

## **ABSTRACT**

### **EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTISENSORY COMMUNICATION IN WORSHIP**

by

D. Matthew Poole

This study focused on the combination of audiovisual (sight and sound) and other sensory communication (touch, taste, smell) used in the context of a thematic worship service sponsored by a large membership church in Bel Air, Maryland. The focus was on the potential likelihood of multisensory communication to bring about transformation in the life of the worshipper. Predictors of transformation used were affect and personal involvement in the multisensory aspects of the worship services. The literature review discusses some theology of revelation, shifts in communication, worship practices, biblical examples of multisensory communication, and postmodernism.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
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EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTISENSORY COMMUNICATION IN WORSHIP

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

D. Matthew Poole

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Chapter	
1. Overview of the Study.....	1
Understanding the Problem.....	1
Background.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Research Question 1.....	5
Research Question 2.....	5
Research Question 3.....	5
The Project.....	5
Definitions of Terms.....	7
Proclamation.....	7
Transformation.....	7
Thematic Worship Service.....	8
Audiovisual Communication.....	9
Multisensory Communication.....	10
The Context.....	10
Methodology.....	11
Population and Subjects.....	12
Variables.....	12
Instrumentation.....	13

Data Collection.....	13
Delimitations and Generalizability.....	14
Biblical Examples.....	14
Theological Foundation.....	15
Multisensory Communication Today.....	17
Overview.....	18
2. Review of Selected Literature.....	19
The Need for Understandable Communication.....	19
Communication in Worship.....	23
Definitions of Christian Worship.....	24
Worship Practices.....	26
The Use of Image in Worship.....	30
Biblical Examples of Multisensory Communication.....	34
Isaiah’s Commission.....	35
The Sense of Sight.....	37
The Sense of Sound.....	38
The Senses of Sight and Sound.....	38
The Sense of Touch.....	39
The Sense of Smell.....	40
The Sense of Taste.....	41
Theology of the Body, Mind, and Spirit.....	42
Worship and Transformation.....	44
Biblical Basis for Meaningful Communication.....	47
Shifts in Communication.....	51

Written Communication.....	52
Electronic Communication.....	54
Audiovisual Communication in the Church.....	58
Note of Caution on Using Audiovisuals.....	63
The Reemergence of Multisensory.....	65
Research Method.....	71
Conclusion.....	72
3. Design of the Study.....	74
Research Questions.....	76
Research Question 1.....	76
Research Question 2 .....	77
Research Question 3.....	78
Population and Sample.....	78
Instrumentation.....	79
Reliability.....	81
Validity.....	81
Data Collection.....	81
Variables.....	82
Data Analysis.....	85
4. Findings of the Study.....	87
Profile of Subjects.....	87
Descriptive Data.....	88
Multisensory Communication and Affect.....	90
Audiovisual Communication and Involvement.....	97

Multisensory Communication and Involvement.....	98
Phone Interviews.....	101
Recall.....	102
Importance of Multisensory.....	103
Transformation.....	103
Summary of Findings.....	104
5. Summary and Conclusions.....	106
Major Findings.....	107
Affect.....	107
Personal Involvement.....	111
Interviews.....	114
Application of the Findings.....	115
Weaknesses of the Study.....	117
Further Studies.....	121
Conclusion .....	122
 <b>Appendixes</b>	
A. Affective Learning Scale.....	124
B. Personal Involvement Inventory.....	126
C. Phone Interview Questions.....	128
D. Worship Services.....	129
E. Glossary of Statistical Terms.....	138
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Works Consulted.....</b>	<b>147</b>



## TABLES

Table

2.1	What Happens at Worship.....	27
3.1	Modified Affective Learning Scale.....	80
3.2	Recruitment of Participants.....	83
4.1	Mean Scores for Services 1,2, and 3.....	89
4.2	Comparing Affect Response for Sight, Sound, and Taste .....	92
4.3	Comparing Affect Response for Sight, Sound, and Touch.....	94
4.4	Comparing Affect Response for Sight, Sound, and Smell.....	96
4.5	Comparing Personal Involvement for Sight, Sound, and Taste.....	100

## FIGURES

### Figure

4.1	Comparing mean scores for services 1 and 4.....	91
4.2	Comparing mean scores for services 2 and 5.....	93
4.3	Comparing mean scores for services 3 and 6.....	95
4.4	Mean scores for personal involvement.....	98
4.5	Comparing mean scores for services 1 and 4.....	99

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

#### Understanding the Problem

On 10 June 1995 I was ordained as an elder in the United Methodist Church. As I stood before the bishop and a congregation of approximately one thousand worshippers, I was asked to fulfill several tasks as an elder in the church. The very first task I was asked to fulfill was to “share in Christ’s ministry of love and service in the world ... by preaching and teaching the Word of God” (United Methodist Book 674). When I committed myself to these words, I was given a task to fulfill. I had been entrusted with a message.

Preachers are those who have been entrusted with a God-given message. This message of God found within the texts of Scripture is not to be hidden but proclaimed. The Greek word used in the New Testament more than sixty times is *khrusaw*, literally meaning, “I proclaim, preach” (Metzger 15). The intent within the Greek word would best be described as the role of a “herald” (15). The role is of someone who is to go out and proclaim a given message to the public.

Preachers as heralds stand within the gap between the message giver and the intended receivers of that message. They have an important task to impart the message clearly and understandably. On the one side they need to be faithful to the message giver, who in my case is God. On the other hand they have to communicate the message in such a way that the public clearly understands the meaning and intent of the original message.

John R. W. Stott uses the metaphor of “bridge-building” and writes, “Preaching is not exposition only but communication, not just the exegesis of a text but the conveying of a God-given message to a living people who need to hear it” (137). This metaphor for

the preacher being a bridge builder is one that creates a constant tension between being faithful to the message of God and communicating it in a way that the people living in a particular culture and community can understand it. The preacher has a dual task of not only exegeting the Scriptures but also exegeting the culture and language of the hearers.

The focus of this dissertation was on the proclamation of the God-given message to the people in the context of a thematic-oriented worship service. The dissertation will explore the communication side of this bridge.

I was given two other tasks at my ordination that followed the first. The second task was “leading the people of God in worship and prayer” (United Methodist Book 674). The third task was “leading people to faith in Jesus Christ” (674). All three of these tasks are often being fulfilled within the context of the local church’s regular worship service. The people gather at a regular time each week where they are led in worship, led in the proclamation of God’s word, and led to faith in Jesus Christ. Three verbs used throughout this dissertation to describe these tasks are proclamation, worship, and transformation. The word transformation is used in connection with the task of leading people to faith in Jesus Christ because spiritual formation can be viewed as a lifelong change process whereby people are formed more and more into Christlikeness.

The focus of this dissertation was on proclamation and in particular how the message is being communicated to the hearers. This dissertation also takes into account how proclamation happens within the context of worship and that within the worshipping environment transformation can occur in an individual’s faith and life.

### **Background**

The past two decades preceding the new millennium have shown significant changes in the area of proclamation in the context of worship. These changes can be seen

in the attempts some churches make to change their form of communication in worship services from written and spoken words to spoken words and visual images. Some churches are now spending significant amounts of money to purchase video projectors and large projection screens. These are attempts on the part of churches to communicate to a visually oriented culture. Some churches view these changes as a way to communicate effectively the God-given message. This shift in the way communication is used in worship has brought out proponents and opponents to these changes.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the emergence of a postmodern worldview was beginning to bring about another shift in how some churches attempted to communicate in worship. This shift comes out of a desire of the postmodern mind-set that yearns for experience. The shift is not as much a change in the approach to worship as it is an addition to the way communication happens in worship. Churches are attempting to communicate not only through visual and auditory means but also by adding another human sense to the communication process, such as smell, taste, or touch. The use of additional senses is now being regarded as “multisensory worship” a term borrowed from Kim Miller’s book, Handbook for Multi-Sensory Worship. Multisensory has become a popular label, but in reality attempts at multisensory worship are sometimes simply attempts to communicate in visual ways. This popular label is also sometimes misused to describe communication in worship that involves the use of a projector and a screen. The use of a projector is engaging the sense of sight more but it does not necessarily make it multisensory. What appears to be happening in some churches is a shift towards what appears to be visual communication in worship and not necessarily worship that is multisensory. Worship that is multisensory uses more than just the two senses of sight and sound. The overall shift towards multisensory communication in worship is in some

ways a shift back to a time when communication in worship was more symbolic and participatory.

With these shifts in the way that some churches are attempting to communicate in worship has come controversy. Anytime churches change paradigms, some people are eager and ready to adopt the new paradigm and some are not so eager. Yet the issue to be concerned with is the effectiveness of the new paradigm to proclaim more clearly and understandably the message of God to today's people. The new communication paradigm emerging out of the need to be relevant to the postmodern worldview is a desire for more experiential forms of communication in worship. These new forms of communication may actually bring about better understanding of God's Word and need to be studied. Indicators of potential transformation in a person's life need to be investigated.

Some churches are experimenting with these new forms of communication in worship without questioning their effectiveness, and others are not valuing these new forms of communication in worship without questioning their effectiveness. An investigation of multisensory forms of communication and their ability to help proclaim God's Word in the context of worship is needed. These emerging forms of communication, if effective, may have the potential to bring about transformation in the lives of those who attend such worship services and therefore are worthy of study.

This particular research focused on the potential effectiveness of audiovisual and multisensory forms of communication to bring about transformation in the individual worshipper's life. Leonard Sweet raises an important question:

The question is whether the people, including the clergy, are having life transforming experiences in worship. Are these churches, and their clergy, mediating deeply moving experiences of the divine? What would happen if we truly expected that in worship someone was going to be transformed? What joy if we really believed in the transforming power of

God's presence in worship? What difference would it make if worshippers could expect in worship to come to "know Christ" and "experience the power of his resurrection." (Soul Tsunami 209)

Preachers and worship planners need to know how to plan for "life transforming experiences in worship" (209). This research looks at how multisensory communication can help create an experiential and transformational message in the context of worship.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Communication in worship occurs in many different ways. This particular study focuses on the effectiveness of multisensory thematic proclamation in worship to promote transformation in the individual lives of those who participate in a worship experience.

#### **Research Question 1**

How does multisensory communication stimulate a response of affect in a worshipper participating in a thematic worship service where proclamation is the primary purpose?

#### **Research Question 2**

To what extent does using audiovisual forms of communication in the context of a thematic worship service arouse personal involvement?

#### **Research Question 3**

To what extent does engaging the sense of touch, taste, or smell in the context of a thematic worship service arouse personal involvement?

### **The Project**

The project consisted of six worship experiences divided up into two sets of three, thematic worship services. The first set of three services used audiovisual means of communication to proclaim the thematic message, and the second set of three services



utilized multisensory forms of communication to proclaim the thematic message. The services were done over an eighteen-week period. The first three services were thematic worship services not using multisensory communication. These first three services were done on consecutive Sundays over a three-week period. The research participants used survey instruments to evaluate each of the first three thematic services. Then after twelve weeks, the same three thematic worship services using multisensory communication were administered and evaluated by those participating. These last three services were also held on consecutive Sundays over a three-week period. The worship services took place at Bel Air United Methodist Church in Bel Air, Maryland. The project was done using the church's Sunday evening service called, "TrueFusion." This worship service was created in May 2001 to reach young adults. I worked with the research reflection team at Bel Air United Methodist Church to plan all six services. The worship leader for each of the six services was the normal worship leader for that particular service, and different speakers were used for the corresponding thematic service in each set of worship services.

The thematic services were designed with the help of the research reflection team. They considered the current design and structure of the Sunday evening service already in place. The thematic services were adapted and modified to the appropriate cultural context of the TrueFusion community at Bel Air United Methodist Church.

The first service using multisensory communication utilized audiovisuals and engaged the sense of taste. The second service utilized audiovisuals and engaged the sense of touch. The third service utilized audiovisuals and engaged the sense of smell. Worshippers evaluated each service in regards to affect. Individual worshippers also evaluated the audiovisual components of each of the three services in the first set and the

added sense of taste, touch, or smell in the second set in regards to personal involvement.

### **Definition of Terms**

Several terms need further definition and explanation—proclamation, transformation, worship, thematic worship, communication, audiovisual communication, multisensory communication, affect, and involvement.

#### **Proclamation**

The use of the term proclamation places emphasis on the side of the earlier bridge metaphor that deals with how God’s Word is communicated to the hearers. One of the words used in the Hebrew Scriptures that is translated “proclaim” is *šāma*’ and literally means “cause to hear, be heard, make known” (Knapp 977). The New Testament Scriptures use several Greek words interchangeably that are translated as “proclaim.” G. L. Knapp gives a good summation of the intent of those words when he writes, “This word group usually refers to proclamation in a special, technical sense: the making known of God’s activity, his will to save” (977). The word “proclamation” used in this dissertation is defined as making known God’s Word or message in the context of a thematic worship service.

#### **Transformation**

The apostle Paul uses the word “transformed” when he writes his letter to the Romans and says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (12:2, NIV). The Greek word used here for “transform” is *metamorfousqe*, from which the word metamorphosis is derived. John Ortberg uses this definition of that Greek word: “the inward and real formation of the essential nature of a person” (20). This is not simply transformation for the sake of transformation but rather formation into something or the likeness of someone. God’s

Word leads us to see that the transformation is from a sinful human being into the image of Christ. Paul again writes in Romans, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son” (8:29, NIV). The use of the word transformation here has to do with the inward formation of a person from that of sinful human being into Christlikeness. This transformation cannot be measured in quantifiable terms and ultimately is something that can only be measured by God. This dissertation attempted to study predictors of transformation such as affect and involvement as defined below.

**Affect.** Affect here is defined as “an increasing internalization of positive attitudes towards the content or subject matter” (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 81). This study evaluated the ability of different forms of communication to make an impression upon an individual who attends a particular worship service. Changes in positive attitude become predictors of potential transformation in the individual.

**Involvement.** Involvement in this study signifies “arousal, interest, and motivation” in an individual to a particular message (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 286). The study attempted to assess any significant changes in arousal, interest, or motivation based on changes made to the forms by which the message was communicated.

### **Thematic Worship Service**

A thematic worship service is a type of worship service planned around a theme that runs throughout the entire worship experience. The music, prayers, and sermon would each tie into the theme for the entire service of worship. Kim Miller lists the following elements in developing a thematic worship service:

**Word:** The Word of God as discerned in the Scripture;

**Felt Need:** The presenting need(s) that the people bring to worship;

**Desired Outcome:** The expected responses that people will make;

**Theme:** The package in which the message is wrapped;

**Metaphor:** The root image that permits the desired outcome to connect with the needs of the people; and,

**Structure:** The order of worship (9).

### **Audiovisual Communication**

Audiovisual communication is the use of both audio information and visual information to convey a message. A good example of audiovisual communication is observed on MTV where images and music are paired together to form a message. Music Television uses this form of communication in an attempt to shape and mold the values of today's younger generation. Examples of audiovisual communication can be seen in some churches today where images are projected on a screen and songs lyrics are displayed in combination with music and congregational singing. Both audio and visual communication is being utilized.

Pierre Babin, a well-known author in the area of religious communication, refers to this type of communication as "audiovisual language" (3). He understands that audiovisuals are not just an aid in instruction but a language in and of itself, one being learned and spoken by millions of TV viewers and moviegoers everyday. The ability to edit both image and sound and place those images and sounds together to form a message has become a type of language. Another example of this language is now showing up in reality TV. Although hundreds of hours of film and sound footage are captured, only part of the footage is conveyed. The parts that are conveyed are based on what the editors want people to see and hear.

Audiovisual communication is now being used in worship services through the use of video projection equipment to project song lyrics, images, and videos to enhance

the worship experience. These images are used in conjunction with music and spoken words to create audiovisual communication.

### **Multisensory Communication**

Multisensory communication incorporates the audiovisual language but adds one or more human senses—touch, smell, or taste—to facilitate communication of the message. A person who regularly attends worship will notice that all worship services engage all five senses to some degree. For example, a communion service will engage the sense of sight by seeing the bread and cup, the sense of hearing as words are spoken, the sense of touch as the person takes the bread, the sense of smell in the aroma of the bread, and the sense of taste as the person eats the bread and drinks the cup.

The term “multisensory” in this research refers to a more intentional effort to engage the five senses through means other than the traditional means of grace (communion and baptism) the Church has employed for centuries. Some examples would be using aromatic candles that produce pine scent during a Christmas service to engage the sense of smell, the use of rocks to build an altar as they did in the Old Testament to engage the sense of touch, or the use of salt to remind people to be salt in the world and engage the sense of taste.

### **The Context**

The research took place within the context of a new worship service started in a large membership church in Bel Air, Maryland. The subjects were persons who attended a new Sunday evening worship service sponsored by the church in addition to the three worship services already held on Sunday morning. The service is conducted in the church’s multipurpose room. The attendees are mainly middle to upper middle class Anglos. A mix of single and married professionals attended the Sunday evening services.

The average age of the Sunday evening worshipping congregation is 38 years.

The worship at this particular service consisted of an opening time of singing consisting of three songs, a welcome and announcement time of a few minutes, an additional time of singing intermingled with prayer led by the worship leader, a message delivered by one of the pastors of the church, and then another period of singing that usually consisted of two or three songs before the service ended. The congregation was accompanied in singing by a band consisting of two guitarists, a drummer, and an electronic keyboard player. The service would be mainly characterized as free church worship where the service is structured mainly around proclamation and response. The duration of the worship services varied in length from just under one hour to an hour and twenty minutes.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of multisensory communication used within the context of worship and how it may or may not create the potential for transformation in the lives of individual worshippers. What the study attempted to do was to identify if multisensory communication created affect and personal involvement in the individual worshipper. A good predictor of possible transformation is affect. Affect is the emotional response or reaction that takes place in a human being due to a stimulus. This study looked for positive affect in individual worshippers in response to multisensory thematic proclamation. Affect is an important motivator in bringing about actual changes in behavior. By studying affect the research attempted to quantify the degree of affect in a person and use it as an indicator of potential transformation. This study utilized a survey to evaluate the affect of the individual worshippers in the TrueFusion service at Bel Air United Methodist Church by

the use of a posttest design.

A second component of the posttest design was to evaluate the personal involvement of the individual worshipper in the multisensory dimensions of the worship services. According to the research of Munson and McQuarrie in 1987, "Involvement signifies arousal, interest, and motivation" (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 286). By studying individual involvement with the specified components of the worship services, the research intended to demonstrate relevancy of this medium for communication. Positive personal involvement is another indicator needed to assess the potential for transformation to occur in the life of an individual. A second survey tool was used to assess personal involvement.

### **Population and Subjects**

The population studied was dependent upon those who participated regularly in the Sunday evening worship service at Bel Air United Methodist Church. The survey research consisted of a convenient sampling of available participants. Willing participants for the study were identified three weeks prior to the start of the research and during the weeks that the research commenced. The subjects ranged in age from 20 to 56 and were predominately female.

### **Variables**

The constant in this study was the worship service itself. Participants were exposed to from one to six thematic worship services. The independent variables of this study were the uses of audiovisual aids and multisensory aids in worship. The senses of taste, touch, and smell were looked at independently. One of these three independent variables was used in each worship service of the second set. The assessed dependent variables were affect and personal involvement of the individual participants. Other

variables that may affect outcomes are age and gender.

### **Instrumentation**

Two questionnaires were administered to the subjects immediately following their worship experiences. The first was a modified version of the semantic differential scale developed originally by Scott and Wheelless in 1975 and later revised and extended by Anderson in 1979 (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 81). The modifications are primarily in the wording of the questionnaire to reflect the participation in worship rather than the classroom. The questionnaire consisted of four different evaluations of six content areas in the service.

The second questionnaire, that accompanied the first, was a personal involvement inventory assessing relevance based on perceived needs and interests. This survey was also modified to study the audiovisual and multisensory elements of the worship service. This inventory was a unidimensional construct that consisted of twenty word pairs that rate each identified and specified element of the worship service.

### **Data Collection**

I contacted a predetermined number of participants before the start dates of the worship services to determine if enough interest to participate in the study was available. After obtaining participant permission and commitment to be involved in the study, the first three worship services were conducted. A twelve-week waiting period occurred before the last three services were held. After each of the six worship services, the two questionnaires were distributed to the participants immediately upon the dismissal from each service. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires on the premises and return them to me. I was available to give participants instructions and answer any questions they had.



Confidentiality was insured for the participants by using the last four digits of each participant's social security number. Some of the participants agreed to the possibility of a follow up phone interview six months after the six worship services by signing their name and providing their phone number.

The data was collected and stored on computer using SPSS Interactive Graphics software. This software was used to provide statistical analysis for this research.

### **Delimitations and Generalizability**

This study obtained convenient sampling of those who participate in the worship life of the TrueFusion service at Bel Air United Methodist Church. The delimitations of the study are the context of the attendees of this service and the limited number of participants that participated in the study. The atmosphere of worship in this service was unique due to its location in a multipurpose room and the context of being part of a large membership church. The average attendance of this particular worshipping community was ninety when the research took place.

The benefit of this study is in demonstrating that certain forms of communication in worship help facilitate positive affect and personal involvement in individual worshippers. Affect and personal involvement are predictors of behavioral change and what could be termed transformation. These results can be generalized to other churches that want to create worship services where the possibility of transformation can occur. The potential for transformation may encourage other pastors and congregants to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ more effectively in their culture.

### **Biblical Examples**

Many examples of God using multisensory communication to bring about transformation in the lives of people exist. God communicates through visual means

many times in the Bible. God communicated with the Israelites by leading them through the desert using a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night (Exod. 13:21). God used imagery to communicate with John who records these images in the book of Revelation.

