles went on their missions, but they routinely checked one another, sometimes heatedly (Peter and Paul, Barnabas and Paul, anyone and Paul?), and occasionally, a younger person upends their assumptions and becomes the teacher (Barnabas).

Collaboration, discussion, and the use of sensory detail have always been common to the way people have been discipled. Jesus told parables drenched in visual detail. There is little hard evidence of precisely how Jesus spoke, but in the open air and fields, near the sea, or in a village, he had at his disposal many possibilities to enhance his message. There are a few instances where this is the case: when asked about taxes, he showed them the coin to make his point. When he wanted to teach his disciples about faith, they got in a boat and hauled hundreds of fish. The cursed fig tree certainly remained in the memory of anyone who passed it. Jesus filled his teaching with sensory detail, and it stuck in the minds of his followers. It stuck so well that three of them could write it down much later. It stuck far longer than eight hours.

Jesus asked and entertained questions regularly. When someone came to him with a question, he commonly responded with another. He intended to make the other person think and come to a conclusion by him or herself. Then, Jesus would expand upon it or talk to them about it. Thus, he asks the rich young man what he believes will get him to the kingdom of God. He then dialogs with him about the truth of his response. His intention is to make the young man find the truth without being told, and though this is an interaction with one person, Jesus certainly intends for those around him to learn the lesson. When he is approached about paying taxes, he asks a question. When he is condemned for allowing a sinful woman to touch his feet, he asks a question. This teaching is always in a group setting, and he intended it to be dialogical. One can argue that Jesus, as the only human to ever walk the earth who knew all the correct answers, should preach a monologue if anyone should. But he rarely does.

Even in situations typically called sermons, such as the Sermon on the Mount, is it really likely that all of those Beatitudes were spoken one after another without any interaction? It doesn't seem probable, especially in the Hebrew culture. There is vivid imagery here—the gouging out of eyes and the dashing of houses into the sea. There is certainly a possibility that Roman soldiers were in the crowd, keeping order and becoming a perfect visual aid for Jesus' teaching on loving your enemies and going the extra mile.

Many in the church currently resist the notion that teaching could be dialogical. They insist that those in the congregation are not trained to understand scripture, and they may be tainted by a surrounding culture which accepts many points of view. They believe it is dangerous to invite peoples' questions and input on a Sunday morning. Yet Jesus seemed to do so routinely. He does not appear to have feared how people might answer his questions. He rarely asserts his

truth first, even though he is the only one who ever *could* assert complete truth. Instead, he leads others to the truth.

This training and leading others to their own conclusions finds support in both scripture and adult learning literature. In Acts, the Bereans are congratulated for doing their own homework and reaching their own conclusions about the preaching they hear. In adult learning literature, statistics point to the reality that a person who asks her own questions and reaches her own conclusions as opposed to a person who simply listens to them learns the material much more deeply.[19]

Many also believe that inviting hands-on learning during Sunday morning worship would devolve into chaos. It can. But the literature implies that this is worth the effort and risk. Naysayers would point to Corinthians and the chaos in that church that Paul needed to address. His call for order is cited often when arguing that inviting dialogue and experimentation in a sermon would be unbiblical. Paul's call to order, however, dealt more with the chaos of people trying to one up one another, attempting to all speak at once, and allowing pride to override worship than with the concept of multiple points of input. He suggests multiple speakers in chapter fourteen. Interactive preaching does not necessarily result in Corinthian chaos. It requires a leader who imitates Paul's desires for and methods of order.

In the future, teaching is likely to have an even greater purpose for pastors. As postchristian generations drift farther and farther from knowledge of the gospel, preachers will need to define terms and educate on the basics of faith far more. Evangelistic preaching without context will fall on deaf ears more and more, because hearers will simply not have enough past

19. Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: the Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development,* eighth edition, (Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, New York: NY, 2015), 22.

information in their history to comprehend. A pastor will need to teach the basics of Christianity as if they were new and unheard of, because they will be. She or he will have to begin not with words and ideas like "the gospel" and "Jesus as our Savior" but with concepts far more basic. Who is/was Jesus? What does "gospel" mean? What is sin and why on earth would dying on a cross make it better? Knowledge of any of this can no longer be assumed, and indeed, many congregations right now probably would not define "gospel" of "kingdom of God" properly. Neither did the original converts to Christianity in the Greek world, but while Acts speaks of Jews coming to faith en masse after hearing Peter, it does not speak of this phenomenon in the Gentile world. It usually relates some combination of some believed, some laughed, and some said, "We want to hear more about this later" (Acts 17:32-34). So, not unlike American culture, evangelistic preaching will likely not result in en masse conversion but in the same three reactions Paul received—a slower, more cautious, measured journey to faith. This is the realm of teachers. It is discipleship, in preaching.

C. A Theology of Discipleship

"Disciple," both in scripture and in the culture of Jesus' time, means one who follows another. Specifically, a disciple follows the teaching and example of the master's life, imitating him or her closely so as to pattern one's life after the teacher. One can be a disciple of Jesus, Socrates, or Yo-Yo Ma—the concept remains the same. A disciple wants to emulate the teacher.

In one of Jesus' most well-known statements, he tells his disciples to make more disciples, teaching them as they have been taught. He instructs them to do this "to the ends of the earth." Jesus makes clear that his future disciples are not only to know his teachings but to obey them.

Thus, when attempting to make disciples, the task is twofold: teach others what Jesus taught, and teach others to act as Jesus acted. Part of this instruction also necessitates helping others to think as Jesus thought and feel as Jesus felt. This makes the task of imitating His actions considerably easier and certainly more effective. Discipling is making "little Christs"—imitators of the Master.

The word disciple—*mathetes*—means a follower, adherent, or imitator. Herrington and Absalom mention that the word occurs 264 times in the New Testament and, "In its original ancient Greek context, it meant someone who was either an apprentice in a trade or a pupil of a teacher."[20] Hebrew history knew well the custom of a rabbi calling others to follow him. These followers would live with and watch the teacher, learning to do as he did, think as he thought, and believe as he believed. When Jesus meets his first disciples, he uses the language they would have recognized as that of such a rabbi— "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" Their response exemplifies what a man would do if someone made him such an astounding offer— **"**And they left their nets at once and followed him" (Matthew 4:18-20). They knew they were being invited into a discipling relationship. This idea of a lived relationship permeates the biblical picture of discipleship.

To be a disciple of Jesus required several responses. One was to willingly follow. Another was to obey His teaching. "Jesus said to the people who believed in him, 'You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'" (John 8:31). A disciple follows his or her master's commands. To disciple others means to lead them in obeying God. A disciple would necessarily grow to look more and more like the master. "Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully

[20] Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, *Discipleship that Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships God Uses to Help Us Grow*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 20, Kindle Edition.

trained will become like the teacher" (Luke 6:40). If pastors make disciples, those disciples should resemble Jesus more as time goes on. A disciple must prioritize Christ, and that priority must govern his or her choices. "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me" Luke 9:23). Making disciples looks like helping people lose their own priorities, agendas, and plans in favor of complete surrender to God's. Herrington and Absalom summarize discipleship similarly: "A disciple is an intentional learner from Jesus. Thus the two questions of discipleship are: 1. What is Jesus saying? 2. What am I doing in response? . . . Being a disciple is akin to being an apprentice, and that discipleship is a dynamic process . . . Discipleship is helping people trust and follow Jesus."[21]

If individuals need to learn how to discern truth and how to speak it in a confusing culture, they must practice doing so. As Jesus trained and sent out his disciples to do the work he did, they necessarily had to spend time alongside him in hands on experience. They were not sent out cold with only information but had spent some time working with Jesus doing as he did.

In Luke 10, Jesus sends out seventy-two of his disciples with very clear instructions, ones which they have probably watched him carry out in countless towns. They are now ready to do as they have watched him do. He promises his followers later that, "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father" (John 14:1). He has taught the work, and they are to build on it. His final instruction (Matthew 28:19-20) affirms that our focus is on teaching what he has taught, including the actions that go with it.

[21] Harrington and Absalom, 17.

Paul shows this continuation with his work in Ephesus, which he intends for Timothy to carry on. “You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

In the American church, most people are not living and working with their pastor, so this type of teaching must be translated into a different cultural context. Pastoring is the act of passing on a reliable witness. Preaching, then, serves to give followers of Christ an example to follow and the tools they need to become such themselves when they are not in direct continual contact with the teacher.

If leaders want to equip their people to do as Jesus did in their context, they must spend time allowing the people to practice the work themselves. Congregants must be given a chance to think through the material themselves, ask questions, and imagine how they would implement it. Traditional preaching offers mainly information or inspiration. To manage change in a changing culture, a form that more resembles Jesus’ style, giving congregation the chance for hands on experience within the church setting, might better serve people who will not follow their pastor in daily life.

If in this new context pastors lead by discovering gifting, it seems the best way to do so is to get people to practice employing their gifts. Leaders can no longer be the guides to the jungle––they need to be handing over the weedwhackers and teach people how to use them. They do this by teaching them how, giving them the ability to practice, tinkering with the outcome to improve, and setting them free to minister themselves. Preaching can be employed in all these activities, if looked at it in a new light.

A discipler should know the challenges of this age. As information overload becomes increasingly stressful, a disciple-maker's particular challenge is to help people sort through and filter the voices that attempt to gain their hearing and allegiance. Kinnaman speaks of this in reference to Millennials, but it is true of most generations today:

> The third arena where the church must rethink its approach to disciple making is helping the next generation learn to value wisdom over information. Mosaics have access to more knowledge content than any other generation in human history, but many lack discernment for how to wisely apply that knowledge to their lives and world. Making sense of and living faithfully in a rapidly-changing cultural context requires massive doses of wisdom . . . Wisdom . . . is the idea of skillful living. [It] entails the spiritual, mental, and emotional ability to relate rightly to God, to others, and to our culture . . . How can the Christian community help young Christians live wisely in a culture of mental, emotional, and spiritual distraction?[22]

Teaching wisdom might become the most valued commodity of all in discipleship.

The goal of a disciple-maker, finally, is to offer God a person who has grown into *shalom*—perfect wholeness in Christ. "So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me" (Colossians 1:8-29). This perfection Paul (and Jesus) speak of means a complete, mature person with a clear sense of God's purpose and identity in his or her life. This is the hope and vision of one who preaches with discipleship in mind.

22. David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 30-31.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE ANALYSIS

This literature analysis will cover a number of issues related to preaching and the adaptive change it triggers. First, one should discover the competing values that complicate the preaching issue which must be understood in order to facilitate change.

A. Competing Values in Adaptive Change of the Preaching Event

There are several competing values regarding changing preaching styles and Sunday morning organization. The literature speaks to four in particular that should be pointed out for the ways they affect preaching and change.

1. Control versus Generosity

"The truth is out there. Don't take me; show me. Don't tell me; point me in the direction. Don't trap me within your cage of what you know (Google can tell me that!). Fill my tank with insight and inspiration, and then let me go experience Christ."[1] Dr. Rick Chromey, a leading church educator in postmodern culture, here summarizes the ethos of a new generation. However, adult learning literature suggests all generations are better served by pointing rather than telling. For a church leader, this willingness to adapt from captain to navigator begins and ends with the battle over control and resulting humility. The competition between control and generosity manifests itself both in a leader's ability to lead change in general and in one's willingness to give over a measure of control in the preaching event specifically. Fred Craddock,

1 Rick Chromey, *Sermons Reimagined: Preaching To a Fluid Culture*, (Loveland: CO, Group Publishing, 2015), 76, Kindle.

one of the fathers of narrative preaching style, asks the penetrating question in the entire discussion about interactive preaching--"Can the ego take that?"[2]

Chromey believes the course of communications history must lead in the direction of generosity. He suggests that all the inventions and thought systems of modernity focused on control—humans would use knowledge to conquer all obstacles and usher the world into an age of enlightened new Edenic glory. Postmoderns, however, are different--"Modernity was hinged by CONTROL. In postmodern culture we are wired by CHOICE."[3]

Adult education guru Malcolm Knowles, famous for his introduction of learner constructed contracts and theories of andragogy, believes that creative leaders understand that change is inevitable and continuous, and that managing change takes creativity and innovation. This harkens back to Tod Bolsinger's *Canoeing the Mountains* and his concentration on always scanning the horizon for what's next, preparing for the terrain ahead, and planning for change.[4] Missional writer Alan Hirsch talks about the courage required to face change, keeping ones' "eyes soft" in order to remain open to what may be on that horizon. ("Hard eyes have already reached a conclusion before really seeing the scene."[5]) Control gives way to anticipation and adjustment if one desires to adapt to the future.

a. Power Dynamics that Resist Change. Church leadership speaker and author Kevin Ford outlines the needs of a healthy culture as a "realization of our desire to belong, contribute,

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2 Fred Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel,* (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 42.

3 Chromey, 80.

4 Todd Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory.* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

5 Alan Hirsch, *5q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ,* (Atlanta, GA: 100Movement Publishing, 2017), 284 266, 280, Kindle.

and make a difference."[6] He concurs with Ronald Heifitz in this discussion of potential leadership being quashed by those who benefit from the current system. These "trained prisoners of the structure" become like their leaders, continuing the power battles and refusals to allow alternate viewpoints under the guise of healthy, non-confrontational churches.[7] A confident leader, according to missional consultant and writer J. R. Woodward, is one that washes others' feet and steps aside rather than asserting his or her view.[8]

Fresh Expressions founder Michael Moynagh offers a rationale for this behavior in his statement that, "In complexity theory, stable systems tend to dampen innovation."[9] The longer something stays the same, the more motivation there is to keep it that way. Instability, oddly, is the key to creating change in this system.

b. Control and the Pastor's Inner Life. Control versus generosity begins with the person of the pastor. The inner life and vulnerability of that leader makes the difference in whether or not changing preaching styles will succeed. Woodward asserts that good leadership comes out of the crucible, a harkening back to Dr. Ruth Hayley Barton, founder of Transformation Center for spiritual formation. Those who have not become vulnerable through struggle are those who tend to grasp control.[10] Woodward's language of "grasping control"

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6 Kevin Ford and James P. Osterhaus, *The Secret Sauce: Creating a Winning Culture, (*New York, NY: Palmgrave Macmillan, 2015), 340, Kindle.

7 Ronald Heifitz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World,* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 1052, Kindle.

8 J.R. Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World,* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 82.

9 Michael Moynagh. *Being Church, Doing Life: Creating Gospel Community where Life Happens,* (Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 2014). 1859, Kindle.

10 Woodward, 97.

echoes Paul's words about Jesus in Philippians 2, bringing the idea full circle to missiology professor Dr. Michael Frost and Hugh Halter's calling for a church, and presumably its leaders, to model Christ first and all else falls into place.

Jane Overstreet, leadership trainer and consultant, strikes at the heart of a pastor as the place that needs to function with humility and self-knowledge before he or she can possibly project that quality outward. Comparing David and Saul, she details how the former held his leadership lightly. Saul, however. clung to it, insecure in his position, willing to bow to others' opinion in order to feel certain, uncircumscribed by a community that would both support and check him. If leaders are intent on gaining their security from people, they will continue to preach in a way that pleases the most members of their congregation. Pastor, author, and activist Doug Pagitt suggests that this insecurity lies in the way of changing our preaching methods, because people generally like to sit in the congregation, gaining inspiration and not having to contribute.[11]

Overstreet implies that spiritual insecurity directly links to our insecurity as leaders. If leaders believe in their hearts that they need to earn God's love and approval, as well as that of people, they will double down in whatever they're doing (in this case, the preaching status quo) to ensure they get "good enough" to *be* "good enough."[12] Once leaders take care of the inner life—learning who they are in God and what their call is—they will be more able to hold their positions lightly, like David, and give over leadership keys generously.[13] Dr. Hayley Barton

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11 Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Reimagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith, (*Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 54, 28.

12 Jane Overstreet, *Unleader: The Surprising Qualities of a Valuable Leader,* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 102.

13 Overstreet, 81.

agrees, questioning about what it would look like to lead from "the place of my own encounter with God" rather than "my performance-oriented drivenness."[14]

Barton also discusses how fatigue and conflict might force pastors into giving up on change, as well as giving in to the loudest voices for the status quo.[15] This meshes well with therapist and consultant Edwin Friedman's talk about anxious congregations and how leaders must become disengaged themselves before they can lead well through conflict and anxiety. Little causes more anxiety than offering to significantly alter a congregation's Sunday morning routine. Friedman considers the lack of vision that occurs when leaders become too focused on the loudest members of the system and allow those voices to derail the train. Like the others authors, he believes this dysfunction comes from within, and the leader must determine why she cannot step away from others' drama in order to truly create change. "Before any technique or data could be effective, leaders had to be willing to face their own selves."[16]

If a leader can't face his own questions and doubts, how can he facilitate those of others? Dr. David Benner, a psychologist in spiritual formation, notes: "Knowledge of oneself – and ability to be vulnerable and wonder and question and even doubt before people is required."[17] Barton expresses this need succinctly—"Only those whom God has freed at this level are prepared to lead others into the freedom that they seek. Only those who have been brave enough to ride their own monsters . . . all the way down to the bottom will find a truer energy with

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14 Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry,* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 25.

15 Hayley-Barton, 120, 141.

16 Edwin Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix, (*New York, NY: Church Publishing, 2007), 547, 557, Kindle.

