EFFECTIVE EXPOSITORY BIBLICAL PREACHING TO THE UNCHURCHED

A PROJECT REPORT
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
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ABSTRACT

This project sought to discover how to become more effective at connecting with unchurched individuals through expository biblical preaching. The research focused upon the preaching at Gateway Church in Findlay, Ohio. The degree to which the preachers at Gateway Church were connecting with the unchurched had to be determined before realizing what would be necessary to improve.

First, the researcher reviewed the history of Gateway as a congregation. Second, a biblical and theological foundation was laid for expository biblical preaching. Third, insights were gleaned from other preachers and authors. Fourth, research was conducted of Gateway Church.

Five different modes of research were implemented in this process. First, a survey was conducted of all new members who were brought into the church over a one year period. Second, a questionnaire was given to those within the church body to complete and return during the worship services on a particular weekend. Third, sermon evaluations were filled out by a number of previously unchurched persons who are now in attendance at this church. Fourth, informal interviews were conducted with previously unchurched persons who now attend Gateway Church on a regular basis. Fifth, information was gleaned from preachers and authors with experience or expertise in connecting effectively with the unchurched through preaching.
This research led to the following four conclusions: (1) preachers should preach the Word of God with authority, (2) the character of the preacher matters, (3) the unchurched matter to God, and (4) preachers should seek to adapt their messages as necessary in order to connect in an effective manner with the unchurched.

Topics were focused upon within the final section of the project with the following recommendations being proposed: (1) lay a biblical foundation, (2) learn from other preachers, and (3) incorporate communication theory.

The purpose of this study was to learn how to become more adept at communicating Bible truth to an unchurched world and to share the insights that have been gleaned with other preachers who find themselves in contexts similar to that of our congregation.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

When I step into the pulpit at our church to communicate through the preaching of God’s Word on any given weekend there will be persons from both a churched and an unchurched background present in the congregation. “Each new generation becomes increasingly unchurched” (Rainer 2001, 33). About two-thirds of the adults in the United States are unchurched and that figure is even higher among young people (Barna 2002a, 22). The church in the United States finds itself surrounded by culture that is filled with unchurched people.

In recent months, I visited with a number of new attendees to Gateway Church who does not know much at all about Christianity or the Bible. Many of them stated that they did not understand much of what went on during the worship services or about what Christians believe in general, but that they were on a search for answers to the issues they were dealing with in their lives. The reason for their attendance at Gateway rather than other churches seemed to be primarily due to the “relaxed” atmosphere at our services. Our church appeared to them to be a place where they could investigate the Christian faith in a safe and non-threatening environment. Knowing that we have a number of persons in this category attending our services, it is critical that we connect with them and clearly communicate God’s truth each week from the pulpit in an effective manner, for their eternal destiny weighs in the balance.
Am I or any of our pastoral staff clearly communicating to unchurched persons who are present in our congregation during any particular worship service? How can I know that we are being effective at connecting with them? If we are not, what changes need to be made in order to do so?

*Context of the Problem*

The mission of Gateway Church is to connect people to Jesus Christ and to one another. We have been more of a traditional church in our past history, coming from a mainline denomination that did not embrace change very easily. Over the past few years, the leadership of the congregation has been consistently and persistently seeking to make changes in order to position the church so that it reaches out to the non-Christians in our community. My desire, and the desire of our pastoral staff and elders, is to ensure that we are connecting with those who do not yet have a commitment to Christ. The preaching pastors are specifically targeting the preaching and teaching of God's Word as a means through which to reach the unchurched without compromising the truth in any way.

When I first became involved with this congregation (around September 1998) it was a different church with a different name and it was aligned with a different denomination. The main focus of the church leadership at that time, specifically the senior pastor, seemed to be upon Bible preaching and teaching from the pulpit and in the Sunday school classrooms to the "churched" people who were present. I did not find the worship, the small groups, or the Sunday school classes to be successful at connecting unchurched persons to Christ or to the church.

I remember first walking through the doors of the church and I do not recollect anyone greeting me or attempting to welcome me into the flock. I recall how the worship
was rigid and rote; it seemed cold to me. Yet, the service was professional and well organized. However, when Pastor Ben Borsay, the senior pastor, stepped into the pulpit in that church of about 400 in weekly attendance to preach God’s Word, it was as though he was speaking directly to me. I sensed the Lord had touched me in a very special way that first Sunday, as well as the second Sunday, and probably every Sunday since. There was something about God speaking through Reverend Borsay’s teaching of the Holy Scriptures that reached down into the depths of my soul. I believe it was the Holy Spirit supernaturally working in my life to change me and form me into the likeness of Christ. I wondered where the church was headed.

I was extremely hesitant to become part of a church that was a member of a mainline denomination since the denomination as a whole took quite liberal stands, from my perspective, on moral and biblical issues. However, I knew many Christians whom I respected from Winebrenner Theological Seminary and The University of Findlay who attended or were members of this church. As I encountered God each week during the preaching portion of the worship services, I soon discerned that this was where God would have me to be for at least this season of my life, though my plan was to move on to a church where I would serve in ministry in the years ahead.

One day Pastor Ben took me out to lunch just to get to know me. During the conversation he told me that he would be willing to allow me to do my internship with him at the church. I thought this might be a possibility, though I desired to go on staff at another church or to plant a “seeker” church with a pastoral team in Findlay or the surrounding area. I could then encompass my internship into my normal duties at whatever church that might be. However, though I had other opportunities cross my path,
none of them seemed to be the right fit for me. Therefore, I stayed on the staff in admissions at Winebrenner Seminary (where I had been employed since I had begun seminary classes in January 1998) and continued to be active in the life of this congregation.

I eventually called Pastor Ben and asked if I could serve as an intern under his tutelage in the summer of 2000. He was more than willing to work with me and so I served as an intern from May to September 2000. I became a part-time intern at the church and continued to work at Winebrenner Seminary part-time as well. It was an excellent learning experience.

At that time I viewed this congregation as needing to make some significant changes and I did not sense that it was a place where unchurched visitors would feel welcomed. I realize I was young and idealistic, but from my perspective, neither an outreach focus nor a friendly attitude was part of the aura of this congregation. I strongly believed these were necessary in order for the church to connect with the non-Christians and unchurched persons in our community. Nonetheless, I learned a great deal during that summer that I would take with me in the future as I entered into full-time pastoral ministry.

Toward the end of the summer, in a pastoral staff meeting, Pastor Ben told me that the elders voted unanimously to ask me to come on staff at the church in the areas of evangelism and children’s ministry. I was overwhelmed and flattered. At first the church wanted to hire me part-time and have me continue to work at Winebrenner, but I told them I wanted a full-time position and that I did not feel called to serve in children’s ministry.
The leadership of the congregation obliged and allowed me to oversee the areas of evangelism, discipleship, public relations, and adult Christian education as well as preach on a regular basis in order to hone my skills in the pulpit. I saw this as a tremendous opportunity to learn on the job and to help this church reach the non-Christians in our world, which I did not feel we were doing effectively up until this time.

The congregation had relatively few visitors who attended services each weekend and most of them were from a “churched” background. Most persons I met at church had come from another church in the area or had moved to the area recently and had attended some other church from where they had moved. There did not seem to be a dynamic emphasis upon reaching out to the unchurched in our area. All of the ministries, from my view, appeared to seek to attract and minister to the already churched crowd, except for the youth ministry. There appeared to be more of an appeal to speak to the Christian in the pew, especially in preaching and in the adult Sunday school classes, than to the non-Christian, who was coming out of the world. I had a sense that there was a lot of work to do.

During the summer of 2001, not long after I had joined the staff, the national leadership of the denomination to which the church was joined voted to delete the denomination’s “fidelity and chastity” ordination standard that was found in the Book of Order. This action of the national leadership opened the doors for homosexuals and those who were sexually active outside of marriage to be ordained within the denomination (Adams 2001b, 1).

More serious to me than that was that the General Assembly did not support a motion to state that Jesus Christ alone is God’s provision for salvation (Adams, 2001a,
3). These decisions were extremely disheartening to our church and to me personally. My desire to assist in the focus of this church to reach the unchurched took a severe blow. How could a church teach a definite standard, the Word of God, if the denomination to which it was a part did not?

Through a series of events, the congregation left that denomination to join another, more evangelical and theologically conservative group. On Sunday, January 27, 2002, most of the congregation met at the Hancock County Humane Society multi-purpose room and officially became a new church. We formally became part of a different denomination that same Sunday.

Though we were now a different church and the church we left still exists, this was to a great degree the same congregation. But, we were now different in many ways. We were now “outside the box” in the way we could “do church.” It was an exciting, yet scary experience.

We eventually came up with the official name “Gateway Church” and on Sunday, May 5, 2002, we revealed the new name to the congregation. We formed a fresh mission and vision as a reinvigorated congregation. We improved our focus as a church and articulated that focus as follows:

Mission: Gateway Church exists to connect people to Jesus Christ and to one another.

Vision: Our vision is to be a gateway that connects people to Jesus Christ and to one another by:
1. Worship that speaks to the heart, pleases God, and attracts the unchurched.
2. Bible teaching that is practical, relevant, and life-changing.
3. An extraordinary commitment to evangelism.
4. A building plan that inspires the believer and attracts the community.
The following is what Pastor Ben wrote in the weekly newsletter the week following the official announcement to the congregation about our new name:

The name Gateway combines two words Jesus used in describing Himself. In John 10:9, He said, “I am the gate.” He thus proclaimed Himself as the entrance to the green pastures of God’s Kingdom – a great place for sheep.

In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way.” The Greek word translated as “way” is the avenue one must travel. So Jesus is not only the gate, that is the entrance, but He is also the exclusive road the believer must travel. Therefore, the name Gateway speaks of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We now had a new name, new mission, new vision, and new work from God Almighty. Yet, we still seemed to be a church that was speaking mostly to Christians and not enough to non-Christians. Our goal was through God’s leading, to overcome that trend in order to be faithful to the Great Commission which calls us to, “Go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19).

In the early fall of 2004, I visited Winebrenner Seminary and stopped by the office of Dr. Steve Sherman, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics. I wanted to greet him and speak with him briefly about my desire to write my doctoral project on preaching to the next generation. I had heard that Dr. Sherman had a passion to reach the lost for Christ. He had attended the Chapel, which was known as a growing church that has reached many for Christ and is where Chuck Smith serves as senior pastor. Knowing this information and that Steve’s Ph.D. was in theology, I thought he could give me some immediate wisdom and possibly be a resource.

I informed him that I had been researching the perspectives of authors such as Dan Kimball, who wrote The Emerging Church (2003), and Leonard Sweet, who wrote Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World (2000). I had
seen Steve at one of our weekend worship services a few weeks before. He relayed to me that the service he observed at Gateway Church was a modern service.

I let him know I understood what he was saying and that Gateway had come from a very traditional background as a congregation. The church had been a member of a mainline denomination, which has been very liturgical, traditional, and modern in its approaches to ministry.

He believed that through my research, I would find that the spiritual giftedness of the minister impacts how he or she connects with any generation. God miraculously gives the ability to some preachers to communicate to all ages and generations. Sometimes we attempt to reach people through the implementation of methods, but God calls people to himself in spite of our imperfect approaches. The power of God’s Word, through the Holy Spirit, supernaturally opens the minds of all people to the truth of God’s saving grace which only comes by having a born again experience through Jesus Christ. It is not the method or the words of the pastor, but through the Spirit of God working in the life of a person so that he or she comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

I believe I have kept Dr. Sherman’s wise words in mind as I approached this research project. I believe I have been called and am gifted by God’s Spirit to preach His Word. My desire was for myself and Gateway Church to become even more adept at connecting with the unchurched in our community. We have sought to make strides to that end.

We have had the following statement in our weekly bulletin for the past few years:
Who Are We?

If you are a newcomer, you probably have many questions about our church. We are unique. We are different. We are not the average neighborhood church. We are a “new” church with some very old fashioned convictions. We believe the Bible is the Word of God. We believe that God is still in the business of changing lives. We believe that God has a wonderful plan for your life. We believe in miracles. And we believe in eternal life, with two possibilities. So we are passionate in loving people into a personal and forever relationship with Jesus Christ.

We also believe that the good news should be presented in ways that are practical, inspirational and exciting. If we sound like your kind of church, please join us as we seek to be fully devoted followers of Jesus. If you want to know more, check us out on our web site (www.gatewayepc.org), call our church office (419-423-5947), or talk to one of our leaders today.

And because we believe in the power of prayer, please know that our elders are always available to pray with you. After worship, come to the pulpit area and someone will talk with you and pray with you – whatever the need may be.

I believe this is an accurate statement about who our church is. We are a church that is now more friendly and accepting. Our people are more willing to invite their friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances to our services. Many new people, a number of them brand new Christians directly through the impact of congregants of Gateway Church, make comments about how they were welcomed in a warm and loving way when they first attended. Newer people have noted how the Gateway people made them feel accepted and comfortable no matter who the visitors were. Though this is a reality in the church, we still preach what I would characterize as sermons geared toward the Christian mindset.

When Erwin McManus (2001) visited some famous churches, he took note of how Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Valley Community Church had people continuing to bring in their seeker friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances even though the churches have existed on this basis for decades. He noted that a church must continue to be an organism that reproduces or that church will die.
With no seekers to which to preach and speak, there is no seeker church. The same is true for Gateway Church even though we are not in the truest sense a “seeker” church. We need to continue to bring in the new generations so that we may preach to them the Good News of Jesus. And we need to speak to their world in appropriate and effective ways that change their lives through the work of God’s Word and the Holy Spirit.

Statement of the Problem

The people who make up our congregation have been increasingly faithful at investing in and inviting to church and to Christ unchurched persons and non-Christians in their sphere of influence. I believe that it is our duty as preachers to connect the Word of God with the world of those who are unchurched and have had little to no church background who attend our worship services. Haddon Robinson stated that we are to be “preaching an ancient text in a contemporary context” (2001).

It may seem simple: preach the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to do the real work of changing the hearts of those who listen. This should be the focus of every biblical preacher. Why should he or she even be concerned about how the audience views the world? Because we are to be co-laborers with Christ in an endeavor to *matheteusate* or to “make disciples” who reflect Christ (Matt. 28:19). As the Apostle Paul stated it, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (1 Cor. 9:22b NIV).

As I have perceived God’s calling on each Christian through the lens of Scripture, it is to reach out to the spiritually lost and help facilitate their growth in the knowledge and wisdom of God. The wisdom of God infers the knowledge, understanding, and practical application of the truths of God found in his Word. So, we must quickly realize
that any way in which we are attempting to do this means it will take intentionality. It is
the same in preaching to the unchurched and non-Christians as well to those who are
already Christians. What are the characteristics of the non-Christians with little or no
biblical knowledge? What are the characteristics of a message that will best reach them?

As a preacher at Gateway Church, it can be easy to slip into the mold of
“preaching to the choir.” Not that it is wrong to challenge and grow the believer, for that
is certainly a part of “making disciples,” but we should not neglect striving to reach the
spiritually lost with the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. And we need to
realize that we are speaking to a number of persons who have little to no understanding of
the Christian faith in our congregation. They do not generally see the world through the
lens of Scripture. They do not all perceive the Bible as THE authoritative truth in our
world.

In our day and age, “Spirituality is in. But attempting to reach postmoderns must
be done wisely, understanding them and communicating Christ in a manner that is clear
and satisfying” (Drummond 2002, 27). The same is true of any generation or people as
we approach reaching our community with a missionary mindset. It is our responsibility
as leaders and preachers in seeking to fulfill our role in making disciples of Christ.

Simply stated: What needs to change in the preaching in our ministry setting in
order to connect in a more effective manner with those who are unchurched?

**Purpose of the Study**

It has been the purpose of this study to determine what content, methods, and
practices in the preaching in our ministry setting need to be changed in order to connect
in a more effective manner with unchurched persons. There certainly has not only been
one simple solution to ensure one connects with the unchurched, for "there is no single model for the emerging church" (Kimball 2003, 14) or any church of the future. However, there have been numerous sources from where one could acquire insights, wisdom, and knowledge concerning this issue. There were a number of tools available to utilize and many persons from whom I could gain a greater understanding in this area of preaching.

I am sure there are many preachers who have been dealing with this same struggle in their congregations. The purpose of this study has been to learn how to become more adept at communicating Bible truth to an unchurched world and to share the insights that have been gleaned with other preachers who find themselves in contexts similar to that of our congregation.

Research Methodology

The research method utilized for this project was qualitative in nature. Research was conducted by collecting data through recording observations, surveying new members, having those in the congregation complete a questionnaire, conducting sermon evaluations, searching for biblical and theological truths in scripture and in history, and through seeking the insights of authors and preachers of the past and in our contemporary culture.

To find out to what degree this church was reaching the unchurched, surveys were conducted of all incoming new members over a one year period. As well, there was a questionnaire which was given during all of the worship services on a particular weekend. This questionnaire also helped glean information about who the previously
unchurched were and to know how the preachers were doing at connecting with this group of people.

I first sought to note the distinctive characteristics of how unchurched individuals think and what they believe. This was the basis for understanding the difference between a biblical perspective and that of an unchurched person.

In addition to my own observations, a total of twenty-two persons were asked to conduct sermon evaluations over a four month period. These individuals were unchurched before attending this congregation. There were an equal number of male and female persons who were asked to participate in this study. These individuals had not attended church on a regular basis for a minimum of two years and some of them came to faith in Christ through the ministry of our church.

To a great degree, I searched from the wisdom of the Bible and other authors, both from history and in our contemporary world for insights into this topic. There were many sources from where to find insight and wisdom in the Christian and secular communities.

The ethnographic research method was employed in this process. This procedure was described by Myers (2000) as follows:

The ethnographic research method sets out to describe what can be seen by someone (usually described as an “outsider”) who wants to understand what is going on within a culture or subculture...In such research the researcher becomes a “participant/observer,” i.e., the researcher steps into the culture as someone from outside the culture who nevertheless is attempting to uncover that culture’s meaning. (28)

It was critical to understand the unchurched “culture” I was seeking to reach in order to connect with them. A preacher should investigate the culture to which he or she desires to speak. The goal was to become more effective over time, realizing that the
culture inside and outside of the church was and is in constant flux. Therefore, the preacher should always be willing to adjust in order to speak to that culture in a relevant and impacting manner.

In many ways, I was an outsider when it came to the unchurched world. I came from a conservative Christian background where I was trained to view the world in a clear cut manner, where there were definitive boundaries of right and wrong, and where I was taught that there was one way to God, that being Jesus Christ, and one standard by which to measure one's life, that being God's Holy Word.

In other ways, I have been influenced by the secular world. I have been open to more perspectives on varying issues than I believe my grandparents were. I have learned much about other cultures and have visited other countries more than my ancestors did. The world has become "smaller" in recent times, especially with the cheaper cost of travel and with the amazing capacity to search the internet for information and to utilize it for a means of inexpensive communication.

Understanding where the unchurched persons are and the degree to which I have been connecting with those persons has given me insight into that which needs to change. It has been a necessary endeavor so that I am better able to reach them. This has been the whole goal of this method of research: to understand unchurched individuals in our community and how to best relate to them in preaching in order to have a positive effect upon them for the kingdom of God.
Research Questions

The primary focus of this research was to determine what steps should be taken in order to ensure effective communication of the Bible with the previously unchurched who attend Gateway Church. The four primary research questions are as follows:

1. To what degree do previously unchurched persons attend our church?

2. What are the distinctive characteristics of the unchurched in our ministry setting?

3. How good are we doing currently at connecting with the previously unchurched in our ministry setting?

4. What are the characteristics of a message that will best reach unchurched persons in our ministry setting?

Question number one (RQ1) looked at the percentage of those who were previously unchurched before attending our church on a regular basis to the total attendance. This was important to see to what degree have we connected with those who have not been attending a church on a regular basis in the past two years or more before coming to be part of our congregation on a regular basis.

Question number two (RQ2) sought to find out what the distinctive characteristics have been of the unchurched in our community. The goal was to distinguish unique traits of the unchurched that come to be part of our congregation.

Question number three (RQ3) addressed my current effectiveness in connecting with the unchurched within our ministry setting. What in the preaching has been attractive and connective to the previously unchurched? Since the goal of this project was to connect as much as possible with the unchurched in our congregation, it was necessary to begin with an understanding of where I currently am in this process.
Finally, question number four (RQ4) dealt with discovering the characteristics of a message that would best engage an unchurched person. It was critical to discover those specific distinctives that connect with a person who had not been attending church and engaging with a Christian community or the proclamation of the gospel on a regular basis for an extended period of time, or for some, ever.

Significance of the Study

This study has impacted me, the other preachers at Gateway Church, and Bible preachers in churches where the leaders have sought to connect with the unchurched world through the communication of the Word of God. This investigation has assisted me in knowing if I have been reaching out to the previously unchurched and the unchurched persons who have been sitting in the audience of Gateway Church. It has helped me to understand the mindset of the secular world around me and how to connect with them when preaching the truths found in Scripture.

This research has also aided others who preach in the pulpit at Gateway Church. This study has helped to give insight into methods and means through which to understand the mindset of those who have been unchurched and to open their minds, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to the areas of their lives where they have veered off the biblical path. Also, other preachers in the western world who have desired to proclaim the truth of God’s Holy Word can glean from this study ways in which they can become more adept at connecting with the unchurched world around them.
Assumptions and Limitations

The first assumption was that the preaching of God’s Word is the primary way in which the Holy Spirit works in order to change the hearts and minds of human beings. For as scripture states,

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Rom. 10:14-17 NIV, italics mine)

If preaching the Bible is not the primary way in which to reach non-Christians with the Good News of Jesus Christ, then this endeavor is not all that significant for me or anyone else.

A second assumption was that there is a problem. To say that I am not currently being as effective as I should be at communicating the truth of Scripture through expository biblical preaching to the unchurched person and/or to the non-Christian is a judgment from my own subjective observations and perspectives. I perceive there to be a difference in the approach in preaching to non-Christians than to Christians and I believe I am not as effective as I could be at connecting with those who do not have a churched background.

Thirdly, the assumption has been made that there are answers to the problem. This study begins with the premise that there are insights and resources that will assist me and others in the delivery of expository biblical messages that will connect in a deeper way with those persons who are not Christians. The beginning point of this research is the belief that answers exist to the questions and problem proposed.
A fourth assumption was that the solution to the problem could be found. This study began with the premise that the answers to the problems that have been articulated could be discovered through research. There was a presupposition that there was information and resources available that can be tapped into in order to discover the answers to the research questions proposed and the stated problem.

The fifth assumption was that the other pastoral staff would engage in this process. Currently, the senior pastor and I preach most of the sermons at Gateway Church. In fact, we bring the messages about ninety-five percent of the time. The senior pastor will be taking the information gleaned from this research and implementing the ideas into his preaching as well. If I alone utilize the insights discovered through this study, this endeavor will not be as useful or beneficial to the non-Christian who attends Gateway Church as it could be. All of those who preach at Gateway would need to implement the findings discovered through this research for this to be as valuable as possible.

The sixth and final assumption was that effective expository biblical preaching would connect with some of the unchurched persons who do not know Christ as savior to the point that it would result in conversions to Christianity. As well, it was assumed that the unchurched who have become stagnant in their walk with Christ will, through relevant expository biblical preaching, experience increased connectedness to Christ and growth.

The first limitation was that the problem was focused upon preaching and did not encompass all aspects of the ministries within our local church setting. To assume that by simply changing the preaching there would be instant success in connecting with those
who were unchurched would be quite naïve. However, it would not be practical to attempt to look at every aspect of the ministries of Gateway Church and where changes need to be made in order to become more effective at reaching out to and connecting with the unchurched persons in our society and congregation in one paper. Writing a research project that broad would be too laborious. However, there was a necessity to hold to a “whole package” approach within the leadership of Gateway Church.

As the research enlightened us concerning the areas within preaching that need to be adjusted in order to reach out to those who do not have a church connection, there would certainly be ideas that could be incorporated into other areas of ministry in the church. In order to be the most effective in communicating the truth of the Bible, the church must move forward with the implementation of these ideas and discoveries to every area of ministry within Gateway Church.

The second limitation was the realization that some of the approaches that would be discovered as a result of this study would most likely only be temporary in nature since culture is in constant flux. Every decade or so, the cultural characteristics transition into something different. Therefore, the same would almost certainly be the case here as well.

Definitions of Terms

1. *Churched* – a person who has been attending church at least once a month. (based upon CedarCreek Church’s *Future Planning Survey 2005*)


3. *Expository preaching* – “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, literary study of a passage in its
context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers" (Robinson 1980, 30).