God communicates through the use of sound in the Bible as well. In a time when Samuel was worshipping before the Lord the Bible says that, “the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites” (1 Sam. 7:10). The people of God also used instruments and song to worship the Lord (Ps. 33:2-3, 100).

Sometimes visions and sounds were used together to create communication with humans. An example would be the angels communicating with the shepherds at Christ’s birth. The shepherds both saw and heard the announcement of Christ’s birth.

The other three senses of touch, smell, and taste were engaged throughout the Bible. The sense of touch was used in the act of sacrifice in the temple and the sense of smell was used in the temple worship when the priests used incense. The sense of taste was employed in the Passover meal celebrated by Jews and early Christians. These are just a few examples and more are discussed in Chapter 2.

### **Theological Foundation**

If God desires to reveal himself to human beings, then he has to be concerned with how he goes about it. Finite human beings can only comprehend and understand an infinite God to a certain degree. Two theological categories describe God’s revelation—general and special revelation. The universal ways that God reveals himself to people is through the creation, through history, and through a person’s inner being. Special revelation is where God decides to communicate with human beings in particular ways

and at particular times to offer the opportunity to be in relationship. Moses' burning bush experience in Exodus chapter 3 is a good example of special revelation.

Special revelation takes several forms. The historical events recorded in the Bible revealing God's redemptive plan are one form. Another is divine communication to those who were prophets and those who wrote sections of the Bible. The letter of 2 Peter records, "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" (1:20-21, NIV). Nevertheless, the most complete revelation of God is found in the incarnation.

Theologian Millard J. Erickson writes in regards to the person of Jesus Christ, "Here revelation is as act and as word come together. Jesus both spoke the Father's word and demonstrated the Father's attributes. He was the most complete revelation of God, because he was God" (191). The incarnation as found in the person of Jesus Christ becomes the most unique and full form in which God communicated to human beings.

The Gospel of John says, "The Word became flesh" (1:14, NIV). The Greek text for "Word" is *logos*. The interpretations of this Greek word are many, and scholars have debated John's intent and meaning around the use of the word *logos*. One particular interpretation of meaning from The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament says that it means "the communicator par excellence" (Rogers and Rogers 175). God's most excellent way of communicating with humankind was by taking on flesh.

The Gospel of John goes on to record in reference to the Word becoming flesh, "and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14, NIV). The presence of

God was dwelling among humans in a form they could understand and comprehend. The infinite took on the finite. The incomprehensible could be comprehended. God's effort to communicate with humankind forms the basis for the efforts that should be made to communicate God's Word today.

When Jesus, who was the Word, wanted the disciples to remember the significance of his death, he did not use words or phrases alone to teach them but invited them into an experience. This experience is called the Lord's Supper or Communion. It is a multisensory form of communication that occurs in worship services all over the planet. The Lord's Supper engages and utilizes all five senses. The experience communicates significance and meaning that can be easily recalled by those who participate in it. When Jesus wanted to communicate something important, he utilized multisensory forms of communication.

### **Multisensory Communication Today**

With the culture shifting from modernism to postmodernism has come a perceived longing for worship that is experiential and participatory. Multisensory communication may be a way to connect with today's culture. Experience and studies show that "people tend to remember about 10 percent of what they hear, 50 percent of what they hear and see, but 90 percent of what they hear, see, and do" (Hendricks 127).

The Church needs to be looking for ways to communicate relevantly to people that could possibly become more increasingly postmodern. Just as God saw fit to communicate to the world through the Son, the Church can look at similar and new ways to incarnate the Christian message today. When God wanted to communicate with human beings, He did it in tangible terms. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

The experience of people throughout the Bible gives a perspective on the power of multisensory communication in worship. The engagement of multiple senses is one way that God reveals himself to human beings. These biblical encounters with God in some cases brought about transformation in the lives of those who had them. This research attempted to show indicators for transformation through worship services that utilized multisensory communication.

### **Overview**

The following chapters of this dissertation cover more broadly what is reflected here in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 covers a review of literature in the area of communication and how it has changed within the context of worship in the twenty-first century. The second chapter also reviews the biblical basis for multisensory proclamation in worship and for using different forms of communication. Chapter 3 presents the research design for this study. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the research, and Chapter 5 gives a summary and interpretation of the research findings.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The literature review takes a more in-depth look at how communication happens in today's society and its implications for the Church. It gives the background history of changes in communication and how those changes have affected the way communication happens in the context of worship. The biblical contexts for communication and more specifically multisensory communication are addressed. The chapter ends with a look at the effects of postmodernism. First, the need for clear and understandable communication is discussed.

#### **The Need for Understandable Communication**

Every culture hears God in a different way. The middle class suburban Anglo culture of America is constantly changing and in need of a Christian witness that will speak in new ways so that the Biblical message can be understood today. Eugene A. Nida, in his book Customs and Cultures, writes to cross-cultural missionaries:

A missionary's failure to identify himself with the people, not in sympathy, but in empathy, is sometimes made more acute by reluctance, inability, or callousness to the proper use of the people's language. Communication is essentially a two-way experience; one must understand before he can talk, one must learn before he can teach. The proper use of language is not only the key to open the hearts of non-Christians, but it can also help to open the culture-closed heart of a missionary to the unsuspected needs and aspirations of the people. (252)

Although Nida is speaking to people who would go into foreign missions, the truth that he gives is applicable to the American mission field today. The principle of applying proper language is applicable across cultures. The need to revisit proper use of language by the Church in Anglo suburban culture is evidenced by the growing mission field that exists today. Bob Logan, a church-planting consultant, has said in his lecture

that “North America is the third largest mission field in the world.”

Missionary Leslie Newbigin brings up a fundamental concern:

A missionary or an anthropologist who really hopes to understand and enter into the adopted culture will not do so by trying to learn the language in the way a tourist uses a phrase book and a dictionary. It must be learned in the way a child learns to speak, not by finding words to match one’s existing stock, but by learning to think and speak in the way the people of the country do. (56)

Communicating to the adopted culture is more than simply using proper and clear words; it also has to do with learning to think in a like manner. Communicating is the task of putting together the ideas and concepts in a language that helps people grasp those same concepts and ideas.

David W. Henderson, in his book Culture Shift, recognizes the changes taking place and the need for more accessible communication in today’s culture. He uses the analogy of a package that was never delivered because it had been sent to an old address. The people, to whom the package was to be delivered, moved. He uses this analogy to help explain what is happening in churches today. “The world has moved, but it neglected to send a change of address card. We keep delivering the same words to the old address, but no one is home” (16). God’s Word has relevance to the American culture today. The Church’s task is to figure out how to communicate the Word in understandable and intelligible ways. It has to discover ways of sharing information in forms that are meaningful to people living today. Henderson adds that “God’s Word speaks with relevance to all humans, crossing every cultural line. But not until it has been translated into words and concepts that speak with particular meaning to each particular culture” (31). The United States is in desperate need of churches that speak with particular meaning to today’s culture. The Church needs to avoid making the mistake of

“pigeon-hole communication and keeping data relevant to Church and world separate. They speak the language of Babel in the street and that of Zion in the pew” (Morris, God in-a-Box 184).

One of the major changes taking place in today’s culture is the shift in how communication takes place. According to communication writer Leonard Sweet, “Book culture and literary culture are giving way to an electronic culture” (Communication and Change 50). The way people communicate has dramatically changed since 1950. With the constant change in technology and the emergence of postmodernism has come rapid change in the area of communication in today’s culture.

This rapid change in communication has brought about a difference in the way information is exchanged. The problem seems to be that the Church has missed it. “This reformation, unlike the one led by Martin Luther, is challenging not doctrine but the medium through which the message of Christianity is articulated” (D. Miller 11). According to Michael Slaughter, pastor of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church, the Church needs to understand that “we live in a post-modern, post-Christian, post-literate age” (18). Professor of worship and theology Robert E. Webber states, in regards to the changes taking place, “Because culture is in a new paradigm, the old wineskins are collapsing. It is not the faith that needs to be changed but the paradigm or wineskin in which Christianity is communicated” (Younger Evangelicals 15).

The problem affecting some of mainline Protestant worship is that the Church has retained one medium of communication while the culture has shifted to a new medium and will continue to shift. The Church has been primarily relying on print forms of media to communicate rather than taking advantage of new technologies and seeking to



understand the culturally adopted language of postmodernism.

J. Edward Carothers, author of The Paralysis of Mainstream Protestant Leadership speaks of the need to rethink the way the Church communicates: “The labor of hermeneutic conversation calls for creative revolution of the entire communication system within our churches. The revolution must take place in all of our printed materials, audiovisual materials, services of worship, preaching, classroom teaching, and pastoral care” (73). Colin Morris says, “When the world speaks to us without our being able to speak to it, we are deprived of speech and hence condemned to be untrue” (Wrestling with an Angel 28). The mainline Protestant churches are in need of rethinking the way they communicate to the world around them.

The Apostle Paul raises the question: “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?” (Rom. 10:14, NIV). If people are coming to worship services and not hearing the gospel proclaimed in a clear and meaningful way, then the Church risks failing in its mission. Leander E. Keck points out the potential failure:

The matter is urgent, for unless the mainline churches are able to communicate to the wider public who they are, what they believe, and what difference they can make; unless they are able to communicate the character and content of the Christian tradition, they will become an endangered species of interest mostly to their professional caste and historians. (110)

The Church has the important task of focusing on how communication happens in worship. George Barna reports that in 1991 the number one reason that Americans attended church was to worship God (42 percent). The second most popular reasons were to learn/study more about God (14 percent) and to quest for personal growth (14 percent) (What Americans 257). Christian A. Schwarz, who surveyed one thousand churches

worldwide, found that one of the eight significant growth factors for a church is an “inspiring worship service” (30). People want to worship, and they are longing for it to be a meaningful and inspiring experience. People want to know and encounter God, but a clear distraction is not communicating to people in their preferred language. Many things can disrupt a God encounter from happening in a person’s life. A person’s receptivity to the message is one factor beyond a church’s control. What is within a church’s control and discernment is its use of meaningful forms of communication. If the church becomes complacent about its task to articulate clearly God’s message, then the church should not be surprised when it lacks a passionate spirituality that will resonate with those who are open to meaningful worship experiences.

George Barna adds to his statistics this insight: “Worship, for a majority of adults, is a series of activities rather than a state of the heart” (What Americans 257). Again, many factors may have led to this conclusion. One way to address the issue is for the Church to rethink its use of words, phrases, images, sounds, tastes, touches, and smells to share the God given message as received in its worship services. The Church should be attempting to communicate in a language that engages the heart by finding ways to communicate in worship services that foster rather than hinder transformation from happening. This study hopes to help the Church find ways to communicate that provide for the best possibility for spiritual transformation.

### **Communication in Worship**

The following section gives a brief understanding of worship with focus on communication in worship. Communication happens in four different relationships: people communicating to God, God communicating to people, people communicating to

one another, and the worshipping group communicating to the world. All these ways of communicating are valid, yet this study focused mainly on communication between God and people. More specifically the focus was on multisensory thematic proclamation within worship and its ability to promote changed lives. The focus of this study assumed a free church style of worship where the main ingredients are proclamation and response.

### **Definitions of Christian Worship**

The two-way interchange between God and humans can be illustrated by looking at some definitions of Christian worship. Professor Paul W. Hoon, a United Methodist, defines worship this way: “Christian worship is God’s revelation of himself in Jesus Christ and man’s response” (77). Hoon goes on to discuss how God communicates to people by saying, “Through his Word, God ‘discloses and communicates his very being to man’” (77). A Lutheran theologian, Peter Brunner, is highlighted by James F. White who says, “Brunner has a distinct advantage in using the German word for worship, *Gottesdienst*, a word that connotes both God’s service to humans and humans’ service to God. Brunner capitalizes on this ambiguity and speaks of the ‘duality’ of worship” (Introduction to Christian Worship 26). Martin Luther himself says of worship, “Nothing else be done in it than that our dear Lord Himself talk to us through his holy Word and that we, in turn, talk to him in prayer and song of praise” (qtd. in J. White, Introduction to Christian 27). These brief quotes are a hint of the dual communication that exists in most Christian worship between God and human beings. God speaks to people through the Word, and people speak to God through their response of worship. Evelyn Underhill elaborates more upon the human response:

Christian Worship is a supernatural action; and more than a supernatural action, a supernatural life. It is the response of the human creature to the

besetting charity of God. But whether our outlook be towards the personal or the transcendent, it is here, in this movement of the abiding God towards His creature, that the incentive is given to man's deepest worship, and the appeal is made to his sacrificial love: and all kinds and degrees of Christian devotion, in prayer and in action, are ways in which he replies to this utterance of the Word. (339)

People not only respond to God's revelation by acts of worship, but they respond by action seen through a changed life. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans regarding the changed life as an act of worship:

Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (12:1-2a, NIV)

The previous definitions lend themselves to one of three philosophies of worship employed in America today. The three styles of worship are celebrative, free church, and charismatic. The following are brief definitions of each.

**Celebrative historical worship.** “Christian worship is an action which recalls the events of the history of salvation” (Taft 266). “Christian worship is not how we seek to contact God; it is a celebration of how God has touched us” (269).

**Free church worship.** “This worship has three objectives: to speak to God, to listen to God, and to respond to God—a sequence based on the ancient biblical structure of proclamation and response” (Mayfield 272). This style is broadly characterized by a simple form of worship, which “places the preacher on a platform and turns the congregation into an audience” (Shelley and Shelley 179). This style of worship often reflects a passion for evangelism.

**Charismatic worship.** “Worship, for Pentecostal and charismatic Christians, is an expression of the experience and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit—an event

which for many brings the Scriptures to life and continuously incarnates Jesus Christ in his church” (Wilde 275).

The nature of the type of worship that I researched in this project is associated with free church worship. “Free Church stands for colonial revivalists, Baptists, **some Methodists** [emphasis mine], the Churches of Christ and contemporary independent or “Bible” churches” (Shelley and Shelley 179). Some overlap and similar understandings in each type of worship philosophy exist, yet for the sake of looking at communication in worship, the focus upon communication between humans and their creator is necessary.

### **Worship Practices**

Depending on the church tradition, many different things take place within the context of a worship service. Research has shown that two practices happen in virtually every worship experience across America, and they have to do with people communicating to God and God communicating to people. Table 2.1 lists the findings of research done by Mark Chaves in a nationwide study showing the table the things that happen in worship.

**Table 2.1. What Happens at Worship**

	Percent of Attendees at Worship Services with	Percent of Congregations who's Services have
Singing by congregation	98	96
Sermons/speech	97	95
Musical Instrument of any sort	90	83
People greet each other	84	79
Written program	84	71
Silent prayer/meditation	81	74
People speak/read/recite together	75	63
*People testify/speak about religious experience	72	52
*Skit or play performed by teens or adults	70	61
Applause	58	55
People call out "Amen"	53	63
Singing by soloist	50	40
*Performance by paid singers or other performers	51	35
People other than leader raise hands	48	45
Communion	48	29
Dance performance by teens or adults	29	17
*People speak in tongues	19	24
Visual projection equipment	15	12
Adults jump/shout/dance spontaneously	13	19
Incense	7	4

An asterisk (\*) indicates the percent of congregations having a service with that feature at any time within the past year. For other elements, the percentage indicates the percent of congregations whose most recent main service included that element.

(Source: Mark Chaves. How Do We Worship? Alban Institute, 1999. 6).

As the above chart shows, people communicating to God through singing and

God communicating to people through the Word are the two most frequently used practices of worship. Fourth on the list is people interacting with one another. All the practices listed here are communicative acts in worship. Good communication is essential to worship.

In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul discusses the need for good communication in worship. He is writing to the Corinthian Church on matters pertaining to corporate worship. He is specifically discussing the use of the gifts of prophecy and tongues in the worship of the church:

Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. (14:9-11, NIV)

Several Greek words need to be looked at here. The first is the word *eushmoz* in verse 9, which literally translated means “intelligible, well marked” (Rogers and Rogers 382). It was used of scribes to describe their writing as clear and legible. Verse 9 is the only time in the New Testament this word is used “where Paul demands clarity of proclamation in view of the serious import of the message in questions of eternal destiny” (Kittel and Friedrich 278).

Another word Paul uses in verse 10 is *afwnoz* that is to be understood as “meaningless sound” (Kittel and Friedrich 382). Paul also describes meaningless speech as *dunamin thz fwvhz*, which literally rendered is “power of the sound” (Parallel New Testament 513). The NIV translates this Greek phrase as “meaning” (14:11). Paul in his own language is saying that meaning is the power behind the sounds or words.

The last Greek word that should be addressed is *barbaroz*, which is literally

rendered “barbarian” and was used to describe someone whose “language made no sense” (Rogers and Rogers 382). *barbaroz* is translated by the NIV into English as “foreigner” (14:11).

Paul’s first main concern for communication in worship is that it be clear and intelligible for those in worship to correctly comprehend what is being said. This importance is due to the nature of the message being a revelation from God. Paul’s additional concern is that what is said have meaning to the hearers. The message is good in that it may have meaning to the one communicating the message but it is useless if the listener does not grasp it. If those for whom the message was intended cannot understand the meaning, it is useless. Paul says it will be “barbarian” and make no sense to the intended audience.

Paul then goes on from these verses here to assert the need for communication in worship that builds up the Church. Good intelligible communication that speaks in a language, whereby people can understand the meaning, is essential to engaging people in worship.

Authors Ronald J. Allen, Barbara S. Blaisdell, and Scott B. Johnston write in regards to preaching in a postmodern context that “we are called to preach; and to preach intelligibly in this milieu is to take theological account of the community-embedded rules that describe how words are to be used meaningfully” (179). Allen, Blaisdell, and Johnston argue the importance of assessing what words and phrases hold meaning for people to intelligibly communicate with them.

These concerns are applicable to the Church today as it communicates to people in worship. The two main concerns are clarity and meaning. Both are necessary for the



message to be understood. If the worship leaders and preachers use clear and intelligible words but those words have no meaning to the hearers, the message will be lost.

Likewise, if the speakers use words that have meaning to the hearers but they are not distinctly spoken the message will also be lost. The attempt to utilize multisensory forms of proclamation in worship may be able not only to aid in clarifying the message but also bring awareness to the meaning of the message.

Don Saliers in his book, Worship Come to Its Senses, writes about four qualities that characterize relevant Christian worship: “awe, delight, truthfulness, and hope” (14). Attempts at communication in worship often attempt to bring about these characteristics. Saliers writes, “The physical senses are crucial to the recovery of awe, delight, truthfulness, and hope. For worship depends upon our capabilities of sensing presence, of hearing, seeing, touching, moving, smelling, and tasting” (14). According to Saliers, senses are important to communication in worship. He also states, “We must deal, then, with the relations between physical senses, feelings, more complex emotions, and the *sense* [original emphasis] of God” (15). What Saliers is saying helps to confirm the need for research in the area of multisensory communication in worship.

### **The Use of Image in Worship**

The use of image in worship may be helpful in understanding the use of all five senses in Christian worship. The theological insights and understanding that can be gained from images that engage the sense of sight may be transferable to the other senses as well.

The use of Christian images in worship has occurred well before the sixth century. Historian Kenneth Latourette states, “Long before the year 500 paintings inspired by the

Christian faith had begun to appear, and a few surviving specimens can still be seen, notably in the catacombs” (251).

In the eighth century the iconoclastic controversy arose in the Church. An ongoing debate erupted about the use of images in Christian worship because of their association with paganism and idolatry. The argument of the iconoclasts was similar to those who argue against the use of audiovisuals in the Church today. Latourette writes, “The iconoclasts pled the prohibition of the second commandment to make the ‘likeness of anything’ and held that to do so ‘draws down the spirit of man from the lofty worship of God to the low and material worship of the creature’” (294). In the end history shows that the Pope upheld the use of icons as “a valuable means of instructing illiterate Christians in the faith” (293). The council of Nicaea also upheld the use of icons in its meeting in AD 787.

The part of the larger Church that still uses the icon in worship is the Greek Orthodox branch. They continue to make use of images in their worship of God. Leonid Ouspensky, an iconographer in the Greek Orthodox Church, explains “the icon is a language common to the entire Church because it expresses the common Orthodox teaching, the common Orthodox ascetic experience, and the common Orthodox liturgy” (62). The theological basis for their use of image is found in the incarnation, “This is the humiliation, the kenosis of God; he who is absolutely inaccessible to humans, who is indescribable and unrepresentable, becomes describable and representable by assuming human flesh” (35). The Orthodox Church does not view the use of image as idolatry like the iconoclasts do and makes the distinction that “idolatry means to mistake the icon for

the Christ Himself. On the other hand, when I say this icon represents the image of the Christ, then it is a different matter altogether. It is just an icon” (Markides 72).

The history of the Church can help shed some more light through the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ  
 the only Son of God,  
 eternally begotten of the Father,  
 God from God, Light from Light,  
 true God from true God,  
 begotten, not made,  
 of one being with the Father;  
 through Him all things were made.  
 For us and our salvation  
 he came down from heaven,  
 was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
 and became truly human. (United Methodist Hymnal 880)

The Nicene creed helped to clear up the debate over whether the spiritual was separated from the physical in Christ and, for that matter, in all humanity. Webber writes, “The Nicene Creed affirmed that the immateriality is communicated to us through materiality. Divine encounter does not occur apart from the material in some fuzzy and nondefineable esoteric spirit, but through the physical and material reality of a man named Jesus” (Ancient-Future Faith 64).