17 David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery,* Exp. Ed, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 43.

which to lead. Only those who have faced their own dark side can be trusted to lead others toward the light."[18] A pastor who refuses to face her own inner insecurity will struggle with giving over control in preaching because she will retain a subconscious need to please and earn her worth rather than find freedom in identity as God's called one.

c. Control and Pastoral Vulnerability. In order to lead change in preaching, a pastor needs to model vulnerability so that others feel invited to participate and so that the pastor feels a part of the experimenting community. The key to authenticity is what Friedman calls the willingness to stand out—going first in vulnerability.[19] Hirsch agrees that this process of vulnerability is terrifying to begin—"When we take the first steps toward becoming our authentic self, the process reveals our weaknesses, sin, vulnerabilities, and hindrances. Releasing our defensiveness and excuses can at times leave us feeling a bit naked."[20] Hirsch mentions this myth of pastoral protection, assuring leaders that their tendency to protect themselves will "tempt us to spend energy protecting our leadership rather than serving the people we lead."[21] This self-protection reinforces the power dynamics against change.

Urban pastor Gregory Hollifield rejects the notion that a preacher should be vulnerable and transparent, suggesting that he speaks as a herald with authority, not as one of the people.[22] This argues against the other authors who talk about the need for humility and authenticity in preaching in community, particularly to reach a younger generation. Hollifield's words seem an

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18 Hayley-Barton, 44.

19 Friedman, 3706.

20 Hirsch, 274.

21 Hirsch, 359.

22 Gregory Hollifield, *Preaching in Red and Yellow, Black and White*, (Memphis, TN: GKH. 2013), 915, 925, Kindle.

antidote to powerless preaching, and this certainly is something to heed. Yet his solution, to be *more* above the crowd, denies other authors' research on how to communicate and foster trust as a leader.

Pagitt suggests that giving the message that the preacher is the only one qualified to speak for God imprisons people in expecting the preacher to tell them how to live, as if they cannot determine these fundamental discipleship choices. He finds comfort and power in knowing that "I am no longer in a position of having to be the answer man" but able to be a part of the community, hearing from others, being corrected, letting his guard down, learning to discover discipleship together.[23] Craddock wonders how a preacher can even speak of weighty topics like forgiveness if the congregation does not know his experience with it. "From the standpoint of the hearers, the qualities of the teller affect the response to the story. The decision that a message is worth listening to is a decision that the teller is worth listening to."[24] The congregation will judge the teaching it hears by the teacher and his or her life, so that life should be known if the message is of great importance. Craddock takes this further by assuring preachers that they must allow the congregation to interrogate them in some respect so that the congregation knows that they know what they know they know.[25] This takes impressive vulnerability.

Fuller Youth Institute strategists Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin ask how, "We create space for wonder, questioning, and reflection on Scripture to aid self-discovery or group-discovery processes rather than teaching predetermined points?" They wonder if we need

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23 Pagitt, *Preaching*, 29, 45.

24 Craddock, *Overhearing,* 33.

25 Craddock, 42.

to ask (and answer) questions such as, "Where are you in your spiritual pilgrimage?" and "With what issues are you wrestling when it comes to God?"[26] A leader who does not present himself as the final authority but as a fellow questioner and follower will win the hearts of people who do not trust authority for its own sake. The ultimate portrait of this vulnerable posture is to give away leadership, not needing to control all outcomes and reserve leading for a certain vetted few. "Keychain leaders (those who give away leadership) model a posture of giving away access and authority."[27]

d. Control and the Next Generation. Woodward enters into some of the language of Frost when he warns the church that postmodern thinking demands shared leadership because of its suspicion of power and institutions. "Of all the charges laid at the door of the church by many disaffected young people . . . the most frequent and damning is the charge of controlling leadership . . . stifling creativity, stunting innovation and imagination, forcing uniformity, silencing dissent."[28]

Sociologists Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope discuss the steady decline in trust for clergy since 1985 and general distrust for institutions among the dechurched. They also mention the reality that people, particularly younger adults, no longer automatically respect or believe a pastor because of his or her office or position. They don't assume teaching to be correct because it comes from the mouth of a person educated in a seminary.[29] Jennifer Guerra from Fuller Youth

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26 Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, Jake, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 2156, 2055, Kindle.

27 Powell, 718.

28 Woodward, 70, 74.

29 Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are DONE with Church but Not Their Faith,* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2015), 242, 1399, Kindle.

Institute discusses their research into the lack of faith in "experts" and the need to journey together, without one-sided answers, in order to engage the next generation. Her short summary--"Take criticism seriously. Check motivation. Engage disengagement. Ask better questions."[30]

Not surprisingly, the *Growing Young* authors find that a key to retaining the next generation in church is to give up control to them. Barna researcher and author David Kinnaman discusses young adults' "disdain for one-sided communication, disconnect from formulaic faith, and discomfort with apologetics that seem disconnected from the real world."[31] Packard and Hope talk about the necessity of decentralizing both knowledge and power in order to reengage the dechurched. "If the leadership team truly wanted people to be more participatory, the church needed to be more like home, where everyone is expected to contribute. And this is precisely what the dechurched want."[32] They insist that this be "intentional and strategic,"[33] a belief echoed by FYI in their findings that "giving up keys of leadership" in order to retain younger people not only matters but must be a planned, focused intent by a leader.[34]

It is interesting to read the list of qualities that Overstreet finds people prefer and do not prefer in their leaders. She discusses the wishes of all generations, not those under forty alone. Yet, she finds similar desires. People gravitate toward leaders with integrity, humility, authenticity, character, servanthood, and maturity. Conversely, they dislike shows of pride,

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30 Interview with Jennifer Guerra, Fuller Youth Institute, June 7, 2018.

31 David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith, (*Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 11.

32 Packard and Hope, 1585, 1636.

33 Packard and Hope, 1594.

34 Powell et al, 541.

refusals to listen, and certainty that one is always right and in charge.[35] The conclusion, combining her work and that of writers such as Kinnaman and Powell, is that what young people do not hesitate to say out loud others have always thought—all people want leaders who believe their congregants have something important to say.

That humility matters is highlighted by the fact that dechurched persons do not object to serious theological content but to the inability to question, give input, or be honest.[36] Several writers discuss the issue of lack of trust in various ways. Professor of preaching Matthew Kim believes that, when a pastor is vulnerable about her uncertainties, listeners need this in order to believe themselves welcome in God's work, despite their own doubts and confusions. This transparency builds trust not through projecting an aura of perfection but the opposite—an attitude of teachability and communal working out of ideas. This includes preaching about one's own weaknesses as well in illustration and example.[37] Homiletics professor Zach Eswine takes this concept of pastoral vulnerability to Scripture, citing Paul as an example of a leader/preacher who spoke clearly of his own weaknesses and personal story of growth—showing Paul openly weeping, expressing love, confessing himself a chief sinner, and giving all glory to God.[38] So both authors bring the same idea of vulnerability as good leadership to light, in psychology and theological example. Eswine takes this thought into the current generation, maintaining that an

35 Overstreet, ix, 9.

36 Packard and Hope, 1329.

37 Matthew Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 83, 204, Kindle.

38.Zach Eswine, *Preaching To a Post Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with Our Culture,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 1630, 1639, Kindle.

absolute necessity for reaching the next generation is a compassion for and an open understanding with their doubts, mistakes, and inconsistencies while trying to follow Jesus.[39]

e. Control and Inviting Participation. Adult learning literature, apart from Christian discipleship, echoes the concept that people learn best when they are treated as engaged, capable, and vital to their own outcome. Knowles explains his beliefs about true adult learning versus a non-helpful teacher:

> The ideal helper views personal interaction with the learner as a dialogue, a true encounter in which he or she listens as well as talks. Help will be tailored to the needs, goals, and requests of this unique learner. These perceptions are in sharp contrast to those of helpers who want to control, command, manipulate, persuade, influence, and change the learner. Such helpers use communication as 'an inexhaustible monologue.' {This type of} helper perceives the learner as an object and expects to do something to that object. He is not primarily interested in the other person as a person, and in his needs, wishes, and welfare.[40]

Packard and Hope consider the importance of humility and generosity in earning trust, rather than demanding it. "As a pastor and staff, we approach every day with the understanding that we need to focus on earning that trust back. It can never be assumed."[41]

Leadership writer Bill Robinson expands on the trust idea by explaining that a good leader will turn the trust around and give it out liberally, using the Nordstrum Rule of trusting its employees' common sense as an example.[42] If one expects trust, one must give it first. Leaders should expect followers to do the right thing rather than assume error. This trust is vital in the discussion of giving over the primary teaching role and inviting discussion and input. This trust

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39 Eswine, 204, 1630, 1639, 15.

40 Malcolm Knowles, Edward Holton, and Richard Swanson, *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development,* (Abington, UK: Routledge, 2014),128.

41 Packard and Hope, 254.

42 Bill Robinson, *Incarnate Leadership: Five Leadership Lessons from the Life of Jesus,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 48.

dynamic will matter when the critics of interactive preaching complain that allowing people's input creates misinterpretation and error.

Knowles contrasts controlling versus creative leaders, stating that creative leaders have faith in people, giving them both challenge and responsibility. He offers research: "The validity of the positive set of assumptions is supported by research which indicates that when people perceive the locus of control resides within themselves, they are more creative and productive."[43] Most pastors fear this—and many authors address that fear. Yet good leaders, according to Robinson and others, expect that their people will make good choices. They suggest that correcting errors later is preferable to exhibiting a lack of trust in the beginning. The *Growing Young* authors' entire premise of handing over keys of leadership assumes that leaders are handing over real keys—not plastic ones to a pretend car. This comes with risk, and risk, according to Bolsinger and others, is not a bad thing.

The concept of "creative leaders" set forward by Knowles meshes with a number of authors. Creative leaders, he says, are required in "a world of accelerating change." Pagitt employs this truth in discussing preaching, mentioning particularly the speed of change in communication and learning styles, suggesting that Knowles correctly identifies a need in adult learning that is present in discipleship as well—creative response to change. Creative leaders "make it legitimate for people to experiment and trust failures as opportunities to learn rather than as acts to be punished."[44] Several other authors emphasize the need to allow for failure and encourage creative effort rather than success. Powell, Mulder, and Griffin argue a need to allow young people a release from the stress of having to get everything right, a stress they live with

43 Knowles, 248.

44 Knowles, 251.

constantly. Packard, Lyons, Barna, and Kinnaman all talk about encouraging doubts and questions, certainly in line with accepting that making mistakes is part of the learning process.

Jennifer Guerra suggests making practical this release of control by sharing the pulpit, redefining what preaching means, and teaching others how to do and practice "basic exegetical work." This takes the concept of discipleship in preaching to the next level—discipleship *toward* preaching. For her, it involves the failure aspect spoken of above. The leader must takes pains to be real, to not "look so good that no one thinks they can do what you do,"[45] to be vulnerable for the sake of discipling others.

f. Control and Cultural Pride. Several authors discuss differences in culture as issues that block humility in change. Chromey, for instance, brings up generational cultural differences. If modern culture was about control, and therefore subject to the sin of pride, the postmodern vocabulary is "Interactive. Open. Experiential. Image-driven."[46] Pride must be given over to humble sharing of power and ideas in a new culture, something Kim argues is true for a white person in a nonwhite culture as well. Kim advocates asking oneself questions about other age groups before one preaches and adjusting accordingly, finding out answers that we do not know ourselves. Part of that cultural shift is also understanding that much of those other groups are outside of the church, and so cultural understanding requires a good dose of humility in going out and learning from those people.[47]

Hirsch argues that the "unlearning" of our cultural gospel and practices applies to much of our Christianity, and leaders must be willing to look back over most of what they have seen as

45 Guerra interview, 2018.

46 Chromey, 123.

47 Kim, 375.

required components of the gospel. “If you want transformational Gospel movement—really want it—then you are going to have to unlearn some very ancient churchly habits and be willing to relearn some new—and yet paradoxically more ancient—more authentically biblical ones.”[48] While pastor and author Tim Keller wants leaders to look at other modern cultures, Hirsch wants them to scrutinize a very old culture—the original culture of the church. Hirsch sees this as supplying the tools needed to go into the modern city and fulfill the gospel mandate.

Becoming a facilitator rather than an information dispenser may be the most difficult change a leader/pastor will encounter in the transition from preaching as a central monologue to a dialogical/interactive event. Yet conversation is what many want and need most, according to several sources. “A full understanding of God requires multiple perspectives. This understanding changes the role of the church leader from one who conveys knowledge and wisdom to one who develops and facilitates understanding.” Repeatedly, young adults, for instance, mention that they don’t require agreement—they don’t even want it—but they do want deep, authentic discussion that allows for questioning and alternative ideas.[49] Robinson sees these discussions as ways to give out credit, refusing to hoard it in pride but liberally dispensing credit to others, empowering them in the process.[50]

Humility, and loss of control, may be the main thing many pastors have to “unlearn,” with repentance and willingness to dispose of old ways and embrace new thoughts being the only

48 Hirsch, 435.

49 Packard and Hope, 1418, 1479, 1473.

50 Robinson, 115.

road toward healthy change.[51] In a perfect summary, Robinson writes, "The most powerful position of leadership is beside those God calls us to lead."[52]

2. Clarity versus Mystery

The standard method of preaching consists of explanation and application. Pastors are taught in seminary to focus on a "takeaway" value for listeners. The preacher is the dispenser of answers. This, according to Pagitt, is a part of the post-enlightenment, modern world. The thinking particular to this age "wants answers rather than more questions, seeks out solutions rather than pondering the problem, looks for takeaway rather than processes."[53] This, he will insist, is not the post-modern concept of the world.

Several authors explore the importance of story over didactic teaching, particularly as a touchstone of the next generation—an expectation that there is a larger picture, and humans seek their place in the story rather than a moral to it. That millennials are comfortable with mystery, rather they embrace it, is documented by several sources, most notably researchers David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons' work. For example, "They thrive on unexpected experiences and enjoys searching for new sources of input. They relish mystery, uncertainty, and ambiguity."[54] This creates a clash between older generations' desire for clear answers, obvious morals, and concrete applications. Pagitt speaks of application versus implication, the latter as "a call to see

51 Hirsch, 434, 453.

52 Robinson, 36.

53 Pagitt, *Preaching*, 97.

54 David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 125.

the story and join in it."[55] A new model of preaching will look closely at the latter, and this will cause stress for those used to the former.

These authors suggest studying the way Jesus asked questions and using the mystery he used, in line again with adult learning literature. Ask open-ended questions, trust your audience, and don't give direct answers. This takes time and sometimes silence, things a preacher, and a congregation, find uncomfortable.

The emphasis on story can carry into preaching in a new and fresh way. What if teaching told a story rather than a moral?

> In other words, we journey with our audience to a destination. The points are not the point . . . Narratives draw an audience into the cultural context and the lives of the characters. So an incident like the woman caught in adultery (John 8) is less about three things we can learn (propositions) and more about why she committed this sin, how Jesus responded, and what it meant to her. Narrative preaching reveals the story behind the story.[56]

Editor and culture expert Andy Crouch references this idea of story consistently in his work, when he talks about humans sensing themselves in the midst of story inherently, as if we are made for this sensation.[57]

Kinnaman brings in another aspect to this preaching with a willingness to swim in mystery—pastors can use it to teach wisdom rather than information. He asks, "How can the Christian community help young Christians live wisely in a culture of mental, emotional, and spiritual distraction?"[58] It's a question of vast importance in a world where information is cheap,

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55 Pagitt, *Preaching*, 102.

56 Tom and Joanie Schultz, *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church: And How to Fix It,* (Loveland, CO. Group Publishing, 1996), 83.

57 Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling,* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 23.

58 Kinnaman, *Lost Me*, 31.

fast, and overwhelming, but wisdom is rare. Journeying together, as Guerra put it, allows leaders and congregants to penetrate the mystery and the story and learn together how to hear what is good and needful in one's own working out of discipleship.

Giving over the value of certainty, carefully, gives leaders a much-needed dose of humility (see the first competing value) from believing they do, or have to, know everything. "The willingness to encounter serendipity is the best antidote we have for the arrogance of thinking we know all."[59] This, in turn, leads to the willingness to hear doubts and questions so necessary to retaining people long enough to disciple them.

Akin to the conflict of mystery and certainty is the area left for doubt. Much research points to the lack of a space for doubt in the community on a Sunday morning as a reason for young adults' low level of discipleship and engagement. Research on this point was seen in chapter one when discussing the problem.

Given all this, the FYI writers wonder—is there a place in preaching for wonder? For discovering together what our questions are and leaning toward that rather than "teaching predetermined points."[60] Can preachers accept and embrace wonder, mystery, and doubt in their teaching without necessarily frustrating those who prefer clear answers? Can leaders embrace a humanity that longs for things they really don't understand and accept that this is not comfortable but needed? Crouch explains that only humans worry about this sort of thing—and that perhaps they should celebrate this wondrous uniqueness. "Making sense of the world,

59 Friedman, 2052.

60 Powell et al, 2055.

interpreting its wonder and its terror, is left up to human beings alone. Meaning and making go together–culture, you could say, is the activity of making meaning."[61]

3. Simplicity versus Excellence

The confidence placed in past models, particularly the model of excellence, is closely associated with the control versus generosity value. Christendom and attractional models have worked in the past, and the attachment to them is especially strong in America, according to Frost.[62] The belief that leaders can simply tweak older models for succeeding generations is discussed by several authors. "The biggest hurdles facing long-time leaders may not be in learning new insights and skills, but in unlearning what they consider to be tried and true and what thus provides them with a false sense of security."[63] Heifetz sees that security as not necessarily a bad thing but as a definite impediment when people are blinded to better possibilities.[64] He doesn't mind a default, per se, since it offers some bedrock, but it is rock on which to build new architecture, not sit.

In Frost's discussion of WestMods vs PostMods, he dives into the way that thinking about church is divided along generational and geographical worldview lines. The fact that WestMod thinkers cannot (or will not) think outside the "product" as an ultimate goal leads them to require perfect worship services and to consider numbers as the most important measure of church success. They continue to believe this old model will bring desired results.

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61 Crouch, 24.