4. Modernism – “the essence of modernity, its essential worldview, advocates the epistemological principle that truth and reality can be discerned primarily by the five senses and through rationalism.” (Drummond 2002, 16)

5. Postmodernism – The postmodern would believe that “there are no pure objectives or absolutes. Truth is relative to the individual. Morals, ethics, and other propositions are relative to one’s own opinion and interpretation. God and faith, therefore, are relative. All is relative, even objective good.” (Drummond 2002, 22)

6. Unchurched – a person who has been attending church less than once a month. (based upon CedarCreek Church's Future Planning Survey 2005)

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into six chapters with the following titles:

Chapter One: Introduction to the Project

Chapter Two: Biblical and Theological Foundations

Chapter Three: Review of Literature and Other Sources

Chapter Four: Research Methodology and Procedures

Chapter Five: Analysis of Data

Chapter Six: Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

Chapter One provided a statement concerning what the specific problem was and the context in which the problem existed. It also introduced the reason for the study. The methodology and research questions and their purposes were presented. An attempt to estimate the significance of the study and a list of the assumptions and limitations were brought by the author to this study. The terms that had been given a definitive meaning within this study and that needed to be understood in order to comprehend the material
and findings within this study were offered. There was an overview of the study’s organization provided within Chapter One.

Chapter Two established the biblical and theological foundations, which were used to address the stated problem. The command in Scripture to, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction.” (2 Timothy 4:2 NIV) set the stage for a preacher’s role in connecting with the unchurched. From this biblical perspective, the proclaiming of God’s truth could be presented to the mindset of an unchurched person. Personal reflection, experience and observation were developed as a critical part of this study.

Chapter Three addressed other sources that were utilized in seeking to solve the problem. The sources were made up of literature, dialogue with other preachers, interviews of unchurched and previously unchurched persons, and other sources that spoke to the purpose of the study. There was a plethora of insights to be gained from these other perspectives, Christian and non-Christian in nature.

Chapter Four discussed the research that was covered in the study. The topics addressed in this chapter included the development, utilization, and compilation of a questionnaire, as well as the creation, distribution, and tabulation of a survey. Also noted were the other research methods that were used. Finally, the basis for the selection of individuals who were profiled for the survey and questionnaire were presented, including the qualitative data from the interviews.

Chapter Five presented the analysis and personal reflection on all of the research data. The analysis would focus on answering the research questions and addressing through the research data the stated purpose. The personal reflection would focus upon
the implementation of the theological, spiritual, and practical implications that were
discovered from the interpretation of the data.

Chapter Six summarized the findings of the study and the recommended
application in order to rectify the stated problem. The ability of a contemporary preacher
to communicate in an effective manner the truth of scripture through expository biblical
preaching to the unchurched person was the focus of this project. The purpose of this
research was to discover the manner in which to accomplish this task in a specific
contemporary setting.
CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

As I approached the biblical and theological foundations for preaching to the unchurched person, I had to begin with Scripture as the standard and central focus. Certainly I have used other insights from theologians, pastors and other experts, but the main source is the Bible in this search. I settled on three main texts to develop as fundamental to the preacher as it applies to proclaiming God’s truth effectively to the mindset of the unchurched in the world:

1. The Role of the Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
2. The Role of Preaching (2 Tim. 4:2)
3. The Role of the Preacher (1 Cor. 9:22)

The Role of the Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Any theological foundation must be laid upon the solid base of God’s Word. The Apostle Paul wrote to his spiritual son Timothy that, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17 NIV). The beginning point from which to start any search of how to effectively reach any people group should be the Word of God.

The Greek term theopneustos is a compound word from theos (God) and pneustos (breath or spirit). This term indicates that Scripture is being communicated through the
sovereign work of God by His authority. This is brought about through the Spirit of God. This means, in essence and being, that the words of God found in the Bible are inspired by the Lord himself.

This implies that God himself personally inspired the very words that the authors penned. He blew with his life-giving breath upon the prophets who wrote down the words of life upon the pages of the Bible. All Scripture can be used for gaining the wisdom of God (Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972, 120).

The term theopneustos is found with the passive adjective ending (-tos) which indicates Scripture was acted upon by God. It was not the writings of Scripture which was the actor, nor was the authors. God himself was the One who acted through the authors to write the Word. With God lies the living power to bring about change in the lives of those who encounter his Word.

These Scriptures are God-breathed and are to be taken seriously. In 2 Timothy 2:15 the Scriptures are called "holy," which means "sacred." There is a parallel in verse 16 telling us that the Scriptures are "God-inspired" or "God-breathed." The Word of God is to be treated as though God himself is speaking to us. We need to approach the Bible with reverence and yet with a faith that what it says is true and reliable.

God chose to use human beings to communicate his truth through the ages. But what they have written was not based upon human reason or wisdom, but through the Holy Spirit. "This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13 NIV).
Since Scripture is “God-breathed,” the words within it are filled with life-giving words. The Bible is not like any other book in the world. The writer of the book of Hebrews stated, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb. 4:12 NIV). Other books may be entertaining and even very helpful, but no other book is literally alive as is the Word of God.

Concerning 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “the emphasis of the passage doubtless lies, not on the concept of inspiration, but on the usefulness of the inspired scriptures” (Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972, 120). Within God’s Word we can find everything we need in order to do good works and to train others to do the same. The Scriptures are useful. They are not just abstract philosophies or wisdom. The words can be taken literally and applied to life to have an eternal effect. Utilizing the Bible in order to be changed so that good works are the result brings glory to God.

Though the term used for “Scripture” (graphe) in 2 Timothy 3:16 can refer to any type of “writing,” in this context we can be quite certain it is referring to at least the Old Testament scriptures. The term is used forty-nine times in the New Testament and clearly refers to the Old Testament as a whole. At the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy, “Scripture” would have consisted of what we now call the Old Testament (probably the thirty-nine books we now consider the canon of the Hebrew Bible) because the New Testament had not yet been canonized. Yet within the context of 2 Timothy 3:16, especially in light of 2 Timothy 4:2 which is only a few verses later, Paul is challenging Timothy to “[p]reach the Word.”
In totality, Paul is calling Timothy to proclaim the truth of the Old Testament assuming that he would do so in light of the gospel. The gospel message could have meant to Paul the oral proclamation and possibly written parts that may have been disseminated by this time. Though the New Testament had not yet become canon when this epistle was being written, the Holy Spirit was, even at the moment Paul’s hand was placing the ink on the parchment, bringing the New Testament into being as Scripture equal with the Old Testament.

I seriously doubt that Paul or any of the other writers of the New Testament ever thought that their writings would become part of God’s Holy Word. Yet, one must realize that:

[since] the early church viewed the words of Jesus as fully authoritative, it would not have been a large step for the early Christians to accept the writings of his apostles as equally authoritative with the Old Testament (Mounce 2000, 568).

By 100 A.D., all of the twenty-seven books in what we now call the New Testament were being circulated among Christian churches (Strobel and Poole 2006, 43). Knowing that God used ordinary people who were sinful and flaw-filled like the rest of us, bears witness to the amazing power of God. This should encourage us to know that if God used the writers of the Old and New Testaments to convey his Word, then he can also use us for his divine purposes in preaching and teaching his Word.

“The very existence of the New Testament as the Scriptures speaks strongly...about God’s remarkable way of using very ordinary people” (Demarest 1984, 282). God took regular people to communicate his love to us. The Bible is unique compared to all other writings throughout the centuries. The only books that have real
benefit "for a man's soul were the God-inspired ones" (Barclay 1975, 199). These consist only of the books which make up the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Scripture is the standard by which a follower of Christ must measure all actions and motivations. And the Word of God contains a power like no other. It has the power to show a person the way to salvation. The Scriptures "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15b NIV). They are useful to teach, rebuke, correct and train in righteousness.

What is the purpose of all of this? It is "so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17 NIV). What does it mean to be "thoroughly equipped for every good work"? It is not enough to develop an articulate systematic theology based upon God's Word. It is imperative that our study and reflection lead to good works.

The study of the Scriptures must never be selfish, never simply for the good of a man's own soul. Any conversion which makes a man think of nothing but the fact that he has been saved is not true conversion. He must study the Scriptures to make himself useful to God and to his fellow-men. (Barclay 1975, 202)

This is God's purpose in providing us with Scripture and why we preach the Bible to an audience of both Christians and non-Christians.

In 2 Timothy 3:17, "(t)he emphasis is on the sufficiency of Scripture to provide the knowledge and direction for Timothy's ministry" (Mounce 2000, 571). It was more than enough to provide for Timothy and for those to whom Timothy was ministering. The term which is used for "perfect" in verse 17 is artios in the Greek and it means "thorough, complete, capable, proficient, able to meet all demands:-perfect" (Strong 2001, 1503). So, it was certainly sufficient to empower Timothy and those to whom he was ministering, but Scripture is also capable to endow the leaders of the Christian
church today with what they need to live godly lives, to feed the souls of those in their care, and to tend to the flocks they lead. God’s Word does not change or lose its power over time. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8 NIV).

“Bible learning” encompasses much more than just a cognitive understanding of what content is in the Bible. Bible learning is a continual learning process by which one learns who the Author of the Bible is. It involves knowing in one’s mind and by one’s will what is the Word of God and what that means to the individual. Grasping to what the Scriptures call one is paramount. One must know the Word and trust that the Word is truth. One is changed by knowing the Bible. One becomes a different person in character and action when that person submits to the Scriptures.

_Pisteuo_ is the Greek word for “believe.” John 3:16 (NIV) states that, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” I used to adhere to, without even realizing it at the time, what I would call “easy believism.” This view pervades much of the Christian community today. I assumed that if one just believed Jesus was the Messiah, then that person would get to go to heaven when he or she died or at Jesus’ second coming. James challenges us by stating, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder” (James 2:19 NIV). However, I have come to realize that this word “believe” in the Greek means much more than a cognitive understanding that Jesus was and is a historical reality. This word “believe” gives the understanding that one who decided to entrust his or her soul and spiritual life to Christ would go to heaven. In other words, an individual must place the trust for the destiny of his or her eternal soul in the hands of the risen Christ.
Upon the realization that they have placed the destiny of their souls in the hands of Jesus, they will begin to change. They no longer have their own lives, their lives now become his. Those who have done this are then changed because they “have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Col. 3:10 NIV). And when their minds are renewed, their actions can not help but follow suit. James asks, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him” (James 2:14 NIV). The measure of whether or not they have faith is whether or not it is accompanied by deeds. “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself” (James 2:17 NASB).

Paul “is interested in what the Scriptures do, not in what they are” (Demarest 1984, 283). What does Demarest mean by this statement? The Apostle Paul said in another place in Scripture that, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice” (Phil. 4:9 NIV). One is not to just learn God’s Word, but is to live God’s Word. One is not to argue about a specific truth, but to put into action the truth that is alive and active and that which can change lives, heal the sick, raise the dead and save souls. As Jesus lived and breathed when he walked on this earth, so is the Word of God written alive and active for those who engage with it (Heb. 4:12). “The entirety of Scripture comes from the mouth of God. To read it is to hear him speak. It is therefore true, and it can therefore be trusted” (Mounce 2000, 570).

Bible learning is clearly life-transforming and therefore should be central in the life of every Christian, every church and the goal for the congregation of every preacher. The understanding of and wisdom gained from Scripture “makes the leader of the congregation fit for the fight against the false teaching” (Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972,
120). The Word of God is the standard by which to measure all truth with real meaning (*telrions*). Teaching, preaching and the study of the Holy Scriptures is necessary for the one who is growing into Christlikeness so that he or she can be instrumental in helping others become fully-devoted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. To this endeavor every pastor needs to be committed.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "Paul is calling Timothy to loyalty and perserverance in his proclamation of the true gospel" (Mounce 2000, 565). Timothy can be assured of the empowerment and ability to proclaim the gospel because it is literally from the mouth of God. Scripture, though written by human hands, is not based upon the will of a human.

For the Bible states that,

> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:20-21 NIV)

And though 2 Timothy is an epistle written in a particular context from the Apostle Paul to Timothy, it is applicable beyond that setting. In this particular situation, Paul is addressing a young pastor at a young church in the city of Ephesus. But, the message in this epistle is to all churches and all pastors in every location for all time. This information is reliable and powerful beyond just this specific circumstance.

Though certainly I am searching for ideas, concepts and approaches in this paper in order to reach the unchurched in our world, we need to realize that the Bible does not change. Concerning pastors and preachers,

> (t)he call is not to develop something new or different, but to be faithful to the things we have received. In the midst of much needed calls for church renewal, we must ever guard against seeking renewal merely through novel innovations. (Demarest 1984, 282)
Some things do change, but one must remember that God and his Word do not. Jesus is the Incarnate Word of God and the Scriptures are the written Word of God. Truth contained in the person of Jesus Christ and within the Bible will never change. This reality can be relied upon for all eternity. This being the case, we must not seek to change methods so that the method becomes the magic. The method is not the magic; the Messiah is the change-agent in the lives of individuals.

There is a parallel between Jesus and the written Word. Both of them are mysterious in how God brought them into the world. How did the Father bring about the God Incarnate? How was Jesus both human and divine? Then again, how was God’s written Word brought about through human hands that were not perfect, yet the Word is perfect? We will never fully grasp these mysteries until glory, but we can rest in the fact that the written Word and Incarnate Word are alive, perfect, reliable and powerful beyond human comprehension. So, as we seek to reach the unchurched, we need to do so with the use of the written Word.

Equipping Christians to fulfill God’s divine plan is “the ultimate purpose of Scripture’s inspiration” (Mounce 2000, 570). This is critical to understand when one is dealing with any person when preaching from the pulpit, whether one is proclaiming God’s truth to a Christian or non-Christian. The Bible says, “so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:11 NIV). And God does not just use a handful of passages, he utilizes the whole canon of Scripture:

...wherever you are preaching from in the Word of God, you need to remind yourself that God is pleased to use His [sic] whole Word toward the salvation of sinners. (Alexander 2002, 229)
We can trust that the proclaiming of God’s Word will not return void or empty. It will accomplish that for which God intended it. Sometimes we think we need to be perfect and to know everything for God to use us, but that is not the case at all. Look at Moses and Peter just to name a few. They were both timid and seemingly faithless at times (Ex. 4:1 and Matt. 26:69-75), yet God used them in mighty ways to fulfill His plan of salvation.

*The Role of Preaching (2 Timothy 4:2)*

A preacher is in essence serving in the role of a prophet for God. As Zacharius Ursinus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, noted:

A prophet is one who speaks for God, an authoritative teacher of God’s will, who serves as a channel of communication between the divine and human spheres, so as to bring to light what had remained in darkness. (as noted in Oden 1998, 286)

Through a human messenger, in the Hebrew a *nabi* or in the Greek a *prophetes*, God’s will and way is communicated. This has been God’s chosen means through which to reach the unchurched.

**Monological versus Dialogical**

Monological communication is in essence one-way. The speaker speaks and the listener listens. In dialogical communication, there is interaction. The monologue method of interaction tends toward a lecture while dialogue consists of some level of relationship where there is give and take.

Young people who have graduated from high school and enter college have very little understanding of dialogue. In fact, they tend to enter college “with limited understanding of using writing for discussion” (Morgan 2000). They tend to be more
inclined to share their knowledge to argue why their view is right rather than striving to learn about another’s point of view.

_Dialogical Culture_

The current western culture tends to be more attracted to a dialogical approach than a monological one when it comes to communication. Some scholars engaged in communication ethics claim that

dialogical speakers value authenticity, honesty, inclusiveness, and openness. They try to take listeners’ perspectives and responses seriously. In contrast, monological speakers impose their agendas, hide their motives, and discount the needs of the audience. (Jaffe 2004, 42)

Ross Langmead, the Director of the School of World Mission in Melbourne, Australia, stated that he has been preached at with the intention of converting him to a non-Christian’s religion and noted that it was a tremendous turnoff. So, when sharing the Christian faith, it should be done with “mutuality, reciprocity, openness and respect” (2004).

Langmead also wrote that dialogue can be broadly stated as

...conversation that is respectful and open. It gets beyond surface matters. We bring to it our core beliefs. But we also listen in love. And both conversation partners are open to being changed by the encounter. (2004)

_Keruxon_

Dialogical communication needs to be considered and even utilized when connecting with the unchurched person. And there should be a significant place for it in the church, but there is still a place for monological communication. The Bible speaks of “preaching” God’s Word. The Greek word _keruxon_ and the parallel Hebrew term _nataph_
denote “preach” in the sense of proclaiming a message. In the biblical context that would mean to speak forth God’s message.

Certainly God has used “preachers” to interact with people where we in today’s terms would call it dialogical. It was present in the biblical account of Jesus meeting the woman at the well (John 4:1-42) and Paul’s encounter with the Athenians (Acts 17:16-34). But for the most part in the Bible, God has called on individuals to monologically communicate His message to a people. His truth has stayed the same throughout the ages and the Lord still today calls preachers to proclaim His truth in love.

New Testament Preachers

The Lord utilized preaching as the way to grow the New Testament church. First of all, Jesus himself constantly preached during his ministry. Jesus came to this earth to preach (Mark 1:38). As well, Peter, Paul, the disciples and other followers preached in order to share the Good News Jesus came to proclaim.

The first assumption in approaching this topic on preaching to the unchurched begins with the premise that the preaching of God’s Word is the primary way in which the Holy Spirit works in order to change the hearts and minds of human beings. Feeding the congregation spiritual food should be the top priority of pastors. Luther, Calvin and Zwingli all attested that preaching should be “the chief pastoral act” (Willimon 2002, 141).

The command in Scripture to, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction.” (2 Tim. 4:2 NIV) sets the stage for what a preacher’s role is in connecting with the unchurched person. This verse sets the standard for what a pastor is to do.
There is an implied urgency in this passage. The benefit of spiritual life and consequence of spiritual death hangs in the balance. Paul is making this plea toward the end of his life, possibly not long before his eventual beheading. One can sense the passion and conviction in his writing. If a father was on his deathbed, what would he communicate to his child, in this instance to his spiritual son?

He would let his son know what he believed to be the most important task in this young pastor’s life. In this case, that was *keruxon ton logon* or “preach the Word.” The Greek word, *keruxon* is an imperative, which again means that there is no option; this is a command and a serious challenge. Paul noted in the previous verse (2 Tim. 4:1) that the reason Timothy should be diligent at this task was because Christ “will judge the living and the dead.” That would have been a sobering thought in two ways.

One was that Timothy knew the consequence for those who do not turn to Christ would be eternal separation from God in a real place which the Bible calls hell (Rev. 20:11-15). Therefore, it was critically important that Timothy be diligent at the task for the sake of those to whom he ministered. Timothy needed to have the heart of Jesus, for as Jesus stated it, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world” (John 17:24 NIV). Jesus loved others, therefore Timothy should love others in the same way.

Secondly, when Timothy approached preaching, he had to ensure he was doing so in accordance with God’s will. His teaching should not be based upon his own thoughts and feelings or upon the views of the carnal world, but he was to proclaim the very words of the Lord. Timothy was being told that he would be held accountable one day for the
manner in which he preached and the content of that which he proclaimed as truth (2 Cor. 5:9-10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15).

Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, believed proclaiming God’s truth should be the main task for this young pastor. I believe the same should be the case for all pastors from then until now and for all future preachers. The Apostle Paul noted that Timothy needs to *episteme* or “be prepared.” This contained “the idea of standing by, taking a position of readiness” (Liefield 1999, 287). The term literally means “to approach, come near, stand beside, stop; to be imminent, at hand” (Strong 2001, 1502). In some of the English translations the phrase was translated as “be instant” (KJV), “be ready” (NKJV) and “be persistent” (NLT).

Once again, this word *episteme*, was an imperative. It was communicating that this was not a suggestion, but a command. Timothy must do this in order to be obedient to God in his calling as a pastor. This communicated the seriousness with which Timothy was to take this information.

When pastors consider to what they are called and the areas in which they are to invest their time, energy and talents, Spirit-led biblical preaching must be at the forefront of their hearts and minds. “Among all the things that demand our time and energy, nothing is to have higher priority than preaching the Word, be it from the pulpit or in a conversation in the company cafeteria” (Demarest 1984, 286).

The term *keruxon* or “preach” in this context means literally “to proclaim” or “make known.” It was what the town-crier did. He would state what the ruler commanded him to proclaim. But the proclamation of a preacher should be done with passion, not in a disinterested or indifferent manner. And once again, Paul used the imperative form of this
verb. It was a statement which expressed to Timothy that there was no other choice other
than to proclaim God’s truth all of the time wherever he was. This was to be the top
priority for pastors.

The term logos or “word” meant “something said,” “message,” or “teaching.” In
this particular context, this statement was speaking about the Word of God. It was not
including any words that were communicated, but what God had stated through his
written Word. In other contexts, such as 1 Timothy 5:17, a form of logos meant
“preaching” the Word itself.

Look at these other New Testament passages of Scripture where the Greek term
keruxon is translated as “preach”: Matthew 4:17, 10:7; Mark 1:38, 3:14, 16:15; Luke
4:18-19; and Acts 10:42. As one reads the context of the term keruxon, that person sees
that the reason for Christ coming to this earth was to preach the Good News of salvation.
He then commissions His disciples and any future disciples to do the same. We are to
proclaim the gospel to the entire world. Through this method God has chosen to grow His
Kingdom until Jesus comes again.

After Jesus’ life on earth, the book of Acts sets the stage for Christ’s followers to
preach the Good News to the unchurched. According to Marion Soards’ (1994, 21-22)
research, there are thirty-six speeches in the book of Acts:

1. The words of the risen Jesus and the angels to the apostles (1:4b-5, 7-8, 11)
2. Peter’s speech and the disciples’ prayer prior to the enrollment of Matthias
   (1:16-22, 24b-25)
3. Peter’s speech at Pentecost (2:14b-36, 38-39, 40b)
4. Peter’s speech in Solomon’s portico of the Temple (3:12-26)
5. Peter’s speech to the Jewish authorities after his and John’s arrest (4:8b-12,
   19b-20)
6. The prayer of the apostles’ and their friends (4:24b-30)
7. The speech of Peter and the apostles to the council (5:29b-32)
8. Gamaliel’s speech to the council (5:35b-39)
9. The speech by the Twelve prior to the appointment of the Seven (6:2b-4)
10. Stephen’s speech (7:2-53, 56, 59b, 60b)
11. Peter’s speech in Cornelius’s house (10:28b-29, 34b-43, 47)
12. Peter’s speech to the circumcision party (11:5-17)
13. Paul’s speech at Antioch of Pisidia (15:16b-41, 46-47)
14. The speech of Barnabas and Paul at Lystra (14:15-17)
15. Peter’s speech at the Jerusalem gathering (15:7b-11)
16. James’s speech at the Jerusalem gathering (15:13b-21)
17. Paul’s speech in the middle of the Areopagus (17:22-31)
18. Paul’s speech to the Corinthian Jews (18:6b-d)
19. Gallio’s speech to the Corinthian Jews (18:14b-15)
20. Demetrius’s speech (19:25b-27)
21. The speech of the Ephesian town clerk (19:35b-40)
22. Paul’s speech to the Ephesian elders (20:18b-35)
23. Agabus’s speech in Caesarea (21:11b-c)
24. Paul’s speech to the disciples in Caesarea (21:13b-c)
25. The speech of James and the Jerusalem elders (21:20b-25)
26. The speech of the Jews from Asia (21:28)
27. Paul’s speech to the Jerusalem Jews (22:1, 3-21)
28. Paul’s speech before the council (23:1b, 3, 5, 6b)
29. The Pharisees’ speech in the council (23:9c-d)
30. Tertullus’s speech (24:2b-8)
31. Paul’s speech before Felix (24:10b-21)
32. Paul’s speech before Festus (25:8b, 10b-11)
33. Festus’s speech (25:14c-21, 24-27)
34. Paul’s speech before King Agrippa (26:2-23, 25-27, 29)
35. Paul’s speech(es) during the sea voyage to Rome (27:10b, 21b-26, 31b, 33b-34)
36. Paul’s speech to the Roman Jewish leaders (28:17c-20, 25b-28)

Of these speeches, eight of them were delivered by non-Christians. This leaves twenty-eight speeches that were given by Jesus, the apostles, and other Christians. Fifteen (speeches 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 27, 28, 31, 34, 35, and 36) of the twenty-eight speeches spoken by early Christian leaders were communicated to those who were not Christians. This means that most of the messages spoken by Christians that were recorded in Acts were directed toward the unchurched.

The whole focus of the book of Acts, and it could be argued it is the case in the whole New Testament, is to preach the Good News to the spiritually lost. Of the
remaining thirteen speeches that were not directed toward the unchurched, nine (speeches 1, 2, 6, 12, 15, 16, 18, 22, and 24) of them had as part of their emphasis on reaching out to non-Christians. This means that twenty-four out of twenty-eight of the speeches given by Jesus and other Christian leaders in the book of Acts prioritized reaching the lost. If this was the top priority of the early church, it must be for the church today. Paul’s whole focus of ministry can be summed up in his words to the Church in Ephesus:

You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. (Acts 20:20-21 NIV)

This should be the focus of preachers in the church today.

Old Testament Prophets

The method of preaching God’s Word was not new to the Jews in New Testament times. This concept was utilized by God throughout the history of the Jewish people. Moses was God’s spokesperson of his Word, as well as Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, and many other prophets in the Old Testament.