The incarnation becomes the basis for the experience of the divine through the material world. God so chose to take on the human condition to make clear and meaningful God’s intent for all humanity. The human condition prevents people from truly knowing God. Human finiteness has become an obstacle to relationship with God and was a consequence of the fall; thus it was necessary for God to speak to humanity in a way that humans could understand and comprehend. God chose to speak through the Son, Jesus Christ who took on the human reality. Paul explains the nature of the

incarnation to the Philippian Church:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (2:5-7, NIV)

Bishop Kalistos Ware discusses the practice of natural contemplation and makes this statement about getting in touch with the material world “this material object, this person I am talking to, this moment of time—each is holy, each in its own way unrepeatably and so of infinite value, each can serve as a window into eternity” (118). The point of the incarnation is that we find the “extraordinary in the ordinary” (119).

Found in the incarnation is not only the theological basis for the use of images but also the other senses as well. The incarnation has many implications for the multisensory. Through the senses people get in touch with the material world and thus discover the presence of God. Ouspensky makes this concluding statement; “If the word and song of the Church sanctify our soul by means of hearing, the image sanctifies by the means of sight, which is according to the Fathers, the most important of the senses” (62). This thought could be carried to the sense of taste, touch, and smell. The five senses help humans to comprehend and understand who God is.

Klemens Richter, a German Catholic theologian, writes regarding symbols for ancient people, “In the symbol, the visible reality of the whole was present, although in its entirety it remained invisible. So ‘symbol’ means ‘a whole reality’ insofar as it presents itself through symbol” (14). He is speaking mainly in regards to the Eucharist when referring to symbols and how it can be “reimbodied.” He describes symbol further by saying, “The concept of the symbol has a deeper, more comprehensive sense, because it intends to present and describe a real means of communication between God and

humanity” (14). What has been looked at here in this section is the use of symbols or images to communicate and how they relate to multisensory proclamation as a way to present a message to humanity.

Richter points out a problem with western intellectual theology when he writes about the liturgy. He says it “still supplies no basis in which an understanding for embodied liturgy can take good root and grow. It is not a simple question of getting it through one’s head but also grasping it in one’s heart” (35). Multisensory communication is an attempt to help persons grasp the message’s meaning in their hearts. Richter comes to a similar conclusion when he writes, “So it is up to each community whether its worship services are full of the delight of the senses or are, instead, rational and boring” (36).

### **Biblical Examples of Multisensory Communication**

Good evidence of multisensory communication exists in the Bible. Throughout the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures examples of the five senses engaged in communication are witnessed. Also witnessed is the biological fact that God created human beings with five senses to help them understand the world around them. The episode in Genesis 27:22-29 reveals how Jacob used the sense of taste, touch, and smell to deceive Isaac and steal his brother’s blessing. Isaac’s lack of sight and hearing prevented him from recognizing which son he was blessing. The five senses were integral in this exchange of communication.

Through the senses revelation of God occurs. The Apostle John writes, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the

word of life” (1 John 1:1, NIV). John is speaking, of course, of God’s ultimate revelation in Jesus Christ who could see, hear, taste, touch, and smell as well. Jesus is the one who also took on the multisensory experience of crucifixion through which persons are healed.

### **Isaiah’s Commission**

Before the incarnation God chose many ways to communicate with human beings. Some of those ways engaged multiple senses. A great biblical example of multisensory communication in the context of a worship is Isaiah’s encounter with God. Many scholars believe that this encounter took place in the temple during an actual time of worship (Grogan 55). The temple is known as the central place of worship for the Israelites. This occasion of temple worship is the context for Isaiah’s transformation, yet what makes it truly worship is not the place but the presence of God and Isaiah’s response.

The text says, “I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple” (Isa. 6:1, NIV). Here in Isaiah’s vision, much imagery is described. He also describes seraphs flying above the Lord on the throne with faces and feet covered (6:2). Isaiah is engaged in an awe-inspiring visual display of God’s exaltation. An interesting point to note is that as spectacular as this vision was for Isaiah the only vision part of God that he sees is the train of God’s robe. These visuals became a way of communicating God’s presence, and the visual actions of the seraphs hiding their faces communicates to Isaiah that he is in the presence of a Holy God who unable to be viewed by human eyes.

A strong description of auditory sounds coming from the seraphs are also in his vision as they spoke to one another regarding the holiness of God. Isaiah adds, “At the

sound of their voices the door posts and thresholds shook” (6:4, NIV). Here the seraphs communicate through auditory means the holiness and presence of God. Both the message of the sights and the message of the sounds worked together to communicate to Isaiah. The combination of sight and sound used in audiovisual presentations today is an example of a similar sensory experience. Just as God communicated to Isaiah using both sight and sound in harmony to form a consistent message so do some attempts at using audiovisuals in today’s worship services.

With the sound of the seraph voices, the temple filled with smoke. Some scholars attribute the smoke to the incense the priests used in the temple worship (Watts 74). The smoke would have created not only another visual experience but engaged the sense of smell as well. This sense of sight and smell may have been used to communicate once again God’s presence. The text may also be recalling the cloud of smoke that led the Israelites through the desert by day in Exodus 33:9. Isaiah realizes at this point in the experience his sin before the Lord and proclaims, “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips” (6:5, NIV).

The next sense engaged is the sense of touch, a painful touch, as the seraph flies with a live coal from the altar and touches Isaiah’s lips. The touch of the coal on Isaiah’s lips may also have engaged the sense of taste as well, even though the biblical text does not indicate it. With this last experience atonement for Isaiah’s sin is made. Here the sense of touch is used by God to communicate to Isaiah his atonement. The seraph explains to Isaiah, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for” (6:7, NIV).

At the end of this experience, God calls for a response by asking, “Whom shall I

send?” and “Who will go for us?” (6:8, NIV). With these questions Isaiah emphatically responds, “Send me!” (6:8, NIV). In this multisensory communication experience, Isaiah is transformed from sinner to servant of the Lord. The significance of this passage is how multiple senses are used to communicate. One commentator on Isaiah’s multisensory experience in the temple came to the conclusion, “So the God who normally hides himself from the senses occasionally made himself known in a form accessible to them, and he ultimately did so in the consummate unveiling of himself in his Son (1 John 1:1-4)” (Grogan 56). Here in this comment God’s revelation in Christ to humanity is tied to a previous attempt of God to communicate with a human being.

### **The Sense of Sight**

The fact that God made revelation through the sense of sight is obvious from reading the Scriptures. Numerous examples of God engaging the sense of sight to communicate with human beings are found. God communicated God’s promise to Noah by using a rainbow. God communicated deliverance by parting the Red Sea. A descending dove was used to communicate the Spirit at Jesus’ baptism. Paul’s conversion experience happened through a blinding light. Probably the strongest visual communication in the Bible is recorded in the book of Revelation. This book is not only about the end times, but it is also a book of worship:

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God



Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.” (Rev 4:1-8, NIV)

This strong vision is how God chose to communicate to John. In this text a lot of imagery is used to communicate the visual presence of the Lord Almighty. The imagery leads to a response and demonstrates the power of visual imagery used to communicate in a worship setting.

### **The Sense of Sound**

The sense of hearing is often engaged in biblical communication. Under the leadership of King David, the ark is brought to Jerusalem. As the ark was being brought into the city, the whole assembly was engaged in worship, and they utilized sound to communicate its arrival. “So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouts, with the sounding of rams horns and trumpets, and of cymbals, and the playing of lyres and harps” (1 Chron. 15:28, NIV). Again when the ark is brought to the temple under Solomon’s leadership, “The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang” (2 Chron. 5:13, NIV).

### **The Senses of Sight and Sound**

An example of a visual and auditory encounter is the event of Jesus’ birth. The angels appeared to the shepherds and the text says, “The glory of the Lord shone around them” (Luke 2:9, NIV). The visual of God’s glory communicated to the shepherds just who sent the angels. The visual experience that the shepherds were having was added to by sounds when suddenly a choir of angels appeared and praised God saying, “Glory to God in the highest” (2:14, NIV). The response of the shepherds’ notes the audiovisual communication used by the angels, “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God

for all the things they had **heard** [emphasis mine] and **seen** [emphasis mine]” (2:20, NIV). God used an audiovisual means of communication when trying to communicate with the shepherds. Not only was Jesus’ birth incarnational, but God’s way of telling the shepherds was incarnational as well. God got their attention and put the good news in terms the shepherds could understand.

### **The Sense of Touch**

The sense of touch has been used to communicate atonement not only in Isaiah’s encounter with God but also in the atonement process of the Temple. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the act of sacrifice in worship is described in the book of Leviticus. The sense of touch on the part of the worshipper is utilized in the act of animal sacrifice. In the description of the act of sacrifice the Bible says, “He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him” (Lev. 1:4, NIV). The worshipper touching the animal helped to communicate his responsibility in the offering. Lawrence Frank speaks of the power of tactile communication when he says, “In some interpersonal relations it communicates more fully than speech, e.g., consoling a bereaved person, when words fail” (5). Placing hands on a sacrifice communicated more than words could have.

Thomas is another example of the need for touch in communication. After the resurrection Thomas makes this statement: “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” (John 20:25, NIV). For Thomas seeing was not believing; touching was believing. The risen Christ needed to be communicated to Thomas through the physical touching of Christ’s body. After he touched Christ’s wounds he proclaimed, “My Lord and my God!”

(John 20:28, NIV). The sense of touch elicits a response in Thomas and an obvious change of belief. Some people, like Thomas, hear and understand information in different ways and through different senses.

### **The Sense of Smell**

Incense was used in the Israelite temple as an act of worship and a way to communicate to God. The offering of incense symbolized the ascension of prayers to God. The use of incense would have certainly engaged the sense of smell. In the original tabernacle an altar of incense was built on which “fragrant incense” was to be burned each morning and evening by the priest (Exod. 30:7, NIV). The prophet Malachi calls the people to a time when “in every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name” (Mal. 1:11, NIV). During the time of offering incense Zechariah learned from an angel of his son John the Baptist’s birth (Luke 1:9-12). Incense was a medium of communication in biblical worship that called people’s attention to God.

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, honored and worshipped Jesus in Bethany by offering a fragrant perfume to anoint him. It says that by this act “the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:3, NIV). This fragrant offering was used to communicate to Jesus extravagant devotion. Commentator Gary M. Burge writes concerning Mary’s fragrant offering, “While Judas objects, Jesus finds in it a pleasing expression of devotion” (338). He follows up by saying “The quantity is so great that the entire house is filled with its fragrance, which underscores the extravagance of the gift” (339). This fragrant offering communicated devotion and extravagant worth to Jesus.

The examples of smell being used to communicate, both in the Temple and in Mary’s case, reveal that this sense appears to be used by people to communicate to God.

The sense of smell is used to communicate a response on the part of people to God.

Ultimately God does not need to smell the offerings and the fragrance of the offerings are more important for those who are presenting them.

### **The Sense of Taste**

The biblical witness reveals the sense of taste was used to communicate to people. In Proverbs 24:13 the young men, to whom Proverbs is written, are encouraged to taste the sweetness of honey. The analogy of taste is used as a way to communicate “that wisdom is sweet to your soul” (NIV). The analogy is used again in Proverbs 20:17 and Psalm 119:113. God used the sense of taste to communicate to Ezekiel. In his vision he is told, “‘Eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.’ So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth” (3:3, NIV). After Ezekiel tastes the scroll he is told to go and proclaim God’s word to the house of Israel. The sense of taste is used by God to communicate to Ezekiel the value of God’s message. Honey was used in the Bible to represent “luxury,” “abundance of good things,” and “goodness” (Patch 750). In the book of Revelation, John has a similar experience in his vision. John writes, “I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour” (10:9, NIV).

The sense of taste was also used in the Passover, which was practiced under the first covenant and also in early Christian worship. Within the Passover liturgy, several foods were used to remind the people of God’s deliverance from bondage in Egypt. Matstsoth and bitter herbs were eaten to remind the Israelites of the unleavened bread they made and the bitterness of slavery they endured. Other foods that could have been eaten were the parsley dipped in salt water and charoceth, which was a paste to symbolize

the mortar the Israelites had to make. Cups of wine were also used in the ceremony.

Out of this meal, the Lord's Supper was instituted, and most Christians celebrate it today. Every time communion is served in worship, it engages the sense of taste reminding Christians of Jesus Christ's sacrifice of blood for the deliverance from sin. It not only utilizes the sense of taste but touch, hearing, sight, and smell to form a communicative experience for the participants. Worship author, James F. White, writes about how God uses the sacraments to communicate:

These the sacraments provide as ways through which God accommodates to our capacity in order to make God's love known. Through the words and actions of the sacraments, God reaches out to us in self giving so as to make God's love remembered and experienced anew. (Sacraments 23)

All five senses have been used at one point or another in the biblical witness to communicate with people. The use of communication through these senses helped people to hear and understand who God is. God appears to be accommodating the human condition throughout the Scriptures and especially in the incarnation to communicate to the created ones. Through these times of God's self-disclosure, person's lives were affected. Isaiah, Moses, Zechariah, Thomas, Mary, John, the shepherds, and many others have been affected by times of communication that revealed God through multisensory experiences.

### **Theology of the Body, Mind, and Spirit**

Jesus taught people to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30, NIV). The text reminds people of the concept that God created humans as thinking, feeling, and spiritual beings. Thoughts and feelings are a response to information gathered from the five senses. People are commanded to love God with all of their being.

The Apostle Paul gives insight into the aspects of human beings when he writes, “May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23, NIV). Paul indicates three aspects that are inherent in the creation of all human beings; spirit, soul, and body.

The Eastern Orthodox Church’s theology on the creation of human beings can help to shed light theologically on humanity’s ability to understand God. Bishop Kallistos Ware writes, “While distinct, these aspects are strictly interdependent; man is an integral unity, not the sum total of separable parts” (47). In the orthodox view, the body is the material aspect of the human condition. The soul is the aspect that feels and perceives. The spirit is the breath of God that connects people to the Holy Spirit. The spirit of a person is the aspect by which “man apprehends God and enters into communion with him” (48). The important point is to understand that these three aspects are interconnected and interdependent. People can connect and be helped to apprehend God by engaging the senses of the physical body.

The human senses may help people to comprehend God to a certain degree, but the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be discounted. Paul said of the Spirit that when people are unable to communicate with God the Holy Spirit “intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Rom. 8:26, NIV). This communication from God to humans is likewise by the same Spirit. Paul writes about the work of the Holy Spirit:

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (2:9-11, NIV)

Here Paul argues that the things of God can only be known by the Spirit and not by the human spirit alone.

The person of the Holy Spirit assisting in communication between God and human beings is very important to consider as forms of multisensory communication are studied. Multisensory forms are no substitute for the work of the Holy Spirit, and God can certainly communicate with human beings by the Spirit even when no multisensory forms of communication are used. Multisensory thematic proclamation needs to be considered within the context of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

### **Worship and Transformation**

The whole worship experience in which people engage has the potential to bring about transformation in the life of the believer. Robert Webber asserts, “Worship as a communication event educates me in the Christian life; worship forms me spiritually. Worship not only presents Christ, it causes Christ to be formed in my life” (Worship 105). Geoff Bullock, in writing on getting back to God-centered worship, says, “We can’t worship God truly and remain unchanged. When we worship, we push into God’s heart” (par. 41).

Church consultants William M. Easum and Thomas G. Bandy believe that worship is integral to the transformation process in a person’s life. He writes in regards to people’s experience of worship, “They emerge motivated to pursue the transformation that has only just begun and the Christian growth that will never end” (66).

Marva J. Dawn describes this possibility of formation in saying that “music, songs, Scripture lessons, sermons, liturgical forms, architecture, and other accoutrements of art and gesture and ambience are all means by which God invites, reveals, and forms

us” (“Worship for Postmodern” par. 29). Worship should form and reform the worshipper. As I used to say at the beginning of many worship services in prayer, “Lord, may we not leave here today in the same state of heart in which we came.”

Worship transformation means that actual behavior should change as a result. “Our rituals effectively influence human emotion and thought toward some actual behavioral purpose,” according to John H. Westerhoff (384). Worship should influence people and hopefully inspire them to change in some tangible way.

Behavioral change is not simply about worship attendance. Some people associate worship with something on their to do list rather than as a life-changing event. The worship experience becomes a passive obligation. Worship is inauthentic when it is seen as a duty devoid of intentionality. Timothy Mayfield places the right emphasis when he writes, “But true worship includes actions as well as thoughts and emotions. We understand with our mind and heart, but we act by our will. Facts and feelings must come together resulting in actions which bring honor to the Lord” (272).

This idea of transformation is emphasized more in the Orthodox theology of worship. Whereas many churches look to Bible studies, retreats, and conferences to bring about life change, the Orthodox Church focuses primarily on worship as the transformational element of a Christian’s life. According to one Orthodox theologian, “Worship informs, reforms, and transforms the believer. The life and character of orthodox Christians, in large measure, is shaped and formed by the worship of the Church” (Calivas 284). Whereas the Orthodox Church approaches worship differently than those of the free church model, great wisdom can be gained from this perspective. Protestant mainline churches willingness to learn the essence of what the Orthodox



Church is saying could help to provide meaningful worship experiences in this new millennium.

A greater potential for transformation can be created in worship when the Church is willing to look to new ways of communicating to this present-day, Anglo popular culture. Media prophet Marshall McLuhan informs about the power of media to transform. He writes, “Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us unique ratios of sense perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act—the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change, men change” (41). A contemporary prophet of American culture, Robert N. Bellah, writes about the power of meaningful communication to bring about transformation:

Indeed, the more deeply the symbols do grasp the real problems and conflicts of the worshippers, the more powerful the subsequent experience can be. But what happens in worship is the transformation of the personal into the transpersonal, the immediate into the transtemporal. Through this transformation the immediate problems and conflicts can be seen in a new light, insight can be achieved and postworship changes in behavior can ensue. (55)

Both these modern-day prophets are asking the Church to look at effective means of communication realizing that transformation can only happen when communication is relevant to the culture.

Research in the area of learning has confirmed the need for communicating in a variety of ways and using a variety of senses to bring about change. For example, when only the sense of hearing is used, research shows a lower degree of retention:

Research shows that 40 percent of a spoken message is lost from a listener’s memory after just two minutes. After a half day, 60 percent of the message is gone. And after a week, over 90 percent of the message has leaked out of the memory forever. (Schultz and Schultz 70)

Memories become permanent when they are “dependent on how strongly the information

is registered in the first place. That's why it's so important to learn in ways that involve hearing, seeing, saying, and doing and which involve positive emotions" (73). As scientists have learned about the human brain, they have discovered "the filter in the brain that transfers information to your long term memory is very closely linked with the brain's emotional center. And link your associations with as many senses as you can: sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste" (166). Described here is a connection between recall and emotion within the human brain. The connection between recall and emotion sheds light on the intent of this research to study affect and personal involvement. These are both predictors of potential transformation.

Jesus told a parable about a sower who cast seed haphazardly onto path, rocks, thorns, and good soil (Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15). He connected the story to things in life with which people could associate. Jesus' employment of common illustrations helped people learn the parable and want to know more about it. The parable itself is about retention of information that brings about growth. The environment into which the seed was cast determined the amount of transformation that took place in the life of the seed. Here in the parable, the soil represents the condition of the hearer's heart and their receptivity to the message. This parable could be applied to worship environments today. Churches have the ability to create a worship environment and experience that can facilitate the potential for Christian growth. Mediums of communication can help create the right environment for transformation to happen.

### **Biblical Basis for Meaningful Communication**

Jesus taught using stories and analogies that connected with the people he was trying to teach (Matt. 5-7). He used humor to connect with the people (Matt. 19:24;

23:24). He communicated in ways that were not only appealing to his cultural situation but in a way that people of all cultures and generations could relate.

The greatest evidence for meaningful communication is the incarnation. When God wanted to communicate with human beings, He did not expect people to come to his level, but he stooped to the level of humanity. “Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Phil. 2:6-7, NIV). Jesus Christ became a human to communicate God’s love to humanity. God could actually be accused by some of “dumbing down” the gospel message (Dawn, Royal Waste 334).

James Empereur, in discussing liturgical theology, writes concerning the incarnation:

Jesus Christ is the language of God. Communicative human language is not the mere transmitting of information. It sets one up for encounter, a deepening of relationships, and a challenge to one’s presuppositions. And all this communication takes place within the rhythmic pattern of the liturgy which is where the language of God becomes concrete. (265)

Although Empereur is taking the liturgy as a whole in view, his point is still well taken. Communication in worship is not just about information but transformation. God’s steadfast love for humanity motivated the incarnation. The Church could it express its love for people by incarnating the way it communicates in worship. The Church could accomplish this task by speaking the language of the people.

Communication was important in the Hebrew Scriptures. Simply reading the Scriptures was not enough; people needed to understand them as well. When the exiles returned to Jerusalem, they worshipped, and Ezra read from the Book of the Law. The text says that “they read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read” (Neh. 8:8 NIV). The

people had been in exile and would have become biblically illiterate. Biblical illiteracy can be witnessed in our culture today. The Church can help people to understand God's word once again by making it clear and meaningful.

Looking again at the parable of the soils, the seed is the message. The Church scatters seed every time a worship service takes place. The Church attempts to communicate God's message to those who come. That message may or may not be heard depending on the language spoken in the service.

The context of worship has the potential to influence the environment in which the seed is cast. That environment is the heart; it is the person's receptivity to the message. Different worship services offer different ways of influencing the soil of the heart and cultivate that soil differently. Look at the words of Jesus in this parable he tells. He sits down with his disciples and says to them, "**To those who are open to my teaching** [emphasis mine], more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But to those who are not listening, even what they have will be taken away from them" (Matt. 13:12, NLT). Changing the way in which the Church communicates to people in worship may help to open doors to human hearts. Communicating in meaningful ways can only help people to grasp the Christian message.