62 Frost, 5.

63 Woodward, 67.

64 Heifetz, 64.

PostMod minds, however, are suspicious of slick products and canned services. They value the process, not the product. Their measure of success collides with measures that are strongly rooted in past worldviews. Dollars and stats are not as important as lives lived out for the common good. Frost would agree with Hirsch that leaders need to rethink the purpose of church but would add that they need to rethink the very *way* they think in order to lead the church into a new era.[65] If they do not, Hirsch reminds us, churches will continue to compete for the same low hanging fruit, the easy, nearest "targets" for evangelism. Adaptive change will remain elusive.[66] Heifetz would have that rethinking led by some of the younger leaders who have not succumbed to the lure of the status quo.[67] Dutch missionary counsul Johannes Hoekendijk adds that the best leaders may not be clergy at all but those who know best how to serve others with no agenda, self-protection, or "propaganda."[68] No change can happen so long as leadership is unable to be objective.

The relevance of this conflict between simplicity and excellence for the preaching event is evidenced in a couple ways. One, once the preacher no longer controls the entire content of the teaching, the experience threatens the value of excellence. As the above authors have communicated, an examination of how leaders came to that value, its biblical basis (or lack thereof), and the dependence on control must happen in a congregation before change can occur.

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65 Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture,* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006). 78-9.

66 Hirsch, 986.

67. Heifetz, 52.

68 J.C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out, (*Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1964), 54, 66.

Second, a conflict between excellence and simplicity emerges when one talks about participation rather than spectatorship.

It emerges in adult learning literature as well. Knowles differentiates between pedagogical learning (teacher directed, content-oriented learning) and andragogical leaning (self-directed, participatory, needs-based content) and strongly believes that the latter is the better teaching method.[69] His discussion of pedagogical learning implies that the teacher retains control and focuses on something like our value of excellence—ensuring the content is most important. "The basic concern of people with a pedagogical orientation is content. Teachers will be strongly concerned about what needs to be covered in the learning situation." In contrast, the andragogical learning style is more in line with what we will call the simplicity value—one that encourages manageable mess. "The basic concern of people within an andragogical orientation is process."[70]

4. Participation versus Consumerism

Researchers George Barna and Frank Viola reach far back into the age of the Reformation to discover the roots of this dichotomy in the purpose of church and preaching. While most other authors consider it a more modern problem, these two see its beginning in Luther and Calvin, and later revivalists.[71] They see the problems of lack of discipleship stemming from this model of pacifism and non-participation, long before the internet. "It encourages passivity, it limits functioning, and it implies that putting in one hour per week is the key to the victorious Christian

69 Knowles, 276.

70 Knowles, 277.

71 George Barna and Frank Viola, *Pagan Christianity? Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices,* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, 2012), 77.

life. We grow by functioning, not by passively watching and listening."[72] Other authors bring the same discussion into the modern era, but it should not be missed that they are building their argument on what has gone before, and writers and historians such as Leslie Newbigin, Rodney Stark, and Barna wish to ensure readers see the entire picture. Participation is particularly important to younger generations used to creating and curating their own lives, and the information relevant to that specific point will be recalled from Chapter One.

Knowles believes in the importance of participation, always aware that participation in learning content and goals creates better learning outcomes, regardless of age. He traces learning and teaching styles over millennia, citing the teaching of Jesus (in company with Confucius, Lao Tse, the Hebrew prophets, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Evelid, and Quintilian) as one of the innovative ways used to disciple hearers, not simply get information across.[73]

The consumer model, Knowles argues, comes from our earlier education models.

> The minute adults walk into an activity labeled education or anything synonymous, they hark back to their conditioning in their previous school experience, put on the dunce hat of dependency, fold their arms, sit back, and say "teach me." . . . They have been conditioned to be dependent on teachers to teach them. And so, they often experience a form of culture shock when first exposed to develop educational programs that require them to participate in the planning.[74]

One might, and many do, believe that this need for contribution originates from the selfish, selfie side of the next generation. Not so, according to Pagitt. It comes, instead, from the

72 Barna and Viola, 77.

73 Knowles, 18.

74 Knowles, 44, 53.

need to find meaning and purpose, two needs most people possess but certainly touchstones of the next generation.[75]

One of the greatest objections of pastors to the idea of interactive, participatory preaching is that it can be disorderly. God is a God of order, they maintain, and he has anointed one person to teach. Yet others discover that "fitting and orderly" for them consists of many voices meshing together, correcting and contributing to the others. Pagitt accepts this diversity of thinking and its potential conflict head on, arguing for a change of definition rather than focusing on the differences. "In our community, the value is having as many voices as possible contribute to the conversation. We organize our gatherings around that value. For us, that is 'fitting and orderly.'"[76] In Packard and Hope's words, people now would prefer to "create with" rather than "create for,"[77] and that collaboration is the kind of order they seek. Pagitt roots this desire for creating within the next important topic, community.[78]

Viola notes that this type of creative, contributing community is where the church began—with an emphasis on encouraging and edifying one another, with all voices, rather than teaching information through one mouthpiece.[79] "Make no mistake about it: the Lord Jesus cannot be fully disclosed through only one member. He is far too rich for that."[80] His conclusion

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75 Doug Pagitt, *Church in the Inventive Age,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014), 31.

76 Pagitt, *Inventive*, 61.

77 Packard, 409.

78 Pagitt, *Inventive*, 24.

79 Viola, 52.

80 Viola, 60.

not only affirms community participation in discipleship but absolutely requires it for a full expression of Jesus and the gospel.

Theologian Dr. Kwang-hyun Cho brings the idea of community, participation, and preaching back to the beginning, asserting that Paul primarily preached for community formation, not information. He assumed a measure of information—and the persecuted believers needed to be formed into a family more than they required doctrine. "His [Paul's] chief goal is to enhance and to maintain the community facing a serious challenge that could destroy it. Paul's primary goal is not informative; it's formative."[81] Cho, however, does not believe in a community formed preaching event for precisely this reason. He dislikes its focus on the individual. "The problem is that narrative homiletics has provided no resources for thinking carefully about the ways preaching contributes to the building of the church – the formation of the people of God – beyond the individual hearer."[82] He is addressing the "new homiletic" that became popular a few decades ago rather than exactly what Pagitt, Chromey, and others are proposing, but the concept of "turn to the listener" remains the same in both.

A key factor in leading change is the ability to listen and reflect to the church what they fear, hope, and imagine. The *Growing Young* writers consider "empathizing with today's young people" one of the keys to a growing church, and one can only do that in healthy community. According to Barna, forty percent of people who have left the church did so because they felt coming to church for a worship service was like, "Sharing the same space at a public event, but

81 Kwang-hyun Cho, *Paul's Community Formation Preaching in 1 Thessalonians: An Alternative To the New Homiletic*, (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2017), 140.

82 Cho, 147.

not a group of people that was connected to each other in any real way."[83] Benner offers an antidote in his discussion of "moving truths from head to heart" only being possible in the context of journeying with others, echoing the thought that truth is better discovered with others than told by one.[84]

Pagitt brings into this discussion the idea being presented in this paper—that what he calls "progressional dialog" creates unity and order by its emphasis on community participation, not disorder. He argues for a style, "Where the content of the presentation is established in the context of a healthy relationship between presenter and the listeners, and substantive changes in the content are often created as a result of this relationship."[85] Thus, a dialog emerges that cements community ties and offers leadership to every participant.

This participation ethos comes with a price—congregations will not always appreciate the pain of change. What a leader must not do is confuse keeping peace with making peace. Peace—wholeness—is what Jesus offers us, but it is not quiet nor easy. It does make waves. In the end, it makes people whole, but first it can rip apart. A leader has to lead with vision that transcends that ripping apart and pictures the wholeness. They have to let people see the end while the middle hurts. As Steinke states, "Resisters essentially say, 'Let us be content in our homeostatic world.' Sometimes leaders get into the position of thinking they are primarily responsible for preserving tranquility in the congregation."[86] They are not. But they must preserve the vision of real peace.

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83 Barna and Kinnaman, 51.

84 Benner, 49.

85 Pagitt, *Preaching,* 23.

86 Steinke, 73, 76.

Part of the price might be an insistence that churches bring young people and people who are not like the majority along for the adventure. In order to survive the future, however, incorporating those into the team who have not traditionally been on it, giving them a voice and real leadership, has to be part of the vision. Keller and FYI are in agreement on this. Hartwig reminds leaders that their teams must have real work and a real voice in decision making, not busy work.[87] Church leaders need to set a vision with those they lead for *our* story, not just my story. This sets the backdrop for why preaching within community, as an interactive, team activity, can further discipleship in a new culture.

B. Preaching Methods and Discipleship

While preaching is not the sole method of discipling people, and many other factors are involved in making a disciple, it is an important one. Preaching professor Scott Gibson asserts that, "preaching *is* discipleship" based on Paul's teaching in 2 Timothy 3. He sees these verses as addressing teaching that creates right thinking and right living, the outcome of which is changed lives. One could, he assumes, disciple without preaching, but one could not ever do it the other way around.[88] Professor of religion Henry Mitchell points to preaching as a vehicle to move believers "to grow from point A to point B," a basic definition of discipleship. All sermons, according to him, should have the goal of changing behavior.[89] Other writers (Barna, Kinneman,

87 Ryan Hartwig and Warren Bird, *Teams That Thrive: Five Disciplines for Collaborative Church Leadership,* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 1151, Kindle.

88 Scott Gibson, *Preaching with a Plan: Sermon Strategies for Growing Mature Believers,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 16, 156.

89 Henry Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 165, 260, Kindle.

Dean, Powell) would argue that changed lives matter more than changed behavior, but Mitchell seems to equate the two for his purposes.

So is effective discipleship sufficient reason to consider changing long-standing preaching methods? Authors disagree on this question, so perhaps the question of changing method versus mission should begin the discussion. Hope International officers Peter Greer and Chris Horst talk about making sure that the core—the mission—stays true, but that the means can change as necessary for the organization.[90] The mission of discipling generations remains central in the age of preaching—but the methods change.

Hollifield takes issue with the notion that methods need to change, citing studies that show preaching is still the most important event for churchgoers.[91] Barna, on the other hand, references studies that show half of American churchgoing adults say they haven't experienced God's presence in church.[92] Much of the preference for preaching references a congregations' desire to spectate rather than participate. Barna finds that "the driving motivation behind the worship event attendance of millions of adults is to have a pleasing experience," not discipleship.[93] Pagitt admits that preachers don't want to let go of preaching as a monologue because "people seem to like it." In other words, that preaching matters the most to churchgoers when they are polled may not be because it disciples the best but because it entertains the best and is the most expected. This would certainly be his contention—at a time when Christians hear

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90 Peter Greer and Chris Horst, *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches,* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2014), 72.

91 Hollifield, 223.

92.Michael Warden, ed, *Experience in Worship,* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2000) George Barna, "Worship in the Third Millennium,"14.

93 Barna and Kinnaman, 155.

the most preaching in church in history, "our understanding of Christianity has become increasingly fractured and self absorbed . . . The value of our practices– including preaching– ought to be judged by their effects on our communities and the ways in which they help us move toward life with God."[94] Whether it is important to the people is a different matter than whether it succeeds in discipling them. If large percentages don't remember the major point of a sermon, discipleship seems unlikely.[95]

Cho remains firmly with Hollifield, insisting that new methods in the past have not altered basic discipleship. He cites declining memberships at a time when many new preaching ideas were being implemented as the "new homiletic." That these new efforts have "taken place alongside" dire concerns about the church's future tell him that they do not significantly change our discipleship.[96]

Hollifield continues his argument, citing Biblical prophets, modern celebrity preachers, and several quotes of preachers to show that, "God works primarily in and through singular voices. Preaching is the communication of truth by [one] man to men." He cites the Tower of Babel as proof that multiple voices mislead and are inherently confusing. "Group discussion has a useful place, but it breaks on history's logic if it tries to silence the prophet's voice or the poet's song. The eternities have always chosen their own man."[97] Cho agrees, arguing that too many

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[94] Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Reimagined, The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*, (Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan, 2005), 28.

95 Pagitt, *Preaching*, 28.

96 Cho, 13.

97 Hollifield, 417, 732, 410.

voices can drown out the One voice people need to hear from. Such cooperative sermons "could result in the sermon where the voice of God cannot be heard over the gab of the listeners."[98]

Other writers react to this argument with their explanation of New Testament practices of mutual, shared leadership and teaching. Pagitt wonders how only one person could possibly fulfill the mandate of the church to edify one another—"If the function of preaching is mutual edification, then the creation of the preaching must be a collective act."[99] DuBose, like Barna, wants to know why Christians lead such limited lives if they are so well informed about God. "Where is the high adventure?" he asks, wishing that believers understood their lives as pilgrimages rather than places to settle in for a show.[100] So here is what Thom and Joanie Schultz calls a paradox—people say they love preaching and find it inspirational and comforting—yet they retain very little of what they hear, and they feel guilty for not being able to act on what they do remember.[101]

Jeffrey Arthurs, professor of preaching and communication, has written vastly important work here. His book encourages preachers to be "reminders." He discusses how important remembering is in scripture and talks about the meaning of the word as an active one—remembering brings what is in the past present again to be acted on. He maintains that all people have been dis-membered, and it is the preacher's task to re-member. If the people do not remember what they hear, perhaps, he would suggest, it is because pastors are instructing rather

98 Cho, 61.

99 Pagitt, *Preaching*, 43.

100 Francis DuBose, *God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission*, (Nashville:TN, Broadman Press, 1983), 13.

101 Schultz, 242.

than reminding, best done through stories and ceremonies and sensory work. "A remembrancer is a servant who brings things from the storehouse, a farmer who helps the listener harvest memories previously planted. Ministers must serve as the Lord's remembrancers because things learned can be buried, lost, amputated, or corrupted."[102] If no one acts rightly, then no one is remembering rightly. Cho agrees, explaining how new methods, to him, do not help because believers don't need newness—they need to know and remember what's gone before. "Preaching is often an exercise in reminding and remembering."[103]

Valeriy Alikin, a scholar in early Christian history, delves into that history with an intense discussion on how the first Christian meetings resembled Roman and Greek symposiums, a mixture of song, speech, and lively input from everyone.[104] Chromey also takes on history in his argument that the sermon as it is now known stems from the Reformation's elevation of Scripture and sermon above Eucharist and the Enlightenment's subsequent elevation of argument and mechanics.[105] Professor of biblical studies and missiology Pedrito Maynard-Reid reminds readers that this elevation was based not on the Bible but on the Enlightenment notion that more information would create better humans, and more information came best through lecture.[106]

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102 Jeffrey Arthurs, *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness,* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 1, 3, 5, 6, 48, 50, 257, Kindle.

103 Cho, 158.

104 Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development, and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries*, (Boston: MA, Leiden Publishing, 2010), 13.

105 Chromey, 13.

106 Pedrito Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African-American, Caribbean, and Hispanic Perspectives,* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Kindle Edition. 2034.

Pagitt furthers this historical information into the modern church era, explaining how this value on learning created churches as learning centers and pastors as CEO's of the institution, ensuring that peoples' desire to codify doctrine was filled but not the need for experience with God—"the gospel became not a long, messy series of stories about God made flesh, but a lesson you could learn in a tract about steps and spiritual laws, or in a didactic sermon."[107] Chromey then goes past all of this to explain why lecture is no longer an effective method, regardless of history—because the world no longer processes information verbally and centrally but electronically and in a decentralized fashion.[108]

Maynard-Reid would interact with the previous two writers to affirm that much of what is considered biblical necessity in worship is actually cultural condition. He also goes before the Reformation to blame Greek influences on Christian worship as the beginning of a dichotomized view of worship, with the loss of mystery and the beginning of "worship as theater" rather than participatory work. Culture, he argues, involves all those things associated with preaching—information, education, techniques, customs, stories. Culture is inescapable, and changing it is both dangerous and sometimes necessary. People both demand relevance in our church services and also demand their own habitual culture.[109]

C. Methods of Preaching for Discipleship

If preaching is to be effective at discipleship, what do the various writers suggest as changes? Hollifield doesn't truly suggest change so much as attention to culture. His criteria that

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107 Doug Pagitt, *Church Reimagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 23.

108 Chromey, 13.

109 Maynard-Reid, 53, 229, 236, 239, 102-6, 144.

the preacher needs to learn to listen first before changing or speaking has great merit.[110] This harks back, again, to humility as the first criteria for a preacher. Others, like Keller and Eswine, echo this need to listen first, understand context, and then form one's approach accordingly.

1. Sensory Detail and Emotional Experience

Craddock links the sorry state of discipleship with a lack of appeal to the senses and the emotions. "Individuals and groups still live in large measure by dreams, images, symbols, and myths. Preaching that stay in the conceptual world of ideas and doctrines leaves hearers essentially unmoved. It is quite often the case that a hearer will agree rationally with a position presented with no evidence of modified behavior."[111]

The Schultzes highlight the tools of those who work in persuasion: touch on personal experience, involve the people in repeating, discussing, and/or asking questions about the subject, and use visuals to get the point across.[112] Kim suggests similar practices when working on a sermon—using senses and curiosity to ask oneself questions as a preacher about audience, text, and culture.[113] The latter uses the questions and sensory detail in preparation; the former uses them in delivery.

The idea of sensory detail is a highlight of Maynard-Reid, who clarifies that preaching in non-white majority churches has always valued this. Because of African and Hispanic history, the splitting of emotion and intellect never happened as it did in the Western world, so the notion that appeals to feeling are inappropriate never entered their experience. "The member in the pew

110 Hollifield, 2085.

111 Craddock, 114.

112 Schultz, 251.

113 Kim, 202.

must hear, see, taste, touch and feel the sermon." For Hispanic worship, touch is an extremely important sense, because of the emphasis on community and whole person involvement.[114]

Cho, however, considers the emphasis on experience—that which the senses can affirm and enjoy—as "rather a liberal theology of human experience,"[115] dependent on emotion and subjectivism rather than information.