A preacher or prophet in the Old Testament was often called to preach or proclaim. “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor” (Isa. 61:1 NIV, italics mine). The Hebrew term for “preach” in this instance is basar. It means “to preach or proclaim good news.” Oftentimes, this is what God calls a preacher to declare. But other times, the preacher is to decree judgment or repentance. Ezekiel 20:46 (NIV) says, “Son of man, set your face toward the south; preach against the south and prophesy against the forest of the southland” (italics mine). The phrase in Hebrew is nataph dabar and the KJV translates
this to "drop thy word." Literally, it is raining down God’s Word on the people. It is a statement against a people. It is critical for a preacher to understand that one is to say whatever God wants said and not to proclaim whatever may be the preacher’s own self-indulgent view.

Boldness with Humility

What is preaching? Preaching is not someone sharing his or her own ideas and thoughts with great wisdom. No! “Preaching has to do, not simply with our words, but with the Word of God, a Word intruding into our settled arrangements, a Word not of our own concoction” (Willimon 2002, 141).

Why is it that after some preachers have preached we wish they would preach some more because the way in which they communicated God’s Word was filling and yet when other preachers have covered the same Scripture passage preach we wish they would quit after only a few minutes? Certainly there is a calling and spiritual giftedness (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12) to this endeavor. But some who are called and gifted in this area still do not preach effectively. Some, I would suggest, have been lazy.

“Preaching well is hard work” (Robinson 2005, 535). It is a discipline that needs to be taken seriously and approached with diligence. “Preaching is something akin to surgery” (Willimon 2002, 141). It is not to be a sloppy task with little aforesought and meditation. The sermon is a healing agent for the souls of human beings.

“Most good preachers find it essential to schedule certain times during the week when they engage in that difficult, solitary task of study” (Willimon 2002, 155). A sermon should not be rushed. It takes time, preparation, study, and prayer to discern what God wants to tell the preacher and the congregation. In this time with God, he empowers
the preacher. “A power comes through the word preached that even the inerrant written word cannot replace” (Robinson 1980, 17). God has chosen to use preaching as his primary mechanism for communicating his will.

Haddon Robinson purported that “God is not in” much of the preaching of today (1980, 18). Now it is true that he made that statement back in 1980, over 25 years ago. But Martin Luther stated something similar hundreds of years ago noting that the first great abuse of the church was that “God’s word [was] not proclaimed” (as quoted in Willimon 2002, 142). I would assume Luther and Robinson would feel the same way about the church today.

I would suggest that much of the reason for the declining membership in most churches in our western culture is the lack of biblical preaching. The Word of God has been replaced by the words of human beings. And not godly, Scripture-filled men and women, but individuals who speak what are on their minds rather than what is on God’s heart and in God’s Word. That is a tremendous contrast to what expository biblical preaching is.

*Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.* (Robinson 1980, 20)

Preaching must be grounded in Scripture. To “exposit” is to take the content, meaning, and essence for a biblical sermon from the Bible. The purpose of the sermon must come from the purpose of the passage (Robinson 2004, 88-90).

Knowing that what one preaches is from God should result in boldness and confidence as the preacher steps into the pulpit. But that preacher should always remember that he or she is only proclaiming God’s truth because of his mercy and grace.
"[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23 NIV). The beginning place for humility is the cross. "The cross is...the ground of the humility of preaching because the cross is the power of God to crucify the pride of both preacher and congregation" (Piper 2004b, 36). If the preacher is not humble, he or she will put up a communication barrier between himself or herself and the audience. Humility is critical to communicating God's Good News with the unchurched.

It is vitally important that preaching needs to be done with "accuracy and authority" (Chappell 1994, 17). However, this authority or boldness can be mistaken for arrogance if the preacher does not exude a humble spirit. As a pastor exemplifies authority and boldness, he or she can also radiate humility in his or her life and preaching. This can be done when that preacher realizes who he or she was before Christ and the only reason he or she became a child of God was because of Christ.

The Role of the Preacher (1 Corinthians 9:22)

The Preacher for the People

It may seem simple; the focus of a preacher should be to just preach the Word of God and let the Holy Spirit do the real work of changing the hearts of those who hear. When we consider the unchurched as it relates to their conversion and discipleship, why should pastors even be concerned about how others view the world? The reason is because we are to be co-laborers with the Lord in an endeavor to matheusate or to "make disciples" who reflect Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19). As the Apostle Paul states it, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22b NIV).
What does this imply? It implies that one must adjust to the culture, though he or she must do so without compromising the truth of God's Word in any way. The purpose of this endeavor is to reach out and connect others to God.

When Paul stated that he would "become all things to all men," it may seem that he would be compromising his character. But, "(t)his does not, of course, mean that his conduct was unprincipled...But where no principle was at stake he was prepared to go to extreme lengths to meet people. Personal considerations are totally submerged in the great aim of by all means saving some" (Morris 1975, 138-139). Instead of compromising, his principles begged him to become uncomfortable if necessary, and even to the point of giving up his physical life for the sake of others, which he eventually did, in order to reach people who were different than him.

Paul "made every effort to craft his message so that it would be heard and understood by the audience" (Reist 2004, 10). "When Paul spoke to a Jewish audience he used familiar images to which they might understand and respond" (Reist 2004, 12). When Paul spoke to Gentiles he used images they would relate to and which could be connected to the Good News.

I have heard many Christians, especially pastors, who have claimed that all we have to do is to preach the Word and leave the rest to God. Their belief is that we do not need to do anything other than proclaim the truth of Scripture. While it is most certainly necessary to preach God's Word, it is vital that we adapt to those in our culture. We need to speak their language. We need to converse with them in love in a manner to which they can relate. I appreciated what Gordon stated:

We who are preachers of the gospel today should not slavishly repeat the gospel, while proclaiming it in terms that our hearers can understand. Like Jesus, we must
work prayerfully and diligently to choose consciously images, word pictures, and metaphors which faithfully convey the meaning of the biblical truth we are preaching to our contemporary hearers in terms understandable to them. (2004, 53)

If I were to go to a primitive tribe in Africa that has never seen a Caucasian American like me and I were to meet them for the first time and to start preaching on John 3:16 in English in my “western world attire,” would it be logical to think that I would have a tremendous impact for the Kingdom of God? I would think not. Could God use such efforts? Yes! God can do anything, but he tends to use people who are open and willing to be used by him in any way he desires.

How then could I effectively reach a primitive African tribe similar to the one I mentioned? Now I do not proclaim to be an expert in mission work, but from reading a number of stories about missionaries I believe I would know some things not to do. I would first of all not speak to them in my language if it is not their language. I would not try to force my style of music or clothing upon them. I would not push my kind of food on them either. On the contrary, I would seek to learn their language and customs. I would possibly attempt to bless the tribe with gifts such as providing medical assistance, water and food. I would hopefully then earn the right to preach the Word of God to them. I would in this case be seeking to “become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” And I would be doing as Joseph Aldrich advised: “Christians are to be good news before they share the good news. The words of the gospel are to be incarnated before they are verbalized” (1981, 20).

I know of other pastors and Christians who have gone to the other extreme where they have compromised their principles for the purpose of reaching the spiritually lost. Just recently, I heard of a Christian young person state that we need to go to extremes and
not worry about what anyone thinks about what we do for the sake of the unbelievers in our world. I agree with that statement to a degree, but where do we draw the line? Do we become drug-addicts in order to relate more closely with the unbeliever? Or do we become people who use God’s name in vain so that unbelievers will see us as just like them? I do not think so. “Where participating in any one of these would inherently compromise the gospel, Christians must refrain” (Blomberg 1994, 185). But, if something does not go against Christian principles, a follower of Christ should not worry. There is wisdom in taking each situation before the Lord so as to ensure one is following the Spirit’s leading and not the flesh.

Where abstaining would inappropriately distance believers from their non-Christian friends and neighbors, they should participate. Overcoming non-Christian misconceptions about the nature of Christianity, misconceptions that more often than not involve legalism rather than license, forms a crucial part of the evangelistic process and makes the Christian claims of freedom and joy more credible. (Blomberg 1994, 185)

The Apostle Paul rebuked the Apostle Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-21). The reprimand was a result of Peter shrinking back from eating with Gentiles in the presence of Jews. Paul’s conviction was that since we were saved by grace and not works, Gentiles did not need to be circumcised in order to be saved. Salvation is by grace alone. We see in this instance that Paul desired to reach out to the Gentiles and did not worry about what the established church thought. This was not compromising Paul’s holiness. “Holiness” after all literally means “set apart.” And Paul was set apart to reach the Gentiles for Christ.
Holiness in the Preacher

The congregation needs for the preacher to be holy. Holy means “set apart” for a specific purpose. That purpose is as God’s servant. The reason for that is because “you can’t be something in the pulpit that you aren’t during the week” (Piper 2004b, 63). Since the preacher is no longer considered “the spiritual leader in the community” (Robinson 1980, 15), it is imperative for the preacher to show before his or her congregation and community that there are pastors who are above reproach.

“Good ethical practice is foundational to good preaching” (Anderson 2005, 85). This may sound simple, but it is profound. Anderson emphasizes the necessity for the pastor to be above reproach. A preacher who preaches on integrity should practice personal integrity.

We are to live lives that interconnect with the lives of non-Christians so that we may reach them with the Good News of Jesus Christ as a missionary would in Africa or a campus pastor would on a college campus in the United States. It is important for us to realize that “all of life involves modeling for a fallen world the balance of freedom and restraint that Paul articulates here” (Blomberg 1994, 185). Christians are examples to a lost world and to other Christians of how to live for Christ. The Bible says that God’s purpose for calling us to Himself was so that we would be qadosh or “holy” and “set apart” (Deut. 29:16). This Hebrew term connotes a divine purpose in living. As the New Testament commands us: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1 Pet. 1:15 NIV).

Our goal should be similar to what John Piper stated: “The physical eye is meant to say to the spiritual eye, ‘Not this, but the Maker of this, is the Desire of your soul’”
The goal is not to glorify the messenger or to focus upon our “rights.” In fact, “(w)e are all starved for the glory of God, not self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem. Why do we go? Because there is greater healing for the soul in beholding splendor than there is in beholding self” (Piper 2004a, 15).

We are not to live for ourselves, but we are to be set apart to God and for the sake of others. As we balance our lives between freedom and discipline, we are being servants both to God and others. Paul stated elsewhere in the New Testament, “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible” (1 Cor. 9:19 NIV). And the Holy Spirit through Peter commanded us to, “Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God” (1 Pet. 2:16 NIV). When we live as free men and women; free from the Old Testament Law; we are slaves to God and others. As we live in this obedience to God, we bring Him glory and fulfill His purpose for our lives. “The Christian Gospel is ‘the gospel of the glory of Christ’ because its final aim is that we would see and savor and show the glory of Christ” (Piper 2004a, 16).

We are told that this generation needs to see genuineness and sincerity. Yet I believe many preachers of old were just that. However, there is a tremendous amount of distrust of leadership nowadays. This generation has seen many spiritual figures fall into serious sin in the past decades (Catholic priests who molested children, television pastors and evangelists who raised millions of dollars to keep much of it for themselves, and famous pastors who were caught up in sex scandals). It is not as though there are not moral and above reproach preachers in our day. But they have to work that much harder to gain the trust and respect of our society.
Billy Graham and Bill Bright have been excellent examples of living set apart lives for others. Graham, the world-famous evangelist, toward the beginning of his ministry, made a covenant with his ministry team leaders to never be alone with a woman unless she was a close relative. As well, he has lived on a very minimal salary, though he could have certainly justified a much larger income. Similarly, according to Elmer Towns (2003), Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, did not take a salary or have medical insurance. He had saved some money for retirement, but gave it back to Crusade so that an international outreach mission could be started. A Campus Crusade staff member who visited Bright’s office in Florida said that it was a simple office with very few amenities. A person of Bright’s stature could have demanded a large, plush, and spacious office with a hefty salary with tremendous benefits. Yet, for the sake of God’s Kingdom, he declined and instead put the focus upon reaching the lost for Christ and discipling believers.

Concerning Graham’s spiritual life as he looked back over his many years of ministry, if he could make some changes to be more productive for God’s Kingdom, he said:

I would...spend more time in spiritual nurture, seeking to grow closer to God so I could become more like Christ. I would spend more time in prayer, not just for myself but for others. I would spend more time studying the Bible and meditating on its truth, not only for sermon preparation but to apply its message to my life. It is far too easy for someone in my position to read the Bible only with an eye on a future sermon, overlooking the message God has for me through its pages. And I would give more attention to fellowship with other Christians, who could teach me and encourage me (and even rebuke me when necessary). (Graham 1997, 724)

At one point in Graham’s ministry, he began to become more “sophisticated” in his preaching. But then he started to see that his effectiveness was tapering off. When he returned to “the basics,” he observed a greater amount of fruit to be harvested once again.
It is critical for a preacher, no matter who the audience is, to preach the simple truth of the Gospel (2 Tim. 4:2).

Bright viewed, “on the one hand, an impotent American church and, on the other, an omnipotent God. What was wrong with that picture? The disobedience, it seemed to Bill. ‘If we can just demonstrate to God our total allegiance by obeying and following Him, the world would be changed overnight’” (Richardson 2000, 57).

One Sunday when Bright had been rather inconsiderate to his wife, Vonette, they discussed at the dinner table a way in which to understand each others’ expectations before God. Bright suggested they go to separate rooms to write down their own views on the matter. Vonette’s goals were about the children, their home, ministry, a car, and God’s blessings. Bill, on the other hand, came from a broader perspective.

He wrote that he renounced every single thing in his life to the control of the Lord Jesus Christ. He placed life and wife and family and home and car and business-all that they owed or ever would own, past and future-entirely under the Lord’s ownership. He thought of Paul’s New Testament description of himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. So Bill declared in writing that before God he assumed the position of a bondslove [sic], a role exemplified in the obedient life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever the Master said to do, Bill would do, with God’s help. (Richardson 2000, 59)

Not only did this help them to have a more peaceful relationship as a married couple, but Bill considered this the second most important decision, second only to his decision to accept Christ as Savior, of his life. They called this their “Contract with God.” They signed their “contracts” and prayed asking God to use them. It was a changing point in their lives and in the degree of impact they would have on the world for Christ.

Because of their commitment, God used them to reach the world for Christ. Bright believed he and Vonette would not have had the impact they did if he had not first surrender his “life totally, completely, and irrevocably to the lordship of Christ. I was no
longer my own; I had been bought with a price—the blood of my beloved Savior” (Richardson 2000, 60).

Though neither of these men has been perfect, I view in them an example of persons who have sought to maintain their focus upon Christ and His Kingdom. Though Bright has passed on to eternity, his legacy lives beyond his earthly life. Both he and Graham remained focused upon becoming more like Christ by prayer, the study of God’s Word, faithfulness to God’s will in their lives, obedience to Christ and diligently preaching the Scriptures. May God raise up more Christians like Graham and Bright who would be set apart for the Lord’s work as they have been!

The Anointing on the Preacher

There is an intangible quality that needs to be present in the spirit of a preacher in order for God to use him or her in mighty ways. That term for that quality is “anointing.” Different Christian traditions may define this term in varying ways, but in essence it is the degree to which that person has been set apart and filled with God’s Spirit for a certain role in God’s work.

In the original languages of the Bible the “anointing” is transliterated as mishiah from Hebrew and chrisma from Greek. This term literally denotes “one who exhibits a quality” or someone who is “consecrated.” This “quality” is speaking of a godly character. In other words that person submits to God’s will and way. “Consecrated” speaks of one who is “set apart” for something special. In the case of a Christian, this is one who is set apart to serve God in a specific manner. “Behind the content of his message is the character of the expositor. He must be set apart from mundane matters,
lifted above worldly aims and ambitions, and devoted singularly to God’s service” (MacArthur 1992, 85).

How does a preacher go about acquiring the anointing? To begin with, a pastor should only be in ministry if he or she is called (Ex. 3:1-14; 1 Sam. 3; Jer. 1:1-10; Acts 9:1-22). Desiring to be a preacher, pastor or teacher should not be something taken lightly (Jam. 3:1); it should be something taken very seriously. I can recall David Draper, President of Winebrenner Theological Seminary, state multiple times, in essence, “If the Lord will allow you to do anything else other than to serve in vocational ministry, do it.” He said that ministry is not easy. It is not a place to seek fame and security. The ministry of preaching the Word is laden with trials, frustrations, and temptations. Persons should only enter the ministry if they are called by God.

I have noticed that many of my friends who have graduated from a Bible college or seminary did not spend more than a few years in vocational ministry. Why is this? First of all, some seek to enter the ministry who are not called. Maybe they were pressured into it, maybe they had selfish motives or maybe they just did not know what to do with their lives and assumed the best way to serve God was in vocational ministry. If one is not called, that person is not going to bear great fruit for God. “…if a pastor is to truly love his people he must diligently pursue his happiness in the ministry of the Word” (Piper 2004b, 56). One can only do this if he or she is called.

As well, those who are called often fail at their calling. Just recall those in ministry in recent years who have fallen in such a way that humiliated the Christian community. It is critical for pastors to maintain their intimate walks with the Lord as they seek to lead Christ’s church and speak for the Lord in the pulpit.
A preacher “must study a passage to see completely the truth the Lord is teaching in it, and prepare the sermon out of the overflow of that comprehensive grasp and personal application of the passage” (MacArthur 1992, 94). It is not enough to know the Bible in the mind; it needs to penetrate the heart. The preacher must first seek to live out what he or she is about to preach before telling the congregation what they need to hear and do. This leads into the next role of the preacher: The Praying Preacher.

The Praying Preacher

When one considers the profound responsibility that was already noted that rests upon the shoulders of a preacher, how can one expect to be faithful to God without having a dynamic prayer life? God created human beings to be in a personal and intimate relationship with him. As God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, so he still desires to be in constant relationship and conversation with his children whom he created...that means us. A godly preacher should be diligent at seeking God’s face, not only to be prepared to preach sermons, but also to set an example for the flock. The Lord instructs us to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17 KJV).

But what does that mean? What does it mean to “pray continually” (1 Thess. 5:17 NIV)? This is the second shortest passage in the Greek New Testament, yet it is powerful and has life-changing instructions within it. The term adialeiptos, which is translated as “without ceasing,” literally means to do something “constantly” or “always.” If one thinks this means he or she should say prayers continually or constantly speak to God then he or she sees this command in Scripture as being impossible to live out. When would that person sleep? Rather, this passage opens one’s eyes to the fact that “to pray
without ceasing establishes prayer, not as a part of the Christian life, but as all of it” (Demarest 1984, 96).

Praying continually means to constantly have “an attitude of prayer” (McGee 1991, 94). Part of becoming all that one needs to become for God involves changing one’s attitude toward whatever one is doing. One who continually maintains an attitude of prayer needs to do everything for God. This “means conversing with God while shopping, driving, working, or performing any other everyday tasks” (R. Warren 2002, 87-88). A person needs to be in tune with the Lord no matter how mundane the task, “whether it is eating, bathing, working, relaxing, or taking out the trash” (R. Warren 2002, 88). It does not matter what is going on in one’s life, that person is to be praying. Whether life is going one’s way or if life seems to be falling apart, God tells us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in *everything*, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Phil. 4:6 NIV, *italics mine*).

When a person has a love relationship with someone, he or she cannot help but think of that other person. That individual would have “an unceasing awareness of the other” (Demarest 1984, 97). This is how it ought to be with the Lord. If one truly loves God, he or she will always be thinking of him. That person will think of how he or she can serve him. A person may ask, “What can I do to please him this moment?” And a Christian will ask that question every moment of every day of his or her life.

Prayer involves being in the presence of the Lord and allowing him to open one’s heart so that God can show that person what areas of his or her life needs changed. It also connects that person to the Lord so that through his power he or she can be changed. One
can only become more like Christ through his power and through his love working in and through our lives.

Being connected to Jesus Christ is much more than just talking to him once a day or even a few times a day. Talking to God and laying one's requests before God is crucial, but it takes much more than that in order to maintain a connectedness to the Lord. Part of prayer is interceding for others and listening to God. That is what a relationship is. It is sharing, listening and lovingly serving the other. That is what Christ calls Christians to do.

The necessity of prayer for a preacher has to do with being filled and inspired by God "because without prayer the God of our studies will be the unfrightening [sic] and uninspiring God of insipid academic gamesmanship" (Piper 2004b, 63). "Good preaching is born of good praying. And it will come forth with the power that caused the Great Awakening when it is delivered under the mighty prayer-wrought influence of the Holy Spirit" (Piper 2004b, 100).

If the preacher is filled with God, he will speak what the Spirit desires. And if he or she preaches what the Lord wants, God will move in mighty ways because he has promised to do so (Is. 55:11). But it seems that pastors are taught through the influence of "successful" churches that it is all up to the minister for the church to succeed. As Willard has stated, "We get the idea we are supposed to make something happen, and so we need our services to go just right" (2005, 72). But ultimately, God is the one who will save souls and grow the church...in spite of the preacher. Certainly God has called us to faithfulness, but it is Him and Him alone who will draw people to Himself. A preacher is called to pray and be open and willing to proclaim what God has commanded.
CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND OTHER SOURCES

The more a person knows the culture, the more proficiently that person can connect with the unchurched through an expository biblical message. This does not mean the truth has to be compromised in order to do so. As the Apostle Paul stated it, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Cor. 9:22 NIV). Yet Martin Luther, the Great Reformer, stated, “It is a great hindrance to a preacher if he looks around and worries about what people like or do not like to hear” (as quoted in Willimon 2002, 355). How does one maintain the balance? One of the main goals of a preacher should be to proclaim God’s Word with love to all persons. He or she should do so while considering where the unchurched are spiritually and culturally without compromising God’s truth in any way.

There have been numerous sources from which to review pertinent information concerning how to hold to God’s truth on the one hand and yet consider where the unchurched are on the other. In order to learn how to do this, the following disciplines have been sought: the business world, communication theory, and Christian leaders.

*Business World*

The top priority for any business should be to ensure it is financially profitable. In order to do so, that business must have successfully provided a product or service to customers. At any given time, many departments within the company would have been jostling for attention, but none like that of the bottom line. And in order to connect a
product or service with a customer effectively so that the company stays profitable, the company must market and advertise its products or services. These two areas of the business world, marketing and advertising, have been the areas from which insights have been gleaned for this project.

Marketing and Advertising

As marketing and advertising have been approached by Christian leaders, many in the church have had the fear that “we are going to turn the church into a business” (Navarro 2005, 71). In spite of that fear, one must realize that every church has marketed and advertised its congregation. Whether it was the manner in which a church building was landscaped, putting the telephone number in the telephone book or yellow pages, or placing an ad in the local newspaper, all churches have marketed and advertised themselves in some way (Navarro 2005, 71).

A market is “the possible consumers of a particular product” (Kauffman 1989, 171). As a company considers “marketing,” it is seeking to sell its product or service to a specific group of people or market. Marketing is the desire to “influence mass behavior” (Rados 1996, 24). The goal in business is to persuade persons to use a product or to utilize a service that a particular company has to offer. Much of the means through which this has been accomplished has been through advertising.

To advertise is “[t]o draw public attention to a product you wish to sell” (Kauffman 1989, 6). In order to do this, a company must be creative. William Bernbach, a writer who is an advertising legend, noted concerning the public as it relates to most advertisers, “They ignore us. So the most important thing as far as I’m concerned is to be fresh, to be original – to be able to compete with all the shocking news events in the
world today” (as quoted in Higgins 2003, 12). One way in which to keep that creative edge is to read constantly, according to Bernbach.

Maintaining a sense of creativity helps the company learn how to draw in customers. “Imagination combined with customer insight is a powerful, winning combination to satisfy the unmet needs for your target customers” (Schieffer 2005, 31). It is important to conduct research in order to understand the customer, but creativity is just as important. Once a company knows the characteristics, likes and dislikes of the people to whom it is seeking to market its product or service, the business then needs to find creative ways in which to make the product or service attractive to the prospective customers. It is also critical for the company to have the persons to whom it markets see their need for the product or service.

Another important statement Bernbach made concerning advertisers was, “We’re right about everything, but nobody looks” (as quoted in Higgins 2003, 13). A company could have the best product or service on the market and accurately portray the benefits, but if no one looks, no matter how wonderful that product or service is, the company is not going to sell it. A goal of advertising should be “for the idea to convey memorably” (Bernbach as quoted in Higgins 2003, 20). The ad needs to be remembered by the potential customer. Leo Burnett, also a legend in the advertising business, said, “the art is in getting noticed naturally, without screaming or without tricks” (as quoted in Higgins 2003, 26). This takes imagination and creativity.