Note that Jesus refers to the sense of seeing and the sense of hearing when explaining why people do not get the message. He says, "Their *ears cannot hear* [emphasis mine], and they have closed their eyes—so their *eyes cannot see* [emphasis mine], and their ears cannot hear, and **their hearts cannot understand** [emphasis mine], and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them" (13:15, NIV). The implication is that people are not taking God's Word to heart because their ears and eyes have not been

open. Not everyone will accept God's Word. The way the Church worships and changes in how the Church communicates will not bring about change in everyone. Some will reject God no matter what the Church does, and people's ears and eyes will remain closed. When the Church distracts from the communication process by lack of clarity and lack of meaning, it actually hinders the communication of God's Word—the Church is not doing everything in its power to allow for open eyes and ears to what is being proclaimed.

Don E. Saliers writes of his experience, "Many persons whom I have interviewed about their worship experience consistently name three factors that prevent their deeper participation: (1) when worship is 'done for us'; (2) when worship is 'done to us'; and (3) when 'we don't understand what is going on'" (73). Understanding what is happening in worship requires clear and meaningful communication.

The Church can become more intentional about creating a worship environment that influences person's receptivity to the message; a worship context where ears and eyes were opened to receive God's word. Not only can the Church facilitate open ears and eyes but mouths, and noses, and hands to touch as well.

The Church has the ability to facilitate a hearing of God's message that brings in the new kingdom. The key may be opening the senses to receive God's Word and bring it to fruition. In the parable of the sower, the results are what matter. Jesus says, "The good soil represents the hearts of those who truly accept God's message and produce a huge harvest—thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted" (13:23, NIV). The ultimate concern is about fruit. The use of multisensory communication in worship may actually help to produce disciples For people to apply the message they hear

on the weekend in their daily lives they need to grasp it clearly. Ultimately the transformation of the human heart is something only God can measure but an issue that the body of Christ is called to examine.

### **Shifts in Communication**

Over the centuries as technology has changed so has communication. With each new technology comes impact on the culture and how people communicate. New technologies obviously impact the Church. Babin writes about religious communication:

The incarnation of the Christian message in different cultural epochs, each characterized by different media, has introduced not just a new way of transmitting a message (print or electronic, for example), but a new form of Christian existence and a new form of Church. Unless there is a continual total transformation, the Christian message and Christ himself are not communicated. (8)

To understand these new forms of Christian existence, one needs to see the changes that have taken place over the centuries.

Many authors have tried to categorize these changes into different eras. Robert Webber divides classical Christian history into six eras or what he calls “paradigms of time” ([Ancient-Future Faith](#) 13). The following is a list and the labels that go with each era:

**Primitive Christianity** (first Century);

**Common Era** (100-600)—Mystery, Community, Symbol;

**Medieval Era** (600-1500)—Institutional;

**Reformation** (1500-1750)—Word;

**Modern Era** (1750-1980)—Reason, Systematic, Verbal, Individualistic; and,

**Postmodern Period** (1980- )—Mystery, Community, Symbol (34).

One of the factors of change that can be seen from one period to the next in

Webber's description is the influence of technology. The first influence of technology actually occurred prior to the early Church, "in the fifth century B.C., when Athens underwent a change from an oral culture to an alphabet writing culture" (Postman 145). The change to written culture influenced the early Church and can be seen in the copying of manuscripts to preserve the witness of the Word. The invention of the printing press moved the Church out of the medieval era into the Reformation. The mass appeal of print media moved the Church into the modern era. Now electronic technology is helping to move society from the modern era to the postmodern period.

Preachers Allen, Blaisdell, and Johnston speak of the shifts taking place when they write, "Premodern culture was largely oral-aural. Modernity became print based. Now the electronic media are returning an emphasis on oral-aural modes of human communication while adding the dimension of visual images, and not giving up the realm of print" (23). These shifts are influencing the ways people communicate information.

After taking a broad view of the changes that have taken place through the centuries, two major shifts in technology are identified that have affected communication and worship. The first was the invention of the printing press, which brought about the written culture, and the second was the invention of the TV, which highlighted the electronic culture.

### **Written Communication**

Early Christianity put emphasis on the copying of manuscripts, and the apostles recorded their eyewitness testimonies about the life of Christ. Written culture did not dramatically change the way people thought until after the invention of the printing press. A push to change the way faith was communicated occurred after the Middle Ages:

Printing from movable type was invented in Europe by Johannes Gutenberg between 1440 and 1456. It was an inspired act on the part of the Church, the prophets, and the saints of that time to seize on this new medium to react against the degradation and the aberrations of the faith at the end of the Middle Ages. Their tactic—and this has been said many times, but cannot be overemphasized—was not to sprinkle a few printed pieces into the oral culture of the period. On the contrary, they created a different way of communicating faith, which was based on the potential of the new print medium just then becoming available. (Babin 24-25)

In the emerging culture after the printing press, Christian culture's purpose was to make everything uniform. A strong emphasis on doctrine grew with the emergence of the reformers. This emphasis on the printed word led to other changes as well:

On the contrary, it was something quite different: a new way of teaching and learning, but also a change in the structure of communication. That whole system was gradually to change with the introduction of printing—not only the obligation to attend Sunday Mass to hear the catechism sermon, but also, among other things, the development of the school of catechism and such institutions as solemn communion. (Babin 28)

Webber makes another observation about this shift caused by the print media and points out the effects upon the ancient forms of worship:

Protestantism, which can be characterized as a movement of the Word, led the way in the shift from symbolic communication of the medieval era to the verbal communication of the modern era. Because words were regarded as higher and more significant vehicle of truth than symbols, images, poetry, gesture, and the like, all forms of communication other than the verbal became suspect. Consequently, protestant liturgies were not only word centered but attached greater religious importance to the verbal content of worship. (“Concerns” 345)

This reliance on the written word became even more ingrained in the Church later in the eighteenth century. Written text came to its mass appeal about the turn of the nineteenth century. Mass communication grew between 1790 and 1810 as the amount of newspapers went from ninety to 370 (Sweet, Communication and Change 43). After this time, evangelicals came to believe that books could bring about the change required to



usher in the new millennium:

The printed word was seen as the indispensable, even millennial lever of social reform. The confidence of evangelicals in print as little levers that could move great weights, as well as evangelicals 'those who read, lead' trust in literacy, was unbounded. (48)

Susan J. White, author of Christian Worship and Technological Change, comes to this conclusion on the written word in worship: "Christian worship has remained fairly univalent, text centered and, hence, word-centered experience. It continues to be an experience of the ear rather than of the eye" (119).

### **Electronic Communication**

Len Wilson, in his book The Wired Church, gives a basic definition of electronic communication: "Electronic Media are a means to send a message or set of messages to individuals or groups of people in which electronic forms of technology are utilized" (16). Many forms are being used today such as, radio, film, television, CD-ROMs, and, most recently, the Internet.

Samuel F. B. Morse started the electronic communication age in May 1844 when he invented the telegraph (Sweet, Communication and Change 54). It was used in the 1850s to communicate the happenings of camp meetings. Later in the century the telephone emerged and has been used by churches ever since. Little did Morse know how significant his invention would be over the next 150 years.

About 1950 the television emerged on the electronic scene. The TV set brought about major changes in communication still affecting society and churches today. "On a daily basis only 35 percent of Americans read the newspaper and only 45 percent listen to the radio. Ninety-eight percent of American homes have a TV; 64 percent have two or more" (Turner 15). Other statistics on Americans show that "97 percent have plumbing"

(Slaughter 23). More people have TVs than running water. The effects became even more pronounced with the introduction of the VCR. Roughly four out of five homes in America have a VCR, and nine out of ten of those VCRs are used to watch movies (Barna, What Americans 114-15). Now DVD players are taking the place of VCRs, and the emphasis is upon better visual quality. Today's culture is saturated by the audiovisual. With this technological change has come a shift in what is a valued form of communication. One preacher appropriately says, "Texts are simply not valued and prized as they were in previous generations. This makes the preaching of the Gospel a difficult prospect" (Rochelle par. 4). Benedict and Miller, in their book on contemporary worship, teach that "the word has been replaced by the 'icon.' Words are something found in a book; they take time to process. Icons are two-second images that sum up a whole belief system or product line of a company" (37).

Using the written word to communicate in today's culture is becoming more difficult. "More people in the culture are influenced, not by the papers and books of the philosophers, ethicists, or commentators, but rather by the artistic communication of their ideas in the media" (Willhite and Gibson 69). The changes in visual communication have changed the way people perceive and understand reality. Keck, in his book The Church Confident, writes concerning the impact of technology:

Today's technology has made it possible for the combination of sound, image, and words to communicate a quite different power. In terms of communicating, the contrast between silent reading and vibrating with MTV could hardly be greater. If reading appeals to reason and reflection, MTV appeals to emotion and immediacy. This mode of communication has been around long enough to have had an impact far beyond sheer entertainment. (103)

Others have affirmed the power of the audiovisual age by saying, "Our age is

visually as well as if not more than, verbally oriented. People warm to images. This has always been true, but it is especially true now” (Rochelle pars. 38-39). This shift towards image over word is in some ways reverting back to a mode of communication that existed before the printing press. Visual Orientation resonates with a time when the Church may have had a more holistic approach to communication in worship.

Just as the Bible was printed when the printing press first came out, so now one Bible translation team has tried to communicate God’s Word through audiovisual means. The American Bible Society was the first to attempt to communicate through this medium of language. They created an MTV style video of Mark 5:1-20, which is the event of the Gerasene demoniac, called Out of the Tombs.

Sociologist Tex Sample writes about today’s generation and how they grasp information when he writes “Visualization provides authenticity for many younger people today, and, when light imitates sound, visualization participates in the dynamics of the aural and their contemporary capacities to create intimacy and meaning” (83). Sample is describing the power of audiovisual communication and the power of this medium needs to be taken into consideration.

Audiovisual means of communication are not just promoting information but are a form of language. Len Wilson has come to the conclusion that media is a cultural language. He defines four ways that media is used in the Church:

**Media as the arts**—“a means to (re)create the impact and experience of fine art” (18);

**Media as information**—“the ability to disseminate information globally then for the ability to represent artistic truth” (20);

**Media as mission or evangelism**—“For the purpose of drawing un-churched people into a faith community” (21); and,

**Media as cultural language**—“It should (a) mimic innovation in pop cultural expression, (b) reach the mind and soul, (c) through its expression of Christ and truth, draw people to God, and (d) mediate the presence of the Church in the world, for the sake of transforming culture” (23).

Leonard Sweet points out, “MTV marked the birth of a new postmodern language, a dedifferentiated language expressive of a dedifferentiated, multidimensional ‘look and feel’ culture where barriers ... are breaking down” (Communication and Change 87). This powerful truth of electronic media as language is something the Church should recognize and take seriously.

This new language is much different from the print-oriented language:

What is characteristic of this construal system is that it changes the inherited relation of *logos* and *phainomena*, reason and appearances. In the new system the auditory and the visual materials are not aids; they blend with the subject matter itself to evoke an experience. (Keck 103-4)

Experience appears to be more important to persons with a postmodern viewpoint than does information. Creating an experience for people has become a way of communication. The need for experience can be seen in the desire for reality-based entertainment that is offered by television:

This ability to provide the viewer with a live picture of an event leads many people to believe that television presents actual events in themselves—without interpretation, editing, or commentary. For this reason, television has quickly become the ‘real world’ of postmodern culture, and television reporting has emerged as the new test for being real. (Grenz 34)

This audiovisual language is impacting not only communications but with it American society. “Media are also mediums of translation, affecting every nook and

cranny of society, including the intellectual and social girders that underpin that society” (Sweet, Communication and Change 50). The Church exists within such a society.

Communication in worship happens every week in an image and sound-saturated culture.

Television has had an impact upon college students and how they respond to communication. A recent national study revealed that “they expect to be entertained. They are visually oriented. They are not attentive to lecture-format presentations. They become bored easily, unless information is fragmented and packaged according to the TV formula. They dislike reading” (Duffet 77).

### **Audiovisual Communication in the Church**

As the Church tries to communicate by audiovisual means the Church needs to be aware of its impact. First it must be aware of the nature of the medium of communication:

According to A. Behravian, ‘what is said counts for seven percent on television, the tone and the output of what is said count for thirty-eight percent, and gestures and facial expressions count for fifty-five percent’ If this is true then the ground adds up to ninety three percent of the message! (Babin 64)

What is important to keep in mind is the context in which spoken words are communicated. Movie studios and TV production sets can manipulate the context in which something is communicated. This is a part of the new language that has emerged. It is an asset and a danger when the Church uses this form of communication in worship.

Secondly the Church needs to be aware of the positives and negatives of using audiovisual communication that will be necessary in this postmodern age. Many Christians have raised concerns about the use of audiovisuals, particularly video, in worship. Dawn, author of A Royal Waste of Time, expresses the concerns that Christian

leaders have by saying, “I am only one of many commentators who grieve that unless something is on the screen, persons trained by our culture can no longer appreciate it” (71). She lists several dangers of multimedia use in worship: “wastes time,” “stifles imagination,” “develops smaller brains,” “less motivated to think,” “wrong kinds of intimacy in worship,” “muddled perception of reality,” and “Low Information–Action Ratio (L.I.A.R.s)” (76-84).

Another area of complaints against the use of audiovisual communication is that it is seen as entertainment rather than something of substance. William H. Willimon at Duke Seminary says, “When used in worship, video tends to re-form worship (malform, I should say). What ought to be participatory praise, people actively worshipping God, becomes a show watched by an audience” (par. 8). He goes on to say that electronic media creates an “artificial intimacy” (par. 11). He also says that, “video tends toward the superficial. It does a good job of giving the illusion of experience, of drawing the viewer into the story. But that’s about all” (par. 7). Preaching professor Bryan Chappell is quoted as saying that the use of visual media in worship today is a “passing fad” (qtd. in Reed par. 35). These criticisms give rise to the concern that audiovisuals used in worship can be superficial and take away from true worship.

Another concern voiced by some along the same line of superficiality is that the use of visual media does not reach people at a deeper level. Bryan Chappell says, “if you are really going to move people at the level of their will, you’ve got to get away from the media presentation” (qtd. in Reed par. 34). Willimon says something similar by writing, “The virtue of visual media is that they tend to be engaging, stressing concrete images rather than abstract ideas. But they do more than that. Video tends to stress image over

idea” (par. 4). These critics may be reacting out of a modern mind-set that stresses word over image as discussed earlier. Nevertheless, the words of one American preacher are “it’s the heart of the preacher that makes the impact. If I’m not passionate about God’s word, no amount of technology can correct that deficiency” (Rowell par. 18).

What appears to be the main criticism of multimedia in worship is the tendency towards superficiality. Superficiality can be true when audiovisual communication is used in such a way that it does not consider the audiovisual language of the culture. Many churches are simply putting stuff on a screen to get people’s attention. They do so without thinking through what they are trying to communicate. The audiovisuals become more about ornamentation rather than transformation. Using types of communication as a fad can also be said of all types of communication in worship and not just audiovisual. Many of the forms of communication the Church has traditionally used can lose their meaning and become superficial as well.

Proponents for the use of audiovisuals in worship suggest not condemning them all together. Keck adds this comment to the reactionaries: “To begin with, television should not be feared, avoided, or, in the name of being prophetic, damned as the electronic Anti-Christ. Like most things, TV has its good as well as its bad side” (112). Leonard Sweet calls the opponents of audiovisual to remember the words of Raymond Williams:

Raymond Williams argues that there has always been strenuous objection to new modes of popular communication from the opinion makers, and that they are always wrong: they were wrong about Shakespeare in the 1590s, wrong about Austen in the 1810s, “wrong about circuses and quilts, vaudeville and narrowboat decoration, Marvel Comics and Hollywood, jazz and brass bands.” (Communication and Change 51)

Opponents against the use of audiovisuals and proponents have called the use of

audiovisuals—“entertainment evangelism” (Kallestad 7). This attitude has actually existed for sometime. The American revivals and camp meetings were once considered to be “religious theater” and a form of “carnival” (Communication and Change 41).

Nevertheless, experience shows that many people were moved and effected to live the Christian life as a result of those events. Whenever something new comes on the Christian scene, people will protest it. Protest is part of the process of change. Babin voices the real danger:

The greatest danger threatening our faith today, I am convinced, is not the absence of information and firm instruction, but the lack of interest in Jesus Christ and the failure of our hearts to be converted. We have knowledge, and sometimes we even practice. But our hearts remain untouched. Deep inside us the old pagan gods reign supreme. So I am convinced we must opt first of all for audiovisual and symbolic catechesis, appealing to the imagination and to our search for total fulfillment. (32)

Babin also points out that audiovisual communication needs to be employed to educate or teach. Neil Postman, who takes a negative view of television, acknowledges that audiovisuals as used on TV are instructing young people today:

That is why I think it is accurate to call television a curriculum. As I understand the word, a curriculum is a specially constructed information system whose purpose is to influence, teach, train or cultivate the mind and character of youth. Television, of course, does exactly that, and does it relentlessly. (145)

Postman is arguing against the use of TV based on the content of what it sometimes teaches young people but acknowledges that it is a powerful medium of communication. Knowledge can be learned through audiovisual ways that entertain as Postman points out in regards to TV. Even when children’s programming came on TV, critics soon learned that kids do learn effectively through the use of audiovisual means:

In the 1950s pessimistic moralists said that television would destroy children’s imagination by it’s pre-figuration of images. Experience has,



however, shown that the very opposite is true: with greater availability of television comes greater dependence on imaginary creativity. It would seem that an accumulation of feelings and emotions rouses and excites our affective life. (Babin 62-63)

Lyle E. Schaller sums up the possible responses to what is happening in the electronic culture:

One response to this radical change in the context for ministry is to retire early. A second is to complain and lament the passing of the day when listeners accepted the responsibility to listen and learn. A third response is to accept the fact that the television in general, and MTV in particular, has expanded the definition of effective oral communication. (133)

As was mentioned earlier, learning happens more quickly when more senses and emotions are engaged. The gospel is not just for the head but needs to touch the heart to be truly transformational:

The mainline churches' vocation has also a second aspect—cultivating a disposition, a readiness, to hear the gospel. Whereas the informational task finds print shaped communication more appropriate, this preparatory task will find the electronic media which combine the visual and the auditory useful because they touch the affective and the volitional aspects of the self more directly than print. (Keck 110-11)

In a culture that desires experience and is longing to go deeper into an authentic relationship with God, the use of audiovisuals can be an attribute. The Church must come to the realization that “to express Christ’s message audiovisually is to communicate the experience we have of Christ: his being and his words” (Babin 32).

To a certain degree, the critics do have a point in that they see audiovisuals as a teaching tool borrowed from the world. Audiovisuals are more than a tool for learning. They are a language in and of themselves according to Babin. He identifies three stages of discovery about audiovisual media that he experienced:

1. “Realizing the power of audiovisual methods as an aid to instruction”;

2. “Recognizing that audiovisual materials are a language in themselves”; and,
3. “Understanding that the audiovisual media bring with them a new, all encompassing culture” (3).

Using video clips, music, Microsoft PowerPoint, and other audiovisual aids have their positives and negatives. Church leaders are wise to keep in mind that they are tools of communication and not a guarantee of success. Just as with most tools, how they are used is what proves their effectiveness. As Len Wilson says, “Media ministry is not vaudeville” (30).

Media can be used two different ways; it can engage or it can entertain. “To engage is to draw in, to make a connection, to actively involve” (Henderson 86). “To entertain is to perform, to amuse, to give the audience what it wants” (86). This distinction must be held in check for worship to be potentially transformational rather than informational or for ornamentation.

The Church should take seriously the way it tries to communicate and discern the most effective means of communication. The Christian community needs to understand that “the mainline churches’ vocation calls for understanding it as clearly as comprehensively, as penetratingly as possible, in order to learn what both image-dominated media and the printed word can and cannot communicate well” (Keck 105).

#### **Note of Caution on Using Audiovisuals**

McLuhan says, “The Medium is the message” (7). The Church needs to guard carefully how the message of the gospel is communicated. One preacher states that “TV creates new and artificial needs in us by altering our attitudes as believers in key areas of Christian concern” (Turner 115). McLuhan echoes a similar concern by saying, “Each

new medium alters permanently our psychic environment, imposing on us a particular pattern of perceiving and thinking that controls us to an extent we scarcely suspect” (27). Postman brings up a critical question: “In what sense do new media alter what is meant by religion, by church, even by God?” (15).

When using a tool of communication, attempting not to hurt or hinder the message itself is important. The tool needs to help make the message clear not contradict it. One preaching professor has said, “undoubtedly, modern techniques can enhance communication, but on the other hand they can substitute for the message—the startling and unusual may mask a vacuum” (Robinson 16). The Church must keep clear the fact that these are aids to communication in worship and not an end in themselves. As one commentator writes, “Anything that really stimulates and expresses the worshipful spirit is so far forth a legitimate aid to worship, but never a substitute for it, and is harmful if it displaces it” (Crannell par. 19).

The use of audiovisuals can be powerful. McLuhan and Fiore point out what the Church may need to recognize:

All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the message. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments. (26)

When Jesus discussed money in his culture, he placed spiritual emphasis on the medium of money by saying, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and *Mammon*” (Matt. 6:24, NIV). *Mammon* is not a neutral term but a spiritual term. The use of audiovisuals is another medium of exchange. The exchange is

not monetary in value, but it is an exchange of communication. I personally wonder if Jesus' words can be applied to this medium of communication. Jesus' culture did not have this technology, so one must try and infer from what he did teach and apply it to today's culture. I think that technology needs to be kept in the perspective of having a power of its own. Just as money has the power to facilitate wrong desires, so do audiovisuals when not used appropriately.