The Schultzes suggest not only using sensory details to fund the imagination but concrete details like "car keys, briefcases, aprons, checkbooks, newspapers" to remind people that this word is not high-sounding theology but practical, daily work. This, they argue, was the way of Jesus when he spoke in parables. Arthurs goes farther than concrete images to suggest concrete language fulfills a similar purpose: "These words have little chance of sparking imagination: 'virtue, facility, life, value, calculation, dissent, and idea,' but pictures leap into the mind with words like 'beggar, toupee, teapot, dragon, cornfield, marshmallow, and dagger.'"[116] Eswine, too, suggests a preacher search the outer world and the inner world of stories, memories, and others' experiences to enhance preaching visually, if only in word pictures.[117] Knowles gives the biological research language for this, noting that the brain works best with concrete examples to hang on its pre-existing knowledge and thus form new solutions.[118]

Mitchell adds that sensory detail enhances memory, something that would matter greatly to Arthurs, particularly as he discusses Jesus' teaching, rich in sensory detail. His argument that

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114 Maynard-Reid, 527-32, 846, 1914.

115 Cho, 64.

116 Arthurs, 72.

117 Eswine, 172.

118 Knowles, 227.

listeners remember stories told in rich detail related to our own experience over information reinforces Arthurs' emphasis on memory as vital to present action. Mitchell's simple statement, "The truth is that all our 'memory tapes' are in color, not in glowing grammar and rhetoric" summarizes several authors' beliefs that preaching must involve the senses and experience to disciple effectively.[119]

2. Stories and Narrative Preaching

The idea of story features in several writers' work, such as Hollifield's reminder that the black church preacher seldom calls attention back to himself because his aim is not order and points but connection and experience.[120] Keller suggests that sermons fail when the preacher has failed to enter the culture of the people, learning their "hopes, narratives, fears, and errors" in order to connect the truth to them.[121] Understanding the culture's stories, he says, is the only way to place the gospel answers on the questions inherent within it. Chromey ties the ideas of visuals and stories together by reminding readers that, "If you want to speak into the postmodern context you must reinvent your messages as visual metaphors."[122]

Story is the main theme of writers like Fred Craddock and David Randolph, pioneers in the narrative sermon style. The notion of dialogical sermons urged by these authors consists in allowing the listener to "finish the story" of an inductive sermon type, a story. They ask for a

119 Mitchell, 420.

120 Hollifield, 2455.

121 Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Kindle Edition. 89.

122 Chromey, 40.

congregation to be allowed to come to its own conclusions and take an active part in their own story.

David Schlafer's book on play in the sermon agrees with the narrative as a sermon structure, asserting that Scripture doesn't have "points" so much as interactions with a living, moving God.

> "The problem is the preacher's expectation that the biblical texts teach a set, solid truth, whereas instead they sweep their listeners up into a breathtaking, world-upending adventure. To enter any text of the Scriptures is to sign on for a wild ride. A biblical text is like a drama script, a music score, or a playbook. What you look at on the page is a set of notations just waiting to be released in movement, sound, and action."[123]

He thus combines the ideas of story and sensory detail, not a difficult combination to interlock.

Like others, he assumes the preacher will interrogate and dialog with the text prior to the preaching event, not during, although he leaves room open for that possibility. He encourages a dramatic dialog that will search for questions more than for answers and points. He insists that God is more interested in a back and forth with his people than in proclamations.[124] Hollifield and Cho deny this, insisting that the authority of the preacher requires proclamation as part of the calling.

Craddock calls preachers to relinquish their authority, a dissipating authority anyway, and give some over to the congregation. Thus, his work *As One without Authority*, completely re-envisions the preaching event.

Randolph uses the same term, calling for a dynamic event rather than a static lecture.

> If preaching is to be vital it must proceed from the center: preaching must be understood as event. Dynamic preaching, which understands the sermon as a series of forces interacting with one another, would thus take the place of mechanistic preaching which views the

123 David Schlafer, *Playing with Fire: Preaching Work as Kindling Art*, (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2004), 44.

124 Schlafer, 47, 57.

> sermon as a construct of parts. The key to this approach is that its emphasis falls on what the sermon does rather than what it is. Preaching is understood not as the packaging of a product but as the evocation of an event.[125]

For Craddock, a preacher must work through a back-and-forth process between hearer and Scripture. The needs, environment, circumstances, and feelings of listeners matter more to him than the desire of the speaker. His assertion that "we have no more urgent or important or demanding task than that of effecting a new hearing of the gospel"[126] drives him to find new and better ways of communicating that message. He would agree with the authors who insist on taking into account a new age of technology and digital communication and how it affects congregations when choosing a preaching style. Craddock believes that an indirect narrative style respects the congregation more since it does not bully them into a point but respects their intellect and right of personal decision. "The proper business in sanctuary and classroom is communication. To that end the teacher or preacher is servant and instrument; to that end the subject matter is shaped and aimed."[127] Randolph agrees, crying that the listener must "occur" in the sermon in order for it to be real teaching. Their "needs, longings, and aspirations" should be considered from beginning to end.[128]

This "turn to the listener" concept was espoused long before Craddock by none other than Harry Emerson Fosdick. Whatever one may think of his theology, his goal was to affect the listener for good. "From that day on [the healing of an alcoholic], the secret prayer which I've

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125 David James Randolph, *The Renewal of Preaching: A New Homiletic Based on the New Hermeneutic*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1969), 19.

126 Craddock, *As One without Authority,* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press. 2001), 68.

127 Craddock, *Authority,*104.

128 Randolph, 45.

offered, as I stood up to preach, has run like this: somewhere in this congregation is one person who desperately needs what I am going to say: oh God, help me to get at him!"[129]

3. Dialogical Preaching

The desire for a back and forth form of communication is particularly true, in Chromey's terms, of a culture that expects interaction, is used to experiential learning, and can gain insight from Google faster than they can learn it from a preacher. He argues this is a good thing—since mere accumulation of knowledge is the lowest form of learning, something Knowles would espouse.

Maynard-Reid also brings in the idea of dialogical preaching, insisting that this, too, has always been the way in the Afrocentric church. People have always expected to participate in the preaching.[130] Worship professor Bruce Leafblad carries it farther back, promoting an "Isaiah 6" model of preaching and worship such that people are able to respond to God within the service in the ways Isaiah responded to God—repentance, commitment, action—all embedded in worship time.[131] This suggests something that Barna and Kinnaman make much of, in their demand that pastors offer people quiet in our chaotic age—time to process, respond, and wait—things not often considered in the focus on words that change lives rather than response.[132] Dialog does not always mean verbal conversation. Sometimes, it's a congregation's permission to quietly dialog with God themselves, a valid form of this kind of preaching. Knowles might argue that it is the

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129 Michael Warden, ed, *Experience in Worship*. Loveland, (CO: Group Publishing, 2000), Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Preaching as Counseling," 196.

130 Maynard-Reid, 918.

131 Michael Warden, ed, *Experience in Worship*, Loveland, (CO: Group Publishing, 2000), Brice Leafblad, "Evangelical Worship: A Biblical Model for the 21sat Century," 97.

132 Barna and Kinnaman, 219.

most needful thing for real learning, since an adult has to "hang" new experienced and knowledge on his or her pre-existing "neural hooks" in order for the information to be permanent and acted upon.[133]

Pagitt suggests another kind of interaction, one done prior to the sermon event. For him, inviting people to contribute beforehand through social media, video, research, stories, and links is one way to create that interaction that may not be possible on a Sunday morning but still invites others into the construction of a message.[134]

Hollifield talks about the use of repetition to reinforce teaching, a tool Arthurs also suggests along with rhythm,[135] one Knowles advises assists in moving memories from the short term to the long.[136] Hollifield adds that often the congregation is asked to participate, which then turns into a form of dialog, though a very controlled one. He promotes something he calls "rhetorical expository preaching," a method which allows for participation but still relies on the preacher to hold the reins and retain authority to explain the Scripture passage.[137] In general, Hollifield suspects true dialog, as does Cho, who fears it will result in an "experientially-oriented Christianity" without cognition and objective reflection.[138]

Neither writer would agree with Pagitt and Viola, who argue for opening the floor to others and allowing the lesson to flow freely from the discussion. Randolph leaves the door open

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133 Knowles, 227.

134 Pagitt, *Preaching*, 69.

135 Arthurs, 78.

136 Knowles, 239.

137 Hollifield, 2455, 2743.

138 Lang, 64.

when he reminds that philosophy has long understood that people can see and learn more from one another, even when they thought they knew the answers.[139] He does not suggest pure dialogical preaching on a Sunday morning, but this is where his logic inevitably leads in a new culture.

The need for order is a false dichotomy according to Pagitt, who asserts that a conversation during sermon time not only does not devolve into heresy but actually makes its prevention easier, as voices other than the pastor's chime in to gently redirect and challenge when non-orthodox opinions are offered.[140] Eswine directly opposes this discussion, citing evidence that people believed in the 60's that dialog was needed and preaching was on its way out. He speaks of the call for dialog like it is a wild, wide-eyed crazed new idea, using language for it like "allowing the people to talk back," evidence that he considers the congregations' input likely to be disruptive rather than beneficial.[141]

Craddock relates that an audience already talks back all the time, just in its head. No one interprets the sermon exactly as the preacher does, even when the preacher allows no other input. People will use their life experience, their emotions, even their feelings about what they had for breakfast to interpret what they hear. "The charge that every listener hears a different sermon is simply an unnerving fact with which we all have to live. Formal and informal interpretation go on all the time."[142]

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139 Randolph, 66.

140 Pagitt, *Preaching*, 54, 49.

141 Eswine, 101.

142 Craddock, *Authority*, 58.

Nevertheless, the authors do explore what to do if/when members of the congregation go "off the rails" in terms of their input, if some of them do so only by implication. What is the pastor's role when a person does monopolize the conversation? What does one do when correction is in order regarding something believed and stated publicly by a congregant? How do preachers welcome differing views while both challenging unorthodox ones and helping others adapt who are less able to accept differences?

Already referenced are the beliefs of several authors that trusting congregations up front and correcting later both disciples better and offers a better model for relationship. A pastoral view, communicated to the congregation, that mistakes and doubts are welcome lets people know that disagreement and difficulty are an expected part of a journey with God, not a walk away from him. A pastor who fears the errors of his or her congregation does not relay a healthy pastoral relationship.

Throughout the literature, it appears that human beings are more likely to accept correction when they feel they have been heard in the first place and they are welcome at the table. The job of a pastor is not so much to avoid disagreement and inaccuracy as to guide congregations through it. This aligns with the works of Knowles and Craddock in their assertion that people who are told what is right are less likely to believe and obey it as people who have struggled through a question and come to the same conclusion themselves.

Pastors have several options for dealing with errors in sermon dialogue. The questions from *Growing Young* mentioned earlier could be useful in this instance. If a pastor heard something questionable, she could respond with other questions rather than immediate correction. Ask where that person is in their faith journey to make them say this. Perhaps respond with, "Where are you in your spiritual pilgrimage?" and "With what issues are you wrestling

when it comes to God?" Perhaps this could lead to a more fruitful conversation than even the original question. If the goal is to disciple, it should also be to learn where erroneous beliefs come from in the first place. The conversation revolving around this could help others who didn't voice the opinion but don't necessarily disagree. This approach also opens the door for discipleship outside of Sunday morning.

The concern over needing to correct is one of the areas where interactive preaching may well be more work than a simple monologue. A pastor should anticipate objections or errors as much as possible. She or he should sit with the passage long enough to know where others' minds might go. The ideas of some of the authors that a pastor solicit thoughts and opinions on a sermon topic beforehand could also be helpful here. These varied voices ahead of time—and it makes this job easier if one makes them varied voices— help a pastor to know what others might be thinking and what correction might be necessary.

The quote mentioned by Chromey on page one of this chapter tells the work of a pastor who wants to create a new way of preaching. Her job is to point, to give information and inspiration, and guide others toward their self-owned conclusions. This work is difficult—more difficult than crafting a monological sermon.

While preachers humbly give over much of our authority to the congregation, they are still the appointed leaders responsible for teaching the truth. Craddock and Randolph speak of bringing the congregation along in the process that the pastor has gone through to reach her or his conclusions. This requires a deft hand in the fashioning of discussion. A pastor should have final conclusions in mind, because the truth of the scripture should be the goal. However, the challenge lies in making those questions and discussion truly open without rigid guard rails while

still fashioning them to lead toward one large truth. One must learn to be flexible and open to other ideas while retaining at least a light hold on the end in sight.

Craddock's take on this is very interesting, in his assertion that, once people have permission to give voice to their thoughts, doubts, and beliefs, they are also in a sense forced to grapple with how those things meet with the truth they hear from others. Once the ideas are in collision, one has to make a decision. When they are simply in one's head, not necessarily even acknowledged, while listening to a sermon, that collision doesn't happen, and a decision is not forced. One can happily live with contradictions.

Craddock would say that inductive or interactive preaching is not permissive but grants permission. This is powerful he says because, "Permit persons to decide, and they're compelled to decide."[143] Schlafer asks that pastors take into account the need for this permission, explaining the difference people feel when an edict is handed down versus when it is arrived at together—even the same conclusion.[144] He considers the dialog between preacher and people a holy one, imbued by the Holy Spirit, not a disorderly one.[145] Thus, the belief among several authors that congregations might as well discuss these things out loud in order to come to a conclusion together.

` Viola expresses a solution for this chaos/order issue the others wrangle with. First, he chastises those who believe chaos would ensue with dialogical teaching, asserting that this belief betrays a lack of confidence in both the Holy Spirit and the people. Second, he suggests that a pastor must first teach the congregation how to "function under Christ's leadership," training

143 Craddock, *Authority*, 61.

144 Schlafer, 59.

145 Schlafer, 139.

them to understand the authority of Christ as their head and the resulting order and orthodoxy that creates.[146] Craddock echoes his beliefs about the people in his assertion that it is often a faulty theology of humanity that is in play when pastors distrust their congregation's ability to draw conclusions by itself.[147]

Part of this training includes what Jennifer Guerra mentioned earlier—an exegetical training of one's congregation. If a pastor takes the time to teach the people how to read the Scriptures and interpret them, giving them the tools to do so, she is releasing control in the moment as well as holding on to orthodoxy. This training can take place during the sermon time, as a pastor can teach how he came to the conclusions he did in the midst of discussion. While this training takes place, it offers opportunity for slowly leading the congregation toward more interactive preaching, since some (many) might not be ready for a completely interactive experience but could be led toward one in stages.

Again, Chromey argues that far more good will come from allowing give and take and correction to come from other congregants than from a pastor asserting his or her truth into the conversation immediately. A faithful theology of humanity, accepting and encouraging their ability to glean truth from God without an intermediary other than the Holy Spirit, is necessary for this allowance.

One of the criticisms leveled at innovators such as Craddock is that his focus on the individual listener necessarily sacrifices the community aspect of church life. It leaves the hearer free to interpret as he or she chooses; thus, the sense of teaching being for a community, a congregation and their culture, is lost. Cho levels this argument in his summary of induction:

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146 Viola, *Reimagining*, 65.

147 Craddock, *Authority*, 5.

"The listeners can draw their conclusions and implications for their situations. This elevates the position of the listener and restricts the role of the preacher traditionally assumed. The listener becomes one with authority; the preacher becomes one without authority. The listener is not the destination of the sermon but an active partner in preaching."[148]

Perhaps, however, this active partnership is a good thing. The concern about listeners drawing their own conclusions (a reality that happens no matter how one preaches) is not the problematic issue—it is that they do this individually, without the input of a community and its collective wisdom, experience, and diversity. Craddock would agree with this part—he laments the role the technology of writing played in loss of community—"Writing and print created the isolated thinker, the man with the book, and downgraded the network of personal loyalties which oral cultures favor as matrices of communication and as principles of social unity."[149] Newer technologies of computers, cell phones, and social media have increased this isolation exponentially. In the circumstance of unorthodox theology being embraced, a pastor can focus on making the discussion a community event, where the expectation is that iron sharpens iron, rather than a personal one. This is one area where another interpretation of interactive preaching that goes in a different direction than Craddock and Randolph is required.

One additional problem Cho and others bring out is the belief that, if the congregation chooses what is authoritative, then the Scriptures become less so, their truth being submitted to the preferences and understanding of the individual. "Their increased attention to the listener reduces the authority of the biblical text in preaching. It could result in the sermon where the voice of God cannot be heard over the gab of the listeners. It becomes difficult for listener to

148 Cho, 52.

149 Craddock, *Authority*, 10.

hear the transcended voice over their own."[150] Again, that this occurs regardless of the method of preaching—people who desire to interpret Scripture to suit their preconceived preferences and beliefs will do so regardless of what a preacher tells them is true. Cho seems to believe that when one says a preacher preaches without authority and the preacher has to prove the authority of the text rather than assume it, that means one must accept all listeners' conclusions as equal and valid. This does not have to be the case. Group dynamics create an atmosphere where the best ideas, guided by a trained pastor, should rise to the top and be reinforced by the summaries presented. In a post-modern culture, the authority of Scripture is already under suspicion in the pews; pronouncements by a preacher (also under hefty suspicion) will not lessen that reality. Possibly, a healthy discussion can. Craddock considers this state a hidden blessing, allowing for genuine interaction with text and truth, "The fall of Christendom is to be welcomed by the preacher, for when assumptions give way, faith can be born. Unless there is room to say no, there's no room for a genuine yes."[151]

Church leaders do need a road in between what Craddock proposed and traditional preaching. Ironically, recent studies about contemporary listeners and preaching show that the listeners expect the sermon to be based on the Bible, yet those same studies reveal a deep distrust of the pastors who do that Bible-based preaching. *Growing Young* explains that these cynical young adults crave community, along with biblical preaching. Cho is correct when he declares that this sense of community formation matters greatly to the preaching of Paul and others in the early church.

