

ABSTRACT

A JOURNEY IN PREACHING AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

by

Leonard R. Luchetti

The temptation exists for preachers to view preaching as merely a rhetorical, technical task instead of what it is ultimately intended to be—a spiritual, devotional journey into the Christ whom the preacher proclaims. This trend in homiletic practice can detract from the preacher's Christian *ethos* and preaching joy. The result is often homiletic fatigue, pastoral burnout, or, worse, moral failure.

Preachers can benefit significantly from a guide to developing and delivering sermons that fosters and maintains both spiritual intensity and homiletic integrity. The task of preaching does not have to be separated from the spirituality of the preacher. This conviction is at the center of this study, which involves twelve preaching pastors for a period of six months in employing a researcher-designed model for developing and delivering sermons called A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline.

The goal of this journey was to foster a more intimate connection between Christ and participating pastors throughout the homiletic process in a manner that would increase the Christian *ethos* and the preaching joy of the latter. I also anticipated that the congregants of the twelve participating pastors would perceive a heightened Christian *ethos* in their pastors during the preaching event. The journey did increase the preaching joy and Christian *ethos* of participating pastors though the increases were not always perceived by congregants.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
A JOURNEY IN PREACHING AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

presented by

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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at
Asbury Theological Seminary

_____ Mentor	_____ January 26, 2010 Date
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_____ Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program	_____ January 26, 2010 Date
_____ Dean of the Beeson Program	_____ January 26, 2010 Date

A JOURNEY IN PREACHING AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

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

by

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May 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Words cannot adequately express my gratitude to God for the following people, but my words are the only form of expression this page allows me.

Dr. Michael Pasquarello. Thank you for serving as my dissertation mentor. Your homiletic and theological intelligence and passion are contagious. Thank you for being available and encouraging.

Dr. Joseph Dongell. Thank you for agreeing to be my second reader. Your ability to reflect and respond biblically to any question thrown at you is remarkable.

The Research Reflection Team. Dana Antal, Patrick Eby, Brad Hockman, Lynda Keefer, and Roberta Smalls. Your willingness to meet with me throughout this dissertation process to offer your love, prayers, support, ideas, and insights mean more to me than a few pizza lunches can express.

Dr. and Mrs. Randy Jessen. All of the energy and prayer you poured into me, Amy, and our children during our year in the Beeson Program, and beyond, will never be forgotten and always be appreciated.

The 2007-08 Beeson Class. I have become who I am because of who you are. I have never read more than one hundred books in a year with a more enjoyable bunch of guys!

The Stroudsburg Wesleyan Church. Thank you for allowing me a sabbatical year to grow through the Beeson Program. More than that, thank you for allowing me to come back and to pastor my dream church.

Zach, Lia, and Sam. Thank you for being the best, most adorable kids ever! My favorite study break was coming home from long hours of class time and study, throwing myself on the living room floor, and letting you rascals jump all over me. Pure joy!

Amy. The year in the Beeson Program and this dissertation project, both of which have changed my life and ministry for the better, are the result of your belief in my potential. This dissertation would not exist if you had not brought me that form letter from Dr. Kalas, inviting Asbury Alumni to apply for the Beeson Doctor of Ministry Degree. You have always seen more potential in me than I see in myself. Your life is a journey in living as a spiritual discipline. I love you.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

When I began to preach as a local church pastor on a weekly basis, I was twenty-three years old and in awe of both the wonderful privilege and daunting responsibility of proclaiming the good news. Simply put, I was overwhelmed. The feeling of being overwhelmed with the call to preach had a purifying effect upon my soul, for it caused me to rely more heavily upon God throughout the homiletic process than upon my own limited experience and abilities. I prayed and, quite often, even fasted as I wrestled with God for insight into the coming Sunday's text, insight that was theologically informed and spiritually formative. I needed God and I knew it. Preaching was for me, in the earliest days of my pastoral ministry, a spiritual discipline that formed the character of Christ in me as I sought his guiding and anointing. The homiletic process of my early days in ministry is captured by Thomas C. Oden's description of preaching as "the process and act of listening to the Spirit speak through Scripture so as to engender an appropriate here and now witness to God" (127).