If the Church will take the time to understand this powerful medium it can be used for promoting good communication in worship. As William F. Fore says, "By understanding media, we can become their master rather than their slave" (98).

### **The Reemergence of Multisensory**

The idea of multisensory communication in worship is a fairly new term for today but as has been discussed, not new for God or the people of biblical times. Nor is it new for the Church of the pre-Reformation era. In fact it is not really new for anyone since people are all multisensory creatures. Multisensory communication has the ability to reach everyone.

Howard G. Hendricks, professor of Christian Leadership at Dallas Seminary, calls multisensory communication "five-sensing." He highly regards the use of the five senses in communicating:

Five-Sensing is the language of our esthetic nature. Most formal education leans strongly toward the visual and auditory means of communicating information. Our eyes and ears do most of the work. But there are three other senses—smell, taste, and touch. If we ignore them, we starve them. People are able to relate what they already know and what they observe through their senses to find relevancy where they did not see it before. (127)

This form of communication is again being explored today due to a change in the

way some of the culture thinks. The philosophy of postmodernism is bringing on this change. Brian D. McLaren, leader of the Terranova Project, writes regarding the Church's relationship to postmodernism:

The church on the other side will be more like the world of Jesus and the Bible—more Eastern (Middle Eastern, to be exact), a meeting point between left and right brains, integrating objective and subjective, analytical (taking apart) and synthetic (putting together). (90)

Sweet also mentions this change when he says, “The ideology of representation, created by the modern era, is giving way to an ideology of participation, created by a postmodern electronic culture” (Communication and Change 51). This postmodern electronic culture is opening up the way to explore new forms of communication.

Postmodernism was acknowledged as a reality in 1979 when Jean-François Lyotard, a French philosopher, came out with his report “The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge” (Grenz 39). The report was part of the start of the philosophical change in the way knowledge was understood and became a new way of viewing reality. Worship professor Webber confirms “right now we are caught up in the throes of changing from modernity to postmodern times” (Ancient-Future Faith 17).

One of the effects of postmodernism was “the loss of the meta-narrative” which is described as “the myths by which we organized our lives, all the overarching stories that once held civilizations together” (Rochelle par. 5). The stories that once held civilizations and societies together have been deconstructed. Authority is done away with in this loss of the meta-narrative. Truth is found in an individual's experience rather than in absolutes.

With this loss has come a shift in spirituality, which is moving away from reason towards mystery. The spiritual shift is a reaction against modern reliance upon reason and

the written word. This modern reliance upon reason has existed since the medieval era according to C. Jeff Woods:

Ever since medieval times, the western Church has reacted against knowing God by direct experience and supported knowing God through secondary means, such as the Bible, sermons, devotional writings, theology, commentaries, and hymns. The Church has encouraged people to reason about God more than it has encouraged them to relate to God. (88)

The Eastern Orthodox Church gives an outside perspective on Western thinking as it points out a similar idea:

The culture and education system of the contemporary West are based almost exclusively upon the training of the reasoning brain and, to a lesser degree, of the aesthetic emotions. Most of us have forgotten that we are not only brain and will, senses and feelings; we are also spirit. Modern man for the most part lost touch with the truest and highest aspect of himself; and the result of this inward alienation can be seen all too plainly in his restlessness, his lack of identity and his loss of hope. (Ware 49)

This postmodern shift in spirituality is not necessarily a negative but rather can be a strength in reaching this new emerging culture. The postmodern worldview may help to push people back towards the spiritual and get in touch with the truer and higher part of the human makeup.

Donald E. Miller points out the positive side of this shift:

Religion is a full bodied experience that includes all receptors—all the senses—with the rational mind being only one locus of information about reality. Right Brain activities (typically associated with non-linear thought, and in this case with the Holy Spirit) are acknowledged as legitimate. (23)

The task of the Church is to grasp this postmodern situation and take advantage of it. Stanley J. Grenz writes, “The postmodern situation requires that we embody the gospel in a manner that is post-individualistic, post-rationalistic, post-dualistic, and post-neocentric” (167). This situation helps to take the Church beyond mere reason to

experiences that can transform the entire person. He goes on to write, “A post-neocentric Christian gospel emphasizes the relevance of faith for every dimension of life. It refuses to allow commitment to Christ to remain merely an intellectual endeavor, a matter solely of assent to orthodox propositions” (173).

Churches need to be looking to implement communication in worship that is participatory, experiential, and authentic as postmodernism continues to influence culture today. Relying on word-centered communication will not communicate clearly and meaningfully to today’s emerging generations. Webber points out in his study of the younger generation of evangelicals the need to look at the new emerging forms of communication:

Modern print communications was primarily limited to cognitive activities such as reading, writing, clarity, analysis, ideas, explanations, linear sequence and logic. But the symbolic forms of communication introduced since the sixties are concerned with image, experience, sound, such as vibrations, sense of environment through space and architecture, emotional knowledge (EQ), intuition and the unconscious, signs, spiritual sensitivity, ability to hold many seeming contradictions in creative tension, and above all knowing through participation and immersion in events. (Younger Evangelicals 66)

Sociologist Sample gives an example regarding these new forms of communication when he writes about “deadheads,” which are people who follow the musical group The Grateful Dead and attend their concerts, “Such concerts are an orchestration of a gestalt and the participants do not merely: ‘read’ concerts or ‘hear’ or ‘view’ them. They converge them by drawing together the multidimensional setting into a vortex of personal and social yearnings and satisfactions” (78). What Sample describes is the yearning for experience and participation that is a “fundamental contribution of the electronic culture” (78).

The possibility for communication in worship to create more meaningful experiences of the divine may be found in forms of communication longed for by those with a postmodern mind-set. The Church has always needed to reach people in worship on a deeper level to bring about the potential for life transformation. D. Miller states this conviction:

I believe that churches (as well as synagogues and mosques) that provide access to the sacred at a deep level are more likely to grow and expand in membership, while those that do not offer life changing, affective religious experience tend, over time, to decline and eventually die. (25)

The above quote supports the research done by Christian Schwarz on growing churches. The research indicates this question, “Is the worship service an inspiring experience for the participants?” (30). The postmodern culture is asking for affective religious experience. The Church is in a position to provide it by adding multisensory communication in worship.

One approach to postmodernity in worship is offered by Webber who suggests that “the shift of postmodern communications to the power of the symbolic communication is a call to return to the classical period when the Church was an embodied experience of God expressed in life changing rituals of immersed participation” (Ancient-Future Faith 24). Webber is calling for more participation in worship, and multisensory communication can help to do just that.

On the other hand, Webber leans towards a restoration of classical Christianity that may not necessarily resonate with the postmodern culture. D. Miller raises up a concern:

The church architecture, stained glass, statues, frescoes, incense, candles, and all the liturgical activities may play an important role in guiding the shift from everyday to religious consciousness. But for many baby



boomers and Generation Xers, these conventional triggers to religious consciousness no longer work because they are associated with images of false or dead establishment religion. (91)

The Church needs to find new ways of communicating that tap into principles of human understanding that have always existed.

Ruth C. Duck discusses the use of words in worship and says that imagery is important:

The short simple sentences and words that worship requires can easily become boring or trite without images on which we can focus. The expression of deep human feelings may bring a prayer to life, but appealing to the senses can keep feelings from seeming maudlin or romantic. (33)

Although Duck is referring to the spoken word, she brings up the need for engaging the senses and using imagery.

Webber also points out the need to communicate in not only words but also symbols. He writes, “Improvement of both the verbal and the symbolic methods of communicating Christ in our worship experience is desirable” (Worship 88). He goes on to write about his own frustration about the lack of symbols:

I’ve often thought how it must pain and frustrate God when we remain passive and uninvolved in our worship when he wants to communicate with us through words and symbols, and he longs for response through words and symbols from us. (89)

Wilson also makes a similar emphasis in discussing electronic media: “Its strength in storytelling is due to powerful engagement of the senses on multiple levels through visual and aural imagery” (16). The advantage of technology today is that it can create images on a screen rather than in the mind of the hearer. Even Jesus used this technique of image giving when he said, “See how the lilies of the field grow” (Matt. 6:28, NIV). The Church can also be more intentional about engaging the other senses in

worship.

Multisensory communication in worship needs to take advantage of the experience of the past while at the same time looking for ways that will be culturally relevant. Multisensory communication is a move towards a more holistic means of communication in worship that was once known. A reinvention of the use of image, symbols, and senses that will take advantage of technology and engage the current culture needs to take place. Easum and Bandy in looking at the shifts taking place within styles of worship has identified a new trend that is emerging for the twenty first century church that is meaningful to people born after 1965. They call this style “sensory worship” (73). They write, “Sensory worship seeks to involve all the senses to appreciate and celebrate the grace which transforms life. Communication occurs less in words, and more in sights and sounds, images and music, that surround the worship experience” (73).

Mark Tittle addresses the future of worship by looking at young adults. He writes, “They respond well in an environment that touches their senses and that arouses in them thoughts of God’s worthiness” (par. 21). The basic definition of worship is “worth-ship” (Basden 17). Utilizing more multisensory thematic proclamation in our worship may help to create an experience whereby people will be able to “worth-ship” in the future.

### **Research Method**

To discover the effectiveness of multisensory communication in worship, I employed a survey method of research. The survey method of research is a good method to use for studying social phenomena. According to William Wiersma, “Survey research is undoubtedly the most widely used nonexperimental type of educational research. It is

used in a variety of situations to investigate a large number of different research problems” (193). Understanding multisensory communication in worship requires a look into the actual life of the worshipper. The research attempted to assess what was happening in the worshipper while engaging in worship. Survey research helped to do just that. Survey research is done when “variables are studied as they exist in the situation, usually a natural situation” (14). I wanted to understand the effect of multisensory communication upon the worshipper. To understand the effects a survey was needed because, “survey research is aimed primarily at tapping the subjective feelings of the public. There are, in addition, numerous facts about the behaviors and situations of people that can be obtained only by asking a sample of people about themselves” (Fowler 2). To learn what people think one needs to simply ask them using an “interview, questionnaire, or attitude scale” (Sommer and Sommer 13). This research used attitudinal scales in the survey since “rating scales are used to rank people’s judgments of objects, events, or other people” (153). In this research a communication event within the context of thematic worship was rated.

Research that uses more than one method of approach is more useful than a single approach. “An interdisciplinary approach is essential for research on complex social issues. For most problems, several procedures will be better than one” (Sommer and Sommer 14). An additional procedure used in this research was the interview. It helped go deeper in understanding the attitudes of the worshippers. The results of this research can be found in Chapter 4.

### **Conclusion**

The use of image and symbolism through audiovisual means combined with the

participatory aspects of multisensory experiences should communicate effectively to the contemporary postmodern culture. Wisdom needs to be used in communicating effectively to today's culture. First, the integrity of worship itself needs to be upheld. Second, the Church needs to look to the past for principles of multisensory communication yet not use outdated modes in doing so. Thirdly, audiovisuals need to be used wisely to facilitate Christian experience of worship and not for entertainment only. Finally, multisensory communication in worship has much to offer this postmodern age. I believe that this type of communication will enrich the life of the Church and compensate for some lost practices that have occurred during the time of modernism. Multisensory communication used in worship has potential to bring about transformation in the life of the worshipper.

To assess the effectiveness of this form of communication, two attitudinal scales were used. One scale assessed affect of the worshipper, and the other assessed the personal involvement of the worshipper. After the results of the surveys were discovered, six people were selected for telephone interviews. This research design is discussed in Chapter 3.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

The focus of this study was to ascertain the effectiveness of multisensory thematic proclamation in the context of worship. The effectiveness of this type of communication will be assessed on two levels. The first level is the affective response of persons to multisensory thematic proclamation in worship. By assessing affect the research hopes to make the case for potential transformation of persons' behavior. "Affect is viewed typically as an important motivator of students willingness to learn, use, and generalize information and skills beyond the traditional classroom" (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 81). The assumption being made is that proclamation is a sharing of information similar to what takes place in the classroom. In both worship and the classroom, a message is organized and presented to a group of people. In both the worship service and the classroom, the hope is that the hearers will learn from the information communicated.

This study looks at affect response in people to a given message in regards to behaviors recommended, theme of worship service, worship leader, speaker, likelihood of attempting recommended behaviors, and desire to return to another worship service. Affective response will be used to measure the effectiveness of certain forms of thematic proclamation in the context of worship and determine if multisensory forms are more effective in influencing person's affect than audiovisual forms.

Another assumption being made is that by studying affect, which "ranges from lower-order levels of selective attention and emotional response to higher-order levels of behavioral commitment to adopt an idea and internalize it as a value" the likelihood of life change will increase (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 81). This does not guarantee that

behavior will change, but it becomes an indicator of the potential for future change of behavior. The assumption here is that if a person's attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts are influenced by affect towards a message then the person is more likely to change actual behavior. Affect becomes an indicator of the potential for transformation.

The second level of this research is to assess involvement. Involvement is "expected to mediate attitudes and behavioral responses to messages, issues, and objects" (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 286). The research used the personal involvement inventory (PII) to assess involvement in the types of sensory communication used in each worship experience (e.g., audiovisual and touch). Since involvement can signify interest and motivation, it can help determine if the mode of communication used in the worship service is meaningful and valuable to the hearer.

The assumption here again is that personal involvement with the message of thematic proclamation becomes another predictor of the potential for changed behavior. Personal involvement assesses whether or not the hearers viewed the form of communication in which the message was presented was meaningful, valuable, beneficial, and significant. By measuring personal involvement, I hoped to show the importance of audiovisual and multisensory forms of communication and compare these forms to each other to determine if one form elicited more personal involvement than the other.

Follow up phone interviews were done six months after the second set of three services. I designed the interview questions and used them as supporting qualitative material for the quantitative findings. The interview questions were designed to obtain feedback regarding recall, the importance of multisensory communication, and actual

behavioral change. The answers to the phone interview questions are shown in Chapter 4, and a sample of the interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

### **Research Questions**

Three questions guided this study. The following is a list and explanation of how each of these three questions was assessed.

#### **Research Question 1**

How does multisensory communication stimulate a response of affect in a worshipper participating in a thematic worship service where proclamation is the primary purpose?

A modified version of the affective scale “developed originally by Scott and Wheelless” was used to answer this question (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 81). The modified version can be found in Appendix A. This scale was originally used in a classroom setting and has been modified to reflect a worship context. The five areas of the thematic worship service studied for affect were responses to recommended behaviors, content, the preacher/worship leader, the possibility of attempting behaviors, and the likelihood of returning to worship the following week. The first set of three worship services determined persons’ affect towards thematic proclamation where audiovisual forms of communication were employed. The second set of three services occurring twelve weeks later determined person’s affect towards thematic proclamation when multisensory forms of communication were employed.

The literature review suggested that shifts are taking place in the area of communication. The research attempted to identify if those shifts are indeed occurring by measuring person’s affect towards thematic proclamation in worship when audiovisual

and multisensory forms of communication are used. The emerging postmodern worldview reveals a yearning for more participation and experience. A study of multisensory forms of communication in the context of worship may help address this issue for the church. Whereas this study does not address the forms of communication for postmodern people in comparison to people with a modern mind-set it does address the effect these forms of communication may have on all persons regardless of worldview.

### **Research Question 2**

To what extent does using audiovisual forms of communication in the context of a thematic worship service arouse personal involvement?

A modified version of the Personal Involvement Inventory designed by “Zaichkowsky” was used for this part of the study (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 286). This inventory asked participants to judge the audiovisual presentation used in the worship experiences. The inventory was used for the first set of three worship services. The scale measured persons’ personal involvement regarding the audiovisual forms of communication used within the context of the worship service. More specifically they were asked to respond to the use of audiovisuals used to facilitate congregational singing since they were the clearest example of audiovisuals used within the service.

The responses from these first three thematic worship services were used to assess the importance of audiovisual forms of communication for the individual worshippers. They were also used as a baseline to compare the use of multisensory forms of communication in the second set of three worship services with the same themes. The research attempted to show that these forms of communication are meaningful to persons and determine if multisensory forms of communication brought about more involvement



with the messages given. The research may help to reveal if multisensory forms of communication can aid in creating more participatory and experiential worship experiences.

### **Research Question 3**

To what extent does engaging the sense of touch, taste, or smell in the context of a thematic worship service arouse personal involvement?

The modified Personal Involvement Inventory was used to research involvement with the sensory communication implemented in each service. The sensory communication, touch, taste, and smell, were used independently for each of the second set of three services. Depending on the particular sense used (touch, taste, smell), judgment was done independently for each sense used in the services. The first service, in the second set of worship services, the Personal Involvement Inventory had participants evaluate the use of taste used to communicate in the service. The inventory had participants evaluate the use of touch in the second service of the set, and the sense of smell in the third service of the set. The Personal Involvement Inventories for this second set of services were compared to their thematic counterparts from the first set of three services.

### **Population and Sample**

The regular participants of the TrueFusion Sunday evening service at Bel Air United Methodist Church defined the population. A convenient sampling of the regular attendees to worship was brought together for the purpose of this study. Persons aged 20 to 56 were chosen. The average age of the worshipping congregation was 38. Due to the limitations of the current worshipping community, the participants were predominantly

female (60 percent female and 40 percent male). This is reflected as normal when compared with national statistics. George Barna Research Group reports that in 2001 47 percent of women and 36 percent of men attend church on any given Sunday (“Gender Differences” par. 4). The population was asked to make two, three-week commitments over an eighteen-week period to attend all six worship experiences. Worship attendance at this particular service was very sporadic by a majority of the respondents. This factor is reported in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5. Each participant used a random number to identify him or herself, and the results were kept confidential since some of the feedback reflects upon the speakers and worship leaders. Some of the participants did agree to follow up phone interviews six months after the worship services ended. They provided names and phone numbers, but those names and numbers have not been revealed within the results of this study. The participants were not specifically told the subject of the study to prevent bias.

### **Instrumentation**

The first instrument used for this study was a modified version of the affective learning scale developed by Scott and Wheelless (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 81) to evaluate worship participants’ affect regarding each worship experience. Five specified affects were studied by responding to four, seven-step bipolar scales. The inventory was originally designed for research in the classroom. The participants responded to areas of the service I modified to reflect a worship context. Table 3.1 shows the modifications made to the affective learning scale. Appendix A is a sample of the actual inventory used by participants.

**Table 3.1. Modified Affective Learning Scale**

<b>Original Affective Scale</b>	<b>Modified Affective Scale</b>
Behaviors recommended in the course	Behaviors recommended in this worship service
Content/subject matter of the course	Theme of the worship service
---	Worship leader
Course instructor	Speaker
In real life situations, your likelihood of actually attempting to engage in behaviors recommended in the course	In real life situations, your likelihood of actually attempting to engage in behaviors recommended by the speaker
Your likelihood of actually enrolling in another course related content if your schedule permits	Your desire to return to another worship service like this next week

A second instrument was used to assess their involvement with different aspects of the worship experience. This second instrument a modified version of the PII designed by Zaichkowsky (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 286). The only modification made to this scale was in terms of what it asked participants to evaluate and in the layout of the scale to help make it more readable. The scale is a twenty-item, seven point, and summated semantic differential scale. Appendix B is an example of the inventory used for this research.

A seven-question phone interview was conducted six months following the research. I designed these questions to assess recall, the importance of multisensory communication, and actual behavioral change. Additional comments were encouraged as well. Appendix C is an example of the questions used for the interview.

**Reliability**

The affective learning scale has consistently high reliability among populations of secondary and college student samples. “Alpha (or split-half) reliability estimates have ranged from a low of .86 to a high of .98” (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 82).

The Personal Involvement Inventory has proven to be consistent with “Cronbach alphas of .93 and .96 for high- and low-involvement” (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 287). A shortened version of the inventory (sixteen adjective pairs) had a Cronbach alpha of .95.

**Validity**

The affective learning scale is used to assess affect and falls short in the area of assessing actual behavior. The purpose in using this scale is not to assess actual behavior but affect, which is a predictor of actual behavior. The commitment part of the scale used in this instrument (item 5) is broad and not precise. Judging this aspect of the scale’s validity may be difficult. The validity for this scale comes from its “continued positive association with other affective-based measures” (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 82).

The Personal Involvement Inventory has been proven valid by three additional validity checks besides the initial validity assessment. The three additional areas of validity are in content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. Other research has confirmed convergent, discriminate, and predictive validity. These factors show that this instrument has validity and will be credible in assessing involvement.

**Data Collection**

The study was done at the end of each of the six worship services that occurred at the TrueFusion Sunday evening service in Bel Air, Maryland. The average worship

attendance for the TrueFusion service was ninety persons during the time this study took place. Participants were recruited from among the worshipping congregation at TrueFusion for three weeks prior to the initiation of the study period and asked to commit to participating in the six worship services, three of the services not using multisensory communication and three using multisensory communication. A smaller pool of participants was obtained from within the larger pool of average attendees. The research occurred 12 May 2002 through 8 September 2002.

Participants were solicited from the congregation by announcements in the services prior to the research and by individual requests I made. Once thirty participants were confirmed and committed to the dates of the services, the study commenced.

After each worship experience, the participants were asked to meet in a separate area to fill out the surveys. Instructions were given verbally to the participants, and any questions regarding the survey were explained. The surveys were filled out immediately following the service and turned in on the premises to ensure a greater return rate.