> Paul's primary goal is not informative; it's formative. It is undeniable that the attention to the listener is restricted since the new homileticians have primarily focused on appeal to the individual listener and tended to view the listeners simply as individuals rather than as a part

150 Cho, 61.

151 Craddock, *Authority*, 14.

> of a community of faith. The problem is that narrative homiletics has provided no resources for thinking carefully about the ways preaching contributes to the building of the church – the formation of the people of God – beyond the individual hearer . . . The task of community formation is also a key factor in reaching emerging generations. Younger generations tend to feel more disconnection to communities.[152]

What if pastors could create a format for preaching that also fostered the kind of community that could reconnect young people to the church? What if communicators created a middle road between "turn to the (individual) listener" and "turn only to the preacher"? What if churches chose to turn to the collective community instead?

Viola's notion of teaching the headship of Christ first acknowledges that there may be people in the congregation who do not accept Christ and the Bible as their authority. Second, it assures those in the congregation who fear disagreement that Christ will be the final word in all discussion. Again, this requires a pastor steeped in humility enough to know and convey that his thoughts on a matter might not be the only correct ones. *Every* person needs to be subject to the leadership of Christ, and while different interpretations may be equally valid, gentle challenge will happen if something counter to the truth of Christ is asserted. This submission to Christ's headship applies to the way in which congregants correct and interact with one another as well.

Another tool, similar in nature to dialog but going further, is what the Schultzes calls discovery learning. "In discovery learning the teacher steps away from being the prime dispenser of answers and becomes more of a coach and facilitator." This can take the form of personal study or group study during the sermon time to plunge into the scripture and learn the major points. In these ways, the congregants teach one another rather than that being solely the preacher's job. It also addresses the aforementioned need for deep community—offering the

152 Cho, 146-8.

ability to interact with thought questions and find applications together.[153] According to Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, the number one thing young people most would like in youth group is "time for deep conversation."[154] What if that was provided in preaching in addition to or rather than youth group?

Knowles' research seconds these techniques, as he shows that humans, psychologically, need to self-initiate learning for it to be effective. Adults don't learn by information but by sensing their own need for something, a gap in their own practice and knowledge, and wrestling with the information specific to it. They apply it to their own specific experiences, which only they know.[155]

A follow up to discovery learning techniques could be some of Chromey's suggestions for real time interaction. He talks about offering opportunities for application right then, such as sharing what one has just learned with a friend through text or a social media graphic.

D. Discipleship Results in Preaching

Finally, results matter. What type of preaching obtains the result of better discipleship? Knowles defines learning as church leaders might define discipleship--"a change in behavior as a result of experience." He continues to discuss it as "growth, a fulfillment of potential." What is the best way to change behavior, meaning one must first change the motivation behind behavior? Knowles calls this a monumental task, because the brain is wired for incremental change, and transformation is not that.[156]

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153 Schultz, 40, 55, 145, 184.

154 Powell et al, 1524.

155 Knowles, 15.

156 Knowles, 20, 15, 223.

To conclude, Chromey asks several questions in an attempt to discover that answer. No matter what one does in preaching, "Does it teach truth and inspire life change? Does it create interaction and community? Does it invite the participant into the Communion experience? Does it produce a prayerful response? Does it focus upon a simple, single point?" He asks several beautiful questions about the preaching event, such as: "If you throw a rock in a lake, it creates circles or loops, each one growing larger as it moves away from the original splash. What if you reimagined your sermons as wave-makers?"

What if preaching moved away from information-giving to wave-making? He believes this would disciple the community. His questions point at the goal: "How can my congregation love and live this teaching? Will they be able to repeat, reproduce, and reinvent [the] message? Will they *want* to repeat, reproduce, and reinvent [the] message?"[157]

These are the questions this study is attempting to address.

157 Chromey, 46, 68, 70-1.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

"To a large extent, the pulpit has, from the first century, received poor reviews."

Fred Craddock

The process of beginning to change the preaching style at Resolution Church began almost as soon as I became lead pastor. Through the research and experimentation in this project, I have formalized that transition and created a standard interactive preaching program, although the style itself will always require some amount of flexibility.

A. What Is Interactive Preaching?

The term "interactive" can be ambiguous. For some, interactivity comes through using a more inductive method of preaching. They retain a preacher's control of the sermon, but the preacher invites the congregation to formulate its own conclusion and applications through a sermon that tells a story and offers small "hints" along the way, leading to conclusions rather than beginning with the ones the preacher has already determined. The congregation's input remains within the heads of the congregants, however, in an inner dialog with the preacher which he/she has encouraged.

Others approach the idea of interactive preaching in more of a call and response style, common to their subject of ethnically diverse churches. They consider the congregation's emotional reaction, again, largely internal, and its outpouring into verbal response to the preacher's "call," (amen, hallelujah, preach it) as the peoples' appropriate form of interaction.

On the other end of the spectrum, for some it means that the congregation participates fully in talking with the pastor about the subject, diving into the scripture together, and processing a conclusion as a group.

In my experimentation, I include many of these elements. The congregation is invited into full discussion at times, in a guided way through questions and scripture passages from the pastor. Often, they are then requested to summarize their conclusions for the entire congregation. At other times, the sermon includes open-ended questions from the pulpit which the congregation answers in the moment. Sometimes the congregation is invited to ask questions of the pastor, to clarify, satisfy curiosity, or make links to another related point.

Occasionally, the congregation is given a hands-on experiment they must perform in order to "see" a conclusion or point more clearly. This is reminiscent of object lessons pastors often performed in pulpits, more popular in previous decades, but in this case the congregation does the activities themselves and draws their own conclusions from them. It can appear almost like a children's sermon, yet adult learning literature embraces the need for hands-on learning for all ages, going back to the findings that people recall more when they actively participate.

Interactive preaching might also invoke sensory imagery, and therefore draw in participation through smell, touch, and taste, through video, graphic artistry, and even, sometimes, baking (and eating). At other times, the congregation's input consists of volunteers who read the Scripture within the sermon.

Because of the problematic nature of individual interpretation ("this is what the Bible means to me"), in these experiments I strove to find a middle ground between concentration on the individual and yet an invitation to the people to formulate their own conclusions. This was part of the rationale behind creating a "big idea" for each week and repeating those ideas in

succeeding weeks, forming a sense that the community centered around a set of main ideas all agree on. Arthurs, in *Preaching as Reminding,* brings out this need to repeat, remind, and remember together the things that matter to a congregation and its call. The reinforced ideas were talking points to could unite around and take action toward together.

The back and forth nature of the dialog encourages members to hear from one another, reformulate their own ideas based on the input and experience of others, and come to conclusions together they may not have found separately. It also allows for gentle corporate correction when one's point of view might be lacking something substantial or be theologically inaccurate.

One of my favorite aspects of this interactive style has been the input of the children. All ages have felt free to raise their hands and offer answers when I ask questions (even when I ask rhetorical ones that I didn't intend to receive answers!), and their wisdom has proved genuinely valuable to the conversation. Their participation has reinforced the truths in *Growing Young* that young people must feel heard, and they also hear and learn more when they are part of the conversation.

B. Phases of the Experiment

The experiments used in attempting to create this middle road took shape in four phases.

1. Phase One

First, I undertook surveys to discover the congregation's "baseline" level of discipleship and understanding of the gospel as a whole life, kingdom-centered reality. To do this, I surveyed members of Resolution church as well as members of another church, Warehouse Church in Aurora, Illinois, that I believed would be a good equivalent to ours. Resolution has an attendance of approximately twenty-five on Sundays, while Warehouse is fifty to sixty. Both are in a far west suburban area of Chicago, within five or six miles of one another. Both are young churches

that would be considered community focused. I learned that they already had a fairly good grasp of this concept.[1] The biggest, and best, surprise was that the people in Resolution understood the terms "missional" and "gospel" slightly better than the members of Warehouse. The previous pastor's focus on gospel as a whole arc of biblical history did burrow itself into peoples' understanding by a fifty-seven percent margin, compared to thirty-seven percent of the other church's members. The Resolution congregation needed minimal discipleship in the idea that the gospel included more than a simple message of "pray the prayer and go to heaven."

The survey also tested to see how much the congregation understood the idea of "incarnational" as being Jesus in the community. That understanding was present. Sample answers to the request to define "incarnational" include: "Living with a purpose, where every action is dedicated to fulfilling that purpose." "To be there in the flesh representing Jesus to whomever we encounter." "Showing Jesus' love, grace and hope." Resolution has successfully moved from an attractional church based on getting people in the door for the show and the prayer to one focused on getting ourselves out the door to listen to our neighbors.

The other positive point of the background survey is that most people have also absorbed what has been taught about the purpose for church. When asked to choose the top three reasons why the local church exists, four answers of the twelve stood out. Top priorities included: to worship God, to bring others to Christ, to love our neighbors, and to teach the truth. The congregation knew what discipleship should look like; however, their idea of how that concept evolved into daily life remained quite hazy.

The figures on questions about knowing and following passions in ministry implied a lower understanding of how to implement discipleship. Most people did know their gifts; they

[1] See Appendix A.

did not necessarily know how to employ them. This confirmed what I had been discovering in meetings and studies. They have not connected how to use their personal gifts and preferences for mission. The survey suggests that people did know the meaning of missional and understand many of its implications. They did not, however, know how to articulate its meaning nor apply its practices in their context.

2. Phase Two

The next stage was a series of sermons, preached in the fall of 2018, based on the newly-developed mission statement of the church. I designed this series to describe the future church, what its function would be, and how individuals operated within that body. We covered each segment of the statement in order using active, hands-on experiments and examples to drive home the individual's place in the kingdom of God.[2] This series led to step three.

3. Phase Three

In order to learn if this type of preaching would better disciple young adults, I used this same sermon series in another church in a class setting specifically created for people ages eighteen to thirty-five. I preached the same sermons at the Greenville Free Methodist Church in Greenville, Illinois, a town which hosts a Free Methodist university and therefore has a large contingent of young adults. Fifteen to twenty adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five attended each week.

I created a series of surveys for the Greenville students to measure discipleship growth. First, a long pre-series survey determined their current level of discipleship, their beliefs on the subject, and how they believed sermons had helped in that process. After each sermon, a second

[2] The Resolution Mission Statement reads: Resolution Church exists to be a hope-filled light in the community that loves without restrictions, supports individuals and families to grow strong in their faith, and comes alongside people who want to learn more about God's image and redemption for them and our world.

short survey asked people who had participated in the event to evaluate its effectiveness at discipleship, within 8-24 hours of hearing the sermon. I believed that window of time was appropriate, because it allowed for some time to elapse so that the material was not completely fresh but not so much that they would forget to do the survey. This eight-hour window is in line with the research already presented on how quickly one forgets what one hears. This happened after every sermon. Finally, I asked the participants to complete the same survey they had done at the beginning, intending to measure any change.[3]

4. Phase Four

To bring the question full circle back to our church context, I then used the concepts and styles that had resonated well with the young adults in Greenville into Resolution for a three-month trial to determine if this style of preaching better discipled our people. It was my hope that, if this was the case, it would also helped us to learn how to "grow young" for the future.

For three months, I chose one topic per month and covered it during the preaching event in four different ways: 1) a straightforward sermon drawing out one or two larger themes on the subject that we wanted to carry through the month. I interacted with the congregation during this time with questions and discussions, but we didn't do any hands-on work or discussion between congregants. 2) a sermon detailing one passage on the topic, with more exegetical work on each verse, learning what one passage of Scripture had to say in detail rather than a broader overview of a number of passages, as in week one. 3) a week of discussion, in which the congregation met in small groups with a series of questions to talk about in their group. This was not guided by the pastor except in the choice of questions. 4) one week of practical, hands-on application of the

[3] See Appendix B.

question. The congregation was asked to complete the same surveys that the young adults at Greenville had been asked to complete.

For my purposes, I used a variety of styles and an inclusive definition. A primary requirement for my sermons to be interactive was that the congregation was asked questions during the sermon time, as a part of the sermon, and we discussed the points back and forth. An example would be that, during our series on discerning the will of God, I asked them what processes unbelievers went through to make decisions, and we outlined some answers on the whiteboard. We then discussed which ones seemed like biblical ideas and which did not and why. This occurred in the exposition of Romans 12.1-2.

A second method I employed often is the discussion. While I supply a list of questions to discuss, the people in their groups are free to ponder other ideas and focus on what matters most to them among the questions. I do assign a leader to keep time so that we finish as much as possible in the time allotted, but no one is bound by that. Often, I will ask a representative of the group to relay their conclusions back to the larger congregation, either that day or as a recap the following week.

A third method is hands-on illustrations of the material. For example, during the sermon covering our mission statement clause "supports individuals and families to grow strong in their faith," I had six volunteers come forward and build a human pyramid at the beginning of the sermon, at the front of the church. Throughout the rest of the teaching, we talked about how important it is as a body for the spiritually strong to support the weak, the weak to ask for help, and those in the middle to be discipled and disciple others in turn. Another week, we built small gingerbread houses in the service, without any guidance or recipes, to show how it's best to leave

the blueprints to the expert –God--when we're building our faith houses, or we might end up with a mess that does not hold together.

A fourth aspect of the new preaching process was heavy reliance on sensory detail. I endeavored to create more visually appealing and evocative slides for teaching as well as have actual displays at times to illustrate a particular point. We brought in other senses of touch, smell, and taste to make lessons memorable. The day we talked about loving without restrictions, we ate fried chocolate chip cookies to show that, while some things are not as we expect and are used to, they are nonetheless still good if we try them.

A fifth example of my use of interactive teaching is the common use of responsive readings and prayers, as well as asking congregation members to read out loud the Scripture passages bring projected on the screen during the sermon, or possibly look up on their phones a number of Scriptures we are going to use and read them out.

All of this was in service of the question—do people learn better, retain more, and make positive changes when they are engaged in their own discipleship during a sermon, asking questions, offering ideas, doing experiments, and taking active part in their own learning rather than passively listening?

5. Mission Statement Sermons

The first sermons preached first at Resolution Church and then at Greenville FMC were a breakdown of our mission statement called "Road Trip."[4] The idea was that we are on a journey to fulfill a mission in God's kingdom, and this is the map.

Topic one, September 2018 at Resolution, June 2019 in Greenville, we began with an overview called "Packing Well." For the opening hands-on "hook," I placed several items one

[4] See Appendix C.

might use on a camping trip under the chairs. Each person had the chance to pull his or her item out and explain why it might come in handy on the trip. We then looked at photos of vacation destinations and talked about how we all might mean different things when we talk about our dream vacation or even a beach trip. This segued into the idea—why do we all have to be on the same page when we define our terms in the gospel and our mission? I went on to discuss the gifts passage in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.11-16 and what they meant. We took a short APEST[5] evaluation in church and then discussed how each gift could help, and hinder, the others. The elements all pointed toward the one big idea—"Our road trip is to be the body of Christ lived out in our world, and our suitcase is filled with the gifts God has given us." This interested the congregation so much that we decided to return to it the following week rather than go on to the next portion of the mission statement. We had a discussion week on the APEST information and how we can use our gifts to complement one another in the body of Christ.

Topic Two, we began on the first phrase of the mission statement: the church as, "A Hope-Filled Light in the Community." We opened with a responsive reading of Isaiah 40 to illustrate the point of hope we would be focusing on. Then I showed them photos of the seven darkest places on earth and asked what people would want to do there. After that, I handed them boxes which had been shut so that no light could possibly come into them. I asked them to try to see the darkness and asked why they could not. What would happen to the darkness if they opened the box even a pinprick to look inside? This illustrated the big idea—"The tiniest bit of light makes dark disappear."

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[5] "APEST is a profiling instrument designed to assist you in finding your ministry style in relation to the philosophy of the fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4 (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, Teachers**)."** Alan Hiersch, "What Is APEST?" https://www.theforgottenways.org/what-is-apest.aspx, accessed March 4, 2020.

We went on to project facts about the most hopeless facets of our immediate society—opioids, suicide, loneliness, and victims of trauma. I asked them to guess as to what caused some of the figures I presented. We then had an open discussion on what they believed made people they knew feel hopeless. After, we went back to the hands on experience by taking up flashlights and turning them on. When would a flashlight be useful, and when is it not? Again, we concluded that, "The tiniest bit of light makes dark disappear."

The teaching centered upon both 1 Peter 3.15[6] and the Isaiah 40 responsive reading—why do we have hope even in the middle of difficult times? What light do we have to offer?

Topic Three, we covered the phrase, "that loves without restrictions." It opened with a video of Binti-Jua, the gorilla who rescued a toddler at the Brookfield Zoo a number of years ago. Could two creatures so very different love and protect regardless of their differences? We used the phrase "gorilla Christians" throughout to solidify the main point— "Gorilla Christians tear down man-made restrictions to loving others." We delved into the Genesis creation passage and talked about what restrictions are, when they are good and when they are bad, and how fear and shame, brought on with original sin, cause us to create walls to keep others out. While I explained the passage and the theology of this, I asked them interactive questions, with visually interesting slides, about what restrictions are and why/when we need or don't need them. Previously, I had placed scriptures on their tables illustrating encounters between Jesus and someone deemed unlovable or unacceptable by his society. I then gave them a list of five questions and told them to read and discuss the passages together in small groups, coming back to explain to the congregation what they had discovered. After they did so, I talked about the

[6] "You must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it."

pattern we can find in Jesus' encounters with unwanted people and how he used that pattern to love people into his kingdom. ("Jesus gave us a model for how to dismantle wrong restrictions.")

This topic also went into two weeks. After talking about dismantling wrong, man-made restrictions, I felt we needed to see it at work. So the second week, we recapped what we had learned the first week by asking several questions about the main ideas, restrictions, and Jesus' methods for loving people without restrictions. We restated the first week's main points in slide format. This is a technique I employ commonly for better discipleship—recapping the previous week and re-viewing the "big idea" slides.