The more I preached, however, the more comfortable I became with my increasing skills and the less overwhelmed I felt. A peculiar thing happened. I began to pray less and less. Sermon development and delivery became much easier as it was reduced from a spiritual discipline to a technical science. I found my homiletic rhythm by learning *how* to preach. Preaching, admittedly, became for me a rhetorical technique that overshadowed the spiritual discipline it once was. What I once viewed as an opportunity to engage and be engaged by God became a task to be completed. This change in

perspective eventually diminished for me the joy of preaching and its spiritually formative character.

My preaching crisis, and the broader contemporary crisis in preaching, is described and lamented by Michael Pasquarello:

[T]he most unquestioned homiletic assumption of our time: that the primary task of preaching is a matter of finding the right rhetorical technique, homiletic style, and evangelistic strategy to translate and make Christianity useful, appealing, relevant and entertaining on terms dictated by a consumerist culture. This understanding of preaching . . . in practice, shifts the weight of dependence from the efficacy of the Spirit to an almost exclusive dependence on human personality, ingenuity, method, and skill. (*Christian Preaching* 166)

Pasquarello is not denying the importance of skill, style, or technique. He is, however, rightfully concerned with the shifting “weight of dependence” from the Spirit to technique. This shift of dependence eventually leads to a divorce between preacher and preaching, witness and words. André Resner notes the divorce when he writes, “To preach the cross of Christ and not to live out the cross for others effects a separation of witness: one’s lived witness is separated from one’s verbal witness” (149).

The different approaches to preaching (i.e., rhetorical technique versus spiritual discipline) can be evidenced by the focal points of the preacher in the homiletic process. My homiletic process, over time, became consumed with matters such as putting together a clever and relevant sermon, finding a biblical text that would fit somehow with a captivating story I heard, or utilizing props and multi-media images that would help me to communicate the message most effectively. While these concerns are not necessarily wrong and perhaps should be considered, they are not the first and primary focal points for the Christian preacher. These matters focus exclusively on rhetorical technique and

can be addressed without any relational connection to the Christ whom the preacher is called to proclaim.

When preaching is viewed primarily as a spiritual discipline and not merely a rhetorical technique, the preacher begins with a different set of focal concerns that drive the homiletic process. Preaching as a spiritual discipline causes the preacher to be consumed with what God is saying through the text to the preacher and his or her church, as well as with how God is seeking to conform both the preacher and the church to the pattern of Christ through the text. The process of developing and delivering Sunday's sermon can and should maintain congruence between the message (Christ) and the messenger (preacher) so that the theological wisdom proclaimed shapes the people of God to live into the story of God revealed in Scripture. These primary issues cannot be addressed unless the preacher has an intimate relationship with the Triune God, the One who must drive the homiletic process for preaching to have a power beyond the scope of human rhetorical ability.

The spirituality of the preacher, what I define as a deep identification with, and abiding in, Christ, adds something to a sermon that mere technique alone cannot. Throughout the history of the Church, many Christians have written about this *something*, though the literature over the past several decades seems scant at best (Kinlaw 17; Mindling 59). These historic thinkers and writers suggest that the *something* that draws listeners into the preaching event beyond the eloquence of the sermon is the *ethos* of the preacher. Richard Baxter affirms this reality:

All work must be done spiritually, as by one who is possessed by the Holy Ghost.... There is in some men's preaching a spiritual strain which spiritual hearers can discern and relish; and in some men this sacred

tincture is so wanting that, even when they speak of spiritual things, the manner is such as if they were common matters. (138)

While rhetorical eloquence can and should most certainly assist the preacher in the development and delivery of sermons, the *ethos* of the preacher is a greater, or at least equal, factor in the power of Christian proclamation.

William H. Willimon describes how preaching *ethos* is evidenced by the preacher in the homiletic process:

Homiletical habits—disciplined, weekly study; honesty and humility about what the text says and does not say; confidence in the ability of God to make our puny congregations worthy to hear God’s Word; a weekly willingness to allow the Word to devastate the preacher before it lays a hand on the congregation—are habits, skills of the homiletical craft that form us preachers into better people than we would be if we had been left to our own devices. This is the sort of thing Paul was getting at when he told the Corinthians that it would have been nice if he could have preached to them with flattering, eloquent words but, being a preacher he single-mindedly “decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). (69)

These insights from Willimon highlight the stark contrast between preaching as a mere rhetorical technique versus preaching as a spiritual discipline. Clearly, preaching as a spiritual discipline is more likely to form the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16, NIV) in the preacher and the congregation, than “flattering, eloquent words.”