### **Variables**

The goal of the study was to have all thirty participants exposed to the same six worship experiences. Thirty participants originally signed onto the study. In reality attendance at all six services was sporadic by those who had signed onto the study. Due to this sporadic attendance over the eighteen-week period additional participants were recruited as the study continued. Each week the inventories were made available to anyone attending the entire service that wished to participate in the study. This added greatly to the number of participants and provided for a random sampling of respondents at each service. Table 3.2 is a record of those persons recruited during the eighteen-week

study.

**Table 3.2. Recruitment of Participants**

<b>Date of Service</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Previous Participants</b>	<b>New Participants</b>	<b>Total Participants</b>
12 May 2002	Anger	*11	12	23
19 May 2002	Healing	15	4	19
26 May 2002	Worship	19	0	19
28 August 2002	Anger	16	6	22
1 September 2002	Healing	14	9	23
8 September	Worship	16	9	25

*\*Represents number of original subjects who signed on to participate in the study.*

Seven persons who originally agreed to participate did not attend any of the services nor participate in the study. The lack of their participation was taken into account in the statistical analysis of the data. The constants for this study were the theme, speaker, and basic order of the worship services.

The independent variables of this study were the use of multisensory forms of communication for thematic proclamation in worship. The first set of three consecutive services were thematic and used audiovisual forms of communication within the services. They occurred at the beginning of the eighteen-week period.

The second set of three consecutive thematic services used multisensory forms of communication and varied in the use of the senses of touch, taste, and smell for each service. The first service used audiovisuals and taste. The second service used audiovisuals and touch, and the third service used audiovisuals and smell. All three

services were multisensory, but the independent variables of touch, taste, and smell changed for each service. These three worship services occurred the last three weeks of the eighteen-week period.

The assessed dependent variables were the affect and personal involvement of the individual participants. The study researched the lower levels of affect—attention and emotional response—and the higher levels—behavioral commitment and internalization. The level of personal involvement that was studied is that of perceived relevance based on personal needs and interests.

Some of the other variables that may affect outcomes are worship attendance and gender. Worship attendance was sporadic for several possible reasons. One reason is that the worship service was one of several services offered by the church. Three additional services were offered on Sunday morning. Participants may have opted to attend one of the other services offered to meet their own personal schedules. The dates of the study may have also affected attendance since two of the study dates were holiday weekends. One observation about this particular service was that people seen attending in the first part of the study were not attending during the second part of the study. Although worship attendance stayed relatively steady for each service, about ninety to one hundred, I noticed many new faces during the second phase and this is reflected in Table 3.2.

The fact that the population was approximately 60 percent female and 40 percent male may also have affected outcomes. According to George Barna, women view their Christian faith as important, and this importance is reflected in women being more likely to read the Bible, attend worship services, and pray than their male counterparts (“Gender Differences” pars. 3-6). Barna reports “75% of women compared to 59% of men say that

their faith is very important to them” (par.11).

### **Data Analysis**

The surveys were turned in for statistical analysis, and the results quantified. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS Interactive Graphics software. The response to different types of multisensory communication is evaluated after quantification in Chapter 5. The study looked for a significant difference between simply using bisensory communication, audiovisuals, and the use of touch, taste, and smell.

A paired sample t-test was used to assess changes in affect by comparing services one to four, two to five, and three to six. A statistical analysis of these paired samples addressed the effectiveness of multisensory communication to increase or decrease affect in individual worshippers.

A simple t-test was used to assess personal involvement for services one, two, and three. The mean scores from this test were then used to identify a person’s involvement with the audiovisuals for the first three services.

A paired sample t-test was also used to assess changes in personal involvement by comparing services one to four, two to five, and three to six. The comparison was made between the use of audiovisuals in services one, two, and three and the use of multisensory communication in services four, five, and six.

The purpose of this research was to explore the potential for multisensory thematic proclamation in worship to be life changing. Relevance and affect act as predictors of transformation. The follow up interviews asked participants to discuss any actual behavioral changes that took place as a result of the worship experiences. Inferential statistics were applied to broaden the generalization of the study. By studying



this smaller group of the population, the results may be beneficial for application to other similar populations of worshippers in large membership churches who are experimenting with ways to reach a younger generation of worshippers.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

This study set out to discover the effects of multisensory communication in worship upon individual worshippers. The research particularly addressed the affect and personal involvement of individual worshippers when exposed to multisensory stimuli. Three questions guided this study: How does multisensory communication influence affect in a worshipper participating in a thematic worship service where proclamation is the primary purpose? To what extent does using audiovisual forms of communication in the context of a thematic worship service arouse personal involvement? To what extent does engaging the senses of touch, taste, or smell in the context of a thematic worship service arouse personal involvement?

#### **Profile of Subjects**

The three weeks prior to the study were spent recruiting participants of the TrueFusion service sponsored by Bel Air United Methodist Church. The service was designed to be a Sunday evening outreach to young adults ages eighteen to thirty-five in the surrounding community. Over that time period thirty participants initially signed on and others signed on over the eighteen-week period of research to make a total of sixty-two individual participants. The participants in the research actually ranged in age from 20 to 56 with an average age of 38. Although young adults did attend the service, the average age fell outside of the target audience for reasons outside the scope of this dissertation. The participants were approximately 60 percent female and 40 percent male. All the subjects were Anglo, middle class, and living in a suburban setting. The majority of the participants would be considered white-collar workers and well educated.

The worship at these particular services studied consisted of an opening time of singing of three songs, a welcome and announcement time of a few minutes, an additional time of singing intermingled with prayer led by the worship leader, a message delivered by one of the pastors of the church, and then another period of singing that usually consisted of two or three songs before the service ended. The congregation was accompanied in singing by a band consisting of two guitars, drums, and an electronic keyboard. The central object in the worship service was a large projection screen where song lyrics, images, Scripture readings, and message material were displayed. An altar table was positioned to the left and was used for communion elements, when needed, and offering plates. The service would be mainly characterized as free church worship where the service is structured mainly around proclamation and response. The duration of the worship services varied in length from just under one hour to an hour and twenty minutes. Descriptions of each worship service presented during the study are found in Appendix D. The participants involved were already a part of the ongoing worship life of this particular Sunday evening community and the larger church, which sponsored this Sunday evening service.

### **Descriptive Data**

The first set of three services provided a baseline of statistical data through participants' responses using the two questionnaires. The second set of services had the same theme, speaker, style, and order of worship as the initial three services.

The first service in the set dealt with the topic of anger and an outline for that service can be found in Appendix D. The affect response for the first service in the set had very high mean scores that ranged from 6.05 to 7.00 for twenty-four possible

responses. The second service’s theme was healing, and the responses produced mean scores in the range of 5.50 to 6.63. The third service raised the topic of worship itself and found mean scores ranging from a low of 5.50 to a high of 6.61. On the seven-point scale, these means are a favorable response to all three services and established a baseline that participants were already satisfied in terms of affect regarding their worship experiences.

Participants also evaluated audiovisual communication used during the first set of three services to establish a baseline against which multisensory communication could be measured. The personal involvement inventory was used to measure participants’ level of involvement with this mode of bisensory communication. The first service found mean scores ranging from 5.88 to 6.76 on a seven-point scale for all twenty possible responses. The second service produced mean scores that ranged from 5.50 to 6.44. The third service in the first set showed mean scores ranging from 5.11 to 6.47. These scores for personal involvement show a favorable response based on a seven-point scale. These results can be seen in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. Mean Scores for services 1, 2, and 3**

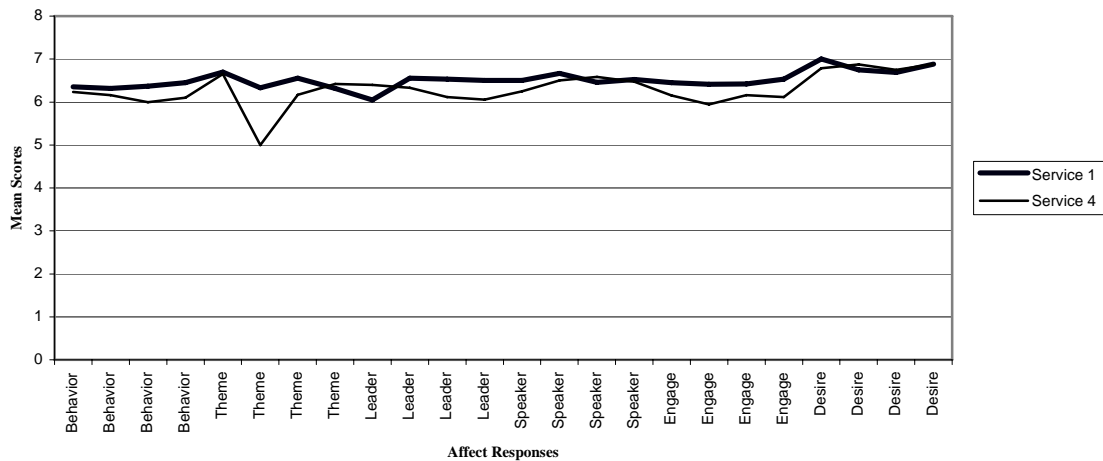
<b>Service</b>	<b>Affect Low Mean</b>	<b>Affect High Mean</b>	<b>Involvement Low Mean</b>	<b>Involvement High Mean</b>
Service 1	6.05	7.00	5.88	6.76
Service 2	5.50	6.63	5.50	6.44
Service 3	5.50	6.61	5.11	6.47

The initial baseline scores for both affect and personal involvement with

audiovisual communication suggest that the participants were responding favorably to the audiovisual forms of communication already in place at TrueFusion. These baseline scores for the first three services were then used for comparison with other sensory forms of communication in their counterpart services in the second set, services four, five, and six. Statistical significance was found in some of the data but not all. A comparison in mean scores revealed some possible trends.

### **Multisensory Communication and Affect**

The second set of three worship services added the element of taste, touch, and smell in that order. The first service with the theme of anger added the sense of taste to help communicate the theme and message. Pieces of baking chocolate were used to illustrate the bitterness associated with anger. Mean scores for responses to this first service ranged from 5.00 to 6.88. When compared to the mean scores for the first service in the first set that also dealt with the same theme, anger, the mean scores in general drop off for the twenty-four possible responses. The drop in scores can be seen in figure 4.1, which compares service one and service four.



**Figure 4.1. Comparing mean scores for services 1 and 4.**

The mean scores comparison suggests that affect was influenced negatively when the added sense of taste was employed. Only six of the twenty-four responses were found to be statistically significant for a directional, or one-tailed, test, and only one response was found to be significant for a nondirectional, or two-tailed, test. The data for the statistically significant responses can be found in Table 4.2, which shows scores in the areas of recommended behavior, the speaker giving the message, the likelihood of people engaging in the recommended behaviors, and their desire to return to such a service the following week. This last category had the most statistical significance for both one and two-tailed tests. The scores went up in only one response, which was in relation to the speaker’s fairness. Table 4.2 lists only those areas of response that were statistically significant. A glossary of statistical terms and abbreviations can be found in Appendix E.

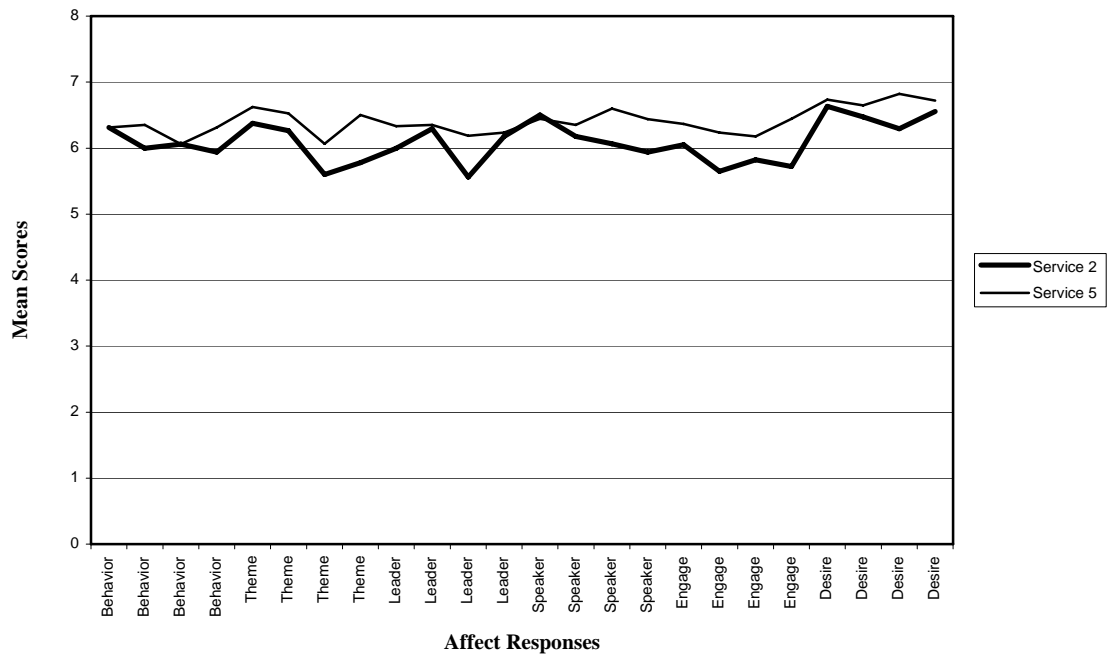
**Table 4.2. Comparing Affect Response for Sight, Sound, and Taste**

<b>Affect Response</b>	<b>Service 1</b>		<b>Service 4</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>*p&lt;</b>	<b>**p&lt;</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>				
<b>Recommended Behavior</b>								
Good	6.35	1.06	6.24	1.03	17	.489	.022	.632
<b>Speaker</b>								
Good	6.5	.69	6.25	.97	20	1.42	.006	.171
Valuable	6.67	.59	6.5	.62	18	1.37	.004	.187
Fair	6.47	1.0	6.59	.80	17	-.56	.017	.579
<b>Likelihood Of attempting Behaviors</b>								
Probable	6.42	.69	6.16	1.26	19	1.10	.013	.287
<b>Desire to Return to worship</b>								
Likely	7.00	0	6.79	.42	19	2.19	--	.042

\*1-tailed, \*\*2-tailed

A review of the data for affect suggests a negative change for the use of taste in this particular instance for multisensory communication.

The second service in the second set with the theme of healing added the sense of touch to help communicate the theme and message. Each participant was given a piece of fabric that represented the hem of Jesus' robe (Luke 8:43-48). The mean scores for this service ranged from a low of 6.06 to a high of 6.82 to twenty-four potential responses. A comparison of mean scores between service one and service five, which used multisensory forms of communication, show a general, slight increase for service five (see Figure 4.2).



**Figure 4.2. Comparing mean scores for services 2 and 5.**

The mean scores for this multisensory service incorporating touch suggest an increase in persons’ affect in response to this particular worship experience. A closer look at the statistical data reveals only two categories had statistical significance in both one and two-tailed tests: the theme of service and the worship leader. Table 4.2 shows the statistically significant data for three of the twenty-four responses and a marked increase in affect for the categories of theme and leader.

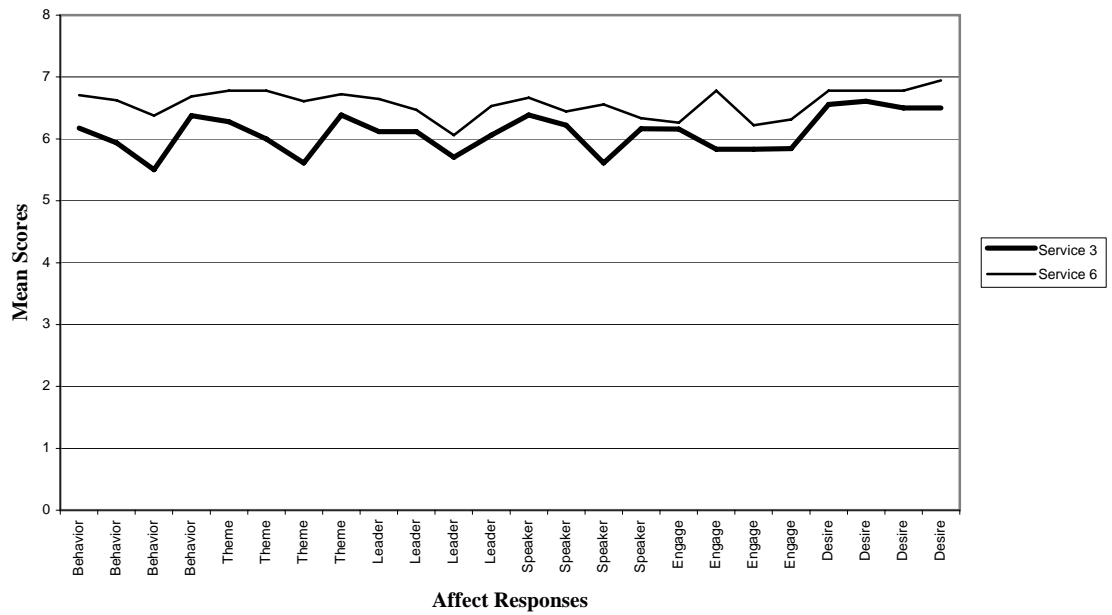


**Table 4.3. Comparing Affect Response for Sight, Sound, and Touch**

<b>Affect Response</b>	<b>Service 2</b>		<b>Service 5</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>*p&lt;</b>	<b>**p&lt;</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>				
<b>Theme</b>								
Valuable	6.26	1.45	6.53	.61	19	-1.05	.001	.31
Fair	5.50	1.32	6.25	1.00	16	-2.66	.025	.018
Positive	5.78	1.22	6.50	.62	18	-2.49	.348	.023
<b>Leader</b>								
Fair	5.56	1.36	6.19	1.17	16	-1.99	.041	.066

\*1-tailed, \*\*2-tailed

The third service in the second set utilized the sense of smell for multisensory communication. The theme of this sixth and final service was worship. To utilize the sense of smell, a fragrance filled the room prior and during the worship service. A dramatic presentation was used to demonstrate Jesus being anointed with perfume (John 12:1-8). As the dramatic presentation unfolded, a jar of fragrance was opened, and those in the audience experienced the smell. The mean scores for this sixth service ranged from 6.06 to 6.94 and were higher in all response categories when compared to service three that had the same theme and speaker. The results for mean scores can be seen in Figure 4.3.



**Figure 4.3. Comparing mean scores for services 3 and 6.**

The above line graph shows a clear increase in mean scores between the service using bisensory communication and the latter one using multisensory communication. The significant statistical results for this sixth service are more clearly seen in Table 4.4. This table shows significant results in the following categories: behavior recommended in the service, theme of the service, the worship leader, the speaker, and a desire to return to another such service.

**Table 4.4. Comparing Affect Response for Sight, Sound, & Smell**

<b>Affect Response</b>	<b>Service 3</b>		<b>Service 6</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>*p&lt;</b>	<b>**p&lt;</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>				
<b>Recommended Behavior</b>								
Good	6.18	1.08	6.71	.59	17	-2.05	.267	.058
Valuable	5.94	.93	6.63	.62	16	-2.30	.555	.036
Fair	5.50	1.26	6.38	.89	16	-2.33	.827	.034
<b>Theme</b>								
Good	6.28	.89	6.78	.55	18	-1.93	.674	.070
Valuable	6.00	.97	6.78	.43	18	-2.83	.254	.012
Fair	5.61	1.04	6.61	.78	18	-3.91	.207	.001
Positive	6.39	.61	6.72	.46	18	-1.56	.074	.138
<b>Leader</b>								
Good	6.12	.78	6.65	.61	17	-2.05	.512	.058
<b>Speaker</b>								
Fair	5.61	1.24	6.56	.78	18	-3.18	.235	.005
<b>Desire to Return to worship</b>								
Would	6.5	.86	6.94	.24	18	-2.05	.565	.057

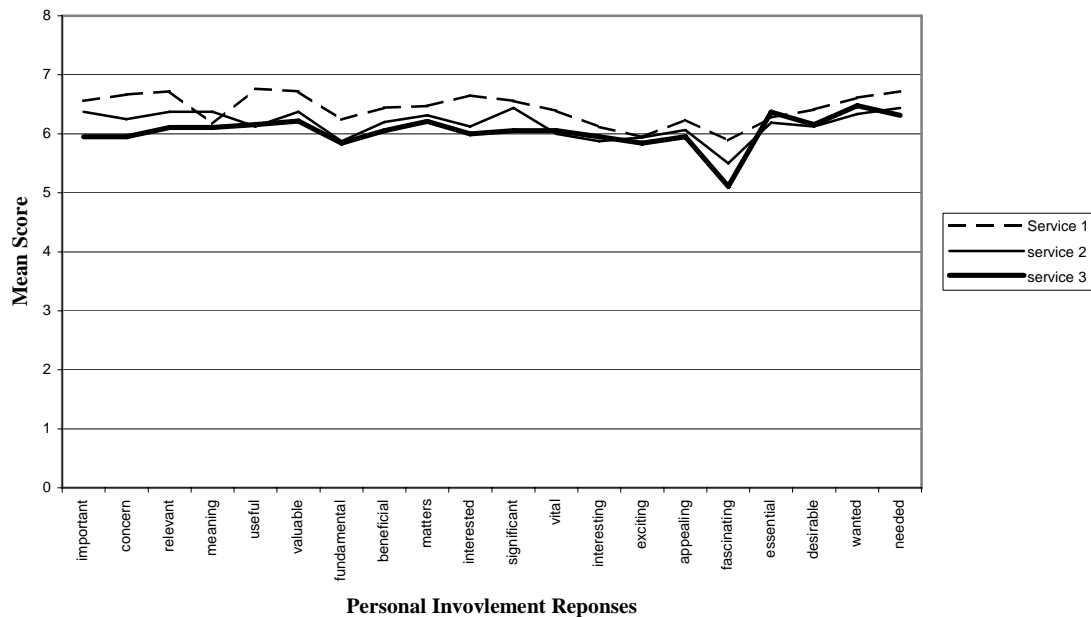
\*1-tailed, \*\*2-tailed

Five statistically significant responses stand out in the data. The behaviors were viewed as valuable and fair. The theme was also responded to as valuable and fair. The fairness of the speaker was the final significant statistic to stand out in regards to affect. The sixth service overall stands out as showing marked increase in affect over services three and four.