To be creative takes hard work. Rather than doing business the way it has always been done, leading companies have constantly sought new and innovative ways to market their products or services. Using the imagination forces a business to look at new ideas
that can be the catalyst for success, staying away from just being comfortable. That is how businesses stay on the cutting edge, and by doing so, ensure that they do not fall behind. Many new businesses do not succeed. That is why it is imperative for companies to keep fresh ideas on the table at all times while investigating which concepts will most efficiently accomplish the mission of the business. Gerald Zaltman of the Harvard Business School once stated,

The ability to anticipate consumers’ responses based on deep knowledge about them lies at the heart of skillful marketing. A deep understanding of customers is the only sound basis for developing marketing strategy for discontinuous innovations.” (as quoted in Schieffer 2005, 31)

In other words, to promote a product or service in an effective manner, one must understand the persons to whom he or she is seeking to sell. This ties in with what Robert Schieffer called customer insight. In marketing, “customers transcend all others” (Rados 1996, 24) in importance. No other factor rates as high. Ensuring that a business knows, serves, and caters to the customer is critical when seeking to successfully market any product or service.

Burnett noted that advertisers should find “things that were most interesting to people” (as quoted in Higgins 2003, 38). While it is certainly possible to succeed in marketing a product or service without the input of customers, research would show that it is much wiser to find out the needs of a company’s potential customers (Schieffer 2005, 32).

There have been many varying approaches which companies have employed in seeking to understand their customers. The desire of these businesses, specifically, is to know what prospective or current customers think of their products and services. Though many different research techniques have been utilized, by far the most widely used
method of research has been the utilization of focus groups (Schieffer 2005, 37). Focus
group research gathers a group of those in the target audience to ask questions in order to
hear where those people are concerning their needs and the company’s services. The
business then takes the information gleaned from those in the focus group to target in a
strategic manner potential clients and help them meet the needs of prospective customers
through their products and services.

Another means through which to glean information about prospective customers
has been the utilization of surveys. Surveys consist of specific questions that are targeted
with intentionality toward the wants, needs, or desires of potential patrons. The surveys
can also contain questions focused upon the current services or products that are being
used by already existing customers. The results of these surveys can be used to adjust the
marketing and advertising strategy in order to speak to the needs and situations of
potential and current customers.

What Can Be Used From This Information?

What can be taken from this information in the business world and be applied in
the discipline of preaching to the unchurched? First, a preacher must desire to influence
the masses with his or her message from the Bible as a business does concerning its
products or services for financial profit. But a pastor should not do so for the sake of
material gain (2 Cor. 2:17). Rather it should be done with the motivation being for the
sake of other people and for God’s glory (Matt. 22:36-40). Though a business has as its
top priority to make money, a Christian leader should be concerned with souls. The goal
of a leader of a church should be how many and to what degree individuals have been
connected to Jesus Christ and the church.
Second, imagination and creativity should be encouraged. As Bernbach noted about advertisers, “We’re right about everything, but nobody looks” (as quoted in Higgins 2003, 13). This related very closely to the church. This has happened too often in the pulpit: a preacher proclaimed an accurate truth from Scripture, yet no one acquired the reality for himself or herself. A pastor should take time during his or her week to be creative in preparation for the sermon. Rather than just utilizing the same format for preaching, a pastor ought to seek new avenues through which to communicate the truth of the Bible. For the unchurched, as well as for the whole congregation, to experience God’s Word in fresh ways is vitally important. It is hard work, but worth the effort. When preparing to preach, a pastor should certainly study diligently the Scriptures and pray, but also, glean from the insights of others by reading widely.

Third, a company seeks to learn about the people whom it wants to become its customers, and similarly the preacher should learn about those to whom he or she wants to reach, that being the unchurched. If a pastor is able to understand the needs of those to whom he or she is speaking, then he or she will more effectively connect with them. This can be done through focus group research and surveys.

Communication

Method – Types of Speeches

There have been four main approaches to public speaking. They are impromptu, memorized, manuscript read, and extemporaneous speeches. There are public speakers who employ each of these methods in various ways. Each method will be described and analyzed to see which would be the best approach in order to connect with the unchurched.
The first approach is impromptu speaking. Impromptu speeches are presentations that provide little or no preparation time. The topic is given to the presenter and then he or she must conduct the speech while thinking on his or her feet. Generally, there is no outline or practice allowed with impromptu presentations. This method of public speaking should only be used “when you have little or no time for preparation or practice” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 364). When implementing this approach one can speak informally, but “unless a speaker is extremely talented or has learned and practiced the techniques of impromptu speaking, the speech itself will be unimpressive. An impromptu speech usually lacks logical organization and thorough research” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 279). Most public speaking professors recommend that the average speaker should try to avoid impromptu speeches (Jaffe 2004, 29).

The second approach is a memorized speech. A memorized speech is one that is written out and committed to memory word for word. This is quite difficult, especially for those who have not had much practice at it. People can easily make mistakes when utilizing this method because they can be “so caught up with remembering that they forget about communicating” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 365). And “most memorized speeches sound stiff, stilted, and overrehearsed [sic]” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 279) even when the speaker faithfully practices the speech. Attempting to perform a memorized speech is “highly risky” (Jaffe 2004, 28) and not recommended in most situations.

The third approach is reading a manuscript. This method has many of the same drawbacks as the memorized speech. The problem is that the speaker tends to be too glued to the text and not to the audience. Reading “a manuscript is rarely done well enough to be interesting” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 278). This method hinders a speaker
from connecting with the audience through eye contact, and therefore, is not recommended for most speakers (Jaffe 2004, 268).

The fourth approach is extemporaneous speaking. “Extemporaneous speaking features a spontaneous and natural-sounding presentation and makes it easier to establish immediacy with an audience” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 368). With this approach, “you speak from a written or memorized general outline, but you do not have the exact wording in front of you or in memory” (Beebe and Beebe 2000, 281). This type of speech is what is recommended for most situations. It tends to communicate as though the speech was delivered “live rather than as though it were prepared yesterday or weeks ago” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 281). It is generally the most effective means of public speaking through which the orator can connect with the listeners.

Audience Analysis

Audience analysis is “identifying audience characteristics to communicate more effectively” (Jaffe 2004, 72) to that audience. Knowing the listeners is a key to communicating in an effective manner with the hearers. In order to do so, the speaker should first analyze the audience and then adapt to the listeners. Audience adaptation is “the process of ethically using information to analyze an audience so the message will be clear and achieve the speaking objective” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 87).

Both the information presented and the presenter must be credible to have the most impact upon the audience. The three general purposes of public speaking are to entertain, inform, and persuade. A speaker should always determine the purpose of the speech prior to developing it. In an expository biblical sermon, the purpose is usually to persuade the audience to act. In order to do so, the speaker must seek to change or
reinforce a biblical concept within the hearts and minds of those in the audience. For the audience, if the speaker is able “to change their thinking, their emotional judgments are simultaneously altered” (Hauser 1986, 116). In order to do that, the presenter needs to know and adapt to the audience.

**Age, Gender, and Educational Level**

A listener is motivated by his or her wants or needs. Each person’s circumstances shapes what those needs and wants are. An effective communicator will seek to know and understand the life-situation of the audience. Prior to speaking, the presenter will be best equipped if he or she knows the listener’s age, gender, and educational level. An individual’s age will influence that person’s experiences and knowledge base. A speaker needs to realize that although there are distinct differences between every person, “members of a generational cohort tend to be moved by appeals and allusions that another generation might not understand” (Jaffe 2004, 76). The presenter would do well to research what the median age and age range is of the audience to whom he or she is speaking.

The gender of the listener speaks of his or her affinities, needs, and wants. The assumed roles of males and females in Western culture are constantly in flux, yet distinctions clearly exist between the genders. There tends to be general traits among those who are males that are usually noticeably different from females. Even so, a speaker should be careful to not be sexist in his or her comments. If the presenter “assumes a man or a woman will think or act a certain way because of his or her sex,” that is considered sexist (Jaffe 2004, 75) in this day and age. Nonetheless, a thoughtful
speaker can speak to the affinities, needs and wants of the audience whether the audience is all male, all female or a mix between the two.

An individual’s educational level is the most revealing about that person. In fact, the higher the educational level is of those within the audience, “the more you can assume they know about general topics and current affairs, and the broader their range of interests is apt to be” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 117). The listeners may have a common educational background, such as engineering. This should affect the manner in which the speaker approaches the presentation to that audience. Where possible, a speaker ought to research the age range and median age, percentage of male to female, and average educational level and the span of educational level in order to speak as accurately as possible to the needs and wants of the audience.

Sometimes, a speaker desires to connect with a specific segment of the audience. This segment is called the target audience (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 95). This would be the portion of listeners the presenter has the most desire to influence. In order to connect with the target audience most effectively, the speaker must seek to know and understand those individuals.

*Ethnicity, Race, and Occupation*

“Ethnicity is that portion of a person’s cultural background that relates to a national or religious heritage” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 90). Some people care deeply about their ethnic background and some do not. “The urban areas in the United States are especially diverse” (Jaffe 2004, 74). And in Western Culture, many individuals have quite a diverse ethnic background. A speaker can benefit from knowing the context of the
audience ethnically so as to protect from offending anyone, and beyond that, ensuring
that he or she is connecting with the listeners.

An individual’s race “is his or her biological heritage, such as Caucasian or
Hispanic” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 90). “Racial categories are generally based on
physical characteristics such as skin color or facial features” (Jaffe 2004, 74). However,
in Western culture, there has been the realization that human beings are basically the
same. It is important to learn and understand the issues facing the races present in the
audience. Some races are motivated differently from other races. This should affect the
speaker’s approach to a presentation so that he or she can connect with that audience
most effectively. This information, however, is probably even more valuable in keeping
the presenter from insulting the listeners by what he or she says.

When a speaker seeks to identify the range of occupations within the audience, he
or she should realize that this usually is an indicator of the listeners’ socioeconomic
status. Knowing the listeners’ occupations can give the speaker “insight into how much
[the] listeners know about a topic, what type of vocabulary [the speaker] should use, and
which aspects of a topic should be most interesting to them” (Osborn and Osborn 2006,
118). Once again, finding out this information about the audience can assist the speaker
in better connecting with the audience without offending them.

Adapting to the Audience when Speaking

The clearest indicators of whether or not the audience is engaged with the speaker
are eye contact, facial expression, restless movement, and nonverbal and verbal
responsiveness. A speaker should look for these as he or she is presenting a speech.
These signs should allow the speaker to know how to adjust the presentation as it progresses in order to ensure the listeners are on board with what is being shared.

"Perhaps the best way to determine whether your listeners are maintaining interest in your speech is to note the amount of eye contact they have with you" (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 107). If those in the audience are looking at the speaker, most likely they are listening to the message and receiving what is being shared. On the other hand, if the listeners rarely look at the presenter, they are most likely distracted and not comprehending the content of the presentation. A speaker should make sure he or she is intentionally looking for eye contact from the audience to ensure the listeners are engaged with the message.

Probably the most revealing response based on facial expression would be "a frozen, unresponsive face" (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 107). If a listener looks bored and his or her face appears as though he or she could care less about what is being shared, that is probably an accurate appraisal. A person who is engaged with the speaker tends to change facial expression throughout the presentation accordingly. For instance, if the speaker uses humor, a listener who is connected with the message will smile. If those in the audience are not responding facially with what is being shared, their facial expression will most likely show it. A speaker should look at the facial expressions of the listeners in order to know whether or not they are engaged with the presentation.

If the audience is engaged with a speech, there will probably be very little body movement on its part. However, if there is fidgeting and feet shuffling, most likely the audience is not interested in what the speaker is attempting to communicate and desiring
to do something different. A presenter should look for restless movement in the audience as an indicator of whether or not he or she is connecting with the listeners.

Nonverbal responsiveness consists of the listeners responding to a message without the use of words. When this type of response occurs, it usually indicates that the audience is listening to the message. Some examples of nonverbal responsiveness are nodding the head in agreement, the squinting of the listener's eyes as though processing what is being shared, raising the hands if asked to, and laughing when a humorous anecdote is used. If the audience, on the other hand, is not connected, there is probably very little, if any, nonverbal responsiveness. The individual presenting the speech should look for nonverbal responsiveness to know whether or not he or she is connecting with the listeners.

Verbal responsiveness occurs when the listeners verbally react to the speaker's message. Examples of this would be shouting out answers, saying "amen" in agreement, asking questions, or sharing disagreement with what the presenter is sharing. When verbal responsiveness occurs, it is an indicator that the listeners are engaged with the speaker. Again, this is one more way for a speaker to know whether or not the audience is listening to what he or she is saying.

A presenter should be a listening speaker. A listening speaker is a "dialogical speaker who hears audience interests and concerns before, during, and after a speech" (Jaffe 2004, 72). Seeking to know who the audience is before the speech, looking for indicators of engagement in the listeners during the speech, and listening to those in attendance after the speech will help the speaker to be more effective at connecting with the audience.
No speaker is perfect. There will be times where the presenter will need to engage a “bored” audience. The “mark of effective communication” is when a communicator is able to adapt his or her message in reaction to the response of the audience (Griffin 1994, 53). Here are some ways in which to engage a bored audience (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 108):

1. Tell a story.
2. Use an example to which the audience can relate.
3. Use a personal example.
4. Remind your listeners why your message should be of interest to them.
5. Eliminate some abstract facts and statistics.
6. Use appropriate humor.
7. Make direct references to the audience, using members’ names or mentioning something about them.
8. Ask the audience to participate by asking questions or asking them for an example.
9. Ask for a direct response, such as a show of hands, to see whether they agree or disagree with you.
10. Pick up the pace of your delivery.
11. Pause for dramatic effect.

Multimedia

The use of visual aids in presenting an idea is not new. Objects were utilized millennia ago in order to communicate ideas. “People learn and remember better when they use more than one sense to take in information, and in an image-saturated culture they expect visual support” (Jaffe 2004, 212). Utilizing any type of visual aid can add to the effectiveness of a speech, but this section will focus specifically upon multimedia usage. A multimedia presentation is a combination “of text, music, still images, animation, and video” (Jaffe 2004, 212). The multimedia discussed in this study is a computer-generated presentation which is sent through a projector to a screen which in turn is readable by the audience. The reason for the focus upon this type of multimedia is
because computer-generated presentations utilizing programs such as PowerPoint provide "professional-looking possibilities for illustrating" (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 316) a speech.

Speakers are sometimes "tempted to overuse visual support and forget that oral delivery is still the key to a good presentation" (Jaffe 2004, 225). Certainly "modern techniques can enhance communication, but on the other hand, they can substitute for the message" (Robinson 1980, 16). Yet the use of a quality presentation both orally and visually that utilizes multiple senses is the most effective in the Western culture. In fact, utilizing computer-generated graphics are basically expected in the corporate world today (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 316).

It is important when providing a computer-generated presentation to ensure the font is easy to read for the audience. A speaker should not attempt to have slides that are "fancy" because they can tend to be hard to read. The most important aspect of choosing a font is to consider the "audience's ability to read it" (Jaffe 2004, 226). If the listeners cannot identify the words, they will not listen to the presenter. The speaker should also seek to stay consistent with the same fonts throughout the presentation. A different font may frustrate audience members, thereby, causing them to stop paying attention.

A presenter should make sure to utilize the space and size of each slide wisely. The font size should be large enough to be read with ease for the furthest listener from the screen. Also, using proper outline form and formatting can help the audience to follow the line of thought within the presentation. The speaker should work to ensure each slide is clean, neat and appealing. The orator should "leave plenty of white space so that [the] listeners' eyes can find their place easily" (Jaffe 2004, 228). It is important to
keep it simple and to remove any unnecessary words or images from slides that do not add to the presentation.

Studies have shown that even the colors utilized in multimedia tend to have specific effects upon those who view them. According to research, the following are feelings that were a result of viewing the following colors:

- **BLUE** – stability
- **GREEN** – calming effect
- **RED** – passion, celebration, and love
- **WHITE** – purity and innocence
- **BLACK** – strength and reliability

(Schieffer 2005, 107)

A presenter can use this information in order to communicate his or her ideas to the audience more effectively. For instance, if the speaker desires to stir passion in the listeners, he or she can use a red background on the slide.

Adding color to slides, according to the 3M Company, has a number of benefits:

1. It attracts attention.
2. It increases learning, retention, and recall of informative messages.
3. It adds persuasiveness to messages.
4. It motivates audiences to participate.

Though colors can add to the effectiveness of a speech, the presenter should ensure that each slide within the presentation is easy to read and understand.

Intentionality is critical when utilizing multimedia to enhance a presentation. Why? Because quality matters! Those in the Western culture are accustomed to excellence when technology is used as people watch television, watch movies, and play video games. They expect the same when multimedia is utilized in a public speech. Navarro believes the demand for quality “is primarily a cultural phenomenon” (2005, 50). He means specifically that this is a phenomenon in the Western world. So in this culture,
it is important to keep up with technology because the Western world does. When utilizing multimedia, a presenter should use a DVD instead of a VHS tape. He or she should utilize quality sound and images in the presentation so that a lack of quality will not be a hindrance to getting the message across to the audience. The speaker should use a computer-generated presentation because with a computer the presentation will usually be “much neater and more accurate” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 305).

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is any message that is communicated that is something other than written or spoken language that creates meaning. Amazingly, individuals “communicate approximately 93 percent of emotional meaning nonverbally” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 277). With this knowledge, a speaker should ensure nonverbal communication is an integral part of his or her presentation.

Use of Voice

The pitch of a speaker’s voice affects the manner in which the audience perceives the speaker and the message. The optimum pitch is a “level that allows us to produce our strongest voice with minimal effort and that permits variation up and down the scale” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 353). The best pitch is one that is not too high to make it uncomfortable to the listeners’ ears, but that is not too low for the audience to hear clearly.

Vocal rate is the number of words a speaker speaks in a given period of time. The proper rate “helps set the mood of your speech” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 354). There is not necessarily one rate at which all speakers should speak. In fact, “great speakers use
no standard rate of speech that can account for their speaking skill” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 291). The most effective rate for any particular speaker depends on his or her “speaking style and the content” of the message (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 291). No matter the setting, a speaker must make his or her words clear and articulate. He or she should make sure to enunciate and pronounce each word during the speech so that it is intelligible to the listeners. In any context, the speaker should be sensitive to the audience, ensuring it is able to comprehend what is being said and to make certain it is interesting enough to hold its attention.

Maintaining the proper volume is critical in communicating a public speech effectively. The speaker should ensure the volume is not so loud that it hurts the hearers’ ears, but loud enough that the message is easily understandable. Usually in a church context, a microphone is necessary to maintain the best volume. That way a sound technician can electronically adjust the volume and quality of sound so that it will be optimum for each setting.

Utilizing variety in the volume, rate, and pitch is important to keep the message appealing to the audience. Failing to vary these aspects of nonverbal communication communicates that speakers “have little interest in their topic or in their listeners” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 357). Variety provides a change for the listeners and increases their interest in the message because their minds have to adapt to hear. The varying of volume, rate, and pitch allows for the speaker to emphasize important parts of the speech. Pauses are a specific way to vary the rate of the speech. They should be intentional and well thought through when they are utilized (Jaffe 2004, 265). They can emphasize a
point and allow the audience time to think about what was stated at that particular point in the speech.

Use of Body

Facial Expression and Eye Contact

The “audience sees your face before they hear what you are going to say” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 287). A speaker should set the tone emotionally before the speech begins without being phony. A speaker should know that as an audience who observe contradiction between content and non-verbal communication, we “will usually believe our eyes rather than our ears” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 360).

It is important to note that cross-cultural studies conducted by social psychologist Paul Ekman have shown that facial expressions are virtually universal. In fact, “even a culturally diverse audience will be able to read your emotional expressions clearly” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 288). A suggestion for helping a speaker to enhance his or her effectiveness with facial expression, or all aspects of speech delivery, is to videotape oneself practicing or presenting a speech. This will help to ensure the speaker is communicating in the manner in which he or she desires.

For the speaker, “the eyes are the most important element of facial expressiveness” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 360). A speaker should look at the faces of those in the audience because “direct eye contact communicates honesty and trustworthiness” (Jaffe 2004, 261). In fact, the amount of eye contact that a speaker employs has a direct correlation to the amount of influence the speaker has on persuading the listeners to respond to the message (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 382).
Posture, Movement, and Gestures

The manner in which a speaker carries himself or herself is important to communication with the audience. The stance a speaker uses, according to one particular study, can reflect the credibility the speaker has with the listeners (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 287). A good posture that communicates confidence is one where the shoulders are back, the head is up, and the feet are on the ground about shoulder-width apart. An important part of posture is that it is natural (Jaffe 2004, 65). One’s posture should indicate to the audience that the speaker believes in what he or she is saying and is interested in the audience.

Body movement, if well-timed and intentional, can increase the effectiveness of a presentation. Each movement, however, should enhance what is being shared at that particular moment. It should be smooth so that it seems natural to the audience where they better understand and relate to what is being communicated. A speaker should ensure that a movement does not take away from the message. Any nonessential movements tend to detract from the effectiveness of the presentation (Jaffe 2004, 270). Before utilizing movements, the presenter should make certain that there are no obstacles around him or her or at least be aware of them.

In using movements, a speaker can “signal the beginning of a new idea or major point” (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 287) in the speech. The presenter can move to a particular point and then stand in that spot to begin a point or to emphasize it. One thing a speaker should avoid is constant pacing during the whole presentation, which tends to distract listeners from the message rather than engaging them.
As a speaker approaches gestures, first of all, he or she should let his or her hands “rest in a relaxed position” (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 361). This should be the case whether the hands are at the side, on the lectern, or in front of the orator. Gestures do vary between cultures. Americans in the United States tend to use gestures in a more conservative manner than do Italians and some other cultures (Beebe and Beebe 2003, 283). So, if a presenter is speaking to Americans in the United States, the gestures should not be as flamboyant and the gestures should be more dramatic if speaking to Italians.

The gestures, like movements, should be natural and in accordance with what is being said. For instance, if the speaker says, “The first point I want to make is…” and then puts up two fingers on his or her right hand, that is contradictory. The gestures should enhance the message and not detract from it.

The further away and higher elevation-wise the speaker is in comparison to the audience, the less identification the listeners will tend to have with the orator (Osborn and Osborn 2006, 363). Identification is the degree to which the audience relates and connects to the speaker. “Identification occurs when we try to show that our ways are like the other person’s” (Hauser 1986, 132). The further away a speaker is from the audience, the more the audience tends to feel the speaker is “untouchable” or “aloof.” Therefore, if possible, depending on the size of the room, a presenter should attempt to be as close to the listeners in proximity and level as possible to enhance identification. Being elevated and away from the audience will usually depend on the size of the audience. The further away a speaker is from the listeners, the more dramatic the movements and gestures should be so they can be easily seen even by those furthest from the presenter. Gestures should always seem natural to the audience.
Storytelling

"The narrative impulse is part of our being, and narratives are meaningful for everyone, across culture, time, and place” (Burgchardt 2000, 289). Everyone loves a good story. "Narration has been well understood as a rhetorical technique since ancient times" and “all forms of human communication can be seen fundamentally as stories,” according to Walter R. Fisher (as quoted by Carl R. Burgchardt 2000, 289). Probably the most effective way to communicate ideas is through narration. There are many types of illustrations, but none of them have the impact of a well told story.

Kevin Miller teaches effective story-telling from a “3-D” approach: details, dialogue, and denouement. Concerning the details of a story, a public speaker should “select some key details that help people visualize themselves in that situation” (Miller 2005, 483). The presenter should seek to have the audience, in his or her mind, in the story seeing, smelling, hearing, feeling, and experiencing what is being communicated. Sharing the details of the illustration helps the listeners to imagine what is in the mind of the speaker so that they can better connect with the point of the story. One caution of that which Miller warns is going into too much detail. If the details do not relate to the point of the story and bore the audience, then the speaker should keep the irrelevant specifics out of the illustration.

The second ‘D’ Miller describes is dialogue. What he means is that a speaker ought to share the actual words of a conversation within the illustration. When the listeners hear the dialogue between the characters within the story, they are drawn into the drama. Then, the audience will better understand the point of the illustration, the moral of the story, and how it applies to their lives. Again, Miller warns of overdoing the
discourse. If it is in too much detail with irrelevant dialogue, the presenter can lose the attention of the listeners.

The final ‘D’ is for denouement. The denouement is the end of the story or the conclusion. Miller actually says that this means “delayed denouement.” He says to “leave the ending for the ending” (2005, 485). It is important to not give the punch line too early so that the audience will still be engaged and interested at the end of the presentation. The presenter should “play up the tension” (Oudemolen 2005, 504). If the speaker gives away the ending too soon, the listeners are already disengaged because they do not feel the need, at least subconsciously, to listen any further. It is quite effective to leave the audience “hanging” in a dramatic story and to not bring completion until the end. By using this method when illustrating, the speaker holds the listeners for the whole presentation.

The right “illustrations put light, color, and excitement into” presentations, speeches, and sermons (Larson 2005, 486). Craig Brian Larson shares principles to follow in which to do so successfully. One of his suggestions is to focus upon people rather than things in illustrations. Listeners relate much more to other people than they do to inanimate objects. Talking about famous people, everyday people who live life just like the audience, and the speaker’s personal experiences relates to the listeners to a much greater degree than speaking about things that have no life. In fact, according to Haddon Robinson, personal stories help the listener relate to the speaker more than any other type of illustration (2001). Telling a real-life personal story helps the audience to see the orator as a person just like them.
Larson recommends utilizing true rather than hypothetical stories. A factual illustration is one that really occurred. It is not imaginary, but a story that the audience can know took place in history. An actual event lends credibility to the point of the message of a speech. “While someone can argue or doubt a hypothetical situation, a true account ‘proves’ its point” (Larson 2005, 489). But it is important when sharing a true story to ensure the facts are accurate. If a presenter tells a story and claims it as true, and even a part of the illustration is found to be false, it will take credibility away from the presentation as a whole.