Christian *ethos* can be defined as faithful obedience to the Great Commandment, which is to love God and love people (Luke 10:27). This love is not only taught, but modeled, by Christ and incarnated in the life of the preacher through the consistent and authentic practice of spiritual disciplines that promote these two loves (Westerhoff 1).

Pasquarello describes poignantly how the love of Christ cultivates love:

Because our human loves and yearnings define us—we are what we love—our loves and desires must be redirected toward their true end in God. Thus the voice of the Spirit speaks through the impassioned Word,

drawing the intellect and will toward the truth and goodness of God.
(*Christian Preaching* 177)

Genuine spirituality will heighten one's capacity to love God and others (Bugg,
Preaching from the Inside Out 12-18).

Love for God and for others, as embodied by Jesus, demanded extreme self-sacrifice. This love goes well beyond surface sentimentality. That is, Jesus' love for the Father was evidenced by the cruciformity of his will to the Father's will, and Jesus' love for others was evidenced by the cruciformity of his well-being for the needs of others. Cruciformity demands the subordination of personal ego, ambition, will, and desire in favor of God's glory and the well-being of people. The preacher's love for God and others, which heightens *ethos*, will demand no less a sacrificial subordination. Resner describes this costly love when he writes, "The preacher's life is to be a cruciform life, consonant with the message of the cross" (130).

Marva Dawn alludes to the practical self-sacrifice entailed by a preacher's cruciformity, writing, "Unless I die to myself and my pride, I have nothing to give those who hear my sermons" (79). Self-sacrificial cruciformity, loving like Jesus loved, is quite a challenge. This kind of love cannot ultimately be developed by trying harder or being nicer. Nor is the cultivation of this love simply a matter of trying to imitate Christ. The only way for the preacher to love like Christ is to abide in Christ so that the actual love of Christ itself flows through the preacher's life and preaching.

As stated in John 15:1-15, Jesus called his followers to "abide" in him and then immediately followed this call with a challenge to love as he loved. Jesus clearly recognized and taught his disciples that the only way for them to love as he did was for them to remain as intimately connected to him as possible. Spiritual disciplines are one of

the main ways of establishing and developing this intimate connection to Christ so that “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) develops in those who follow Christ. Authentic engagement with God through disciplines that incorporate Scripture, prayer, and Christian fellowship enable this abiding with Christ that fosters the development of these two loves in the life of the preacher. The love of Christ cultivated through the preacher’s engagement in spiritual disciplines enhances the kind of preaching *ethos* that gets a hearing.

Based upon my own observations, countless conversations with people who listen to preaching today, and the opinions of homileticians and theologians (e.g., Cunningham; Lischer; Pasquarello; Resner), this Christian *ethos* is lacking on the preaching landscape. Several factors may contribute to the problem. For one thing, pastoral ministry can become so demanding of one’s time and energy that so little of both are leftover for the cultivation of Christian *ethos* through spiritual disciplines. Another factor is the ease with which preachers become infatuated with acquiring better technique to enhance their eloquence. The development of rhetorical skills, of course, is not, in and of itself, a hazard. A problem only exists when the preacher is more concerned about becoming a better orator than becoming a better lover of Christ and others, in other words more concerned with technique than spirituality. This proclivity can lead to what John Wesley calls *practical atheism*. Although most preachers would profess their deep dependence upon God, in the practice of developing and delivering sermons they can potentially become atheistic in their overreliance upon technical methodology and their underreliance upon revelation, wisdom, and power from God.

Dawn alludes to the problem of “practical atheism” in preaching today:

Our society so much values credentials, expertise, savvy, technique—but these can so easily be used to manipulate and deceive.... The question, instead, is whether my preaching will spur them more to love God and their neighbors.... I am the problem with my preaching when I don't rely on the Holy Spirit to produce the results of my sermons. (82)

Dawn's comments challenge me and all preachers who have a tendency to tackle the preaching task with more self-reliance than Spirit dependence. Spirit-driven preaching, not technique-driven preaching, is what enhances the Christian *ethos* of the preacher and the impact of the preaching event because it draws attention and bears witness to the triune God. Oden writes bluntly, "No amount of technical instruction or objective data gathering can finally call preaching into being. It cannot be reduced to an art or natural talent" (129). Preaching is, fundamentally, a spiritual discipline.