Prior to the recap, I showed slides of some of the most repulsive food I could find examples of and asked who would try it. We talked about what food they liked as adults that perhaps they had hated as children. I then passed around a plate of unusual cookies and asked them to eat them and report back. They loved the cookies. So I told the story of how I came to make fried chocolate chip cookies one day while trying to teach English to a Burundian refugee. This would all come to illustrate the big idea--"To love without restrictions, we have to leave our old normal and journey into Jesus' new world of reconciliation."

Next we read the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10 by having two people, chosen ahead of time, read it as a dialog between Peter, God, the servants, and Cornelius. I explained how Peter had followed the pattern we talked about the previous week that Jesus had begun. Afterward, we had a time of reflection, lament, and repentance. This is not a normal part of the sermon, but given the topic and the current events at the time (synagogue, grocery store, and a school shooting), it seemed appropriate to couple the topic of loving without restrictions with lament and prayer over the current situation of hatred and polarization. We did responsive

reading, responsive prayer, candle lighting and reflective personal prayer, corporate confession, communion, and corporate commitment to hope.

Topic Four unpacked the phrase, "supports individuals and families to grow strong in their faith." This is the week we opened with the human pyramid. Then we watched a video of human castle building in Barcelona, showing human towers three stories high. We discussed what the various members of the pyramids do, how important they are, and what keeps them standing. Then I introduced the big idea—"To grow strong in our faith, we need to both support and be supported by our family."

This led to an exposition of Hebrews 10:24-25, Ephesians 4:12, and several other passages, as well as a general discussion of the many times we see the words "one another" on the New Testament and what that means. We focused on what living things need to grow, using visuals such as plants (some of which had been deprived of light or water), coins (to show what "approved" meant in ancient Rome), and a resistance band (because we don't grow without some tension).

We ended by revisiting the human castles, asking how they thought the small children on top and the strong men on bottom felt about their roles. Finally, we finished with a quote from one of the builders, one I thought illustrated perfectly the idea of community we were trying to create—"We don't get hurt when we fall because we fall into each other."

Topic 5—The church "comes alongside people who want to learn more about God's image and redemption for them and for our world." This is the final phrase in our mission statement. I chose to focus on the section about God's image and how we help others see that in themselves. We began with a back and forth about the ancestry craze and hearing the results of anyone in the congregation who had taken it. I asked why they thought people were so obsessed

with finding their heritage, and this went into talking about identity and our identity crisis as human beings. A reading of Genesis 1 led to the big idea--"The mission of the future church is to help people know who they are—and we'll never know who we are until we know Whose we are."

We talked together about where people go to get their identity and how that works out. Then, I showed a Bible Project vide on the image of God, and we discussed what people had believed that phrase meant versus what the video, and Scripture, meant by it. Then we went into our second text for the morning, 2 Corinthians 5:16-17—"So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!" Each person had a set of overhead projector sheets, cut into circles, of various colors. We used each color to illustrate what it would be like if we looked at other people through that lens—lenses of eternity, potential, forgiveness, and belovedness.

6. Final Experiment Sermons

After these weeks, the Greenville young adults took their final survey, and I went home to put into practice some of the things I had learned there. This culminated in a three-month teaching series in fall of 2019 in my own congregation. Called "How to Do (Almost) Anything," The series took some questions the congregation had asked about things they wanted to know how to do, and we covered one each month for three months. The questions I chose from their options were: 1) How can I know the decisions I make are in God's will? 2) How can we create healthy boundaries and relationships, and when do we know when it's time to love someone better or to let them go? And 3) How do we help our young people retain their faith in a digital, 24/7 culture?

Beginning in September, to emphasize our "big idea" that would carry us through the month, we watched a video of a world class marching band. Then we talked about how people make decisions, what advice we get from our culture, and how decisions are rarely as simple as "A leads to B." This focused us down on Galatians 5 and the main point, directly quoted from it— "You are not to do whatever you want. Let us keep in step with the Spirit." Hence the marching band and an explanation of what exactly keeping in step means.[7] (We have several marching band people in the congregation, so I knew this would make sense to them.)

The people read passages where we learn about submitting our agendas to God, and we talked about various times in our lives when we have had God change our path. The back and forth discussion focused on how we find ways to either lag behind or run in front of the Spirit, and how doing so makes it very difficult to discern the will of God.

Week 2 we did our discussion group rather than an in-depth look at some passages. This was because I wasn't able to be there. I gave them the Wesleyan quadrilateral idea—four tools to discern when what I hear and see is from God or not.[8] Discussion questions focused on each of these four, how they interwove, and why we need all of them. Interspersed were some "pastor's thoughts" on specific word definitions and Scripture meanings, since I was not there to give them. Finally, they talked about this sentence: God is more concerned with what He wants you to ***be*** than what He wants you to ***do***.

[7] "March according to the Spirit's orders." Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary Book 9: Galatians*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids: MI, 1995), 5279, Kindle Edition.

[8] The traditional tools in this quadrilateral for discerning truth are Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition. The four work together, balancing what is said in Scripture, what the person and other people have experienced regarding the question, what the church has traditionally determined, and what natural reason would believe to be right. The image we used and the discussion questions and pastor's thoughts are in Appendix D.

Week 3, we began with a Disney video montage of several movie moment involving the advice to "follow your heart" and followed with some verses on the heart and its guidance. I asked how they thought Disney advice would work out in real life. We recapped the previous two weeks, and I asked for conclusions from the discussion week.

Then we read Romans 12:1-2, our core passage, together, and launched into a practical path on how to discern God's will, understanding that there is no exact science to it. We took this passage apart almost word for word, and I asked the congregation what they thought each word meant and what thoughts it brought to mind. Then I taught the biblical meaning and the intersection of that with what they had said. Part of the interactive portion of this week was a demonstration of soap molds and how they work. Through this, I drew out from them the idea of being manipulated into a mold through pressure, heat, etc. and how to resist this process. I asked what the values of their culture were and what pressure it exerted on them.

The big idea came inductively, as we drew up an equation together: If—We follow the words of Romans 12, then—We will be able to test all that we feel, hear, learn, see, or believe to see if it's really God. Between this and the first week's big idea, the final point from this equation came out: "If we want to know God's true will, we have to give up our own." I left them with a refrigerator card where The Message version of Romans 12:1-2 was printed.

Week 4, practical application week, was difficult. How does one go out and practice discerning God's will? We worked through a process for doing so, using some practical examples. Some of those examples were:

- For whom should I vote?
- Which job should I take/look for?
- What kind of major should I consider in college?

- What should I do with my aging parent/s?
- Your question here: _____

Then we took one of these and talked through a scenario in which we followed these steps:

- Pray
- Clarify the decision
- Get wisdom from the Bible
- Seek wise counsel
- Keep praying!
- Make a choice

The month ended with a recap of the big ideas and an encouragement to use this process on whatever decision they had to make next.

In October, we covered relationships and all their messiness. In the first week, we cemented the overarching idea for the month—I started with a word cloud[9] and we talked about how messy and confusing relationships can be. I brought out scriptures that seem to contradict one another on relationships. When do we turn the other cheek and forgive seventy times seven? When do we walk away from the crowds, as Jesus did, and be alone? When do we stay with an unbelieving spouse? When do we toss our debtors into prison after all? When do we help everyone and when do we, like Moses, realize enough is enough? This led to a discussion of what a baseline and a default were, with illustrations, and how Jesus shows us both. His baseline is sacrifice, the default mode, from which he could choose to set other boundaries. We came to

[9] See Appendix E.

an inductive big idea—"When we learn to live into our identity in Christ, we will learn to live into healthy identity with everything else."

Week two continued with the same big idea, and we added a second corollary—"Jesus is our model for appropriate boundary setting in relationships." This week had more input from the congregation, as I asked them to tell me the various people who followed Jesus, break them down into groups, and discover for themselves how he treated each group. (Ex: disciples, inner four disciples, followers, hangers on, Pharisees.)

Volunteers then read various stories of Jesus, and the congregation drew conclusions from each passage on one way in which Jesus set healthy boundaries.[10] I did not speak these points to begin with—I led them to draw their own conclusions, and we discussed back and forth. We ended by circling back around to how these fit into the big idea from the first week.

Week three was a discussion in small groups. I distributed a page with the big ideas and smaller corollaries we had talked about on the top. Then, the question was asked: With these in the background, discuss three main ideas of relationships:

1. Forgiveness
2. Trust
3. Closing the Door

Each one of these had several questions under it, and there were a number of Bible verses cited at the end for reference as needed. At the end, I listed a few resources for them to read on their own on this topic.

Week four we did the hands on application. I wanted to use some enneagram material for this, since it is a helpful tool for people to understand difficult relationships. This is especially

[10] For example, He chose his level of relationship; he guarded his personal time and space; he expected personal responsibility; he refused to be distracted from his purpose.

important since there are a couple strained marriages in the church, and I wanted them to have some hands on time using a tool that could be immediately helpful. I did not actually teach this session. My daughter volunteered to teach, and as she is more trained in the topic, I encouraged her.[11] She went through the various enneagram types, talked about scriptural support for understanding one another's behavior, and gave them time to type themselves and then talk about what they had discovered with one another. Several congregants talked excitedly during this, saying things like, "So that's why we argue about this all the time!" or "This is why we don't communicate on this!" My husband and I explained our own types and some of the conflicts they bring about in our relationships as examples. This one went into two weeks, as there was a lot of interest and material. On the last week, we also came back to the big idea—"When we learn to live into our identity in Christ, we will learn to live into healthy identity with everything else."

In November of 2020, for the question on finding quiet and peace in a digital age, I chose to focus on retaining faith in that age, using the book *Faith for Exiles*. We called it "Turning Down the Noise: Staying Faithful in Digital Babylon." Week one opened with a "Gilligan's Island" theme song video where we brought out the ideas that, while in exile, this crew of people made the best of where they were but never lost their core identities and desire to be home. We followed that with a Bible Project video on Exile, from which we grew our first big idea—"The way of the exile is living in tension between loyalty and subversion."

The video brings out the point that we all live in exile. I followed it with a discussion of how we do that in our situation today. Then we went into the major Scripture for the month—Jeremiah 29:1-4 (also 1 Peter 2:11-12). I asked the congregation what they saw in these two

[11] This is one immediate way I can disciple and train people. If they want to use their gifts to teach, I open the doors to do it.

passages about living in exile and how it's done. I wrote their input on a while board, and we came up with a list: Invest, Integrity, Faith/trust, Care, Involvement, Identity. Then I went into a description of digital Babylon, following the book, and led to the month's big idea, taken from the first one—"Living in digital Babylon requires us to keep the tension wisely and well between loyalty and subversion." I then asked how they saw Christians in society playing out the choices of assimilation, abandonment, or finding the balance in between.

On week two, we recapped then showed a video on Barna research regarding the 24/7 presence of digital Babylon. Then I did a recap of exile history in the Old Testament, since few if any of our people know those stories well.

As an interactive aspect, I showed some ads and asked what the object of the advertisers was. We talked back and forth about how marketing not only caters to us but attempts to create us. The only way to subvert this, then, became the main idea—"To form a resilient faith identity, experience intimacy with Jesus." This is the first mark of a resilient Christian in the book. Then we went through three stories on Daniel (eating the king's food, fiery furnace, lion's den) and asked after each one—What is Babylon trying to do? Why? What does this story have to teach us about living in digital Babylon and keeping an intimate, living relationship with Jesus? Each time, we recapped with the main idea.

Week three was a discussion on how we help one another maintain that intimate relationship with Christ. We also talked about specific ways we can be loyal and subversive to the digital pull in our lives.

For week four, they had been given the homework assignment to discover digital resources that we could use for good for God's kingdom. I brought a presentation of the ones I had found, and they contributed an explanation of theirs. We first summarized the main ideas

and then I talked about places we wanted to remain either loyal or subversive. Then we went into tools for prayer, bible reading, devotional reading, cultural intersection, and good habits, introducing prayer apps, gratitude apps, an audio bible app, a couple podcasts, and more. Finally, I went quickly through the other four keys in the book to living in digital Babylon.

Finally, after all three months, the congregation took the initial discipleship survey one more time, and I compared results. The ultimate question for this type of sermon is not whether the congregation enjoys it more or prefers it less. We seek to determine if their discipleship level has deepened. This, obviously, is a difficult criteria to measure. How does one decide if one is a better disciple after three months than one was before? In many ways, the measurement is subjective. Questions on the survey were designed to measure this as objectively as possible. Some of the questions included criteria such as: Do you recall the main points of the sermon? Could you explain them to another person? Have you put anything from the sermon into practice this week? Do you believe it has given you a better understanding of your culture or immediate environment? Do you believe it has helped you to love others better? Self-measurement is not the best tool for determining true discipleship, but measurement by another could be even less possible and subject to personal bias. Understanding these limitations, we look at the data to note any differences over the three month period.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

The hypothesis of this project was that interactive preaching methods offer a better way to make disciples.

A. Measuring Outcomes

Discipleship is a difficult thing to measure. How does one objectively determine whether or not a person is a better disciple than he or she was a month ago? What are the benchmarks for who is and isn't a good disciple? This could easily devolve into a legalistic checklist of good behaviors gained and bad behaviors avoided, a resolution that leads at best right back to the Therapeutic Moralistic Deism from which we are trying to recover, and at worst to legalism itself. Yet fuzzy criteria that measure nothing also tell us nothing about what works to disciple our people.

Thus, I chose particular questions to look at for outcome, which include: How did the test subjects understand discipleship before the experiment began? How do they understand it now? Did they make any life changes during the course of the experiment that indicate a greater understanding of how a disciple would behave? Did they make any cognitive or emotional changes that would indicate a greater understanding of how a disciple would think, believe, or feel? Could they recall the important points about being a disciple from sermons in order to make some of those changes later on? Did they feel confident in teaching some of those things to others?

If we can see change and identify it with a particular teaching, we can in some part measure the effect of discipleship training. Discipleship does not always appear in actions,

however, but often in changes of thought, feeling, or idea—changes that move us farther toward orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and what we referred to as ortho-cardiology—correct feeling and reacting about matters. Part of this correct believing is recognizing oneself as a discipler, and thus teaching others what we have learned.

Then one must ask the question of whether preaching/teaching alone can make such changes. The answer, of course, is that it cannot of itself. Preaching which forms good disciples must be taken in conjunction with all arenas for growth in a church, such as one-on-one discipleship, communities, service, classes, or outside pursuits. The potential to study the role of preaching alone, however, was present in Resolution, because we do not have other formal programs for this purpose. If a change occurred, it is likely a result of the change in preaching style. In the future, we would prefer to couple this with other areas for discipleship, particularly generationally-diverse one-on-one discipleship, in order to improve results further.

It is good to be able to study the effects of preaching alone, because as the average church attendance, even for "regular" attenders, trends toward a couple times a month, and as it becomes more and more difficult to capture buy-in from busy people for involvement in other activities, preaching sometimes could become the only portal through which we can reach people. If better discipleship happens here, perhaps the people will then choose to manage their priorities such that they are more open to learning and spending time in other areas.

1. The congregation prior to the experiment

The congregation members were asked to take a survey prior to beginning the three-month experimental sermon period. The survey questions are the same as the Greenville questions.[1] The instrument was intended to measure how people defined discipleship, how they

[1] See Appendix B.

felt about their personal level of spiritual maturity, how they believed they learned best, and what they thought of preaching in general. They were then asked to take the same survey after three months. During those three months, I preached a series of sermons based on their own questions, using several interactive techniques, such as hands-on experiments, sensory detail, concrete visual examples, discussion groups, and discussion questions from the pulpit.

The congregation set a high bar for the post-event survey. The majority (50 percent) gave high marks (5) to preaching in general and the preacher's ability to communicate with younger audiences. Seventy-five percent said the pastor clearly had interest in connecting with younger audiences.

a. How people learn. Most people (75 percent) said that they felt they learned best by doing things, a percentage that didn't change significantly in the post-event survey. However, when asked if they preferred to sit quietly and learn in a sermon, on the scale from disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, the split is absolutely even. The only option with no votes was "strongly disagree." So I believe that they are in some confusion between what they are used to, and therefore want, and how they know instinctively they learn best. This is not surprising, given the information cited in chapter one from Barna that people prefer to passively listen to "good preaching" not because they necessarily are learning but because it is comfortable. It also likely comes from their lack of experience with any other sort of preaching. How would they know what options other than "preferring to listen quietly" exist if that is all that's known to them? So the disconnect between knowing what they're used to doing and knowing what they do well should not be surprising.

The congregation also split evenly on whether they got frustrated wanting to ask questions of authority and could not. It is unclear from the wording of the question and the

results whether this is because they do not want to ask questions or because they feel they already can ask questions comfortably. Therefore, the question needed to be more specific to be useful. However, this question intended to measure a congregation's interest in taking part in discussion rather than being passive, and so the results at least help show some level of interest.

Interest in application was also a mix of somewhat conflicting responses. Seventy-five percent want outcomes they can take action on now. Yet everyone agrees that they want to determine for themselves what that action is. However, again, 75 percent want someone to offer applications to them. So everyone would like to leave church with practical things they can do to apply the sermon, but they want both options—the people want to determine their own applications, yet they also want the preacher to supply them with some. This appears confusing at first, but in the end, perhaps it is the best mix possible--people who wish to think hard and find their own answers for their own situations yet who still want prodding and ideas and wisdom from the pastor. This seems like a perfect mix for interactive preaching.

b. Discipleship measures prior to the experiment. Most people rated the way people are discipled in the Resolution environment at 4 (5 being highest), yet when asked to choose their own level of spiritual maturity, they chose a 3. So at the beginning of the experiment, people believed themselves to be behind the curve in discipleship personally.