*Christian Leaders*

Emerging Church Leaders

“Clearly interest is growing in how the church can reach out to emerging generations in what some call a postmodern or post-Christian context” (Kimball 2003, 13). What does it mean when the terms “emerging” or “emergent” are used? These words are used interchangeably by authors, but “emerge” means to “come forth; rise into view” (*The New Webster’s Dictionary* 1986, 59). This new generation is coming into view and is being described by many Christian leaders as “postmodern” or “post-Christian.” When one hears many of the stories of the leaders of the emergent church, there tends to be a frequent theme: “What all of these people have in common is that they began in one thing and ‘emerged’ into something else” (Carson 2005b, 11). There are varying definitions of these terms, but in essence they are a worldview.

Postmoderns “generally speaking, are those born after 1965, often called Generation X or Busters” (Drummond 2002, 15), thought they are not confined to one generation such as Builders, Boomers, or Busters. Postmodernism is defined by Tony
Jones as “of or relating to art, architecture, or literature that reacts against earlier modernist principles, as by reintroducing traditional or classical elements of style or by carrying modernist styles or practices to extremes” (2001, 10). A postmodern would generally believe that

[T]here are no pure objectives or absolutes. Truth is relative to the individual. Morals, ethics, and other propositions are relative to one’s own opinion and interpretation. God and faith, therefore, are relative. All is relative, even objective good. (Drummond 2002, 22)

Concerning postmodernism, “many call it the most important cultural shift in 500 years” (Jones 2001, 10).

Wise Insights

Many Christians bemoan the fact that the world is rejecting Christ. The world sees the church as hypocritical and irrelevant.

The indictment that we [the church] must receive is that the Christian faith as we express it is no longer seen as a viable spiritual option. Masses gave the church a try and left wanting. We accuse them of not being willing to surrender to God; they accuse us of not knowing him. People are rejecting Christ because of the church! (McManus 2001, 29)

The emergent church movement brings “a flavor of protest, of rejection” (Carson 2005b, 11).

There is a movement in Christianity in the Western world to do church differently than in the recent past and to cling to what is from the ancient past in seeking to reach out to the emerging generation. “There is no single model for the emerging church” (Kimball 2002, 14). Yet, there are principles from this movement which can be utilized in reaching the next generation of unchurched people. These principles affect every aspect within the ministry of the church, but the area of preaching will be focused upon here.
Burke does not believe Christians need to throw in the moral towel, for he disagrees with those in the emergent church who promote a moral relativism. He does however believe the church needs to get busy reaching those who are stuck in the muck of the world. "No longer can we afford to stand on the cliffs high above the cultural mudslide, chastising people for not climbing out of the mess to come up to higher ground" (Burke 2005, 20). As Burke points out, reaching the unchurched needs to be accomplished while maintaining a respect and tolerance for others' ideas (2005, 128). The truth does not have to be compromised in this process. One can listen to the beliefs of others with whom he or she differs while showing genuine care for that individual. This is an important trait for a pastor who preaches and interacts with the postmodern generation.

In the United States, people spend more money on leisure than on health care or clothing (Russell 1999, 54). Much of the focus of the lives of the emerging generation is upon being entertained. "People simply do not read; they observe. We have a culture raised on watching. Beyond the emergence of a post-literate society, we have a culture raised on entertainment" (McManus 2001, 17). Knowing this, the church needs to seek to reach people where they are.

"Postmoderns don't want their information straight. They want it laced with experience" (Sweet 2000, 33). This is where storytelling becomes a dynamic tool in connecting with the postmoderns. "Narrative is becoming the primary means of communicating beliefs" (Jones 2001, 27). Brian McLaren terms this as abductive reasoning. "As opposed to deductive or inductive methods, when you tell a story, you abduct listeners from their known worlds into another world" (Jones 2001, 27). In
sermons, stories can effectively communicate God’s truths to this emerging generation.

“Preaching must elevate the stories of God that draw a picture of what life can be like for everyone” (McManus 2001, 119).

When a preacher utilizes story, he or she must remember that to an increasing degree, the culture does not know the biblical story of God’s work in our world. Only 5% of persons, according to a recent George Barna research study, hold to a biblical worldview (2005). The following was the criteria on which Barna based his determination of that which would be a biblical worldview:

The definition requires someone to believe that absolute moral truth exists; that the source of moral truth is the Bible; that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches; that eternal spiritual salvation cannot be earned; that Jesus lived a sinless life on earth; that every person has a responsibility to share their religious beliefs with others; that Satan is a living force, not just a symbol of evil; and that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful maker of the universe who still rules that creation today. (2005)

Since those in the unchurched culture do not know the story, we have to adapt in order to communicate that story in a clear manner. Too often the following occurs in preaching to the unchurched:

We start in the middle of a story that they don’t know or that they know very little about mainly through negative experiences. We offer them escape from a peril they don’t know they face, and we use words that either aren’t part of their vocabulary or that they don’t correctly understand. Because people in the emerging culture don’t know the story, preachers must become storytellers again. (Kimball 2003, 172)

Preachers have the opportunity and the calling to tell the story of the Christian faith through clear and creative means.

“We need to adapt to capturing images that communicate truth and to move from static to dynamic communication systems” (McManus 2001, 17). A church or preacher should incorporate many senses and means through which to communicate God’s Word
to the congregants. This not only implies multiple senses, but multiple senses at one time. That is what people are experiencing in the other areas of their lives in today’s technological world. Incorporating elements such as sculpting, painting, dance, aromas, drama, and film can connect with the unchurched persons in the congregation because for many of them that is their world.

A result of the worldview of this emerging generation is that in today’s world, “people want to talk about God, they want to hear about God, and they want to learn of new ways to get to God” (Jones, 2001, 64). In the United States of America, “belief in God is nearly at 100 percent... America is an extraordinarily spiritual society... We are more open than ever. We are more searching than ever” (McManus 2001, 29). As McManus describes, Western culture seeks many gods, with openness to multiple gods, and varying ways in connecting with those gods. “Spirituality is in. But attempting to reach postmoderns must be done wisely, understanding them and communicating Christ in a manner that is clear and satisfying” (Drummond 2002, 27).

Burke asked the following question of his own congregation as well to all churches, “[A]re we just playing church?” (2005, 20). He calls Christians to be “missional Christians” (2005, 18). “The gospel, as presented in our time, has been crafted in a way that would only win Christians to Christ” (McManus 2001, 52). It is imperative to be creative in the ways the church communicates God’s Word. “Predictability and stability became dominant themes” within the church in the Western world over the last decades and the church has become “comfortable” (McManus 2001, 30). We have to realize that “we kept our traditions and lost our children” (McManus 2001, 31).
It is important for Christians to be uncomfortable and on the move. Preachers need to teach their congregations that it is necessary to reach out to others. "There must come a time when we become shepherds who feed others" (McManus 2001, 31) beyond just feeding the Christians in the congregation. "It is one thing to have a preference; it is another to demand that one's preferences be honored above the needs of those without Christ" (McManus 2001, 31).

John Ortberg seeks to browse publications such as magazines and newspapers for illustrations that connect with the unchurched. Ortberg states, "Especially for the people who are outside the church, I want to communicate that I live in the real world, their world" (2005, 527). To the postmodern, "authenticity is a valued commodity" (Jones 2001, 37). The illustrations a preacher uses need to be real to life. It is easy to fall into a rut of utilizing religious language rather than working hard to use the words people use everyday in their world when illustrating biblical concepts.

A preacher ought to speak about the areas of Scripture that he or she cannot explain and not gloss over them as though they do not exist. Leave mystery where there is mystery. In this emerging culture, "there is new room in our faith for experience, for mysticism, and for mystery" (Jones 2001, 39). It is more important to be real than to have all of the answers.

Gateway Church is Reformed in theology and part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Gateway's theology is traced back to the likes of John Calvin and John Knox. The focus of the Reformed faith is upon the sovereignty of God. Horton brings a strong challenge to Reformed churches: "Small-mindedness and exclusiveness are rife in our
confessional Reformed and Presbyterian circles, and we need to listen to the challenges of our Emergent [sic] brothers and sisters” (2005, 23).

Reasons for Concern

“Most movements have both good and bad in them” (Carson 2005b, 18). There are insights to be taken and applied from the emerging church leaders, but there are some serious concerns as well. For instance, the moral relativity of some of the emerging church leaders sounds exactly like those of the world.

As noted earlier, the encouragement from the emerging church leaders to adapt to the culture in order to reach it for Christ is biblical (1 Cor. 9:22). However, caution should be used when engaging the culture. “Is there at least some danger that what is being advocated is not so much a new kind of Christian in a new emergent church, but a church that is so submerging itself in the culture that it risks hopeless compromise?” (Carson 2005b, 18). At times it appears the emerging church has compromised the truth with the justification being the desire to reach the spiritually lost.

Some “postmoderns see themselves as wanderers engaged in endless play, always deferring the arrival of Truth” (Horton 2005, 23). Yet, if one adheres to Scripture, the Truth has arrived. Jesus stated, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6 NIV, italics mine). It does not appear that doctrine and truth are focused upon for some of the leaders within the emergent church. Paul wrote about some individuals in his day: They were “always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7 NIV). As well, Paul gives the following challenge: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will
save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:16 NIV). It appears that the emerging
curch leaders should live in light of the revealed truth God has provided in His Word.

_Brokeback Mountain_, a recent mainstream film describing the doomed love
between two men, received Oscar acclaim. The director of the movie, Ang Lee, was
quoted as saying, “Things are being simplified a lot for us lately. I think people are
hungry for something that shows more respect for the complexity of life, the depth, the
gray areas” (“‘Brokeback’ gets 8 Oscar noms” 2006, A7).

Concerning homosexuality, Brian McLaren, a leading author in the emerging
church, wrote, “that pastors have learned from Jesus that there is more to answering a
question than being right or even honest” (2006, 128). I am in agreement that God loves
sinners, for that is why Jesus came to earth (Matt. 9:13). Jesus certainly sought to reach
people right were they were (Matt. 9:10; John 4:3-26), but he did not hold back the truth
from them (Matt. 5:27-32; 19:16-22; 21:31-32). Yet McLaren noted concerning
homosexuality, “that the biblical arguments are nuanced and multilayered, and the
pastoral ramifications are staggeringly complex” (2006, 128). I do not believe
homosexuality is “more wrong” than the sins I have committed in my life. None of us
deserves God’s forgiveness, but I acknowledge my sin for what it is. It does not seem that
McLaren acknowledges a sin that is clearly spelled out in Scripture. It sounds like a
liberal theology repackaged. McLaren’s words sound like those of Ang Lee. This should
be of concern for pastors and Christians who hold to a solid biblical foundation.

As well, from some of the emerging church leaders, there seems to be a
pessimism concerning the church. Certainly there are issues within the church, especially
in the Western world, but there does not appear to be a positive outlook among some of
the emerging church writers. Donald Miller, an emerging church author who has been praised by the likes of Ortberg and McLaren, wrote about a friend of his named Nathan who had a speech impediment. He stated that no one at Reed College would make fun of Nathan, but that people at his church would. Miller went on to state that he “never thought of Reed as an immoral place” (2003, 224) because someone like Nathan would never be made fun of, but would be accepted for who he is. It appears the assumption supposes that the church is bad. Anything seems better than the church. This is a concern as one reads some of the emerging church leaders’ writings. For many of the emergent church leaders, their journeys seem to have their life stories consisting of a “dominant protest...against culturally conservative forms of evangelicalism” (Carson 2005a, 24). It is much easier to criticize the church than to have an impact on the lives of the unchurched for Christ through the life of the church.

Conclusion

John Burke and D. A. Carson seem to have balanced approaches to the emergent church movement. Carson states concerning postmodernism: “Its response is not as penetrating and biblically faithful as it needs to be” and their response to postmodernism at points appears to be “regrettably weak and sometimes misguided” (2005a, 87).

Seeker Church Leaders

Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church, and Bill Hybels, founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, are arguably the most prolific leaders of the seeker church movement. A pastor needs a vision of what God is calling the church to and that should come out in the preaching. “It is a vision that adds
excitement and enthusiasm to the life of people” (Galloway 1986, 30). And there are not too many pastors in the world today with more vision than Hybels and R. Warren.

R. Warren, when he sought to plant Saddleback, found the greatest complaint of the unchurched in his area to be that the messages were boring and irrelevant (1995, 293). Hybels himself fears “boring people or making the relevant Scriptures irrelevant” (2005c, 688). These men are not focused upon “entertaining” people as much as ensuring that they clearly communicate God’s Word to unchurched individuals.

Many seeker churches preach to the unchurched by speaking to where they are. The listeners of a sermon need to know the speaker loves them. “There is no substitute for love” (Galloway 1986, 73). When the congregation knows the pastor loves them, they much more easily receive the message. Speaking to their felt needs is a way of communicating to them that the preacher and the church love them.

Some have criticized seeker churches for preaching to “felt needs.” But R. Warren responded by saying:

I want to state this in the clearest way possible: Beginning a message with people’s felt needs is more than a marketing tool! It is based on the theological fact that God chooses to reveal himself to man according to our needs! (1995, 295)

R. Warren also noted that he believes that meeting human needs connects with the unchurched in his or her world. Therefore, like Reader’s Digest draws people to read their magazine, so he seeks to “appeal to common human needs, hurts, and interests. People want to know how to change their lives” (R. Warren 2005, 372).

When preaching to seekers, a pastor needs to be careful how he or she approaches speaking to felt needs. Hybels warns preachers not to speak predominantly to those who
are dysfunctional. He estimates that about 85% of his congregation consists of relatively functional people and the other 15% are not emotionally healthy.

Concerning dysfunctional congregants, Hybels discovered that they generally did not want someone to talk to them “about picking up a cross and carrying it to serve Jesus Christ” (2005c, 693). They seemed to want Hybels to preach about Christ’s unconditional love, but not about Christ’s call to be of service of the Kingdom of God. Hybels warns of preaching a cheap gospel. Certainly compassion is part of that gospel, but it should not devalue the Good News of Jesus Christ. Constantly focusing the preaching on the needs of the 15% who are dysfunctional would end in “disaster” (Hybels 2005c, 693). Those who are hurting can have those hurts ministered to in other areas in the life of the church, but those individuals also need to hear the tougher challenges from Scripture.

There are a number of principles that help a preacher to speak in an effective way to the unchurched in a seeker church setting. First, make sure the Bible is accessible to the unchurched person. A pastor can facilitate this by reading Scripture from a newer translation (R. Warren 1995, 297). Also, the church can provide pew Bibles in each seat and announce the page numbers before the passages are read because someone who is not churched probably does not know how to find a book of the Bible. Keep the unchurched in mind when selecting Scripture passages. Some portions of God’s Word may not be appropriate for someone who has little to no Bible knowledge. R. Warren suggests that a church can provide outlines with Scripture texts written out on them for each person in the congregation. That way when the outline is taken home, the Word of God is right on the sheet for the unchurched person to read and upon which to reflect.
Second, when preparing messages, select titles that would appeal to the unchurched. “We have the most important message in the world. It changes lives. But for people to be attracted to it, the titles of our sermons must capture their attention” (R. Warren 2005, 372). If unchurched people hear the title or read it in the paper, it should be something that would be enticing for them to the point that they would see it helping to change their lives.

Third, preaching sermons in a series over a number of weeks exists as a principle in the seeker church model. When many visitors will be present, such as on Easter, Mother’s Day, or the opening of a new facility, announce a new series which will begin. “It creates a hook that brings many first-time visitors back for the next week” (R. Warren 1995, 300).

Fourth, when speaking to unchurched people, a preacher should not be afraid to call for a commitment. A pastor should offer people a number of ways in which to make a commitment. Some means can be by asking them to come forward to talk to someone, filling out a card of commitment, or going to a room where they can speak with someone. Though a preacher should provide a way to respond to Christ, if the unchurched do not respond, he or she “must respect that without pressuring them” (R. Warren 1995, 302).

Fifth, an important part of being an effective preacher is to learn from great preachers. Who better from whom to learn than those who are already doing it? However, it is important for a pastor to be himself or herself. As Hybels suggested, “Develop your own unique style. While you want to learn from great preachers, you don’t want to copy their style” (2005a, 45). Pastors should invest some of their time in watching, listening to, and reading great preachers in order to learn how and why they do what they do.
Sixth, Hybels discovered a common theme among the great preachers he studied. Effective preachers exuded passion and belief in what they shared. Great preachers preach “as though their subject matter was the most urgent issue on the planet” (Hybels 2005a, 45).

If preaching is done right, you live with a text or topic for a week and it builds steam in your spirit. You’re thinking about it, talking to people about it, and asking that God will anoint it. So by the time you’re ready to preach, this subject is the most urgent item in your spirit. If you’ve prepared properly, there is an urgency coming out of you that’s not manufactured. That becomes compelling communication. (Hybels 2005a, 45-46)

Seventh, there are two questions to ask a preacher concerning any message to an audience: “What do you want them to know? What do you want them to do?” (Hybels 2005a, 46). The message should be clear to the audience. There should not be a question as to what the preacher desires for the listeners to know and do. Even the title should be clear from the beginning. Concerning selecting a title, “it’s more important to be clear than cute” (R. Warren 2005, 371). No one should leave church wondering what the message was about and what one is to do with that message.

Finally, and most importantly, a preacher should be filled with God. “Nothing else can take the place of Spirit-anointed preaching” (R. Warren 1995, 306). How can a pastor ensure this is the case every time he or she steps into the pulpit? A preacher should take the advice of Hybels: “Pray like crazy. Trust like crazy. Expect God to work. And then thank him when he does” (2005a, 47). And by God’s grace a preacher can become effective at reaching the unchurched for God’s glory.
Evangelical Christian Leaders

Bill Bright and Billy Graham have been two of the most influential Christian leaders over the past several decades. Bright has gone to be with the Lord and Graham is struggling physically. But by their examples, they have blessed pastors and Christians with tremendous insights into speaking to the unchurched, not only within the Western culture, but to the whole world.

They have both exemplified a passion to be faithful to the Great Commission of going out to evangelize and disciple those who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Bright specifically sought to communicate how to be saved in a simple and understandable way:

What value, really, was a profound theological proposition if the masses could not understand it? What kind of a God would make Himself known in a way that only the brilliant could comprehend? Bill was driven by the challenge of how to make the great truths of God understandable to everyday human beings. (Richardson 2000, 71)

A principle that Bright emphasizes concerning ministry takes shape in the form of making the message of the Bible clear to the unchurched. His passion was for the world to know Christ. He wrote:

I am more concerned than ever with those who are lost in this world without the knowledge of Christ. I am more committed than ever to doing all I can for as long as I can to share with as many as I can the awesome love of our great Creator-God and Savior. (Bright 2003b, 3)

It is critical for a pastor to not only seek to speak to the unchurched in the pulpit, but in every day life as well. A passion for the lost should be the heartbeat of a pastor.

One way of adapting to our present-day culture is by seeking to put the way to salvation “in clear and contemporary language for the postmodern unchurched person” (Vhymeister 2001, 25). More than ever, many individuals do not have any church
background. They do not understand the Christian lingo. So, as preachers, we have the responsibility to ensure that the message we communicate is adapted to the culture we are seeking to reach.

Bright even adapted his *Four-Spiritual Laws* in order to speak to this postmodern culture. He changed the name of the witnessing tract to *Connecting with God*. "Connect" is a buzz-word in our post-modern culture. It communicates to people that they can belong to something bigger than themselves. Here is the basic essence within the pamphlet (Bright 2003a):

1. You were created with value and worth - *John 3:16*
2. Man is sinful and separated from God - *Romans 3:23; 6:23*
3. Jesus Christ is God’s only solution for our sin - *Romans 5:8*
4. We must personally receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord - *Romans 10:9-10*

Bright did not change the essence of the truth, but he changed the language. That is what preachers today need to do in order to reach the unchurched in this day and age.

Patrick Johnstone, when he was recommending how to reach Muslims for Christ, stated, "Often the best missionaries are the ones who have studied little more than the basics of Islamsics but have a passions for sharing Christ. In their boldness for Jesus, they plunge into witnessing to Muslims, where an Islamist would fear to go" (as quoted in Piper 2003, 175). This was insightful, and to a great degree a warning that can be applied to this endeavor. One can overanalyze information and lose the focus of reaching the unchurched for Christ’s glory. The beginning point is a relationship to Christ and a passion to love and obey him by fulfilling the Great Commission.

Graham has probably spoken to more people about Christ through evangelistic crusades and television than anyone who has ever lived. He writes:
We live in a world of confusion. Competing and often contradictory intellectual and religious voices clamor for our attention and allegiance. In the midst of so many crosscurrents, how can we assert that anything is true? Is it not arrogance or narrow-mindedness to claim that there is only one way of salvation or that the way we follow is the right way?

I think not. After all, do we fault a pilot for being narrow-minded when he follows the instrument panel in landing in a rainstorm or at a fogbound airport? No, we want him to remain narrowly focused! And do we consider it arrogant or narrow-minded when a doctor points us to the one medicine that will cure us of a particular disease? The human race is infected with a spiritual disease – the disease of sin – and God has given us the remedy. Dare we do anything less than urge people to apply that remedy to their lives? (Graham 1997, 724-725)

Even with the world beckoning for “tolerance” and allowing everyone alone to believe what he or she wants to believe, Graham has preached and called for God’s truth to be proclaimed. The Western culture may claim that there are many ways to God, but

Graham went on to write:

I have crossed paths with people who hold virtually every kind of religious and philosophical view imaginable. Often I am moved by the intensity of their spiritual searching and by the depth of their commitment. At the same time, as the years have gone by, I myself have become even more convinced of the uniqueness and truth of the Gospel of Christ. (1997, 725)

According to Graham, there is only one way to God and that is through Jesus Christ. It must be proclaimed to a world that is lost and going to hell without Christ’s saving work in their lives.

Some personal thoughts Graham has given that can be taken as wise advise to younger preachers, he said in retrospect of how he has conducted his ministry, “I would speak less and study more” (Graham 1997, 723). Graham went on to say:

I would also spend more time in spiritual nurture, seeking to grow closer to God so I could become more like Christ. I would spend more time in prayer, not just for myself but for others. I would spend more time studying the Bible and meditating on its truth, not only for sermon preparation but to apply its messages to my life. (Graham 1997, 724)
He felt that his life and ministry could have been more effective at reaching the
unchurched if he would have spent more time with God preparing and being changed
himself instead of speaking as much as he did.

David Yonggi Cho is the founding pastor of the Full Gospel Central Church, the
largest church in the world and one of the most influential pastors in the world. His
preaching consists of topical sermons on Sundays and expository verse-by-verse sermons
on Wednesday nights. Concerning his main focus in preaching, he wrote:

I...have a definite goal. I don’t simply preach at random. My goal is always to
help people meet Jesus Christ personally—every Sunday, every Wednesday night,
every Friday night and every other time I am called to preach. Each sermon is
focused so that people will meet Jesus Christ through it. If they are unbelievers,
let them meet Jesus Christ and be converted; if they are already believers, let them
meet Jesus Christ and become more profound in their faith. If I miss the bull’s-
eye there, the sermon is a failure. (1981, 143)

As his second goal in preaching, Cho seeks to help his people succeed in life
(spirit, soul, body, business). Cho puts the success of the people of his congregation first.
His own achievements as a preacher come second (Cho 1981, 144). Cho always begins
with the goodness of God as the basis for all of his sermons (1981, 145). Second, he
bases his sermons on the blood of Jesus Christ, because without the blood of Christ there
is no redemption and therefore no need to persist in the Christian faith. Third, Cho bases
his sermons on producing successful lives within his congregants. Because of the
principles clearly laid out in the Word of God on how to live, those in his church can
follow those biblical principles and succeed spiritually, in their relationships, in business,
in their finances, and in their health (Cho 1981, 151).

Cho believes that “God will use people only according to their brokenness. I
know now that God really could not use me until I was completely broken, until I could
no longer rely on my own strength” (1981, 42). This is a reality for all preachers who are truly effective at communicating the Word of God to any culture or generation. This is critical and necessary to understand when one considers that to which God is calling a preacher.

Cho stated concerning his philosophy of ministry, “In our church we have ‘authority with love.’ If a pastor really loves the people in his congregation, they will respond to his authority and will obey his teaching” (1981, 90). His purpose in preaching is not to be a performer, but a minister. Cho went on to state that:

The members of Full Gospel Central Church obey me because they know I genuinely love them. If I make a mistake, I publicly confess it to them and ask them to pray for me. When a pastor can be open with his congregation like that, they will respect him and obey him. In Christianity all authority must be based on love, just as God’s authority over us is based on love. (1981, 90)

An elder said of Cho, “I do not fully agree with all of Pastor Cho’s policies in the church, but I accept them because I know he really loves me. He’s doing all of this for our benefit” (Cho 1981, 91). It is important that the people experience authentic love from the preacher.