The problem is that many preachers today are like the artist ghost in C. S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* (83). The artist ghost focuses more on the craft of art than what the art is intended to convey. In a similar manner, preachers often become more enamored with the technicality of the craft than the Christ the homiletic craft is intended to convey. The craft (the how) is important and should be carefully approached and developed. However, Christ (the who) must have the more prominent place in the heart, mind, and soul of the preacher. This Christocentric prioritization is essential because the ultimate goal of preaching is not merely to communicate good rhetorical messages but to witness to Christ in such a way that reflects the holy wisdom and love that invites people deeper into Christ. This goal cannot be achieved with better skill or technique alone. It can be facilitated through the preacher's authentic Christian *ethos*, which is fostered through spiritual disciplines and evidenced by a cruciform love for God and others.

Who the preacher is deep down inside can add more power to the preached message than a great illustration, eloquence of phraseology, or en vogue style. “The congregation’s perception of the character of the preacher contributes directly to the congregation’s willingness to attend to the sermon” (Allen 28). “No matter how eloquent the preacher is, the words are ‘sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal’ (1 Cor. 13:1) if we do not sense that the preacher is genuine and authentic” (Bugg, *Preaching from the Inside Out* 25-26). Therefore, the goal of this project was to show how the preacher’s *ethos* adds to the power of the preached word. This emphasis on *ethos* is not to suggest that the power of preaching resides in the preacher; that suggestion might lead toward homiletic donatism. However, the preacher who submits to, and abides in, Christ will experience a heightened flow of God’s Spirit and power through his or her life and preaching.

I created and invited preaching pastors to participate with me in a process of development and delivery sermons called *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*. This journey was guided mostly by spiritual disciplines but did not ignore the importance of rhetorical techniques and other considerations such as sound exegesis. The journey put the pastor’s relationship with God and spiritual formation where it belongs—at the center of the homiletic process.

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch offer a prophetic solution to the present preaching crisis:

We need to recover the kind of worldview that can awaken our deepest passions and give us a redemptive framework and an inner meaning for our activities in the world on God’s behalf. It won’t be good enough to merely get better techniques and methods. Even incarnation and contextualization won’t suffice unless we can find the spiritual framework and resources for real and lasting engagement. (111)

This “real and lasting engagement” within preaching will not be enabled through more technique, but through a spiritual homiletic that invites “God’s own Spirit [to work] cooperatively with our intelligence and attentiveness” (Oden 132). Preachers who engage preaching as attentiveness to God through spiritual disciplines will have something more spiritually profound to say than they would if they were trying to drum up something rhetorically eloquent, entertaining, relevant, or clever.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop a researcher-designed A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline and evaluate its impact on the cultivation and perception of Christian *ethos* in preachers, as well as its impact on the level of preaching joy the preacher experiences in the homiletic process.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill this study the following questions have been identified:

1. What impact did the incorporation of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline by the preacher throughout the homiletic process have upon the cultivation of Christian *ethos* in the preacher?
2. What impact did the incorporation of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline by the preacher throughout the homiletic process have upon the congregants’ perception of Christian *ethos* in the preacher during the preaching event?
3. What was the correlation between the cultivated *ethos* in the preacher and the perceived *ethos* of the preacher by the congregation?
4. What impact did A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline have upon the level of preaching joy the preacher experienced throughout the homiletic process?

Definitions

For the sake of clarity, several terms used in this are defined below.

Christian Ethos

Christian *ethos* is defined and evidenced by a loving connection to God that seeks his glory and will more than one's own and a loving concern for people that seeks their connection to Christ more than one's own comfort and convenience. These two loves were taught and embodied by Christ and are incarnated in the preacher through the consistent and authentic practice of spiritual disciplines aimed at fostering these two loves.