### **Audiovisual Communication and Involvement**

All six of the worship services utilized audiovisual communication through the use of a sound system and video projector. The first three services were used to assess not only a baseline against which to compare the multisensory communication but also to assess participants' personal involvement with that form of communication. Personal involvement helps to establish whether or not people feel that audiovisual communication is relevant for this particular worshipping community.

Figure 4.4 reflects a very similar response pattern for all three services. A significant downward spike can be seen for all three services for the word "fascinating." This word was paired on the seven-point, bipolar scale with the word "mundane" as its opposite. Appendix B gives a list of all word pairs used in the research. The overall pattern suggests that audiovisual communication was relevant to this particular group of people in their worship experience.



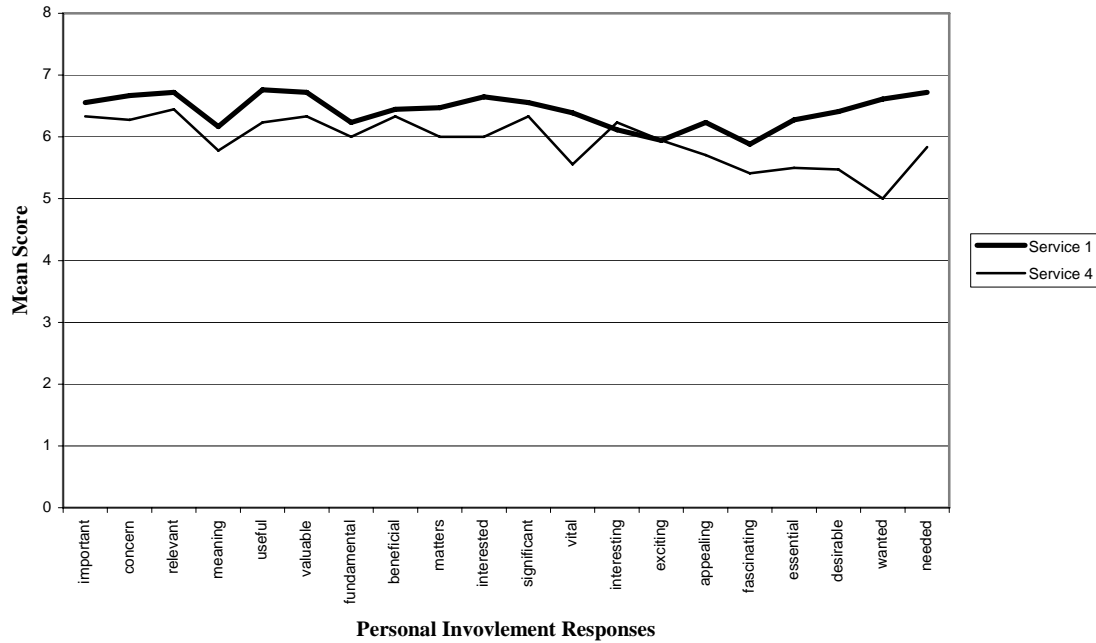
**Figure 4.4. Mean scores for personal involvement.**

### Multisensory Communication and Involvement

The statistical data for the first three services in set one created a baseline against which the second set of three services using multisensory communication were compared. The comparison is being made between the relevance of audiovisual communication to the relevance of adding another form of communication engaging the sense of taste, touch, or smell. The additional sense made the communication multisensory and participatory.

The best data results came from the comparison of service one to service four. After the fourth service, participants were asked to rate the sense of taste after using baking chocolate to communicate the theme in the service. Service four mean scores for personal involvement ranged from 5.00 to 6.44. Figure 4.5 shows the change in mean scores between the two services. A distinct overall decrease in personal involvement for

service four can be seen.



**Figure 4.5. Comparing mean scores for services 1 and 4.**

The data from the paired samples test reflected statistical significance in five of the twenty response areas. A significant decrease in personal involvement was discovered with the element of multisensory communication used in service four for the following word pairs: vital to superfluous, essential to nonessential, desirable to undesirable, wanted to unwanted, and needed to not needed. Table 4.5 lists those five responses and their decrease in personal involvement.

**Table 4.5. Comparing Personal Involvement for Sight, Sound, and Taste**

<b>Personal Involvement</b>	<b><u>Service 1</u></b>		<b><u>Service 4</u></b>		<b>N</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>*p&lt;</b>	<b>**p&lt;</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>				
Vital	6.39	1.24	5.56	1.65	18	2.01	.823	.060
Essential	6.28	.83	5.50	1.34	18	2.18	.753	.044
Desirable	6.41	.87	5.47	1.70	17	1.99	.835	.064
Wanted	6.61	.50	5.00	2.06	18	3.19	.822	.005
Needed	6.7	.46	5.83	1.54	18	2.53	.294	.022

\*1-tailed, \*\*2-tailed

Service four was the one service that provided the most significant results for personal involvement regarding multisensory communication. Service five revealed no statistically significant data in comparison to service two. The mean scores for service five were very close to those of service two with a range from 5.50 to 6.38. The results reveal there was very little change in participants' personal involvement.

The sixth service revealed a similar trend by revealing mean scores ranging from 5.0 to 6.16. Only one response area was statistically significant for this paired test—the word pair essential and nonessential. Service three reveals a mean score of 6.37 and a standard deviation of .83 for this word pair. Service six resulted in a drop of the mean score to 5.05 with a standard deviation of 1.81. Two-tailed significance was .014 and well within the 95 percent confidence level where  $N = 19$ . The results revealed that respondents for this particular worship service using the sense of smell viewed this form

of communication as less essential to the worship experience than audiovisual communication. No further statistical evidence to support any trends or suggest any change in personal involvement outside of random chance could be identified.

### **Phone Interviews**

Six months following the period of quantitative research, I conducted several phone interviews to help support some of the data. The interviews attempted to assess participants' recall of the services, if they had changed their minds about the relevance of multisensory communication, and if they had actually made any behavioral changes as a result of the worship experiences. Asking about behavioral changes not only helped to determine long-term changes in affect but also possibly indicated life transformation. I hoped to use affect and personal involvement as indicators of spiritual transformation.

The six participants ranged in age from 30 to 48. Attendance was less frequent among young adults as is reflected in national statistics. Barna's research on 2,660 people between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-nine shows that "only 3 out of 10 twentysomethings (31%) attend church in a typical week, compared to 4 out of 10 of those in their 30s (42%) and nearly half of all adults age 40 and older (49%)" ("Twentysomethings" par. 3). Of the seven participants who originally signed on to the study and then did not participate or attend any of the services, four were young adults. The following is a review of participants' responses. Participant A is a 44 year old female, participant B is a 35 year old male, participant C is a 40 year old female, participant D is a 30 year old female, participant E is a 48 year old female, and participant F is a 44 year old female.



**Recall**

The six interview participants were asked two questions in regards to recall. The first asked about their ability to remember any of the six services in which they participated and the second asked them which elements they specifically recalled about the services. All six participants recalled the use of chocolate. Several of the respondents described the experience of the chocolate in a negative light. Multisensory communication that involved the sense of a strong taste appears to have impacted recall the most significantly.

The senses of touch and smell also registered in the minds of the participants. Four of the respondents recalled the sense of touch in some fashion. They all recalled the use of a piece of cloth and phrased it in that way rather than actually recalling the sense of touch. Four of the six persons interviewed also recalled the sense of smell. They all made mention of the fragrance used during the sixth service.

Three of the six participants recalled the theme of one or more of the services. All three recalled the theme of anger. This was the same service that used the bitter chocolate. Two of the three remembered the theme of healing for the service utilizing the sense of smell.

The other elements that were recalled were the use of image and the use of the drama. One person recalled the drama used and another remembered the use of a specific image used during the thematic worship service on anger.

None of the respondents mentioned any of the first three service themes or elements that did not use multisensory communication. Neither did any of the respondents recall sermon points, music used, or other elements of the services. The

answers suggest that only those elements associated with the multisensory aspects of communication aided in recall.

### **Importance of Multisensory**

Interview participants were asked to evaluate the importance of the multisensory elements and which ones (visual, audio, smell, taste, or touch) were most important. Five of the six responses revealed that the participants described the multisensory forms of communication as important and helpful to the message of the service. The one other person did not discount the use of the multisensory but did register disappointment with the negative use of chocolate.

The multisensory elements were valued as most important by four of the six participants. Two of the participants did not think the multisensory elements of communication were any more or less important. None of the persons interviewed said the sense of sight or hearing was most important to the services. Three did say that they thought the sense of smell was the most significant. Two mentioned the use of taste as most important, and one said the use of touch was the most important.

Participants used expressed that the multisensory communication used in the services helped to make the services memorable, understandable, participatory, and experiential. One person mentioned that multisensory communication made the services more memorable. Three believed multisensory communication aided in understanding the message and made the worship service more experiential. One other participant mentioned the participatory nature of multisensory communication.

### **Transformation**

The interview participants were asked about any changes they may have made in

regards to their behavior as a result of attending one or more of the services. Three of the participants viewed the services as good reminders of behaviors in which they needed to continue to engage. The services appear to have reinforced Christian behaviors of which they were already aware. Two other respondents said that the services caused them to think more about the theme of the service as they went through everyday life. One person thought that no change had occurred in her life as a result of attending the worship services. She mentioned that most of their spiritual growth comes from her participation in a small group rather than in worship.

One participant, in the final comments of the interview, described the multisensory thematic worship services as enjoyable. Two others mentioned the participatory and experiential nature of the services. One raised the thought that multisensory communication made the services more meaningful and another said this type of communication made them beneficial to those who participated. One other person said that multisensory communication helped her to connect with the message. Finally, another participant raised the ease of recall as a result of multisensory communication.

### **Summary of Findings**

1. Overall positive response to all six of these particular services for personal involvement and affect.
2. Significant positive change in affect was observed for two out of three of these particular services using multisensory communication. Those two services used the senses of touch and smell.
3. A negative influence on affect for multisensory communication that involved the use of taste in a negative form.

4. The use of audiovisual forms of communication received positive response for the first three of these particular services in terms of personal involvement.

5. No significant positive change in personal involvement for the three services that used other forms of sensory communication in comparison to audiovisual communication.

6. The evidence suggests a less than positive response to personal involvement when using the sense of taste in a negative way for multisensory communication.

7. Phone interviews revealed an ability to recall some of the sensory experiences and, to a certain degree, the theme of the worship services six months later.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This project started as an attempt to look into the implications of using multisensory forms of communication in thematic-oriented worship. The literature review discussed the shifts that have taken place in communication over the past decades and centuries. Identified was an emerging concern for communication in worship that helped to create more participation and an experience. The concern was more specifically identified in the emerging postmodern worldview. The outcomes of this research may not only be helpful for communicating more meaningfully with postmodern persons but with people in general coming from similar backgrounds as the population researched.

My hope as a researcher was to provide evidence that forms of communication engaging multiple senses in worship would show greater affect and involvement in individual worshippers for this particular type of worship gathering and for this particular cultural setting. I also hoped that the research would reinforce the use of audiovisual forms of communication being used today in worship gatherings among similar populations across America.

The driving motivation behind the research was the desire to predict the potential for transformation in persons' lives occurring through the worship experience and extending beyond that worship experience into everyday life. Although many factors influence transformation, especially the work of the Holy Spirit, I hoped that both a person's affect and personal involvement with particular forms of communication would show indication of the potential for transformation to occur.

The research did provide some indications that these hopes may be true for

populations similar to the one researched. It also revealed the need for further research in the area of multisensory, thematic proclamation.

### **Major Findings**

Overall participants were personally involved and had good affect for the worship services as they were originally designed and put in place by the worship leadership of the TrueFusion team. The worshipping community was already using audiovisual communication and the participants rated it “high” for both affect and personal involvement. Several factors were discovered through researching multisensory forms of communication.

The high satisfaction level among participants with the worship service as it was in place created difficulty in obtaining dramatic results. Participant background information revealed persons attending the services thought that worship was already important to them. The level of importance showed that participants came with positive expectations towards the worship services already in place and this factor was beyond the control of the research. Statistical significance for this research was not overwhelming, but the practical significance was worthwhile.

### **Affect**

The practical significance of the mean scores were reflected in a positive direction for services five and six. The scores for both services moved in a positive direction. Service five utilized audiovisual forms of communication and engaged the sense of touch to communicate the theme of healing. Service six also used audiovisual communication and engaged the sense of smell to communicate the theme of worship. Both of these services were well received by the participants in terms of affect. The positive overall

trend was an increase of mean scores from a range of 5.50 to 6.63 found in service two to a range of 6.06 to 6.82 found in service five. A similar trend was found in service six that had mean scores ranging from 6.06 to 6.94 in comparison to service three with scores ranging from 5.50 to 6.61.

Significant results for affect were found in service five in regards to participants' attitudes towards the theme of the service and worship leader. Significant results for affect in service six showed participant's positive feelings towards recommended behavior, theme, worship leader, speaker, and their desire to return to another worship service. Looking at the evidence as a whole for these two services an increase in positive affect overall can be seen and especially in regards to the theme of the service and the worship leader for both services.

The evidence suggests that when multisensory forms of communication are used for proclamation within the context of thematic worship services like these a general increase in participants' affect can be shown for this particular type of worshipping congregation. The research appears to reveal that the theme of the service is reinforced affectively when these forms of communication are used to support the particular themes of healing and worship.

Given the age span of the participants, 20 to 56, one sees that this type of communication is not only positive for young adults but more matured adults as well. The generalizability across generations may have implications for researching the modern and postmodern viewpoints found within populations. These forms of communication appear not to be dependent upon philosophical viewpoints in relation to affect and may have more to do with being human. This conclusion is based upon the assumption that the

participants under study came from various viewpoints due to their ages and cultural surroundings. Most healthy human beings take in information from the environment using all five senses. Multisensory, thematic proclamation seems to be opening the door to utilizing all the ways that information can be grasped clear and meaningfully. This form of communication may be helpful for all generations.

The literature review in Chapter 2 discussed the emergence of postmodernism in today's culture. The discussion revealed that postmoderns might yearn for worship experiences that are more participatory according to Brian McLaren, Tex Sample, and Robert Webber. Multisensory communication helps to create an experience that is more participatory and would suggest that the use of this type of communication would be more meaningful for people of a postmodern viewpoint. Yet, the practical results of the study in regards to affect reveal that people in general may have this yearning for more participation and not postmoderns only.

The indication of increased affect also suggests that multisensory, thematic proclamation in worship may help to facilitate transformation in the life of the worship participant. Affect is a marker of the potential for transformation. In the follow up interviews, three out of the six interviewed responded that the multisensory, thematic worship experiences did influence their thinking and potentially their behavior. One example is when one respondent said, The one on worship made me think more about humility as I went through the day.

The fourth service in the series dealing with the theme of anger and using the sense of taste as a way of communicating that topic had a decrease in affect from the previous service dealing with the same theme. In this particular service, a piece of bitter



or baker's chocolate was used. This particular type of chocolate has no sugar or sweetener added to it that leaves a rather unpleasant taste in a person's mouth when eaten. The use of this chocolate left a negative impression upon participants in this service in terms of their affect.

Mean scores for the first service in the series with the theme of anger ranged from 6.05 to 7.00. These scores for affect were the highest for the first set of three services. The fourth service, which also dealt with the same theme, had mean scores ranging from 5.00 to 6.88 and had the lowest overall scores for affect in comparison with all six services. The results are most likely not due to the fact that the sense of taste is a less preferred sense in terms of communication in comparison to touch and smell but due to the use of a negative stimulus.

The use of a negative stimulus resulted in a decrease in affect in regards to recommended behaviors, the speaker, likelihood of attempting recommended behaviors, and the person's desire to return to a similar worship experience. The overall scores in terms of affect for the fourth service were still relatively high on the seven-point scale but overall lower than in the previous service. The scores may suggest that taste was still a good form of communication but possibly not as good if a more positive stimulus had been used.

The negative use of a stimulus being the possible cause of the decrease in affect can be heard in the responses of the participants interviewed. Two of the responses show these attitudes clearly. Participant B said, I also remember the chocolate being bitter and nasty. Participant F described her reaction further by saying, We could have done without the chocolate. It wasn't good chocolate. Use good chocolate next time. I was

disappointed it wasn't real. I didn't equate bitter chocolate to bitterness. These attitudes reveal that there was a negative response and particularly for one person a "disappointment" with not getting what she expected. People in general expect chocolate to be enjoyable. Participant F also added later in her interview, I connected more with the positive than the negative.

Another aspect to consider would be participants' expectations in coming to the worship experience. Their expectation for the worship to be enjoyable, comfortable, and uplifting may have influenced their reaction to the use of unsweetened chocolate. When a stimulus was used that made them uncomfortable and challenged them to think about their own personal bitterness, a decrease in affect may have occurred due to their expectations of the experience not being met.

A dramatic drop in scores can be seen in relation to the theme of the fourth service for affect (see Figure 4.1 p. 91). The results were not statistically significant but interesting to take into consideration given that the other two multisensory services showed an increase in affect around the theme of the service. The descriptive results appear to show that multisensory, thematic proclamation used in this population decreases affect in regards to the theme when a negative stimulus is involved.

### **Personal Involvement**

The first three services in the series representing the first set revealed overall satisfaction level with audiovisual forms of communication already being utilized within the ongoing worship services of the TrueFusion community. The lowest mean score for personal involvement in any of the three services where the audiovisuals were evaluated was 5.11, and the highest for all three services was 6.76. All the mean scores for

responses on the twenty-item, bipolar personal involvement scale fell within this range for the whole first set of services. These scores suggest that participants were valuing this form of communication. For all three services in the set, respondents rated highest the following descriptors for audiovisual communication: “relevant,” “useful,” “valuable,” “significant,” “wanted,” and “needed.” The one overall drop in scores was to the word “fascinating.” The mean scores for the word “fascinating” did stay above 5.0 with 7.0 being the highest possible score (see Appendix B).

This particular worshipping community thought that audiovisual forms of communication were necessary and important to their personal involvement with the worship service. The use of image was pointed out by one of the participants interviewed when she said, I remember a picture of a kid with his arms folded and an angry look up on the screen. The imagery obviously helped to communicate to her the theme of the service.

Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore remind people in their book, The Medium is the Message, that electronic media can be powerful and caution needs to be exercised in regards to audiovisuals in worship. Their powerful use can be seen in the research results in regards to the use of audiovisuals for this population. The participants in the study valued the use of audiovisuals very highly. The results help to reinforce how audiovisuals can aid in communicating a thematic message in clear and meaningful ways, as was suggested by the literature review.

These results simply reinforce that audiovisual forms of communication may be very helpful in proclaiming a message to this type of population. More specifically what is reinforced here in these worship services is the use of images, music lyrics, amplified

music, and words to impart a message in clear and meaningful ways that people can more fully comprehend. One of the reasons they may be helpful and highly valued is that they influence the quality of the forms of communication used in the worship services. The use of TV and other forms of electronic media in everyday life may have potentially influenced people's expectations of the quality and manner in which the Anglo middle-class culture communicates.

This study did not evaluate the use of video clips, which has brought about some of the criticisms mentioned in Chapter 2. Other research would need to be done to address that issue specifically. The literature review did suggest an awareness of audiovisual language is important for those who wish to communicate in today's suburban, Anglo, middle-class culture.

Personal involvement with multisensory forms of communication were not revealed to any degree that had statistical significance for services utilizing the sense of touch or smell in comparison to audiovisuals. The results reveal statistical significance when a negative stimulus for taste is introduced. The use of unsweetened chocolate to communicate the message showed a statistically significant drop in scores for the words "vital," "essential," "desirable," "wanted," and "needed." The results also show an overall drop in all the mean scores for personal involvement and taste except for the word "interesting." Although participants may have found the sensory use of taste interesting, obviously the statistical results and some of the interviews show that this element of sensory communication was not needed or wanted as much as the audiovisual forms of communication.

Nothing conclusive about personal involvement with the other senses of touch

and smell being more significant than audiovisuals can be seen in this research. The lack of conclusions does not necessarily discount the use of multisensory communication in worship but identifies the need for more research in this area of personal involvement.

### **Interviews**

The follow up interviews revealed another factor in the use of multisensory, thematic proclamation that was not specifically addressed by this research. The interviews raised the issue of the effects of multisensory communication on long-term memory. The participants in the interviews recalled the services engaging the senses of taste and touch more than they did the sense of smell. All six respondents remembered the service that used the sense of taste, the unsweetened chocolate. Four out of the six also recalled the service that used the sense of touch, yet only two of the six recalled the service using the sense of smell when first asked. The use of smell later came for two of the other respondents' memories as the services were discussed in the interview.

The slower recall for the sense of smell may have been due to the fact that the sense was used in the service more subtly and not as directly. It is known that memories become permanent when they are "dependent on how strongly the information is registered in the first place. That's why it's so important to learn in ways that involve hearing, seeing, saying, and doing and which involve positive emotions" (Schultz and Schultz 73). The sense of smell was engaged but it was not as obvious as handing someone a piece of chocolate or feeling a piece of cloth.