Cho seeks to speak to the needs of those in his church. “Why should they go to a Christian church that does not speak to their needs or to the cries of their hearts” (Cho 1981, 153)? Cho said, “I have no need for trying to become eloquent –in fact, I have no intention of ever becoming eloquent-because I have turned my pulpit into a counseling place” (1981, 151). His desire is to minister to those in his congregation through preaching with love.
Preaching that Connects with the Unchurched

Many aspects of preaching in today's world connect with both churched and unchurched persons alike. There are some characteristics, however, that tend to communicate more effectively with a person who does not know much about Christianity.

Tolerance

John Burke encourages Christians to be patient and loving with non-Christians. Believers should be careful to not adhere to or communicate religious pride. As Burke points out, "We should be tolerant of others' opinions and even beliefs that differ from our own...be tolerant and disagree" (2005, 128) in a respectful way. Christ followers do not have to compromise what they believe in order to connect with the unchurched. In fact, conviction can be very attractive to a world where relativism reigns. This principle applies in preaching. Pastors can display tolerance in the pulpit while at the same time exhibiting certainty in what the Bible says.

Topical Preaching

Most preachers approach the art and craft of preaching with their own personalities and giftedness. Though there is flexibility in sermon preparation and delivery, my conviction is that expository biblical preaching is the method to which God calls preachers. Once again, here is Robinson's definition of expository biblical preaching:

the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers. (1980, 30, italics mine)
R. Warren states, “I do not believe verse-by-verse teaching through the books of the Bible is the most effective way to evangelize the unchurched” (1995, 294). R. Warren believes a preacher should start a sermon and develop a message from a place of common ground with the unchurched as the Apostle Paul did at Mars Hill (Acts 17:16-34). Many call this topical preaching.

I do not believe that topical preaching and expository preaching have to be mutually exclusive. Jesus used Scripture to address questions of morality and spirituality when he walked this earth (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 12:18-34). Similarly, I believe preaching to the unchurched can be done effectively through a topical expository Bible-based message.

Some homiletics speak against topical preaching. Timothy Warren states, “The problem with topical preaching, however, is not that it’s topical. The problem is when it isn’t expositional” (2005, 418). T. Warren is committed to topical preaching when it is appropriate and he is “committed to expository preaching all of the time” (T. Warren 2005, 418). T. Warren lists the following reasons for validating topical preaching (2005, 418):

1. People like topical preaching.
2. Sometimes issues arise that demand a biblical response.
3. Topical preaching is modeled in the Scriptures.

T. Warren’s first reason does not validate topical preaching, however, his second and third reasons do. Issues arise in our culture and they sometimes call for a biblical response. A tremendous example of this was the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As well, the Bible models topical preaching as one would study the sermons of Peter in Acts 2 and Paul in Acts 13.
Some pastors preach self-help messages where there are three points supported by three different Scripture passages that backup what the preacher wants to say. This is not expository preaching. There is a clear distinction between topical exposition and topical preaching as I just described from a self-help pastor. Robinson states that expository preaching “is preaching that draws its substance from the Scriptures” (2004, 82). As well, he states that “the idea of the sermon...” should “…be true to the idea of the passage” (Robinson 2004, 83). Robinson’s convictions need to be the convictions of an expository preacher.

Preachers should be cautious to be true to the text no matter what method of preaching they utilize, but a danger for a topical preacher is the tendency to “short-cut the exegesis of the passage” (Sunukjian 2005, 421) to get to a point they want to communicate. Preachers must proclaim the meaning of the passage not their own thoughts that they think the audience wants to hear. Sunukjian also states:

Topical preaching that is truly biblical is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from several different passages related to one another through a common subject and through either parallel or progressive assertions. (2005, 421)

Sunukjian’s description is fundamental to topical expository preaching. Concerning the difference between topical expositional preaching and Robinson’s view of expository preaching:

The difference is that topical exposition deals with more than one text or literary unit in their different contexts. All styles of expository preaching, whether starting with a text and moving to a relevant topic/application or starting with a relevant topic and moving back through several texts to application, follow the same method. (T. Warren 2005, 419)
Topical expository biblical preaching, as well as expository preaching based upon one pericope can be effective when preaching to the unchurched. No matter the method, hard work awaits the preacher who will endeavor to do so.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

A young couple first visited Gateway Church and wanted to know more about what the congregation had to offer. The wife was raised in an evangelical church and the husband had little church background. The last few years, the wife had not been attending church on a regular basis. However, over the past few weeks, the couple had been searching for a church that they would both like and that they could call home.

The man felt that Gateway was different from other churches they had tried. He enjoyed the friendliness, the guitar-driven music, and the messages. However, he mentioned that he did not always understand everything that took place during the worship service. Specifically, he did not always grasp what the preachers talked about from the Bible in their sermons. This couple represents a number of people who attend this church. The reason for conducting this research is to help connect with others like this young man and young woman so that they become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

This couple and other individuals like them drove me to find out how this church has been doing in connecting with the previously unchurched. Their insights and feedback determine how to adjust to be more effective through the preaching of God’s Word. The goal of the research in this project was to answer the four research questions posed in Chapter One to ensure connection with the unchurched through preaching. The four research questions are:
1. To what degree do previously unchurched persons attend our church?

2. What are the distinctive characteristics of the unchurched in our ministry setting?

3. How good are we doing currently at connecting with the previously unchurched in our ministry setting?

4. What are the characteristics of a message that will best reach unchurched persons in our ministry setting?

The methodology for this investigation was qualitative in nature. It incorporated some quantitative characteristics, but overall it was an inductive analysis of the results that were acquired through this research process. Different modes of research were intentionally utilized in order to answer the four primary research questions.

Five different modes of research were implemented in this process. First, a survey was conducted of all new members who were brought into the church over a one year period. Second, a questionnaire was given to those within the church body to complete and return during the worship services on a particular weekend. Third, sermon evaluations were filled out by a number of previously unchurched persons who are now in attendance at this church. Fourth, informal interviews were conducted with previously unchurched persons who now attend Gateway Church on a regular basis. Fifth, information was gleaned from preachers and authors with experience or expertise in effectively connecting with the unchurched through preaching.

The persons studied in this research were “previously unchurched.” Rather than looking at all of the unchurched in the world, this study looked at those who were unchurched at one time and are now attending Gateway Church. The phrase “previously unchurched” is similar to that which Thom Rainer uses. He calls certain individuals “formerly unchurched.” The “formerly unchurched,” according to Rainer, are those
persons who had become active in a church in the past two years, but had not been in church for a large portion of their lives (2001, 22). Rainer chose these persons because he then had “an actual case study of someone moving from the ranks of the unchurched to the churched” (2001, 22-23). The goal in identifying and learning from the previously unchurched was so that the preachers at Gateway Church could become more effective at connecting with the unchurched who visit.

*New Member Surveys*

The primary motivation behind these surveys was to gather information concerning primary question number one. All new incoming members in 2005 completed this survey as part of the “New Members’ Class.” In order to become a member of the church, people agreed to make a covenant to attend and support Gateway Church through the use of their time, talent, and treasure. As well, all new members must meet with an elder to discuss their spiritual lives and ways in which to become involved in Gateway Church. According to *the Book of Order of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church*, confirmed members are:

> Those who have been baptized and who have made a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who have been admitted to active membership by the Church Session are entitled to participate in the governing of the Church by voting in meetings of the congregation. (1987 “Part One: The Book of Government,” 6-1-A)

They had to confess publicly Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and be baptized. Upon becoming members, individuals gained the right to vote on certain issues within the life of the church and would be allowed to be considered for some leadership roles where membership was a requirement.
These surveys were completed on the following dates with the number of new members in that class noted in parentheses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th># of New Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 12, 2005</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 2005</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 5, 2005</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 64 new members joined the church in 2005 and each completed the survey. Toward the end of each session the surveys were distributed to each person in the class. The surveys did not ask for a name so that anonymity would be assured and to secure the most honest answers from the participants. After each New Members’ Class was completed, the church secretary tabulated the findings. I ensured that the survey contained the exact same questions each time they were distributed in order to maintain consistency within the research process.

These surveys revealed to what degree the unchurched were moving from attendance to commitment. The surveys allowed for a comparison to be made between the percentage of unchurched in the congregation as a whole to the percentage of the unchurched of those who were becoming new members. To have an unchurched person visit the church was wonderful. To have that individual come back for a number of weeks or months or years was even better. But to have that man or woman commit to Christ through confession, baptism, and to a particular church body was the overall goal of the church leadership. The surveys of new members revealed to what degree unchurched persons were moving toward membership within the church.
Congregational Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to acquire data concerning research questions one, two, three, and four. With RQ1 in mind, the comparison between the percentage of incoming new members who were previously unchurched compared to the percentage of previously unchurched persons in the whole congregation could be discovered. With RQ2 in mind, the questionnaire identified the characteristics of those in the congregation who were previously unchurched. With RQ3 in mind, the questionnaire revealed how well the preaching has connected with the previously unchurched. With RQ4 in mind, this questionnaire let us know to what degree the preaching pastors were able to identify and incorporate characteristics of a message which best reach the unchurched.

The questionnaire was reviewed and revised by my doctoral project chair, William Reist and James Albert, a professor of statistics at Bowling Green State University and a member of Gateway Church. Originally the questionnaire consisted of twelve questions, but Albert recommended lowering the number of questions to increase the probability of each person completing the whole questionnaire. Therefore, the final copy contained just ten focused questions on a half-sheet of paper that was 5.5 inches wide by 8.5 inches long. Questions were on both sides of the questionnaire.

Albert also noted that in order for the results to be most accurate, the questionnaire should be given on a “normal” Sunday where attendance was not abnormally high or low. The average worship center attendance from September 1, 2005, through February 12, 2006, was 569.0. Worship center attendance has grown since September 2005, so the estimate for average worship attendance focused upon the
average attendance the date the questionnaire was filled out. The goal was to have 50% of the average attendance in the worship center to complete the questionnaire. The average attendance in the worship center over a six week span that concluded on the Sunday the questionnaires were distributed was 606.2. Therefore, the target for the number of completed questionnaires would be 300, depending on the worship center attendance the day the questionnaire was distributed. The attendance in the worship center on the day the questionnaire was distributed was 591. So, the minimum number of questionnaires desired to be filled out and returned was 296. This would give an accurate assessment from which to evaluate the research.

Very few children were present when the questionnaires were distributed because most of them were in classes during the worship services. A majority of those present in the worship center completed the survey. According to the responses to question one on the questionnaires, approximately 432 participated.

The questionnaires were distributed to the congregation during all three worship services on Sunday, February 12, 2006. Since many congregants arrived after the worship services were already underway, the questionnaires were distributed during the middle of the one-hour worship time. This allowed for the maximum number of persons to be present in the worship center at the time the questionnaires were dispersed. I gave specific instructions from the platform to those in attendance as they were each handed a questionnaire from the ushers. I made sure to inform those in attendance to complete both sides of the questionnaire. The congregation was asked to fill out each line item, fold the sheet of paper in half, and hand it to the outside of each aisle where the ushers collected them.
Evaluations of Sermons

The principle reason for this research was to obtain data pertaining to research questions three and four. Pertaining to RQ3, the goal was to see how I was doing at relating to the previously unchurched in the preaching. As well, I sought to ascertain whether or not I was becoming more effective over time. Pertaining to RQ4, the goal was to see what aspects of the sermon were most beneficial to the previously unchurched. This would give insight when preparing future messages.

Selecting the Sample

For these evaluations, the goal was to ascertain the perspectives of a broad range of previously unchurched persons concerning sermons that I preached over a four month period. The individuals were asked to evaluate my preaching once every two months over this four month period, which meant three separate evaluations were to be completed. I initially chose twelve persons who I knew were previously unchurched and asked them to participate in this study. A varying range of ages and equal number of males and females was intentionally targeted. Each person selected was contacted through a telephone call, letter, or email. Everyone who was contacted was assured that his or her responses would be anonymous. Some of them never responded.

After a low number of responses were received from the initial evaluation, I increased the number of those I asked to participate to twenty-two persons. I sought to vary their ages and pursue an equal number of males and females. The number of responses received increased, but not significantly for the last two evaluations.
Sending out the Evaluations

The evaluations were sent out with a letter stating the rationale behind them and asking the evaluators to complete the evaluations on the following three dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>October 15 and 16, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>December 10 and 11, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>February 4 and 5, 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Included with the letter and evaluation was a self-addressed stamped envelope for the participants to return the evaluation via mail to the church secretary at the church office. This method helped to ensure anonymity for each participant. The information was mailed out prior to each of the listed dates I was to be evaluated. The first letter was sent out October 3, 2005, twelve days before the first evaluations were to take place. One person, however, returned a filled out evaluation based upon the sermon I preached on October 8 and 9, 2005 instead of October 15 and 16, 2005. Therefore, the following mailings were then sent out on the Monday prior to the desired evaluation dates in an attempt to alleviate the issue of individuals completing the evaluations for the wrong dates.

Something of note was that there was a typographical error in that February 4 and 5, 2005 was placed in the letter instead of February 4 and 5, 2006 (italics mine). As well, church services were not held on December 10, 2005 or February 4, 2006. As of December 1, 2005, the leadership of Gateway Church decided to cease Saturday services and to only provide Sunday morning services.
Receiving the Evaluations

As noted above, one evaluation was mailed to the church office based upon the sermon I preached on October 8 and 9, 2005. Based upon the October 15 and 16, 2005 sermon I preached, five evaluations were returned to the church secretary. Based upon the December 11, 2005 sermon I preached, seven evaluations were returned to the church secretary. Based upon the February 5, 2006 sermon I preached, seven evaluations were returned to the church secretary.

These numbers were much lower than I had hoped, but beneficial information was gleaned from these evaluations. For the October 15 and 16, 2005 sermon, there were three males, one female, and one who did not note his or her gender who filled out the evaluations. For the December 11, 2005 evaluations, there were four males and three females who filled out the evaluations. For the February 5, 2006 evaluations, five males and two females filled out the evaluations.

Tabulating the Results

When all of the evaluations were received, the church secretary tabulated the final results. The secretary entered the totals of each question that was evaluated on a scale of one to five. She also recorded the comments from the last two questions for each evaluation based upon the date of the sermon which was being evaluated.

Informal Interviews

I met with ten different individuals, consisting of three married couples, a single man who has never been married, a single lady who has never been married, a single lady who was divorced, and a lady who is married but whose husband does not attend church.
There were four males and six females interviewed. There were two in the 18-24 year old range, five in the 25-34 year old range, and three in the 35-44 year old range. All of those interviewed were not attending church at least once per month prior to attending Gateway Church. Each of them began attending Gateway within the past three years.

These interviews were beneficial in addressing research questions three and four. Regarding RQ3, I could glean from these individuals how they felt the preaching pastors had been doing at connecting with them. Regarding RQ4, I could gather from these individuals what they felt would be the characteristics of a message that would connect with an unchurched person like they were.

These interviews were conducted in differing situations. I have attempted to meet with as many of the new attendees as possible over the past five years. I met with each of the couples, the single man, and the single women within the first few months of their first visit to Gateway Church. Each of the discussions with the ten previously unchurched persons lasted about one hour in length. When I met with the three married couples, each of them was over lunch or dinner, so the discussion was probably less than with each of the four individuals. As well, with the married couples, I was hearing from two different people for less time so there was not as much shared from each one.

The interviews were not formal and were purposefully non-threatening. I did not want these previously unchurched persons to feel cornered by a pastor concerning their involvement at Gateway Church. For some of the interviews, the initial intent was not to use them for this research project, but after working on the project, it became evident that the information gleaned from the interviews would enhance the research so I have included the findings.
I discussed with each of them how they felt about the sermons that were given at Gateway. The most unique interview was with the married lady whose husband does not attend church. The interview was part of her requirements for becoming a new member. I asked her about the sermons that were preached at Gateway Church and how they have drawn her to the point where she was becoming a new member. This information was helpful in understanding how we had been doing at connecting with the unchurched through our preaching, what the characteristics were of a message that would connect with an unchurched person, and what changes should be made in order to be more effective.

*Preachers and Authors*

Information was gleaned from preachers and authors who appear to be experienced or experts at connecting effectively with the unchurched through preaching. Insights were gathered from a dinner meeting with Pastor Lee Powell and the rest were acquired through reading articles and books written by preachers and other authors who have studied the unchurched culture.

Most of the insights concerning effective preaching to today's culture applied both to churched and unchurched individuals alike. This information was provided in Chapter Three of this project. Some recommendations were garnered from preachers in regards to preaching to the unchurched. These insights were also recorded in Chapter Three of this thesis.
CHAPTER FIVE
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data for this project were primarily gathered over an eighteen month period, October 2004 to March 2006, though a portion of it was conducted prior to as well as after that timeline. The research was collected from new member surveys, sermon evaluations, a congregational questionnaire, informal interviews, and personal observations. The final information was analyzed, collated, and codified in the spring of 2006.

Results from New Member Surveys

These surveys revealed who was joining Gateway Church as new members in 2005. The information was beneficial to the church leadership because it revealed the characteristics of the individuals who committed to membership over a one year period. Becoming a member signified that these persons were willing to confess publicly Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, be baptized if they had not already, and to serve Gateway Church through the use of their time, talent, and treasure. The classes which were held on the following dates will be referred to as follows:

- March 12, 2005       Class 1
- July 28/August 4, 2005 Class 2
- November 5, 2005     Class 3

The standard I utilized to classify individuals as unchurched within this study was based upon CedarCreek Church's (of Perrysburg, Ohio) designation. I have followed and learned from CedarCreek as it has grown from an average attendance of 1,400 to around
6,000 over the past eight years. CedarCreek would be classified as a "seeker-sensitive church," according to Senior Pastor Lee Powell. I learned from their Home Groups Pastor that their attendance as of December 2005 was reaching around 6,000 on a weekend. Gateway Church’s attendance reached 841 in that same month. Since CedarCreek has been viewed by other Christian leaders in our area as "successful" at reaching the unchurched, I wanted to discover how Gateway Church compared to CedarCreek in the degree to which we have attracted and kept previously unchurched persons within our congregation.

CedarCreek Church conducted a *Future Planning Survey* in which it sought to find out who was attending their church. One of the questions asked was, "Before attending CedarCreek, how often did you attend church?". The options they provided those who filled out the survey were:

- Almost every week
- Once or twice a month
- Not very often
- Rarely, if ever

CedarCreek classified persons as unchurched if they were not attending church at least once a month in the weeks prior to visiting CedarCreek Church. Those who indicated that they did attend church once or twice a month or almost every week were considered churched according to the survey. According to their *Future Planning Survey*, 47.1% of those surveyed were unchurched.

The classification of an unchurched person according to George Barna differed from CedarCreek’s. Barna’s definition of an unchurched person is:

*We define a person as unchurched if he or she has not attended a Christian church service at any time during the past six months, other than special events such as weddings and funerals.* (2002a, 23)
The way I posed the question (Question 2) that sought to identify those individuals who were unchurched was simply, “Were you attending a church on a regular basis in the weeks prior to attending Gateway?” The respondents were to mark either “Yes” or “No.” This approach was not concise to the degree Barna’s definition of unchurched was. Barna’s definition was more stringent than CedarCreek’s and Gateway’s.

According to the results of the New Member Survey, this was how the incoming new members responded to the question, “Were you attending a church on a regular basis in the weeks prior to attending Gateway?”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This research revealed that 39.1% of our new members were not attending church on a regular basis before visiting and joining Gateway Church. I categorized these people as unchurched. Even though CedarCreek’s attendance was about seven times that of Gateway’s their percentage of unchurched was only 8.0% higher.

These results indicated that a significantly higher percentage of new members were previously unchurched in the last two classes than in the first. In Class 1, only 28.6% were unchurched, whereas 50.0% were unchurched in Class 2 and 46.4% in Class 3. Over the last two classes, 47.2% of those who became new members were not attending church on a regular basis prior to attending Gateway Church.
These surveys revealed that a significant percentage of persons who joined Gateway Church in 2005 were previously unchurched. In retrospect, the question should have been more targeted and in line with what was asked within the congregational questionnaire: “Were you attending church elsewhere at least once a month in the weeks prior to attending Gateway Church?” Asking the question in this way would have allowed for a more consistent analysis of the figures when comparing CedarCreek’s findings to Gateway’s as well as those discovered through the congregational questionnaire.

A more radical measurement of our effectiveness, especially in light of the Great Commission in Scripture (Matt. 28:19-20), was the degree to which persons were accepting Christ through the influence of those at Gateway Church. The question on the survey was, “Did you accept Christ through Gateway Church or through someone related to Gateway?” Only 6 out of 64, or 9.4%, of the new members in 2005 noted that they accepted Christ through Gateway Church or someone related to Gateway. The goal of any church should be to grow through conversion growth and 9.4% seemed low. It did not seem, on the surface anyway, that Gateway had been that effective at conversion growth according to this survey.

What has kept these new members attending Gateway Church? In order to answer this question, the following was asked on the survey (Question 4): “Why have you chosen to continue to attend Gateway? (check the top two).” According to these surveys, the reason why these new members kept attending Gateway Church was the worship. The assumption was that “worship” constituted the musical, multimedia, and dramatic elements of the worship services. Coming in a close second was the preaching. Below
were the top three reasons the 64 respondents noted for continuing to attend Gateway Church:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preaching</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly Atmosphere</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most respondents noted that their top two reasons for continuing to be part of Gateway Church were the worship and preaching. It was important to note that the respondents were only to check the top two, but many of them checked more than two. In spite of this, it was evident that the worship and preaching were the most influential areas of ministry which kept them coming back.

The surveys revealed that forty-one of sixty-four respondents, or 64.1%, noted that they were still part of Gateway Church because of the preaching. If the preaching at Gateway Church was much of the reason these new members have continued to attend and 39.1% of them were previously unchurched, it would suggest that the preaching was connecting with the unchurched.

However, it was interesting to note that the percentage of those who marked preaching as a top reason for continued attendance at Gateway dropped with Class 3 when compared to Class 1 and Class 2. In Class 1 and Class 2, 75% of the respondents checked that the preaching was one of the top reasons they continued to be part of Gateway Church. In Class 3, only 50% selected preaching as one of their top reasons for
staying. The chart below shows the figures concerning the respondents within each class who indicated preaching was one of the primary reasons why they remained at Gateway:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Preaching</th>
<th>New Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>21 (75%)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14 (50%)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41 (64%)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With this realization, did we become less effective at preaching to the unchurched over time? The percentage of unchurched in Class 2 (50%) was essentially the same as that of Class 3 (46.4%), yet there was a significant drop in the percentage of those who chose preaching as one of the primary reasons for remaining at Gateway Church. Class 1 had a much lower percentage of previously unchurched persons in it when compared to Class 2 and Class 3. Since this was the case, it would be possible that those who had a churched background had a greater understanding and appreciation for preaching. Class 2 had a small number within it with Class 3 having more than three times the amount of Class 2. It would have been feasible that the small number of individuals in Class 2 skewed the figures for that class when compared to much larger classes. Knowing both of these facts, could it be that the preachers have not been connecting with the unchurched effectively? Or were other areas of ministry more important to the previously unchurched than the preaching at connecting with them at Gateway?

I do not know for sure, but I believe the preachers have not focused upon connecting with the unchurched to a great degree until recently. Therefore, we probably
have not been that effective. Also, I have heard from new persons that the preaching was not as important to them as other aspects of the church. The worship and friendly atmosphere were quite attractive to most of the new persons to whom I have spoken. As well, those with children focused upon the way their children were loved on by the teachers and workers. So maybe these other areas were more important to them than the preaching.

Results from Sermon Evaluations

The goals of conducting the sermon evaluations were to find out how effective I had been at connecting with the previously unchurched, if I was becoming more successful over time at relating with them, and what changes could be made in order to become more engaging with the unchurched in the future. The sermon evaluations revealed the degree to which a bond was made with a sample of the previously unchurched who attended Gateway. The results of the evaluations over a four month period with three different sermon evaluations that were conducted with two months in between each message, gave insight into the effectiveness in connecting with the previously unchurched over time. Finally, the information provided insight into changes which can be made in order to become even more proficient at engaging the previously unchurched in the future.

The titles, topics, and Scripture references for the three messages were as follows:
Table 6. Sermon Evaluations, by Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Topic (Scripture)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-15/16-05</td>
<td>Why Communion?</td>
<td>Communion (1 Cor. 11:17-34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-11-05</td>
<td>What is Christmas All About?</td>
<td>Christmas (Luke 2:8-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-05-06</td>
<td>Invest and Invite</td>
<td>Evangelizing (Col. 4:2-6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in Chapter Three, Rick Warren has held the conviction that pastors should use a different approach when speaking to non-Christians who were seeking God than they do when they speak to believers. R. Warren stated that he utilized verse-by-verse messages when preaching to believers, but he did “not believe verse-by-verse teaching through the books of the Bible (was) the most effective way to evangelize the unchurched” (1995, 294).