Specifically, several questions were asked, on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree, about behaviors considered good indicators of a higher discipleship level.

- 75% agree that they generally remember sermon points and can repeat at least one of them a week later.
- 100% agree that the sermons they hear adequately equip them to live out the kingdom daily, but only 50% agree that they act on something they were taught within that week.

- 75% also believe they could teach someone else what they learned and have a good grasp on the Bible passage studied. The same percentage of people said they could explain to someone what the important points were and how the sermon affected them.
- 100% agree that the sermons they heard help them understand people and love God more. 75% act on that knowledge during the week.
- 75% agreed they feel better equipped to make important decisions in a godly manner through listening to sermons.
- 50% agreed sermons helped them to understand the culture.
- 100% agreed sermons help them act as the image of God in daily life.

Of course, these are all self-reported statistics, and no one can verify if indeed, anyone did explain sermon points to another person, although the individual post-sermon surveys did cover some of that information. Nevertheless, the discipleship is as the person determines it him or herself, not determined by some objective measurement. It is possible the answers, like the post-experiment responses as well, could be elevated by what people would like to be able to report about themselves or what they would like to say about the preacher. However, they did also place themselves on the average for personal discipleship, below what they believed the norm to be, so that implies they didn't inflate excessively.

2. The Congregation after the Experiment

a. Discipleship measures after the experiment. After the three-month experiment, the same questions were answered as follows:

- When asked again what individuals thought their personal discipleship level was, based on a 1-5 scale, one being last mature, they now evenly divided between choices 3,4, and 5. So the

self-reported evaluation of spiritual maturity has risen in the three months from all 3's to sixty-six percent 4's and 5's.

- Evaluation of the way people were discipled in the test environment—100% chose 4 and 5.
- Only 33% "agree" that they generally remember sermon points and can repeat at least one of them a week later, as opposed to 75% before. Now, 33% strongly agree, but 33% also disagree. So in a technical sense, this statistically comes out even to the previous numbers, but the extremes on the scale are chosen more often.
- This time, 66% agree or strongly agree that they applied something they heard in the test sermons during the week to come, as opposed to 50% before.
- 100% previously "agreed" that sermons "equipped me for living out Christ's kingdom daily," and after the test sermons, 75% strongly agreed and 25% agreed. This, too, is a significant change.
- This time, there is an even 33% split between neutral, agree, and strongly agree on the question of whether they could teach someone else what they learned and if they could explain to someone else what the important points of a test sermon were and how it affected them. Again, the percentage of agreement is actually down from the first survey, but the percentage of strongly agreeing people is much higher.
- The confidence that they have a good grasp on the Bible passage studied climbed to agree 33% and strongly agree 66%, so the 25% who were previously neutral no longer fit that category.
- 100% now strongly agree that the sermons they heard help them "understand myself and others better," whereas before 100% "agreed."

- When asked if they acted on that love and understanding the other six days of the week, 66 percent agreed and 33 percent strongly agreed. As in the Bible knowledge question, that means that the 25 percent who had previously been neutral no longer were.
- The same percentages held true for the question: "The sermons I heard help me make sense of the culture I live in," whereas only 50 percent said this was true at all previously.
- Finally, 33 percent agree and 66 percent strongly agree that "The sermons I heard helped me be the image of God in daily life"—the same percentage of agreement as before, but now 33 percent have moved into "strongly agree."

The questions on how people defined discipleship and whether that had changed were inconclusive, largely, I believe, because previous surveys from the first project showed that they already had a good grasp on the concept. Answers to the question in this survey again show that to be so. The response, then, is not that their understanding of what discipleship is grew but that their understanding of how to be the image they had in their head perhaps did.

Some responses to the question asking them "What do you think discipleship means?" include:

- Living more Christ-like.
- Cultivating a relationship with God in which I listen and watch to see what he is doing and join him in the way he has gifted me.
- Teaching others through actions and words.
- The process of becoming like Christ in thought, response, and action, to worship, teaching, study, prayer, and spiritual disciplines.
- Those that learn more of God and show others how to do the same.

When asked about how discipleship happened for them in the study, the majority reported that the experiment enhanced their understanding of how to live as a disciple. One said it did not change his or her definition, "but it helped me to think about new ways that this gets worked through in my life."

b. Post sermon survey results. The individual surveys after each sermon attempted to dive deeper into similar questions, determining what people saw as helpful, what they did with the information, and why. To begin, I asked if, in each sermon, they felt "the interactive aspects of the sermon helped me to understand and put into practice the sermon's message in a deeper, easier way." Sixty percent strongly agreed and forty percent agreed. When asked later specifically what about the sermon "made it stick, if it did," some of the things they listed were (condensed and compiled):

- Visual graphics that illustrated the point
- The questions that sparked quite a bit of debate
- Explained each piece and associated each piece with a visual representation
- Use of repetition and activity
- Visuals and participation in the process by doing a personal example
- Probably because we talked and wrote about it
- Participating in the reading and discussion instead of just listening
- Reiteration of the concept with examples from scripture and personal discussion
- Clear, practical, real scenario examples
- Seeing how it is a reality of our current times

- Using scripture from both testaments and video that demonstrate that the point is an ongoing theme
- Personal discussion

When asked, “Have you already done or decided to do something as a result of a sermon?” applications individuals had made included:

- Trying to figure out where I need to make appropriate boundaries for various relationships and how
- Understanding others I have relationships with better
- Limiting my phone use
- Spending more time in the Word
- Spending more quiet time with God
- Thinking about other ways I can improve the culture as an exile
- Downloaded some of the apps on prayer
- Downloaded some apps to try that I hope will help add consistency and depth to my personal walk

Finally, when asked if they felt the three-month interactive preaching experiment was an effective way to disciple in sermons, 66 percent agreed, and 33 percent strongly agreed. When asked if they could suggest one thing for pastors and preaching after the study, answers included:

- Continue with audience interaction model.
- Engagement is key to understanding and motivating change.
- Be interactive!

- Group discussions helps the most to understand how other people's experiences shape the way they think and how that might be different from me but still in line with the spirit of the law.
- Don't change a thing from what you're doing.

C. Evaluation

Does the data suggest that the thesis is correct? To work through this, we examine the questions discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Did we see a noticeable change in discipleship as defined by a change in behavior/actions, thoughts, ideas, words, feelings, or worldview that line up more with a person becoming Christlike?

Orthodoxy. By the definitions of discipleship itself, it appears that more people are, at the least, connecting their definition of discipleship with what they see in their daily lives. This appears in the comments they make about how, though their definition hasn't changed, their way of looking at it and seeing it in practical ways has. It can also be seen in the reported change in peoples' own spiritual maturity—the vast majority of the congregation began the experiment believing that they were "average" in their maturity level (and others were above average) and ended it believing they were either still average, above average, or well above average—66 percent trended upward. In their own understanding, something happened in those three months that they feel changed them and their ability to think and act in spiritual terms.

Seventy-five percent strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed that they felt equipped by the sermons to live out Christ's kingdom daily, as opposed to the one hundred percent who felt they "agreed" in the beginning, indicating a rise in confidence that they could make choices and actions during a day that aligned with kingdom choices.

Orthocardiology. Did the feelings of members of the congregation change—did they move toward a more Christlike attitude toward others or toward themselves? To answer this, I

would point to a couple responses. One hundred percent now strongly agree that the sermons they heard help them "understand myself and others better," whereas before 100 percent "agreed." When asked if they acted on that love and understanding the other six days of the week, 66 percent agreed and 33 percent strongly agreed. As in the Bible knowledge question, that means that the 25 percent who had previously been neutral no longer were. A larger number believed they understood the culture they lived in, and presumably the people in it, better than before, a worldview issue that improved.

Finally, 33 percent agree and 66 percent strongly agree that "The sermons I heard helped me be the image of God in daily life"—the same percentage of agreement as before, but now there is the 33 percent who have moved into "strongly agree." This last one might not appear to be related, but I believe that understanding your role as an image of God is the most crucial aspect of all in discipleship and all else flows out of it. So gaining a better knowledge of oneself as that image leads to acting as that image in our treatment of others and ourselves.

Orthopraxy. The percentage of those who applied the sermons also rose, from 50 to 75 percent. From the answers to individual sermon surveys, those applications are often practical and immediate (I downloaded prayer apps; I understand others I have relationships with better). Both of these statements occurred as a result of times when we stopped the monologue part of the sermon and had some hands on time doing what we were talking about—trying out suggested apps, looking at our own personality types and those of our spouses/family members and answering questions, etc. Could they have occurred otherwise? Only if the individual members took the time to go home and look up apps on their own or sit down with their family members and go through questions. Given that on most Sundays, I hear where everyone is going after service and what they're doing, that seems unlikely.

The self-reported practice of Bible study and understanding also improved in the three months, with 33 percent of people moving into the "strongly agree" category when asked if they had a good understanding of the Bible passage studied. Sixty-six percent agreed, so the 25 percent who had been neutral passed into one of those two categories.

In terms of being able to teach what they had learned, and thus fulfill an important part of being a disciple—discipling others—the results could be interpreted in various ways. No one before the experiment said they could not do this (they fell in the "agree" category), but 33 percent afterward said so. On the other hand, no one prior to the three months strongly agreed they could do so either, and the same percentage believed they could afterward. Perhaps some felt, after learning more, that the challenge was harder than they had previously believed. Perhaps others remembered more after discussion, graphics, or repetition, and moved themselves to the stronger category. I'm not sure this can be known without speaking with the people and getting face-to-face feedback.

By this measure, did their behavior change? Did their thinking change? Did their feelings change? The answer is conclusively yes. Can preaching alone be considered responsible for this change?

I attempted to word the questions such that the answers would be based on the test period sermons alone. Of course, this is not guaranteed. However, the responses to why they believed the sermons had been effective point to the precise changes I tried to make. That each sermon point was presented with a graphic illustration and was repeated several times, as well as revisited in the following weeks, is mentioned by several as a key in their retention. The repetition and revisiting included asking for them to supply the ideas, so it was not all passive.

This part focused on visually enhancing sermons in order to appeal to all senses, as well as repetition, and it was noticed.

Another aspect of the interaction that people mentioned as helping the lessons "stick" was the discussion. Those who mentioned it found it improved their ability to learn when others might disagree or bring in differing points of view. Certainly, this points to the truth of Chromey's assertion that discussion does not beget heresy or confusion but helps people to stretch their minds and solidify what they believe.

Finally, a number mentioned aspects like "participation in the process," real-life scenarios, hands on examples, illustrations that were concrete, or reading and writing for themselves. All of these meant that the people noticed the times they had to come up with their own examples, create their own hands on applications, read the Scripture on their own, or write down a plan. They noticed, and it helped them to move forward in their intent to be better disciples.

In the final analysis of what they thought preaching at Resolution should look like going forward, they definitely had the choice to ask for us to return to "normal." Overwhelmingly, they did not. The response, "Engagement is key to understanding and motivating change," tells me that someone can put in her or his own words exactly what we were attempting to do, without hearing those words and ideas or having coaching from me. That means that something worked.

C. Applications and Questions for the Future

With such a small church, it is difficult to know how significant the results would be in a larger group. Transferability could be understandably questioned. The group is extremely loyal to its pastor, as well, and although the surveys are completely confidential, that could have

swayed some answers. Having teens and young adults in the survey helped that, I believe—they are not afraid to speak the truth in any circumstance.

The one activity that many people found very helpful is also the one several noted as uncomfortable—discussion groups. For those who know the people they're interacting with, this was a valuable tool in their understanding. For those who did not, or who did not feel confident offering their opinions, this activity caused discomfort and dislike. This is an important point to note, especially for churches that have a large number of visitors or new people. Precautions to make discussion easier for them would be in order.

Herrington and Absalom's discussion of social spaces would be helpful when transferring this idea to larger churches and in navigating the discussion group issues. They define most worship gatherings as public space, utilizing the rules of public space, which include surface interactions and expectations that no one will be asked to reveal personal information and feelings.[2] These rules are broken, or at least bent, in interactive preaching. An interactive context behaves more like a social space, sharing snapshots of the self to create community.[3] However, since the majority of churches in the United States are under one hundred people, and ninety percent have fewer than 250 people, the social context works for those forty-six percent.[4] A leader would need to help the congregation in the adaptive change to become more comfortable in that context when they were expecting a public one, using some of the ideas that will be presented below.

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[2] Herrington and Absalom, 81.

[3] Herrington and Absalom, 95.

[4] Aaron Earls, "The Church Growth Gap: The Big Get Bigger While the Small Get Smaller," Christianity Today. https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/march/lifeway-research-church-growth-attendance-size.html, (Accessed March 1, 2020).

Resolution plans to take some next steps. This has included beginning to advertise our "different" way of teaching/preaching, and we have received positive feedback. If this is how we believe better disciples are made, some next steps might be to move toward making worship time more conducive to this community activity and less spectator-like in other aspects of the service as well. We are looking at purchasing a building that will give us more of a home atmosphere while in the center of downtown, allowing for a more unplugged worship and community-oriented, gifts-based time on Sunday morning. Another next step we want to pursue is to train our youth to have a better scriptural base, especially on hard questions, so that they feel confident in taking part talking about what they believe rather than solely what their experience is.

This leads to the question most on my heart—how could this information be used to keep younger generations in the church? If, as the research claims, one of the major reasons they leave is that they do not feel discipled, that they feel indoctrinated but not deeply biblically taught how to make daily decisions and become more like Christ, how might this research change that dynamic?

Going to Greenville Free Methodist Church and testing these methods with a class of people in their twenties gave me some data to determine if this might be the case. The results were mixed, but some things stood out as positive possibilities.

The young adults seemed to prefer the way the test environment discipled young people to their standard environment: 35 percent gave their current environment a 2 on a scale of 1-5, 35 percent a 3, 18 percent a 4, and 12 percent said n/a.

When asked about the way young people were discipled in the test environment: 20 percent gave it a 3, 60 percent a 4, and 20 percent a 5. This says that, though many said their current environment was a good one, the preference for interaction was strong.

Part of this was perhaps their perception of the way the preacher tried to connect with young people. In their current environment, they rated a pastor's ability to preach to younger audience as: 18 percent a 2, 29 percent a 3, 29 percent a 4, 18 percent a 5, and 6 percent n/a. In our class, when asked this question, 40 percent said 4, and 60 percent opted for 5. Another reason for this preference could be the desire by 59 percent who agreed or strongly agreed that they want to be able to ask questions and feel frustrated when they cannot.

Another positive note was in the ability to remember what they heard in a sermon. Prior to the experiment, 29 percent disagree that they generally remember what they heard in a sermon, 21 percent were neutral, 41 percent agreed, and 6 percent strongly agree they can do this.

After the test period, 100 percent agreed they remembered something in that week. More people also agreed that they had applied something form the sermon, at 17 percent before versus 40 after.

In terms of ability to disciple another person by teaching what they had learned, 23 percent disagreed that they could do so before the experiment, 12 percent were neutral, 53 percent agreed, and 12 percent strongly agreed. Post experiment, 100 percent agreed, and 20 percent strongly agreed. When asked if they could explain how the sermon affected them, prior to the tests12 percent disagreed, 76 percent were neutral, and 18 percent agreed. Afterward, 80 percent agreed and 20 percent strongly agreed. So in the important area of being able to explain what they learned, how it changed them, and pass this on to others, discipleship improved during the test period.

When given the chance to reply with short answers, the young adults were very able to explain what they want and need in a sermon and a discipleship environment. Most felt their

understanding of discipleship had broadened, with statements like, “I feel more equipped to love and serve people in a Christlike way, ones I would not have thought of seeing in that way.” “The sermons reminded me of biblical truths.” “Talking around the tables in small groups and getting to voice my thoughts and questions made it happen for me.”

When asked what their most memorable interactive part of the sermons was, most chose a physical example or activity (the human pyramid, the camping exercise, the filters), some chose visuals, and some liked the hands-on skills/gifts tests.

One commented, “I like the examples beginning the sermons (like the pyramid). It helped to reinforce the main point before I even knew what it was. I could go back to thinking about it and putting it into the rest of the material.”

Suggestions they had for preachers in general after the experiment included:

- Provide more outlets for questions and discussion.
- Only teach one point.
- Start out with a specific example and tell stories, especially bible stories, in an interesting way.

Finally, when asked if they “believe this was an effective way to disciple young people in sermons”—100 percent agreed.

Not all of the results from this class trended positive—some of the questions on marks of discipleship remained largely the same. Given that there were more unchurched, or less churched, people in this class than in Resolution Church, this could account for some of the difference. The general skepticism and long buy-in of twenty-somethings could also account for the difference, with people who did not know the preacher and who are naturally more skeptical wanting more time and personal knowledge before saying they had made a tangible change. Yet

much of the data is encouraging for this age level, seeing their investment in and ability to take one good hands-on example and translate it into understanding the "big idea" of a sermon and teaching others.

I am excited by the possibilities of teaching this concept to pastors who are interested in "growing young." One of my next steps is going to be to turn this research into a course and journal for the Free Methodist Church that I can use to disciples pastors to preach for discipleship.

One very important questions is how could these techniques be used in larger settings? Is it possible to have hands on activities and discussions in churches of 300, 800, 5,000? Perhaps a better question is, if it makes better disciples, how can we *not* find a way? As next generations gravitate toward more boutique-type churches, larger churches might begin to explore (as some have) how to decentralize the one-person show and use smaller groupings within the church to teach in an interactive manner. One option could mean one week of everyone coming together for a larger celebration-type gather while three weeks of the month people meet in classrooms for interactive teaching.

In a larger church, perhaps the interaction could be done digitally, with people texting their questions and responses. This would lose some of the richness of personal interaction, and ideally someone other than the preacher would read these texts and create some real interaction.