Spiritual Disciplines

Throughout the history of Christianity, the Church has developed and practiced spiritual disciplines for the cultivation of Christlike character and love, which I am calling *Christian ethos*. Most, if not all, of these disciplines utilize Scripture, prayer, and fellowship for such cultivation.

Homiletic Process

The homiletic process is the entire journey from the development through to the delivery of a sermon. The process begins at the conception of a sermonic thought and carries through to the construction and, finally, conveyance of a sermon.

Preaching Event

The preaching event is the live delivery of a sermon by a preacher to a congregation, which occurs in the context of the weekly Christian worship service.

Preaching Joy

Preaching joy is not derived necessarily from the results of a preacher's sermons but from the preacher's faithful love for God and selfless love for people throughout the homiletic process. Joy is the result of the actual love of Jesus Christ flowing into, and out from, the life of the preacher as a result of abiding in Christ.

Ministry Intervention

I developed A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline that was taught to twelve selected preaching pastors from the Penn-Jersey District of the Wesleyan Church, through a one-day retreat at the Penn-Jersey District Office in Allentown, Pennsylvania, on 28 August 2008 from 9:00-3:00. During the retreat these preachers received guidance on how to incorporate this preaching journey throughout the development and delivery of their weekly sermons. After the retreat, I contacted each participant through e-mail, at the end of each month, to collect qualitative data about the impact of the model upon their preaching, as well as to offer support and answer questions they might have about incorporating the model. A pretest was given to the participating pastors at the retreat. The pastors completed a posttest after the six-month intervention period to evaluate if, and how, Christian *ethos* and preaching joy was cultivated in them because of their participation in this journey.

A pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaire was also distributed to, and collected from, board members serving in each of the churches represented by the participating pastors. These instruments were designed to measure whether or not congregants perceived an increase in the Christian *ethos* of their pastor as a result of the six-month intervention period.

A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline was designed to infuse the homiletic process with a variety of spiritual disciplines that increase the preacher's loving connection to God and the preacher's loving concern for the congregation, both of which enhance the pastor's Christian *ethos*. This journey does not ignore the importance of rhetorical skill and technique in preaching; it was, however, designed to restore spirituality to its rightful and primary place in the homiletic process.

Context

The Penn-Jersey District of the Wesleyan Church consists of seventy-three churches with the same number of solo or senior pastors who do the primary preaching in rural, urban, or suburban areas within Central and Northeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York City. The tradition that guides its practice and theology flows out of the life and teaching of John Wesley, in particular his emphasis on growing in holy love for God and others (i.e., Christian *ethos*). Preaching is a vitally important emphasis in the Wesleyan tradition. As the literature review shows, Wesley embodied and encouraged Christian *ethos* for Methodist preachers.

The Wesleyan denomination was established in 1968. Its most fundamental distinctive is the theological emphasis on sanctification, or holiness. Wesleyan Christians believe that God not only forgives sins but can actually by his grace and human submission to him, begin a process of eradicating the sin nature that leads humans to sin. Rev. Dr. Earle L. Wilson, who has served as a general superintendant of the Wesleyan Church for more than twenty years and has been one of the premier voices representing the Wesleyan denomination, articulates the emphasis on sanctification well:

The Wesleyan view of sanctification basically declares that God can and really does deal with our sinful human nature. We are depraved, true; but

not so depraved that we cannot respond to God's love for us or that God cannot save and also sanctify us. He accomplishes real change in people, not just covering up or subduing our sinful nature (75)... John Wesley ... emphasized the need for a moment-by-moment reliance on the cleansing blood of Christ, a sanctification in which we progressively become more like the perfect image of Christ revealed to us in our experience of salvation and through the Word of God. No holiness resides in a person apart from the presence of Christ, and there is no holiness which does not issue in love and good works (80)... Becoming holy, then, declares that the mind itself may be renewed, cleansed, renovated, and made holy. And despite the fall of our first parents, we are both redeemable and remediable because we are human beings created in the image of God. (81)

This Wesleyan emphasis on the possibility of being sanctified and growing in holy character is essential to my premise that preachers can and should grow in Christian *ethos* as a result of the renewal of their minds and hearts through engagement with Christ in spiritual disciplines. Hope that preachers and congregants can grow in “the perfect image of Christ” as God’s Spirit transforms people is shared by the Wesleyan pastors who have participated in this study.