The Apostle Paul did not use the verse-by-verse approach of preaching when he sought to reach non-Christians with the Gospel when he was in Athens (Acts 17:19-34). As well, it did not appear to be the way Jesus evangelized when he engaged in a conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:4-26. In today’s world, it also did not seem to be the best method for connecting with the unchurched in this generation.

Gateway Church has traditionally focused the Sunday morning (and Saturday evening when applicable) services on the worship of God and challenging the congregation through the preaching of God’s Word. The type of preaching utilized has generally been a verse-by-verse approach in contrast with a topical one. Topical messages have been preached at Gateway at times, but have been the exception rather than the rule. Therefore, the verse-by-verse method was the approach implemented
within the messages I preached over the four month period when the evaluations were
conducted. Though as noted in Chapter Three, topical sermons which address issues in an
expository biblical manner can be done in an effective manner.

The sermon titled *What is Christmas All About?* was a good choice where it could
be targeted toward the unchurched. The message, in essence, centered upon the promises
God made in the Old Testament and then fulfilled through Jesus Christ in the New
Testament by providing salvation for the world through him. The sermon was particularly
appropriate for that season since Gateway has tended to have an influx of unchurched
persons around Christmas time.

The messages that focused upon communion and evangelism did not seem
appropriate for the unchurched. First time visitors have been present every weekend at
Gateway Church over the past few years. The unchurched were taught what communion
means and were challenged to invest in the lives of the unchurched in their world and to
invite them to know Jesus and to church. Some of the unchurched were not Christians.
These topics did not seem wise or proper.

I have suggested to the senior pastor, however, that Gateway provide a believers’
service on Sunday evenings or some evening during the week such as on Wednesday or
Thursday. This has been a practice of both Willow Creek Community Church and
CedarCreek Community Church. Willow Creek provides “New Community” services for
believers on Wednesday and Thursday evenings each week. This has provided a place
where Christians can be challenged at a deeper level than during the weekend services
through deeper teaching and extended worship. CedarCreek provides “New Community”
one a month on Sunday evenings as an opportunity for those committed Christ followers
within the congregation to participate in communion, experience engaging worship, and
to be challenged more deeply through the teaching of the Word of God than they did
during the Saturday evening and Sunday morning services. Both of these churches have
intentionally designed their Saturday evening and Sunday morning services as outreach
events.

The plan of our leadership has been in the future to add a Sunday evening service
once every month or every other month that would be geared toward the highly
committed. Communion would be served every time this service was held, the worship
time would be more extensive, and the sermon would be more in depth with a verse-by-
verse approach.

Having shared this information, the focus will now be on the results from the
sermon evaluations. They were analyzed based upon a 5.0 scale with the values
designated as follows:

1  totally disagree
2  disagree
3  neutral
4  agree
5  totally agree

The four statements which received the best results were as follows with the
highest marks being listed first:
Table 7. Sermon Evaluations, Based on Highest Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Preacher utilized understandable language.</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Preacher involved his personality into the sermon.</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sermon was appropriate length.</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sermon was clear and understandable.</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Realizing that the utilization of understandable language was given the highest marks, it suggested that I used words and concepts that were easily comprehended by the previously unchurched.

Tied for the second best marks were numbers 4, 7, and 8 that had to do with involving personality into the sermon, the sermon being an appropriate length, and the sermon being clear and understandable, respectively. Statement 4 showed that I used my personality and charisma within the sermon. I believe I have been authentic as I have preached knowing that it connects with this culture.

Number 7 revealed that the previously unchurched who completed the evaluations felt that the messages were not too long nor were they too short. It seemed that the congregation was engaged, from my perspective as a communicator, for the duration of the sermons. This was verified by the results of the evaluations for even the previously unchurched.

Number 8 suggested that the sermons were clear and understandable. Keeping a message focused and comprehensible for the audience, whether through writing or speaking, has seemed to be one of my strengths as evidenced by remarks from my professors and congregants. This research confirmed that belief. In order for an
unchurched person to grasp the Good News, it must have been communicated in clear terms they could understand.

The lowest three marks received were as follows with the lowest results being listed first:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. Sermon Evaluations, Based on Lowest Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sermon motivated me to action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sermon inspired me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sermon connected with me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data revealed that my weakest areas consisted of connecting with and inspiring the previously unchurched to action. The responses of the evaluators to these three statements surprised me. I assumed I was quite proficient in these areas. I most certainly do not mean this in an arrogant way, but I have been told I am a dynamic speaker and preacher. Yet, apparently when it comes to preaching to the unchurched I have some work to do. After reviewing the three sermons that were evaluated, I realized there were not specific action steps for the congregants. Action steps need to be implemented and made clear to the audience in future sermons. These can be included in the sermon notes that are placed in the bulletin and displayed on the projector screen. As well, messages should be analyzed for their inspirational quality, without ever compromising the truth found in Scripture.

Overall totals consisted of the total of the results of the fifteen evaluative measures being added together for each sermon. The overall results for each of the sermons were as follows:
Table 9. Sermon Evaluations, Overall Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date(s) of Sermon</th>
<th>Overall Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 15/16, 2005</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 11, 2005</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 5, 2006</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first observation, one which struck me with surprise, was that the overall totals declined with each sermon over the four month evaluative process. Certainly the reasons for this were probably multi-layered, but most likely a major reason was the fact that the October 15 and 16, 2005 evaluation only had five persons participate. After so few responded, I asked almost twice as many (only twelve were asked for the first sermon and twenty-two for the second and third sermons) to participate in the final two sermon evaluations. As noted in Chapter Four, eight evaluations were returned from the December 11, 2005 sermon and seven from the February 5, 2006 sermon.

Confidentiality was desired so that the respondents would be as honest as possible. Therefore, I did not know if the same persons were completing evaluations for all three sermons nor could I know who would follow through with the promise to complete the surveys. Having a different mix of individuals completing the surveys each time, versus having the same individuals each time, could have accounted for some of the decline in the overall totals over the four month period.

I may not have been effective over time at connecting with the previously unchurched within the Gateway congregation. If that was the case, changes need to be made such as were discussed in Chapter Three.
Comments were encouraged by asking the following two questions at the end of each sermon evaluation:

What do you think was the preacher’s greatest strength?  
What is one area in which the preacher could improve?

The comments concerning my greatest strength as a preacher seemed to relate to my ability to tie everyday experiences through story form, with the use of humor, with what God calls one to according to his Word. Many of the remarks in response to the question noted that the evaluators especially related to personal experiences of mine. Haddon Robinson noted that personal examples were the most effective way to connect with an audience and for them to relate to the message and the preacher (2001).

This led into the responses from the second question which focused upon one area I could improve upon as a preacher. One evaluator (a 30-39 year old female) made a comment based upon the December 11, 2005 sermon that my real life examples “seem to be limited” to my “personal experiences rather than more global experiences that apply to a broader audience.” This remark surprised me because of other responses I have received from many different means. However, after reflecting upon the response, I have made some changes as I integrate illustrations into my sermons. The particular message to which the 30-39 year old female was referring contained two personal illustrations that evoked laughter from the audience. I was not sure why the woman did not resonate with those stories, but I can seek to make certain that in the future I think through each illustration to attempt to connect with a “broader audience.” As well, I reviewed the last number of messages that I have preached. Each of them contained at least two personal illustrations. Robinson noted that speakers can overdo narrative about themselves to the
point that the illustrations lose their effectiveness (2001). That being the case, I have intentionally limited the number of personal stories utilized in sermons to two.

Another evaluator requested that I add more background information for the Scripture passages I utilized. This paralleled a great deal of the information I gleaned from other previously unchurched individuals, especially those who did not have a well-grounded knowledge of the Bible. This was an area I found I should focus upon more in sermon preparation and delivery.

It was also recommended by one evaluator that I should seek to motivate people to action to a greater degree. This was one of the lowest scores received within the fifteen evaluative measures and it was obvious that I needed to incorporate more of that element in future sermons.

Finally, a respondent remarked that the beginning portion of the last sermon was slow and that the second half took off keeping the interest of this evaluator for the remainder of the message. This particular sermon began with a serious illustration and was a challenge to the congregants to invest in the lives of non-Christians and invite them to church. As noted earlier, the message was probably not appropriate for the unchurched. This may have been why this particular evaluator was not engaged with the first part of the message. It was definitely a sermon geared to Christians.

Results from Congregational Questionnaire

The questionnaire was beneficial in discovering the demographic make up of those who have been in attendance at Gateway Church and how effective the preachers have been at connecting with them, especially the previously unchurched. According to
the responses to Question 1 of the questionnaire, 432 individuals filled out at least a portion of the questionnaire. Not all of the 432 answered every question.

Reaching the Unchurched

According to Question 5, 38.9% of the respondents were not attending church on a regular basis prior to attending Gateway. The question was worded as: "Were you attending church elsewhere at least once a month in the weeks prior to attending Gateway?" The wording of this question was in line with the parameters CedarCreek set for defining an unchurched person.

A significant portion of those who were in attendance during the worship services were not attending church on a regular basis prior to visiting Gateway Church. This was in line with the desire of our leadership to reach out to the unchurched. The number was actually higher than expected, yet slightly lower than the percentage of previously unchurched within the new members' classes in 2005, which was 39.1%. However, the percentage of unchurched over the last two New Member's classes was 47.2% and these two classes were held during the last six months of 2005. This suggested that a greater percentage of unchurched individuals have been attending Gateway Church over the past number of months. If that is truly the case, then the percentage of unchurched within the congregation as a whole would most likely increase.

Question 6 brought about a significant figure, 15.0%. This was the percentage of respondents who marked that they came to know Jesus Christ as Savior through Gateway or someone who attends Gateway. The question was worded as, "Did you come to know Jesus Christ as Savior through Gateway or someone who attends Gateway?" In retrospect, the question should have been worded precisely as it was on the New Member
Survey. Not that the meaning was any different, but it would have brought consistency when comparing figures between the two evaluative measures and left no room for misinterpretation when comparing the two.

The percentage of those who came to Christ through the influence of Gateway Church within the congregation as a whole according to the Congregational Questionnaire was 15.0% whereas the percentage of new members according to the New Member Survey only 9.4%. This showed that a larger percentage than was first thought based upon the New Member Survey have come to Christ through the ministry of Gateway. This was encouraging, yet revealed that most of the Christians within the Gateway congregation did not come to Christ through Gateway Church. This was viewed as a challenge to seek to increase this percentage so that a greater amount of the growth of Gateway in the future would come from conversion growth.

Thirty-four out of the 164 (20.7%) previously unchurched noted that they came to Christ through the influence of Gateway Church. That was 5.7% higher than the overall church. In other words, more than one out of every five unchurched persons who became part of Gateway came to Christ through the influence of Gateway Church. This information is encouraging.

It seemed that Question 6 was clear, yet 13 respondents noted that they were “Not Sure.” There could have been a few different reasons for these responses. First, perhaps they were not sure of the level of influence of Gateway in their salvation story and they wanted to ensure their response was accurate. Second, some of them may not have known what it meant to “know Jesus Christ as Savior.” If the second is true, then we need to be
more intentional and clear about what having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ means.

Demographics

The responses to Question 1 revealed that 52.8% of those who were in the worship services were under the age of 45. For the unchurched, this figure rose to 54.5%. The average age of the previously unchurched was lower than that of the rest of those within the congregation. Based upon the responses to Question 1, plus the fact that 173 infants, children, and youth were involved in classes during the worship services that particular weekend, most of those in the congregation were under 35 years of age. Gateway Church had a lower average age per person than I had previously thought. The population in Hancock County consists of 64.2% of those under the age of 45 (U. S. Census Bureau 2000).

Only 432 out of 591 who were in the worship services filled out the questionnaire, which was 73.1%. There were a total of 173 individuals who were infants, children, or youth in classes that same Sunday. If 73.1% is multiplied by 173, the result would be 126.5. Since all of the 126.5 were under the age of 45, when that figure is added to the 228 who completed the survey who were under that age of 45, the estimate of those under the age of 45 within Gateway Church was 63.5%. This percentage was right in line with that of Hancock County. Therefore, Gateway was reaching a healthy distribution of ages proportionate to that of the community in which it exists.

Gateway is not ethnically diverse, but neither is Hancock County. Out of those who responded, 95.4% noted that they were White American/Non-Hispanic, which was in line with 95.1% in Hancock County (U. S. Census Bureau 2000). The previously
unchurched consisted of 92.9% White American/Non-Hispanic. There was not a significant difference between the percentages of White American/Non-Hispanics in the overall congregation versus that of the unchurched.

The population of Hancock County consisted of 51.5% women (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The percentage of females within the congregation as a whole was 58.5%, which was not surprising since more women than men attend church in general (Barna 2000). The percentage of previously unchurched who were female was 59.4%. There was not a significant difference between the two statistics which suggests that Gateway has reached out proportionally to both women and men.

"More than four out of every ten adults in the United States is not married" (Barna 2002b). From the congregational questionnaire, assuming none of those 17 years of age and under were ever married, this would mean that only 17.3% of the adults of Gateway were single. This figure was significantly lower (less than half) than that of the overall population of the United States. As well, only 4.4% of those who filled out the questionnaire and 4.9% of the adults who completed the questionnaire were divorced. This suggested that Gateway Church has not been focused upon connecting with singles or those who were divorced. There has been a considerable amount of unchurched singles in our community which have not been reached. The most significant way in which to reach this target group would take place in small group settings, yet the preaching should adapt to this need as well.

Effectiveness at Preaching to the Unchurched

The final three questions on the questionnaire dealt with the effectiveness of the preachers at connecting with the congregants when they first attended Gateway. It was
important to word these questions in such a way that the respondents knew their answers were to be based upon their thoughts about the preaching when they first visited the church. The questions were as follows:

Question 8: Did the preaching help you to more faithfully live the Christian life when you first attended?
Question 9: Did the preaching speak to your needs when you first attended?
Question 10: Did the preaching at Gateway connect you with God when you first attended?

Each response was assigned the following values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at All</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Much So</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the responses were tallied based upon a 2.0 scale. For the overall congregation, the following were the final results:

Table 10. Congregational Questionnaire, Overall Effectiveness at Preaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 8 dealt with the actual living out of the Christian life. This result was the lowest of the three questions. Question 9 dealt with the needs of the congregant and it received the highest result. Question 10 dealt with helping individuals to connect with God and its final result was in between that of Question 8 and Question 9.

These results were not surprising since people tend to want to hear of God’s love and His desire to meet their needs, yet those same people often do not want to hear what
God calls them to do according to Scripture. This was what Bill Hybels warned against when challenging preachers not to preach a cheap gospel no matter the response from the congregation (2005c, 693). This reasoning should not be used as an excuse for boring and irrelevant preaching, but what Hybels shared was a reality due to the sinful nature of human beings. Nonetheless, the pastors at Gateway have some areas for improvement in connecting with visitors through the preaching.

The results of the unchurched as they responded to Questions 8, 9, and 10 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was interesting to discover that the results from Questions 9 and 10 were even higher among the unchurched, yet the result from Question 8 was lower. There was not a significant difference between the unchurched and the congregation overall, but there was to a slight degree. It would seem that the unchurched would be even more concerned about their needs being met (Question 9) and not as willing to be challenged to live life God's way (Question 8) as discussed above.

Those who were unchurched and marked "Yes" to Question 6 (which asked, "Did you come to know Jesus Christ as Savior through Gateway or someone who attends
Gateway?" responded very favorably to Questions 8, 9, and 10. Their results were as follows:

Table 12. Congregational Questionnaire, Overall Effectiveness at Preaching to Unchurched, who Answered "Yes" to Question 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These were individuals who came to the realization of their need for Christ through the ministry of Gateway Church. Apparently the preachers have connected with them clearly concerning their spiritual state apart from a personal relationship with God and in teaching them to become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

The group who responded the least favorably were those who were unchurched and either marked "Not Sure" to Question 6 or left it blank. Their results were as follows:

Table 13. Congregational Questionnaire, Overall Effectiveness at Preaching to Unchurched, who Answered "Not Sure" to Question 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preaching must have connected with them to some degree because there was only one response of "Not at All" (and that was on Question 10). Most of the responses to Questions 8, 9, and 10 were "Somewhat" by this group. While we cannot be sure why
this group noted “Not Sure” to Question 6 or left it blank, it seemed that some of them probably have not come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Surprisingly, four out of eight (50%) of this group attended Gateway for more than four years. The other half of the group attended Gateway two years or less. Whether this group was filled with stubborn individuals or the messages were not clear, was not known. Nonetheless, it was obvious that the preachers did not connect well with this group of individuals.

Results from Informal Interviews

As noted in Chapter Four, there were ten individuals interviewed for this portion of the research. According to the congregational questionnaire 69.7% of the previously unchurched were married, 22.4% were single and have never married, and 6.1% were divorced. The marital status of the individuals who were chosen for the informal interviews was proportional to the statistics found within the congregational questionnaire. Of the ten individuals who were interviewed 70% were married, 20% were single and have never married, and 10% were divorced.

Overall, only 54.5% of the previously unchurched were under the age of 45 according to the questionnaire, yet of those who were chosen for the informal interviews all ten of them were under the age of 45. Therefore the group chosen for interviews was not consistent with the overall demographic statistic concerning age from the congregational questionnaire. This could have skewed some of the information that was obtained from the interviews.

Only one of those interviewed was a minority (10%). The rest were White (90%) which was in line with the 92.9% of the previously unchurched who noted they were White American/Non-Hispanic according to the congregational questionnaire.
Four of those interviewed had little to no church background at all. Four had an evangelical church background but had not attended church on a regular basis for at least two years. Two grew up in the Roman Catholic Church but never knew what it was to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ until they were saved through the influence of persons who attended Gateway Church.

Every interview produced much discussion from the part of the interviewees, but not all of it pertained to this project. I have included only that which was beneficial to this research. One of the main foci of the interviews was what kept these previously unchurched persons coming back to Gateway Church. All ten of the individuals noted to some degree how they felt that the atmosphere of Gateway Church was friendly and non-threatening. This included the preaching, but preaching was by no means the only draw. In fact, it seemed that preaching was not the primary component that attracted these individuals to Gateway. The greatest appeal appeared to be that they thought they would be accepted by those within the Gateway congregation even if they were not Christians or if they were not living the Christian life faithfully.

The two single women each independently noted that they sensed the preaching pastors conveyed a loving attitude towards them and that they believed the pastors cared about what happened to them. Since the ladies believed that the preachers had their best interest at heart, they felt they could receive and trust what the pastors shared, even if it was convicting. This information was encouraging and it seemed to confirm how vital it was for preachers to show genuine care and concern for those to whom they were speaking. Not only was it critical for a pastor to love those in the congregation, but he or she needed to communicate that clearly within the sermons.
Another aspect that became evident through the interviews was the way in which
the preacher interacted with the visitors before and after the worship service. It was
significant that the preaching pastors spoke to, shook hands with, listened to, and smiled
at those who were visiting Gateway Church for the first time. It made them feel as though
they really mattered to the church leaders. This made it not just something said in the
pulpit, but something lived out by the pastors.

Three of those who had little to no church background (it was interesting to note
that they were all males) independently shared that they did not always understand what
the preaching pastors taught. For instance, when a preacher would refer to a Bible story
without describing the narrative in detail, these three did not make the connection with
the point the preacher was attempting to make and this made them feel disconnected. As
well, when the preacher would use theological terms without clearly defining the terms in
every day language, it left these three confused and frustrated. This information
emphasized the necessity of being sensitive to those who do not know the Bible stories. It
highlighted the importance of sharing the background and stories of the Bible rather than
scanning over them to make a point. Also, this insight stressed the significance of
clarifying any terms that an unchurched person may not know. All of these efforts would
have helped to connect with these three men more effectively.

A distinctive of Gateway preachers that seemed to resonate in a positive way with
most of those who were interviewed was humor. They appreciated how the pastors were
willing to tell jokes, share funny stories, and laugh, even at themselves in order to make
serious points during the sermons. This communicated a spirit of humility and
authenticity to the audience letting the congregation know that the preachers did not
consider themselves better than anyone else. This made the messages easier to take and the pastors more relatable to the everyday person. Humor was an effective tool in connecting with the unchurched.

The interviews did not dig deep into the thoughts and attitudes of these previously unchurched persons since it was the first time any of them had sat down to talk with me. The overall goal of the interviews was to get to know who these ten individuals were in order to help them grow to know Christ more deeply. As a secondary goal, I sought to discover how effectively Gateway Church has been, specifically in the preaching, at connecting with each individual with the Truth of God’s Word.

This brought about a limitation with this type of research. Those being interviewed may share with me what they thought I wanted to hear rather than their true feelings in order to ensure my acceptance of them. Knowing that the three men who had little to no church background openly shared that they did not always connect with the preaching, made me wonder whether the woman who had very little experience in church felt the same way but was not comfortable sharing it. Though I certainly sensed they were all honest in their appraisal of Gateway Church, the preaching, and their own spiritual lives, it seemed certain that there were some hindrances to a freedom to share their deepest thoughts. None of them knew me very well and it would be logical to assume that I was probably perceived, at least to some degree, as a pastor who may have been trying to get something from them. This was probably a hindrance in gleaning some of their true thoughts and feelings.
CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This research has had as its goal to determine means through which I could become more adept at connecting with the unchurched who attend Gateway Church through expository biblical preaching. This chapter discussed four ways to synthesize in a coherent manner what was discovered. The four areas covered were a summary of the research, the findings through the process, conclusions drawn from the study, and recommendations of how Gateway Church could connect to a greater degree with the unchurched.

The problem discussed in the this project was: What needs to change in the preaching in our ministry setting in order to connect in a more effective manner with those who are unchurched?

The purpose of this study has been to learn how to become more adept at communicating Bible truth to an unchurched world and to share the insights that have been gleaned with other preachers who find themselves in contexts similar to that of our congregation.

Chapter One presented the base from which the rest of the study was built. It focused the project upon the specific problem that was addressed in the process. The problem addressed was: Am I or any of our pastoral staff clearly communicating to the unchurched persons who are present in our congregation during any particular worship
service? How can I know that we are being effective at connecting with them? If we are not, what changes need to be made in order to do so? Finding the answers to the problem was accomplished by discussing the introduction to the overall project which included the context of the problem, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research methodology employed, the research questions, the significance of the study, assumptions and limitations, definitions of terms, and the organization of the study.

Chapter Two laid a biblical and theological foundation for the project. Bible texts were examined and studied closely relating to the original language in which the verses were written. Theological tenets were examined for a basis from which to approach orthodox scripture-based messages. The foci of this chapter were (1) The Role of the Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17), (2) The Role of Preaching (2 Tim. 4:2), and (3) The Role of the Preacher (1 Cor. 9:22).

Chapter Three discussed other literature in two overarching foci: communication and Christian leaders. The discipline of communication was examined in the areas of method of public speaking, audience analysis, multimedia incorporation, nonverbal communication, and storytelling. Writings from Christian leaders in the emerging church, in the seeker church movement, and evangelical Christian leaders were analyzed, critiqued, and ideas were gleaned from them.

Chapter Four provided the research methodology and procedures. The study included four methods: new member surveys, a congregational questionnaire, evaluations of sermons, and informal interviews. The manner in which the research was conducted was laid out in this section.
Chapter Five included a discussion and analysis of the data which was generated. The results of the new member surveys, the congregational questionnaire, the evaluations of sermons, and the informal interviews were presented.

*Findings*

The goal of this research project was to discover ways in which to become more effective at connecting with the unchurched through expository biblical sermons. The manner in which the study was directed was through investigating answers to the four primary research questions which were:

1. To what degree do previously unchurched persons attend our church?

2. What are the distinctive characteristics of the unchurched in our ministry setting?

3. How good are we doing currently at connecting with the previously unchurched in our ministry setting?

4. What are the characteristics of a message that will best reach unchurched persons in our ministry setting?

RQ1 sought to ascertain the degree to which unchurched persons were attending Gateway Church. In order to do that, a definition of “unchurched” had to be articulated. There were many variations to what unchurched meant based upon the descriptions that were utilized by different churches and authors. This study settled on the following definition for the term “unchurched:” a person who has been attending church less than once a month (based upon CedarCreek Church’s *Future Planning Survey* 2005).

The new member surveys revealed that 39.1% of those who became new members in 2005 were unchurched, however, the question pertaining to this information was not asked precisely enough to discover if the individuals were attending church at
least once a month prior to attending Gateway. The percentage was 50% for the last two
classes and that would suggest the degree of unchurched persons attending Gateway
Church was on the rise. According to the congregational questionnaire, 38.9% of the
congregation was unchurched and the question pertaining to this information was precise
in order to determine if the persons were attending church at least once a month prior to
attending Gateway. This data showed that a significant portion of the congregation was
previously unchurched prior to visiting Gateway Church for the first time.