The other potential reason for these results regarding recall was that two of the forms of communication, taste and touch, involved things of a tactile nature tied to the visual of an object. For example, the use of unsweetened chocolate was seen, touched,

and tasted; whereas, the participants only smelled the fragrance. The use of multiple senses may have registered the experience deeper into long-term memory. In the case of the unsweetened chocolate used in the worship service, it was more truly a multisensory form of communication.

The interviews also revealed feedback that the multisensory forms of communication were viewed as important to the overall worship experience. One participant shared, I know doing these types of services requires more planning but I think they are beneficial. Another participant said, I get more out of a service when I am asked to participate; the concepts stay with me more. A young adult respondent, age 32, added, I really enjoyed the multisensory aspects of the services. People my age really need it. Subjects' comments revealed a positive receptivity to multisensory communication, and all six of the people interviewed had positive feedback for the use of multisensory forms of communication. The feedback supports the idea found in the literature review that multisensory communication helps people in this particular population not only to remember better but also to participate more fully in the worship experience. Participation is more highly valued among the emerging postmodern worldview, but multisensory forms of communication may aid in communicating more effectively with people of many different worldviews.

### **Application of the Findings**

The study suggests that multisensory, thematic proclamation in worship is applicable to similar populations of worshippers when addressing participants' affect. As a result the potential for transformation in an individual's life could happen through similar types of worship services that utilize multisensory forms of communication.

Results are inconclusive according to this research whether or not these forms of communication help to create personal involvement within the individual. Multisensory communication may or may not be necessary, but it is an aid in retaining memory of a certain subject, which in itself may help facilitate the process of transformation. The experience of multisensory informs long-term memory as was witnessed in the interviews. Multisensory communication appears to also help facilitate participation of the individual worshippers in this type of group.

The literature review raised the awareness of shifts taking place in the area of communication and the emergence of a postmodern worldview in the minds of some people today. The worship service under study was originally designed with young adults in mind, yet the background information revealed that in actuality the average age of those attending (38) fell outside the age range for what is defined as a young adult (18-35). What was discovered is the possibility that these forms of communication are not only relevant for young adults and postmodernism, as the literature review suggests, but that multisensory forms of communication may be applicable to most human beings regardless of age or philosophy. This application could be due to the fact that all fully functioning human beings utilize all five senses and take in information using those senses.

Postmodernism may simply be a cultural issue that helps make multisensory communication more culturally relevant for today although multisensory communication may have always been relevant. The dominance of a word-centered and modern worldview may have pushed multisensory communication forms aside for a time in history. This was witnessed less in the Eastern Orthodox Church, which held on to the

use of image as an incarnational form of communication.

The emergence of worship for postmodern people may be calling the Church back to communicating in worship through ways that are more multisensory and the results of this research indicate the possible benefits in doing so. One possible benefit is increased affect when positive, multisensory communication is employed. The other possible benefit is the increase in long-term memory.

These findings in general should not be surprising given that God creates people as five sensing beings and that God throughout biblical history has chosen to reveal himself to humans through the use of multiple senses. My assumptions that multisensory communication is more applicable to young adults and those of a postmodern viewpoint have been unfounded according to the results of the research. The uses of audiovisual and multisensory forms of communication are applicable to most people in general.

### **Weaknesses of the Study**

Several weaknesses existed in the study that need to be shared. These weaknesses limit generalizability and may have affected the outcomes to a certain degree.

One of the main weaknesses in the study was the lack of participants resulting in the lack of statistically significant findings in this study. With a larger pool of respondents, more statistical data could have been obtained. Obtaining better results would require this type of research within a larger worshipping community. Research done in a setting that had a worship attendance larger than ninety to one hundred people would be preferable.

The results could have been strengthened if the research had been done with a broader pool of worshippers from different backgrounds. Research done with people who



have different expectations of worship than the particular group studied may have helped to fortify the findings of the study. Further research in the area of multisensory communication among different worshipping groups needs to be done.

Another weakness that was beyond my control was the sporadic worship attendance, which created difficulty in getting the same respondents each week involved in the study. Sporadic attendance also necessitated the recruitment of new individuals each week to fill out the response forms. This process of ongoing recruitment also limited the amount of background information that could be obtained on the participants, although the research was not dependent upon this information. The weakness may have been the lack of consistency in getting responses from the same people each week, but the advantage was that new people brought less apathy to the process and helped obtain possibly less biased reactions to the variables.

The research is only generalizable to this type of group and setting. It may not be able to be duplicated to other contexts and is another potential weakness of the study. Two factors made this setting somewhat unique. First was the predominance of female participants in the study, and second was the lack of young adult participants. Women were much more likely than men to attend the services and this is witnessed in worship services across the country. The TrueFusion worshipping community had a larger female participation than the national average. Female attendance was also discovered for the overall membership of the larger church by talking with the church leadership at Bel Air United Methodist.

A sporadic rate of attendance among young adults, for whom this service was originally designed, was discovered also. Again, sporadic attendance is typical among

young adults and this factor limited my ability to look more closely at the young adult age group in relation to multisensory, thematic proclamation. More research needs to be done with the young adult population in regards to multisensory communication in worship.

The data showed that this particular group of people gathered for worship on Sunday evenings was already highly valuing audiovisual communication. Their high estimate of audiovisuals affected results and the results may have been quite different for a group that did not value audiovisuals as much. Some segments of the population may not be as dependent upon audiovisuals in communicating ideas. The results may have also been very different for a worshipping population that did not use audiovisual forms of communication at all. Herein lies another potential weakness of the study.

Another factor that may have influenced the outcomes was the lack of control the research design had over the actual elements of the worship service itself. Certain facets of the worship services may have had an impact on the data, such as length of worship service, specific order of worship, design and use of audiovisuals, group dynamics, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Maintaining consistency for elements in the worship services over all six services in the research period was challenging due to working within an existing worshipping community.

One confounding element was the use of communion in both services three and four. The practice of communion in service three made this service multisensory although it was being regarded as a baseline service to compare with the multisensory communication used in service six. The use of communion in service four made this service multisensory in more than just one way as compared with the two other services

in the second set where multisensory communication was employed. This may have confounded the results for affect in comparing these services but not for personal involvement. The Personal Involvement Inventory asked people to address specific elements of the services whereas the affective scales asked participants to rate the overall worship experience.

Another possible confounding element was that the worship leader for service one was different from the worship leader in service four. The difference in worship leaders could potentially have had an impact on the responses people gave when assessing their affect towards the worship leaders for those particular services. The other factor that was an issue was that the fourth and sixth services in the series were significantly shorter than all the other services that went just over an hour and fifteen minutes. Services four and six were both about an hour long, fifteen minutes less than the services in the first set and service five in the second set. The length of service may have influenced participants' affect. Discussions with church leadership revealed that all the church's services were approximately an hour and fifteen minutes long and that most of the attendees to the Sunday evening service under study were most likely already acclimated to the length of the services.

One phase of this project that could have been done better was the recruitment and retention of participants. More ongoing communication with the worshipping congregation prior to the research phase may have helped to build more interest in participation. Communication may have also helped to address the sporadic attendance issue. A larger portion of the less frequent attendees could have been brought into the research phase earlier. The initial recruitment only occurred three weeks prior to the

initial phase of research. Some of the attendees who come only once every four or five weeks would have been made aware and could have opted into the research instead of being brought in as the research occurred. More emphasis and clarity around participants' overall commitment to attendance and participation could have been built up as well. The emphasis on commitment may have increased the number of respondents for each service.

### **Further Studies**

More research in the area of multisensory, thematic proclamation needs to occur. Further research needs to be done among young adult populations to assess how multisensory forms of communication may or may not speak more clearly and meaningfully to that particular generation. The research would also need to be carried across generational and sub-cultural boundaries. Research across these boundaries may aid understanding of the potential for this particular research to be applicable to all human beings. I would suggest that this type of research be done in multiple sites where different forms and approaches to worship exist in comparison to the one under study. Research with different worship communities would help to assess if multisensory thematic proclamation is applicable to all groups regardless of approaches.

A component that emerged from this research that needs further study is the effects of multisensory, thematic proclamation on long-term memory. Further study may aid in understanding how people retain information and how that might potentially help the process of transformation in people's lives.

One other element that emerged from the interviews with participants was the use of audiovisuals as metaphor. One participant remembered the use of an image that was a

metaphor for anger. The power of image to communicate may be found in the image's use of metaphor. Wilson, in his book The Wired Church, discusses the use of metaphor and the power of using metaphors to communicate a theme. More research would need to be done to assess the power of metaphor in images to communicate clearly and meaningfully to people.

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed the need for further study in the area of multisensory, thematic proclamation in worship. More specific and detailed research needs to be done in the areas of affect and personal involvement independently and across other sub-cultural boundaries. Additional independent research needs to be done in the area of spiritual transformation in relation to worship experience. I continue to have questions around the emerging postmodern worldview that is affecting changes in communication, worship, discipleship, and spiritual transformation. Although many of the changes proposed by some of the emerging postmodern leaders resonate with me as an individual, I am left with two questions. Is this just another passing fad affecting the Christian faith today, or is it here to stay? The second question deals with the human condition. Do not the shifts towards communication in a postmodern context have much more to say about human nature and the human condition than they do about the postmodern worldview? Has not the desire for experience and participation always been the yearning of the human being regardless of age, beliefs, worldview, or gender?

Recent shifts in communication could simply be bringing the Church back to exploring ways of proclaiming the Christian message that may have once been lost by the dominance of the modern worldview. This research indicates the potentially positive

aspects of multisensory forms of communication, which in turn may lead to transformation in the lives of ordinary people.

**APPENDIX A**

**Affective Learning Scale**

(Modified)

**Instructions:** Please respond to the following scales in terms of the worship service you just experienced. Circle one number on each set of the bipolar scales below each numbered item to indicate your judgment or evaluation of the concept/idea about the particular service of worship. Note that in some cases the most positive number is “1” while in other cases it is a “7.”

**1. Behaviors recommended in this worship service:**

Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable
Fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfair
Positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Negative

**2. Theme of the worship service:**

Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Valuable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Worthless
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive

**3. Worship Leader:**

Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable
Fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfair
Positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Negative

**4. Speaker:**

Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Valuable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Worthless
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positive

**5. In real life situations, your likelihood of actually attempting to engage in behaviors recommended by the speaker:**

Likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unlikely
Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible
Probable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Improbable
Would Not	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Would

**6. Your desire to return to another worship service like this next week:**

Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
Possible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Impossible
Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable
Would	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Would Not

Source: Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 81



**APPENDIX B**

**Personal Involvement Inventory**

(Modified)

**Instructions:** The purpose of this study is to measure people’s involvement with various means of communication in the worship service. We need you to judge various aspects of the service against a series of descriptive scales according to how you perceive the particular aspect of the service. Here is how you are to use these scales:

If you feel that the aspect of the service that appears at the top of the page is *very closely related* to one end of the scale, you should place an “X” mark as follows:

Unimportant : X : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : Important

or

Unimportant : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : X : Important

If you feel that the aspect of the service that appears at the top of the page is *quite closely related* to one end of the scale (but not extremely), you should place an “X” mark as follows:

Unimportant : \_\_ : X : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : Important

or

Unimportant : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : X : \_\_ : Important

If you feel that the aspect of the service that appears at the top of the page is *only slightly related* to one end of the scale, you should place an “X” mark as follows:

Unimportant : \_\_ : \_\_ : X : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : Important

or

Unimportant : \_\_ : \_\_ : \_\_ : X : \_\_ : \_\_ : Important

*Important*

1. Be sure that you mark every scale for each aspect of the service listed above each scale; do not omit any.
2. Never put more than one mark on a single scale.

Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high speed through this questionnaire. Do not worry or puzzle over individual items. It is your first impressions, the immediate feelings about the items that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless because we want your true impressions.

{Insert the Aspect of the Service to be judged.}

- Important :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Unimportant\*
- Of no concern :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Of concern to me
- Irrelevant :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Relevant
- Means a lot to me :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Means nothing to me\*
- Useless :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Useful
- Valuable :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Worthless\*
- Trivial :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Fundamental
- Beneficial :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Not beneficial\*
- Matters to me :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Doesn't matter\*
- Uninterested :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Interested
- Significant :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Insignificant\*
- Vital :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Superfluous\*
- Boring :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Interesting
- Unexciting :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Exciting
- Appealing :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Unappealing\*
- Mundane :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Fascinating
- Essential :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Nonessential\*
- Undesirable :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Desirable
- Wanted :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Unwanted\*
- Not Needed :\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_:\_\_: Needed

*Note:* Items on the left are scored (1) for *low involvement* and on the right (7) for *high involvement*. An asterisk indicates that the item is reverse-scored. (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 81).

**APPENDIX C**

**Phone Interview Questions**

*Name:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_ *ID* \_\_\_\_\_

Do you remember any of the six worship services that you participated in?

What do you remember about them? (Theme? Experience? Elements?)

Did you think the multi-sensory aspects of the services were important?

Which aspects (visual, audio, smell, taste, touch)?

Did your behavior change as a result of any of the services? Why or why not?

How did your behavior change?

Any additional feedback or comments you would like to make?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Worship Services**

#### **Worship Service #1**

**Date:** May 12, 2002

**Speaker:** Gary Webb

**Theme:** Anger

**Worship Leader:** Gary Webb

**Senses engaged:** Sight and Hearing

**Length of Service:** 78 minutes

**Environment** —The worship service was held in a multipurpose room. At the front of the room, a large projection screen stood behind the worship team on which thematic images and words to the songs were projected. Sheets were used to create a backdrop that was lighted from behind. Sound was provided through a sound system with microphones, speakers, and monitors.

#### **Order of Worship**

**Songs**—I Love You Lord; I Walk by Faith; Let Everything That Has Breath;

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Song**—We Fall Down

**Prayer**

**Song**—Let Your Glory Fly

**Scripture Reading**—Luke 8:40-55

**Prayer**

**Message**—The speaker introduced the topic of anger and interspersed personal stories between the reading of the following scriptures; Proverbs 15:1, Ephesians 4:26, 1 Timothy 2:8, and James 1:19-20.

**Prayer**

**Songs**—Lord God Almighty Reigns; City on a Hill

**Scripture Reading:** Galatians 5:19-26

**Song**—Awesome God

**Dismissal**

## **Worship Service #2**

**Date:** May 19, 2002

**Speaker:** Cindy Caldwell

**Theme:** Healing

**Worship Leader:** Gary Webb

**Senses engaged:** Sight and Hearing

**Length of Service:** 79 minutes

**Environment** —Same as service 1.

### **Order of Worship**

**Songs**—I Love You Lord; All Who Are Thirsty

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Songs**—My Hope is in You; Jesus Comes in Power; Jesus Draw Me Close

**Scripture Reading:** Matthew 9:1-8

**Prayer**

**Message**—The speaker introduced the topic of healing through the use of a personal story and then raised several questions about healing. The speaker then defined healing and made the following points: Jesus is the source of healing; Physical healing is temporary; God does not always answer prayers affirmatively; We are to pray for each other's healing; and, Jesus was sacrificed so we could be healed.

**Prayer**

**Special Music**—Could I

**Prayer for Healing**

**Songs**—Every Move I Make; Save You; I Get Down/He Lifts Me Up

**Dismissal**

### **Worship Service #3**

**Date:** May 26, 2002

**Speaker:** Barry Heidi

**Theme:** Worship

**Worship Leader:** Gary Webb

**Senses engaged:** Sight and Hearing

**Length of Service:** 76 minutes

**Environment**—Same as service 1. Video images were used on the screen as the congregation sang during the time of communion.

### **Order of Worship**

**Songs**—I love You Lord; Come Now Is the Time to Worship

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Prayer**

**Songs**—Ancient One; Every Move I Make; Lord I Come to You

**Scripture Reading:** 2 Samuel 6

**Message**—The speaker introduced the topic of worship by discussing the indignity of worship when David danced before the ark. The speaker then made the following points; worship is sacrifice, worship is sacrifice, worship is sacrament, worship is sincere humility, and worship may elicit sarcasm. He then led the congregation in prayer and preparation for communion.

**Communion** —people came forward to receive communion by intinction.

**Songs**—Father We Adore You; Cry Holy; Take My Life; I Will Worship; I Could Sing of Your Love Forever

**Dismissal**

### **Worship Service #4**

**Date:** August 25, 2002

**Speaker:** Gary Webb

**Theme:** Anger

**Worship Leader:** Tom Delk

**Senses engaged:** Sight, hearing, and taste

**Length of Service:** 63 minutes

**Environment** —Same service 1. Individual pieces of unsweetened chocolate were placed in a basket on a table at the front of the worship space.

### **Order of Worship**

**Songs**—Let It Rise; These Thousand Hills; Salvation

**Prayer**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Song**—Grace Alone

**Testimonial from Speaker's Wife and Prayer**

**Message**—The speaker introduced the topic of anger and shared the Scripture in James 1:8-10. The speaker used various Scriptures and personal stories throughout the message. The speaker also dealt with issues surrounding anger such as preventing it, using the tongue when angry, identifying the source of anger, and helping others in dealing with anger. A variety of points were made about anger throughout the message. He concluded by looking at Jesus Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness, which can erase the bitterness that can be harbored.

**Response**—The pieces of unsweetened chocolate were distributed to the people and it was used to symbolize the bitterness to which anger can lead. The chocolate was then followed up with a time of communion, which represent Christ forgiveness.



**Prayer**

**Communion**

**Songs**—Holiness; Lord Reign in Me

**Dismissal**—People were encouraged to make a choice in life between God's forgiveness or holding onto bitterness.

### **Worship Service #5**

**Date:** September 1, 2002

**Speaker:** Cindy Caldwell

**Theme:** Healing

**Worship Leader:** Gary Webb

**Senses engaged:** Sight, hearing, and smell

**Length of Service:** 79 minutes

**Environment**—Same as service 1. Individual strips of cloth approximately eight inches long were placed in a basket on a table at the front of the worship space. These strips of cloth represented the hem of Jesus' robe.

### **Order of Worship**

**Song**—Jesus Draw Me Close

**Welcome**

**Song**—He Will Come and Save You

**Announcements**

**Testimonial**—A woman stood and shared with the congregation how God had healed her during a difficult time with health related issues. The worship leader then prayed for her.

**Offering**

**Songs**—Saved; Lord I Come to You

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 8:40-55

**Prayer**

**Message**—The speaker introduced the topic of healing by discussing medical insights that often explain away miraculous healing and raised the question about whether or not God still heals. The speaker then went on to make the following points: Jesus Christ is the only source of healing; All Physical healing is temporary; Sometimes healing comes as a prescription; God does not always answer our prayers the way we want Him to; God

wants us to pray for and pray with each other for healing; and, Jesus was crucified so we could be healed.

**Response**—People came forward to receive piece of cloth and some stopped to be prayed for by the laying on of hands.

**Song**—Breathe; Amazing Love

**Dismissal**

## **Worship Service #6**

**Date:** September 8, 2002

**Speaker:** Barry Hidey

**Theme:** Worship

**Worship Leader:** Gary Webb

**Senses engaged:** Sight, hearing, and smell

**Length of Service:** 57 minutes

**Environment**—Same as service 1. Towels with fragrant oil were placed on the air circulation vents in the multipurpose room to create a fragrant smell in the room as people entered the worship space.

### **Order of Worship**

**Song**—Open the Eyes of My Heart

**Welcome**

**Song**—Here I Am to Worship

**Prayer**

**Kids dismissed for kids club**

**Drama**—John 12:1-8 was read as a woman dressed in attire of biblical times walked through the congregation with a jar of fragrant oil. The jar was open at the appropriate time during the reading so that the congregation could sense the fragrance.

**Message**—The speaker explained the background of John 12:1-8 and then made the following points; Mary's worship was selfless, she gave what she had, her worship was criticized, Mary showed humility in her worship, and the Apostle Paul encourages us to be a fragrant offering in our worship.

**Songs**—Lord we Lift Your Name on High; You're Worthy of My Praise

**Dismissal**

## APPENDIX E

### Glossary of Statistical Terms

**Alpha ( $\alpha$ )** “Greek alpha, the significance level in hypothesis testing, which is also the probability of a type one error” (McCall 405).

**Cronbach alpha** “An internal consistency or reliability coefficient for a test, based on two or more parts of the test but requiring only one test administration” (Wiersma 456).

**Dependent variable** “The variable being affected or assumed to be affected by the independent variable” (Wiersma 456).

**Directional Test** “A statistical test in which the alternative hypothesis specifies the direction of the departure from what is expected under the null hypothesis. (This is sometimes called a *one-tailed test*)” (McCall 412).

**Independent variable** “A variable that affects (or is assumed to affect) the dependent variable under study and is included in the research design so that its effect can be determined” (Wiersma 457).

**M, Mean** “The sum of scores in a distribution divided by the number of scores in the distribution” (Wiersma 458).

**N** “Total number of subjects, observations, or paired observations (depending on the statistical context)” (McCall 406).

**Nondirectional test** “A statistical test in which the alternative hypothesis does not specify the direction of the departure from what is expected under the null hypothesis. (This is sometimes called a *two-tailed test*)” (McCall 416).

**p** “Probability that the observed data could be obtained if the null hypothesis is true” (McCall 406).

**Reliability** “The relative extent to which the measurement procedures assign the same value to a characteristic of an individual each time it is measured under essentially the same circumstances” (McCall 418).

**SD, Standard Deviation** “A measure of variability that is the positive square root of the variance” (Wiersma 461).

**t distribution** “A theoretical relative frequency distribution in which the standard error of the mean is estimated from sample values” (McCall 420).

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