Some of the hands on ideas could continue in a larger setting, specifically activities like:

- Personal reflection times of silence,
- Writing down of plans, ideas, goals, prayers, etc.
- Searching for Scriptures that are given or that are on a particular topic,
- Discussion of a questions between two or three people,

- Asking/answering questions that only a few people in the congregation can answer/ask in the time frame,
- Asking for questions/comments to be sent prior to the sermon time (again, this would require other people present to ask them and interact with the preacher),
- Adding (back) in responsive readings and volunteers to read Scripture,
- Some small, inexpensive, and not wasteful hands on activities could still be done in very large churches if ushers handed individual items to people as they walked in.

Another important question is how one would make this momentous of a change without a great deal of conflict. The most interesting part of this research to me is how little time it takes for a congregation to get past the "we've never done this before and it's very uncomfortable" phase and move into a "we like that we're learning things" mindset. I anticipated overcoming some dislike and distrust. It simply didn't happen. After a few weeks of uncertainty that I really meant for them to talk back, and the assurance that not everyone had to (introverts need process time), the congregation bought in completely.

Surely, a pastor of a larger church or a new pastor would encounter this issue. Some attrition would occur with those who fell uncomfortable being a part of their own process of discipleship. As the research cited previously shows, some do prefer to watch and hear, not taste and see. Pastors would have to be prepared to deal with that conflict and lead confidently and gently toward a better discipleship for everyone, and that could mean a slow journey toward this type of preaching.

One might begin slowly, first discipling church leadership in this style of learning and explaining the purpose to the team. Then, add interaction that is low risk. Start with adding in more sensory detail to the preaching time—artwork, sound, things to touch, and yes, even food

(food breaks down all church barriers). Next could come individual work—reflection time, writing time, etc. Silence itself will be difficult for many to handle well. Then perhaps a pastor could move into one-on-one discussion, volunteer reading, or other less threatening activities. A slow course toward the more highly participatory activities would make the journey easier for the skeptical.

Testimonies and statements from those who had been impacted positively by new methods could persuade others to accept the change. In many cases, I believe the congregation would feel as my church members do—a bit of unexpected elation at realizing they do remember and can tell others what they learned in church. The best part—they are.

APPENDIX A

Project One Discipleship Survey

1. Please choose your top three answers to the following: The local church exists to:
- Take care of its members
- serve the poor, oppressed, lonely, and weak
- bring others to Christ
- inspire its people
- offer fellowship
- reconcile people
- worship God
- teach the truth
- help churchgoers solve their problems
- teach us to be better people
- help Christian people raise their families
- love its neighbors
- Other…

2. For the same choices, please assign each one a rank, 1 being least important, 5 most important.

Please answer yes or no:
3. I know my strongest spiritual gifts.
4. I have a calling on my heart for a particular group, cause, or people for ministry.
5. I could explain what that call is if someone asked.
6. I could articulate the purpose I believe God has for me.

7. If someone asked me why I am a Christian, I could answer . . .
- Easily
- Reasonably well
- I have no idea
- Other

8. I use my spiritual gifts for ministry in the church or in my community:
- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Almost never
- I don't know my spiritual gifts

9. I have followed the call I think God has on my life within:
- the last six months
- the last month
- I know how to follow that call but have not done so
- I do not know how to follow that call.
- Other…

10. Choose the best three measurements of church health:
- The church members are discipling others
- There is an increasing number of people in Sunday morning service
- The church spends more of its budget on people outside its doors than inside
- Church leaders are regularly training other leaders
- The amount of money in the offering is increasing
- There are enough volunteers to run the programs
- The teens have a vibrant youth group
- Each teen has an adult mentor
- Conflict is handled with integrity
- The worship service is excellent
- Other…

11. Choose the best three ways for a church to reach people for Christ:
- Have a fantastic Sunday morning service
- Have good children's programs
- Serve in the community
- Invite others to church
- Invite others to social events with some church members
- Invite others to a Bible study
- Host a VBS
- Invite people to homes for "affinity" groups (book clubs, gourmet cooking, sports, wine tasting, etc)
- Meet the need of a particular group in the community
- Have fun youth events
- Other…

12. What does incarnational ministry mean?
13. What does the word "missional" mean?

14. Which choice best describes what you believe to be the gospel:

- Jesus died on a cross for my sins, rose again so I could be forgiven, and is preparing heaven for everyone who believes in him.
- If I live a good life, I will be in heaven with God after I die. God loves everyone and will let people in who do more good than bad.
- God created a perfect world; humans broke that perfection by disobeying. Jesus came to forgive and restore people, and He gave those who believe Him the Holy Spirit so we would have the power to do his will on earth until he comes back.

APPENDIX B

Surveys

Discipleship and Sermons Pre-event Survey

1. Do you attend church? How regularly?
- Once a week
- Twice a month
- Once a month
- More frequently than once a week
- Less frequently than once a month
- I do not attend church

2. I believe I learn best by:
- seeing things
- hearing things
- doing things
- Other

Rate your satisfaction level from 1-5, 5 being the highest, on the following:

3. Your personal discipleship level (how spiritually mature you feel)
4. The way people are discipled in your faith environment
5. Preaching practices in general
6. Pastors 'ability to preach to younger audiences
7. Pastors 'observed interest in connecting with younger audiences

Score how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about learning/preaching.

8. I learn better in a hands on environment.
9. I want to be able to ask questions of authorities and am frustrated when I can't.
10. I enjoy just sitting back and listening.
11. I want outcomes that I can take action on now.
12. I want to hear intellectual explanations of the topic.
13. I want to be able to determine for myself how I can apply a given topic to real life.
14. I want someone to offer me applications that would work for me.
15. Tangible reminders of the topic (objects I can bring home) help me to remember it.
16. I generally remember sermons well and know one main point a week later.
17. I generally apply what I hear in sermons during the week to come.
18. I feel the sermons I hear adequately equip me for living out Christ's kingdom daily.
19. I believe I could teach someone else the things I learn in sermons.

20. I feel I have a good ability to understand the Bible passages that I've heard sermons on in the last few months.
21. The sermons I hear help me understand myself and others better.
22. The sermons I hear help me love God more.
23. I act on that love and understanding the other six days of the week.
24. I feel equipped to know what God would want me to choose on important matters or daily decisions because of what I've learned in church.
25. The sermons I hear help me make sense of the culture I live in.
26. The sermons I hear help me be the image of God in daily life.
27. I can explain to someone else what the important points of a sermon I heard were and how it affected me.
28. I believe preachers could do a better job of discipling people with their sermons.
29. I don't believe the sermon is the place for discipleship.

Short Answers

30. What was the last sermon you heard? Can you remember an important point from it?
31. Was there an application that you put into practice?
32. What is your biggest frustration with church and preaching in particular?
33. What do you think discipleship means?
34. Where does discipleship happen for you currently, if it does?
35. If you could change one thing about the preaching you usually hear, what would it be?
36. Any other thoughts?

Post Sermon Experience Evaluation

Please answer these questions 8-24 hours after hearing each sermon.

(5 answer scale from strongly disagree to Strongly agree)

1. I felt better equipped to carry out practical applications from the scripture in the sermon.
2. I felt personally challenged to apply the scripture in my context.
3. I learned something about loving God and people.
4. I feel the interactive aspects used in this sermon helped me to understand and put into practice the sermon's message in a deeper, easier way.

Short Answer

5. Can you remember the main point from the sermon you heard?
6. Why do you think it stuck, if it did?
7. Have you already done or decided something as a result of that sermon?
8. Is there something from it you will do this week?
9. Is there something from it you will share with someone else this week?

Discipleship and Sermons Post-event Survey

1. Do you attend church? How regularly?

- Once a week
- Twice a month
- Once a month
- More frequently than once a week
- Less frequently than once a month
- I do not attend church

2. I believe I learn best by:

- seeing things
- hearing things
- doing things
- Other

Rate your satisfaction level from 1-5, 5 being the highest, on the following:

3. Your personal discipleship level (how spiritually mature you feel)
4. The way people were discipled in the test environment
5. The way the test pastor attempted to connect with younger people

Score how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about learning/preaching.

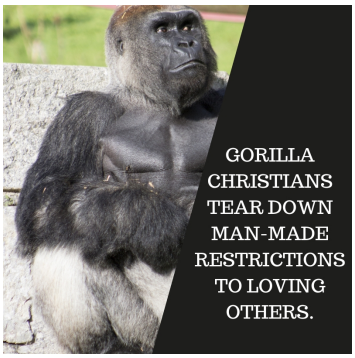
6. I generally remembered the test sermons well and knew one main point a week later.
7. I generally applied something I heard in the test sermons during the week to come.
8. I feel the test sermons adequately equipped me for living out Christ's kingdom daily.
9. I believe I could teach someone something I learned in each test sermon.
10. I feel I have a good ability to understand the Bible passages I heard in the test sermons.
11. The test sermons I heard helped me understand myself and others better.
12. The test sermons I heard help me love God more.
13. I acted on that love and understanding the other six days of the week.
14. I feel equipped to know what God would want me to choose on important matters or daily decisions because of what I've learned in this study.
15. The sermons I heard help me make sense of the culture I live in.
16. The sermons I heard help me be the image of God in daily life.
17. I can explain to someone else what the important points of a test sermon I heard were and how it affected me.
18. I believe this was an effective way to disciple in sermons.

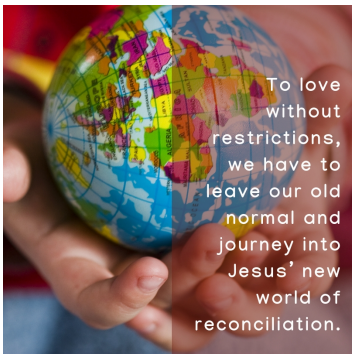
Short Answers

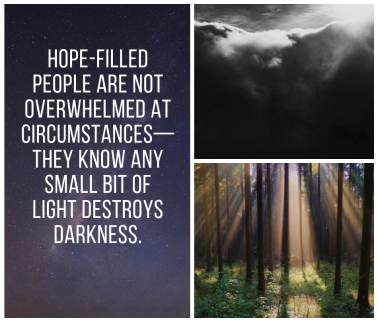
19. What was the last sermon you heard in this test group? Can you remember an important point from it?
20. Was there an application that you put into practice?
21. What do you think discipleship means?
22. Where does discipleship happen for you currently, if it does?
23. Do you believe discipleship happened for you in this study? How?
24. If you could suggest one thing for pastors and preaching after this study, what would it be?
25. What was your favorite style, interactive example, visual, or hands on aspect used in the sermons you heard?
26. Which way do you think you learned best out of all the interactive or non-interactive methods used?
27. Other thoughts?

APPENDIX C

Sample “Big Idea” visuals from the Road Trip Series







APPENDIX D

Discussion Questions on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral

How Do We Practically Hear God?
How Do We Keep in Step with the Spirit?

"I believe that the Spirit of the Lord guides us usually in one of four ways: through circumstances, through other Christians, through the Bible, and through prayer and/or spiritual intuition." Scot McKnight

The Tool of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Scripture—The ultimate authority over the other 3
Reason—what makes sense with the mind God gave us?
Experience—what would my experience and that of others say to this?
Tradition—what has stood the test of time?

(OK, it's not a quadrilateral in this picture, but I like how this one shows scripture as the overriding decision helper and the others interacting. It's rarely just one thing.)

So we have several practical tools God has given us to help discern his will. We can ask ourselves:

1. Is the choice in agreement with Scripture?
2. Does it seem reasonable?
3. Do others we trust to tell us the truth counsel us one way or the other?
4. What circumstances make this a good or bad choice?

5. Have I prayed about it extensively? Have I asked others to?
6. Does history or church tradition tell me anything that would help?
7. What does my gut tell me? Do I have a feeling that the Spirit is leading me one way or the other? Am I listening and submitting?

Talk about the following thoughts. Choose a timekeeper to keep you on track, but feel free to linger on something if the Spirit leads you there.

Scripture: (about 20 minutes)
- What are examples of decisions that Scripture is fairly clear on?
- How do we then handle those decisions?
- What do you do if your feelings or reason conflict with what the Bible says to do in a certain circumstance?
- How can we help one another with the decisions?
- What are examples of decisions Scripture is *not* clear on?
- Are there overarching ideas in the Bible that might not address a question directly but could help us make a decision?
- What do you think some of those are?
- What decisions would they effect?

Pastor's Thoughts on these questions:
Should I commit murder? Steal from the company? Cheat on my taxes or test or spouse? Have sex outside of marriage? Abuse my Image-bearing body with drugs? Be ungrateful for what I have and want what someone else has? Look at pornography that demeans God's image and relationships?
Nope. Those are not difficult questions. The Bible speaks clearly about them. Sometimes we don't have to discern God's will—***we just have to admit we already know it and do it.*** Others are not so clear, and we have to dig for themes, general counsel, or similar circumstances.

Here's one list of overarching themes/questions in the Bible that could help us make decisions. You probably came up with others. Talk about how they might help. Consider specific questions people might have about knowing what God wants of them, and apply these themes, and the ones you came up with. What do you discover?

- Does this choice serve or harm others?
- Does this choice honor or dishonor God?
- Can I imagine Jesus saying yes to this?
- Does this forward the kingdom of God in any way?
- Is this going to make me closer to or more like Jesus or will it threaten to take me farther away?
- What themes/ideas did you add?

Other Christians: (about 10 minutes)
- What keeps us from asking counsel from others when we have a decision to make?
- What kind of person should we best ask for advice? What kind of person should we not ask for advice?

- What happens if the advice we get isn't what we wanted to hear?
- Why is this an important part of a decision making process?
- ***What is the danger if we leave it out?***

Pastor's Thoughts on these questions:
In our individualistic society, this is the piece we probably leave out the most. We don't like to ask for help, and no one else can tell me what to do! Yet God tells us to bear one another's burdens, to seek wisdom and godly counsel, to encourage one another, and yes, to correct one another. Our decision-making process might change drastically, and might not feel so alone and confusing, if we actively sought other believers' counsel.

Experience/Circumstances: (about 5 minutes)
- Has God seemed to arrange circumstances favorably for this decision one way or another?
- Has He seemed to slam doors on it?
- Have you or others done something like this in the past? What was the result?

Pastor's Thoughts on these questions:
Sometimes we discern God's working when we go ahead and take a step forward and the door slams shut. Positive circumstances *aren't* a guarantee that's what God wants us to do. Conversely, negative circumstances aren't assurance God *doesn't* want us to try something. Circumstances can be an aid in making a decision, but they aren't the first test.

Reason: (about 10 minutes)
- Are you a person who relies a lot on reason, logic, and facts?
- Are you a person who rather flies by the seat of your pants?
- What particular warnings should each personality type heed when using reason to make decisions?
- How can we use the other tools with reason to make decisions?
- Have you ever felt God moving you to do something not at all reasonable? What happened?

Pastor's Thoughts on these questions:
Reason is like circumstances. Just because something doesn't make sense doesn't mean it's not what we're meant for. Sometimes God delights in offering us something crazy and seeing what we'll do with it! Other times, He uses the sense He gave us to help guide us into a reasonable choice.

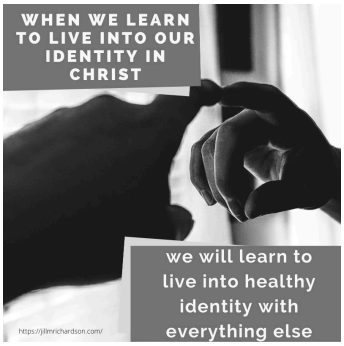
Prayer/Intuition: (about 15 minutes)
- What kind of prayers help us discern God's will?
- How can we combine prayer and the counsel of other to help us?
- Have you ever had a strong intuition that you were supposed to move in one direction or another? What did that feel like? What did you do if you didn't want to make that choice but knew you should?

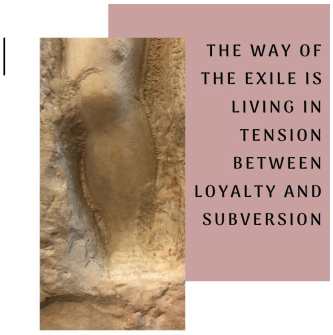
Finally, talk about this sentence:

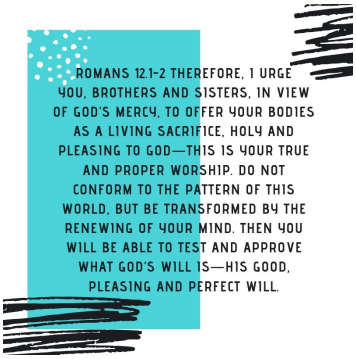
God is more concerned with what He wants you to ***be*** than what He wants you to ***do***.

APPENDIX E

Sample “Big Idea” and other visuals from the fall “How to Do (Almost) Anything” Series







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VITA

Jill Marie Richardson (Hutchinson)
DOB: October 4, 1962, McHenry, Illinois, USA

Education:

Bachelor of Arts in English and Secondary Education, minor in Political Science
Washington University, St. Louis, MO (1980-1984)
Master of Divinity with an emphasis in theology
Senior preaching award and Dean's award for first in class
Bethel Seminary, St. Paul. MN (1991-1995)

Years of Doctor of Ministry Work: 2016-2020
Expected Graduation: May, 2020

Personal Information:

- Pastor at: Real Hope Community Church, Oswego, Illinois (formerly Resolution Church)
- Ordained Elder in the Free Methodist Church
- Married with three daughters
- Author, Speaker, Pastor

Partial List of Publications:

Hobbits, You, and the Spiritual World, Lighthouse Publishing
Don't Forget to Pack the Kids: Short-Term Missions for the Whole Family
Children and Short Term Missions (contributor)
The Christmas Scriptbook (contributor)

Published in:

CT Pastors
Gifted for Leadership
Christians for Biblical Equality
MOPS
A Fine Parent
Etc.