RQ2 looked to determine the specific characteristics of the unchurched who were
attending Gateway Church. The congregational questionnaire was the predominant means
through which to ascertain this information. Of the unchurched that completed the
questionnaire, 54.5% were under the age of 45. Since only 52.8% of the overall
congregation was under the age of 45, it was assumed that the previously unchurched
were younger than that of the overall congregation. As noted in Chapter Five, once the
children and youth who were in classes that Sunday was taken into consideration, it was
determined that most of the Gateway congregation was under the age of 35. Therefore,
most likely, the majority of the unchurched at Gateway was under the age of 35.

Most of the unchurched who filled out the questionnaire were White
American/Non-Hispanic (92.9%). The only other ethnicities represented were
Asian/Pacific Islanders (2.4%), Hispanic/Latino American (2.4%), and Native
American/Indian (2.4%). The makeup of the previously unchurched was not ethnically
diverse. The majority of the unchurched were female (59.4%). The marital status of the
unchurched indicated that 69.7% of them were married. More than one out of five
(20.6%) of the previously unchurched became Christians through the influence of
Gateway Church. Surprisingly, 51.8% of the unchurched have attended Gateway for at least four years.

RQ3 had as its aim to investigate the effectiveness of the preaching at connecting with the unchurched. The first indicator concerning this came from the percentage of unchurched who have become part of Gateway Church. The congregation was made up of 38.9% previously unchurched persons, according to the congregational questionnaire. This figure seemed to show, since such a high percentage of the congregation was previously unchurched, that the preaching has been effective to some degree at connecting with the unchurched. If the preaching was not reaching them, then they would not have stayed.

The primary means through which to discover the answer to RQ3 came through the congregational questionnaire and the sermon evaluations. The responses to questions 8, 9, and 10 of the congregational questionnaire seemed to indicate that the unchurched did connect with the preaching. As well, the sermon evaluations which were filled out by the previously unchurched appeared to reveal that the messages were reaching them. There was, however, much room for improvement. The main areas for improvement, based upon the responses on the sermon evaluations, were within my own preaching and consisted of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area for Improvement</th>
<th>Question Based Upon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivating the unchurched to action</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring the unchurched</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting with the unchurched</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Top Areas for Improvement in Preaching
RQ4 had as its motive to discover distinctive characteristics of sermons which connect with the unchurched in our ministry setting. The means through which the answer to this question was discovered was through the informal interviews and from authors and practitioners of preaching.

A loving attitude conveyed from the preaching pastors was of high importance, according to the informal interviews. This needed to be communicated both through the messages and on a one-to-one basis. The preacher should seek to place the best interest of the audience as a primary motive when speaking to the unchurched in and out of the pulpit. One of the ways in which a loving attitude was shown was through the availability of the pastor before and after worship services. This allowed for personal interaction with unchurched visitors.

The informal interviews identified that a necessary consideration when preaching to the unchurched concerned the use of biblical stories and theological concepts and terms. For those who did not have a churched background, they usually did not know much about the Bible or theology. At times the preaching pastors did not elaborate on phrases, terms, and biblical stories that were presented in messages. This often left the unchurched feeling disconnected from the preacher, the church, and even God. Some of them thought that they needed to know all of the “insider language” in order to be part of the church and even of God’s family.

The informal interviews and the sermon surveys both revealed that the unchurched appreciated the use of humor within sermons. When the preachers would tell jokes, share funny stories, and laugh at their own failings, it seemed to relax the unchurched who were in the audience. Humor communicated to the unchurched that the
pastors were human like everybody else. This approach made the messages easier to take and made it easier for the unchurched to relate to the preachers.

According to Rick Warren, preaching to the unchurched seeker should be approached differently than when preaching to believers. The best way to speak to seekers, according to R. Warren, is through a topical approach (1995, 295). This style addresses an issue for the everyday person and answers the problem with a Bible-based solution.

Conclusions

From this research, it has led to the following four conclusions: (1) preachers should preach the Word of God with authority; (2) the character of the preacher matters; (3) the unchurched matter to God; and (4) preachers should seek to adapt their messages as necessary in order to connect in an effective manner with the unchurched.

Preach the Word

As the Apostle Paul stated to his spiritual son Timothy, so are we to:

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (2 Tim. 4:2-3 NIV)

In order for preachers to be faithful to their calling, they need to preach the Word faithfully. There will be times when individuals do not want to put up with sound doctrine. Nonetheless, pastors should proclaim God's truth in its fullness. This effort takes preparation and diligent study in order for biblical proclamation to be in accordance with God's command.
As preachers teach God's Word, they must trust that the Bible is alive and that as it is made known, the Holy Spirit will bring about changed lives.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Heb. 4:12 NIV)

Without this faith in the Scriptures, a pastor cannot speak to the spiritual needs with authority or boldness. The Word of God is alive and preachers need to believe that it will accomplish the Lord's perfect will as they faithfully proclaim this truth. God can be trusted. The Lord God said:

[M]y word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Is. 55:11 NIV)

Pastors must realize by faith God's purposes will be accomplished through his Word. The preacher may not see the results immediately, but can trust that God's sovereign plan will come to fruition.

When preaching, pastors need to do so with authority. This was the manner in which Jesus taught.

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. (Matt. 7:28-29 NIV)

When this passage denotes "authority," the Greek term *exousian* implies supernatural power and capability. Jesus knew that the Scriptures would accomplish their divine purposes. The same must be the case with pastors who preach the Bible. Preachers must believe that God's Word will be fruitful as they lovingly and faithfully announce the God's truth. The message pastors proclaim is not their own, if it is the Scriptures they teach, it is God's.
The Character of the Preacher

One of the most revealing aspects of preaching that was discovered when conducting interviews of the previously unchurched was the importance of the way the preacher lived. Pastors need to be above reproach when it comes to Christian character. The Apostle Paul stated that, "An elder must be blameless" (Titus 1:6 NIV). The term *anegkletos* denotes a person who is beyond reproach or without fault. That is an extremely high standard by which a preacher should live. It follows the old adage, "practice what you preach." The only Bible some individuals will ever read is a Christian who lives his or her life before those individuals. Christ's followers need to live out their faith passionately and in obedience to God's Word. If this is the case for lay persons, how much more important is it for those in the pulpit. As St. Augustine wrote, "Preach the Bible, and when necessary, use words."

The Unchurched Matter to God

One of the principles Willow Creek Community Church abides by is, "We believe that lost people matter to God, and therefore, ought to matter to the church" (Malphurs 1996, 174). God cares for the people he created. The Lord loves to display his amazing grace by saving sinful human beings. God the Father is the one who calls the elect, for Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44 NIV). Though he does the real work, the Lord chose to use his disciples to be his ambassadors on this earth. Jesus commanded us by saying:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:19-20 NIV)
Those disciples were to pass on to those who became Christ followers after them the necessity to be witnesses of God's love through Jesus Christ. We see God's love in Romans 5:8:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (NIV)

For preachers, it is critical to understand that God has a heart for the unchurched. If this is a conviction for pastors and congregations alike, then efforts need to be made in seeking to connect effectively with those who are currently outside the church. There is no greater mission for preachers and churches.

Some pastors may ask, "But what do I do since most weeks I do not have any, or at most very few, unchurched persons sitting in my congregation?" First of all, preachers should become outreached-focused in their preaching before the unchurched actually come into their churches. Then, when they do attend, they will be ministered to through the preaching of the Word.

Secondly, most of the churched individuals in our culture lack a biblical worldview. Only five percent of adults surveyed in the continental United States have a biblical understanding or know the fundamentals of the Christian faith (Barna 2005). According to this information, most of those in our churches who do attend on a regular basis do not have a thorough knowledge of the Word of God. Therefore, the recommendations set forth in this project should help to connect with the churched people who lack a biblical worldview.

Thirdly, there is a warning to preachers not to neglect the churched within their congregations. The mission of any church should be in line with Christ's command to "'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation'" (Mark 16:15 NIV), but
pastors are also to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). Discipleship means teaching Christians how to grow in their faith. Otherwise, there would only be infantile Christians and not mature believers in the congregation.

Most churches do not have a high percentage of unchurched persons within their congregations. Nonetheless, I do not believe the recommendations brought forth from this study would hinder a mature Christian from growing deeper in his or her faith. In fact, I believe it would emphasize to them the necessity to reach out to the lost in his or her world of influence.

Become All Things to All People

When a pastor realizes that the unchurched matter to God, he or she should then make every effort to ensure his or her preaching reaches out to them. A philosophy that needs to be followed can be summed up in the words of the Apostle Paul, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Cor. 9:22 NIV). Paul certainly is not suggesting that he is the one who did the saving, for he knew God alone draws sinners to himself (John 6:44). Neither is Paul asserting that he compromise the truth in order to save the lost. What he is doing is calling people of faith to a passion and calling them to reach out to those who are not followers of Jesus Christ with God's saving grace.

The challenge to all pastors is to pray for God to fill them with his Spirit and to give them a heart which desires to dynamically share the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ to those in their world. Paul was an excellent example of a man with a passion to witness of God’s saving grace.
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13-16 NIV)

Paul’s desire for others was that they would experience the Spirit-filled life in all its fullness (vv. 13-14). His goal for himself was that he would faithfully proclaim the gospel (v. 16). The design by the Lord in being empowered and filled by his Spirit is for the sake of the spiritually lost. God’s power raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 1:4) and through this power God has provided salvation for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16). Pastors should follow Paul’s example:

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God (2 Tim. 1:7-8 NIV)

Recommendations

The recommendations below are guidelines that are applicable to preaching pastors and academicians in the area of homiletics. These insights were discovered during this research project and are fundamental when preparing to preach specifically to the unchurched. The following topics were focused upon within this final section of the project and with the subsequent recommendations being proposed: Lay a Biblical Foundation, Learn from Other Preachers, Incorporate Communication Theory, and For Further Research.
Lay a Biblical Foundation

Preaching the Word of God faithfully each weekend needs to be the starting point for preaching pastors (2 Tim. 4:2). For a pastor who believes that God’s Word is alive and active (Heb. 4:12) and that it does not return void (Is. 55:11), the proclamation of God’s truth is paramount in connecting with unchurched persons. The Holy Scriptures are what opens one’s heart to be able to understand salvation (2 Tim. 3:15) and to grow in the faith by understanding the truths found in Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17). With this conviction, a preacher should boldly, yet humbly, proclaim God’s Word to the church and to the world. This needs to be done while trusting by faith that God will move in the hearts of those who hear.

An important part of reaching the unchurched is that preachers need to live out what they preach. The Bible calls Christians to model godly character. Living a Christlike life certainly brings glory to God, but also can be a conduit through which non-Christians come to Christ (1 Cor. 9:22). This manner of being highlights the greatest two commandments as Jesus laid them out for his followers:

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt. 22:35-40 NIV)

This is the life all Christians are called to live, but preachers are held to a higher standard of accountability in God’s eyes (James 3:1). Loving God by loving others into God’s kingdom is the hallmark of the Christian faith and ministry. It needs to be the heartbeat of a preacher’s life.
Learn from Other Preachers

There have been countless preachers who have gone before the preachers of today. God has provided some dynamic examples of effective pastors and teachers from whom other preachers can learn. No preacher has all the answers. Insights from emerging church leaders, seeker church leaders, and evangelical Christian leaders will be addressed here.

First, emerging church leaders tell us that postmoderns want to be entertained and desire experience over a lecture. “Postmoderns don’t want their information straight. They want it laced with experience” (Sweet 2000, 33). Preachers need to take this into consideration when designing expository biblical sermons. The most effective means through which to connect with the emerging generation is through storytelling. “Narrative is becoming the primary means of communicating beliefs” (Jones 2001, 27) to this culture. With this knowledge, the illustrations pastors utilize become critical to reaching this generation. Multimedia, stimulation of multiple senses, and visual means of connection with the postmodern generation speaks to where they are. Preachers need to diligently look for creative means through which to communicate God’s never-changing truth to the emerging culture.

Second, seeker church leaders emphasize many aspects of preaching, but the most prominent is speaking to the unchurched where they are. Rather than expecting them to adapt to the preacher, the preacher should adapt to the seeker (1 Cor. 9:22). Seeker church leaders, predominantly R. Warren and Bill Hybels, desire to provide messages that speak to the felt needs of those unchurched who attend their churches. This shows the seeker that the pastor loves and cares for them. Therefore, these leaders believe that
topical messages should be utilized when preaching to the unchurched. R. Warren's and Hybels' philosophy is that the issues non-Christians deal with in their every day lives can be addressed from Scripture and that this approach was modeled by Jesus and Paul in the Bible (John 4:1-42; Acts 17:16-34). Topical expository sermons can be part of the repertoire of preachers when seeking to connect with the unchurched.

Third, evangelical Christian leaders brought tremendous experience and insight to this project. Bill Bright, Billy Graham, and David Yonggi Cho probably have had more influence within the evangelical church in this generation than any other leaders. They all emphasized a passion for the lost. A focus on the task at hand, preaching God’s Word to a world in need, has been at the forefront of all of their ministries. They have sought to preach the Word of God with conviction and passion with the goal being for people to meet Jesus. Because of their faithfulness and God’s grace, they have led ministries that have led countless people to Christ. The hearts of these men stand as examples for preachers who come after them should emulate.

Incorporate Communication Theory

The incorporation of excellent communication skills within sermons enhances the connection process with unchurched persons. Through this research process, a number of key components within the discipline of communication were discovered. These points add to the effectiveness of reaching unchurched persons.

First, a speaker should seek to utilize visual aids and multimedia when possible. The use of visual aids may include an object, a person, a slide presentation, or any number of means. This can enhance the message to a great degree. The incorporation of multimedia within the sermon can provide a professional-looking presentation. It is
important to ensure the multimedia is well done and easy to read and understand. This increases credibility and connectivity with the audience. The utilization of visual aids and multimedia should enlighten the audience to the point of the message and not be used for the sake of impressing the congregation. Rather than just the sense of hearing being stimulated, when the congregants see something that relates to the topic being presented, this engages another sense, sight. The more senses used, the greater the degree to which the audience will retain the message.

Second, a preacher should utilize the extemporaneous method of speaking. This lends to a freedom to be expressive, without being tied down to a script or memorized speech. The speaker ought to have someone record his or her sermons on a video tape or DVD. A pastor can then review his or her messages and identify ways to improve his or her communication skills. The preacher needs to look for excellent facial expression, eye contact, vocal rate, volume, pitch, vocal variety, posture, movement, gestures, and to ensure he or she is not looking at notes too much.

Third, a pastor needs to adapt to his or her congregation. It is critical to identify who makes up the audience to which the preacher speaks. Identifying the general makeup of the congregation by age, gender, educational level, ethnicity, race, and occupation provides a framework from which to speak to the needs of those who listen to the pastor’s messages.

Fourth, stories are the most effective means through which to communicate biblical truths. Jesus was the great story teller. He taught through the use of parables that related precisely to where his audience lived. This method painted a picture of the truths Jesus was communicating. Like Jesus, preachers of today should incorporate stories into
their sermons so that the audience can clearly see in their minds the point of the messages.

For Further Research

The first recommendation for further research has to do with discipleship. A suggestion for study is the integration of discipleship through preaching and teaching beyond the message. Sermons should provide a springboard from which to teach persons who are not spiritually mature the foundations of the Christian faith. The topics should be coordinated with classes or small groups and with a mentor. Currently, some of the small groups (which we call life groups) in my church, study the Scripture passages from the sermons more in depth. Research should be conducted to determine how to tie in messages with small group and one-on-one discipleship.

For those within a congregation who have little knowledge of the Bible or Christianity, it is critical for the church to provide a means through which those individuals can learn and apply Bible truth. An investigation to determine successful methods to disciple unchurched persons would be extremely beneficial to a congregation. Topics to be looked at should include teaching the Bible, theology, church history, and Christian tradition. This necessitates practical application of what God calls Christians to and how the church provides means through which to live that calling out.

The process for discipleship would most likely employ both a mentor meeting one-on-one with a previously unchurched person as well as classes which would be provided by the church leadership in a small group setting. The research would delve into different mechanisms utilized by various churches which seek to grow persons in their Christian faith. The project could include discovering or developing curriculum which
would lay a foundation for those who do not have much knowledge of the Bible or of Christianity. The culmination of the project could provide a particular plan to be implemented in a specific ministry setting where previously unchurched persons now participate.

The second recommendation for further research is to investigate the most effective means through which persons come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in this age as it relates to the preaching task. If the mission of the church is based upon the Great Commission as Jesus gave it before he left the earth (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8), then it should be the focus of the life of every preacher. The research should seek to determine the most successful ways which preachers have found that God is using to save the spiritually lost. Certainly, God does the saving (John 6:44), however, the church and the preacher should do all that it can to facilitate that process (1 Cor. 9:22).

There are many methods promoted in the area of evangelism, however, not all of them are appropriate for all situations. In fact, each church has a unique DNA by God’s design and each preacher is uniquely designed by God. Therefore, the goal of the research project should be to determine a process that would be the most effective for a particular ministry setting. The desired fruit of this endeavor should be that authentic conversions should occur and that those persons who came to Christ should become fully devoted followers of him.

Final Thoughts

This project has been beneficial to me, our other teaching pastor, and our congregation as a whole. My prayer is that others who read and reflect on this research realize the necessity to effectively connect with the unchurched through preaching the
Word of God. I hope that my church and other churches will have a greater impact than ever before on the lives of the spiritually lost. May we see in heaven those who came to Christ due to our faithful proclamation of God's Good News! To God be the glory for ever and ever! Amen.
APPENDIX A

NEW MEMBER SURVEY
New Member Survey

Date

1). Did you accept Christ through Gateway Church or through someone related to Gateway?

_____ YES  _____ NO

2). Were you attending a church on a regular basis in the weeks prior to attending Gateway?

_____ YES  _____ NO

3). How did you hear about Gateway Church? (Check all that apply)

_____ Personal invitation  _____ Word of mouth
_____ Radio Ad  _____ Other _______________________
_____ Newspaper Ad

4). Why have you chosen to continue to attend Gateway? (Check the top two)

_____ Preaching  _____ Worship
_____ Youth Ministry  _____ Children’s Ministry
_____ Friendly Atmosphere  _____ Family/Friends attend
_____ Life Groups  _____ Sunday School Classes
_____ Other ________________________
APPENDIX B

CONGREGATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE
Congregational Questionnaire

Sunday, February 12, 2006

1. Please note your age:
   ______ 0-17  ______ 35-44  ______ 64-74
   ______ 18-24  ______ 45-54  ______ 75+
   ______ 25-34  ______ 55-64

2. Please note your ethnicity:
   ______ African/Black-American  ______ Native American/Indian
   ______ Asian/Pacific Islander  ______ White American/Non-Hispanic
   ______ Hispanic/Latino American  ______ Other (please specify) _______

3. Please note your gender:
   ______ Male  ______ Female

4. Please note your marital status:
   ______ Single (Never Married)  ______ Divorced
   ______ Married  ______ Widowed

5. Were you attending church elsewhere at least once a month in the weeks prior to attending Gateway?
   ______ Yes  ______ No

6. Did you come to know Jesus Christ as Savior through Gateway or someone who attends Gateway?
   ______ Yes  ______ No  ______ Not Sure

7. How long have you been attending Gateway?
   ______ 0-6 months  ______ 1-2 years  ______ 3-4 years
   ______ 7 months-1 year  ______ 2-3 years  ______ Over 4 years

8. Did the preaching help you to more faithfully live the Christian life when you first attended?
   ______ Not at All  ______ Somewhat  ______ Very Much So

9. Did the preaching speak to your needs when you first attended?
   ______ Not at All  ______ Somewhat  ______ Very Much So

10. Did the preaching at Gateway connect you with God when you first attended?
     ______ Not at All  ______ Somewhat  ______ Very Much So
APPENDIX C

SERMON EVALUATION OF PASTOR CRAIG CRAMER
Sermon Evaluation of Pastor Craig Cramer

Date

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female
Age: ___ 0-19 ___ 20-29 ___ 30-39 ___ 40-49 ___ 50-59 ___ 60 & Up

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5.
(1 – totally disagree; 3 – neutral; 5 – totally agree)

1. Preacher maintained my interest.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Sermon flowed with whole worship service.
   1 2 3 4 5

3. Sermon inspired me.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. Preacher involved his personality into the sermon.
   1 2 3 4 5

5. Preacher illumined the Scripture text.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. Preacher utilized understandable language.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. Sermon was appropriate length.
   1 2 3 4 5

8. Sermon was clear and understandable.
   1 2 3 4 5

9. Preacher did not read from his notes too much.
   1 2 3 4 5

10. Preacher projected loving attitude.
    1 2 3 4 5

11. Preacher spoke to some of my personal needs.
    1 2 3 4 5

12. Sermon focused on Christ’s greatness.
    1 2 3 4 5

13. Preacher connected with me.
    1 2 3 4 5

14. Sermon points were easy to remember
    1 2 3 4 5

15. Sermon motivated me to action.
    1 2 3 4 5

What do you think was the preacher’s greatest strength?

What is one area in which the preacher could improve?

Thank you for taking the time to help me better serve Christ and you!
APPENDIX D

LETTERS TO SERMON EVALUATORS
October 3, 2005

I am sending you this letter, along with a handful of other people, in hopes that you will be willing to evaluate my sermons on the following dates:

October 15 & 16, 2005
December 10 & 11, 2005
February 4 & 5, 2005

These evaluations of my sermons are an integral part of the study for my final doctoral research project. The purpose of these evaluations is to assist me in becoming more effective at connecting with you and others as I preach.

If you are willing to complete these evaluations, please be as honest as you can. I would appreciate it if you would not worry about hurting my feelings, because if there is an area in which I need to become more proficient I need to know about it. There will be two more letters with the evaluations sent to you prior to the dates in December and February. Please place all three of these weekends on your calendar and make every effort possible to be there for these dates. It will help the research to be as accurate as possible.

Please place the completed evaluation in the enclosed envelope and send it back to the church office. So that I will not know who wrote what within the evaluations, I have the envelopes addressed to our church secretary, Jan Myers. I will not use your names in this research. It will be kept confidential and I will make the final research available to you before it is published to ensure you are comfortable with what I have written in my doctoral project.

If you are willing to evaluate my sermons, would you please let me know within one week (by October 13th)? If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me any time during this four month process. My contact information is: Craig@gatewayepc.org or 419-423-5947.

Thank you again for your willingness to help me and to serve God in this way!

In Jesus,

Craig Cramer
Associate Pastor

Enclosures
November 7, 2005

I am sending you this letter, along with a handful of other people, in hopes that you will be willing to evaluate my sermons on the following dates:

December 10 & 11, 2005
February 4 & 5, 2005

Some of you have already evaluated one of my sermons in October and I thank you for that. I also need the sermons in December and February evaluated by a number of persons in the Gateway congregation for the completion of some research I am conducting. These evaluations are an integral part of my final doctoral research project. The purpose of these evaluations is to assist me in becoming more effective at connecting with you and others as I preach.

If you are willing to complete these evaluations, please be as honest as you can. I would appreciate it if you would not worry about hurting my feelings, because if there is an area in which I need to become more proficient I need to know about it. There will be another letter with the evaluation sent to you prior to the date in February. Please place these two weekends on your calendar and make every effort possible to be there for these dates. It will help the research to be as accurate as possible.

Please place the completed evaluation in the enclosed envelope and send it back to the church office. So that I will not know who wrote what within the evaluations, I have the envelopes addressed to our church secretary, Jan Myers. Please DO NOT place your return address on the envelope. I will not use your names in this research. It will be kept confidential and I will make the final research available to you before it is published to ensure you are comfortable with what I have written in the final draft.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me any time during this process. My contact information is: Craig@gatewaypc.org or 419-423-5947.

Thank you again for your willingness to help me and to serve God in this way!

In Jesus,

Craig Cramer
Associate Pastor

Enclosures
January 23, 2006

This is, once again, a letter requesting your input concerning my preaching. This is the last of the sermon evaluations required for my research. Thank you for taking the time to consider helping in this way! The final sermon evaluation will take place on:

Sunday, February 5, 2006

This date is about a week and a half away. These evaluations are an integral part of my final doctoral research project. The purpose of these evaluations is to assist me in becoming more effective at connecting with you and others as I preach.

If you are willing to complete these evaluations, please be as honest as you can. I would appreciate it if you would not worry about hurting my feelings, because if there is an area in which I need to become more proficient I need to know about it. Please place this date on your calendar and make every effort possible to be in church. It will help the research to be as accurate as possible.

Please place the completed evaluation in the enclosed envelope and send it back to the church office. So that I will not know who wrote what within the evaluations, I have the envelopes addressed to our church secretary, Jan Myers. Please DO NOT place your return address on the envelope. I will not use your names in this research. It will be kept confidential and I will make the final research available to you before it is published to ensure you are comfortable with what I have written in the final draft.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me any time during this process. My contact information is: Craig@gatewaypc.org or 419-423-5947.

Thank you again for your willingness to help me and to serve God in this way!

In Jesus,

Craig Cramer
Associate Pastor

Enclosures
WORKS CITED


WORKS CONSULTED