The spiritual maturity and development of pastors has always been a major thrust in the Wesleyan Church. In the first year of the denomination’s existence, *The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church* of 1968 lists as the first duty of the pastor “to devote himself diligently to the study of the Scriptures, to prayer, and to the work assigned to him” (83). Clearly, the spiritual disciplines utilizing Scripture and prayer had a key role in the formation of Wesleyan pastors.

In the section on “Ministerial Orders and Regulations,” *The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church* states that aspiring Wesleyan pastors should be examined with questions focused on several key areas. The first series of questions is primarily concerned with the potential pastor’s character, or Christian *ethos*:

Does he know God as a pardoning God? Has he the love of God abiding in him? Does he desire nothing but God? Is he holy in life and conduct as well as in heart? Is he a worthy example to the church and to the world? (338)

The Wesleyan denomination clearly affirms that the person of the preacher matters as much as the preaching of the preacher.

The Wesleyan Church is concerned not only with the character but the competence of pastoral hopefuls. The second set of questions in the first published *The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church* focuses on competence: “Does he have gifts as well as grace for the work? Does he have a clear, sound understanding? a right judgment in the things of God? a just conception of salvation by faith? Does he speak justly, readily, clearly?” (383-84). The content of sermons and the competence of preachers matters.

Pastoral character and competence were both important to those who founded the Wesleyan denomination, and they continue to be emphasized today. While character questions were primary, questions regarding the skills and abilities of the pastor were also important. This dissertation project focuses primarily on the development of holy character within preachers through spiritual disciplines, but it does not ignore the vital importance of competence for pastors in the use of the gifts. Rhetorical and exegetical skills, then, are necessary for preachers, though Christian *ethos* is primary because it results in the holy use of those skills. According to the Wesleyan Church, the holiness of the person doing the preaching matters as much as or more than that person’s preaching skills.

The pre-intervention retreat, and the post-intervention debriefing, with the participating pastors took place at the Penn-Jersey District Office in Allentown, Pennsylvania. E-mails to and from participating pastors were made from my church

office in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, requesting feedback about the journey at the end of each month of participation. Phone calls were also made at the halfway point of the journey to encourage the participating pastors and invite them to ask questions or offer feedback about the journey.

Methodology

This project was primarily a mixed method qualitative study that utilized a researcher-designed pretest and posttest for participating pastors and congregants.

Participants

I developed a questionnaire that assisted me in the selection of the twelve participating pastors, which is found in Appendix A. This criterion-based instrument was distributed and collected at the Fortieth Annual Penn-Jersey District Conference held on 19 June 2008 in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. I invited those pastors who serve as the primary preacher in their congregations to complete the instrument in three minutes after I briefly explained the project. The questionnaire included a note from the Penn-Jersey district superintendent, Rev. Dr. Harry F. Wood, endorsing my project.

Pastors had to meet several criteria to be selected for the participating sample. First, participants were no more than “moderately satisfied” (Question 1) with their present incorporation of spiritual disciplines throughout the homiletic process. They also affirmed on the questionnaire that preaching as a spiritual discipline is “very important” (Question 2) and that they were “very willing to commit” (Question 3) to adopting, at least for the six-month intervention period, *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*. The pastors selected for the study had at least three years of preaching

experience and served in their present pastorates for more than one year, which allowed their congregants to be familiar with their preaching.

Forty-eight out of seventy-three possible respondents completed and submitted the instrument after I explained the project briefly to all conference attendees. Twenty-two out of the forty-eight respondents met all the criteria. The sample of fifteen participating pastors was randomly chosen from this population using a random number table (Wiersma 298). I wrote a letter (see Appendix B) inviting a sample of fifteen pastors to participate, assuming that some might not show up for the retreat or drop out along the way.

Members of the Local Board of Administration (LBA) from each church served by the preaching pastors also participated in the study by completing a pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaire concerning the preaching of their pastor. The LBA is the highest governing board in the local Wesleyan Church and typically meets monthly to oversee the ministry of the church. Participating LBA members have been in their church for more than one year and, according to Wesleyan polity, are nominated and elected to the board because of their spiritual maturity.

Instruments

Several instruments were used in this overall qualitative study and all were researcher designed. I developed and utilized a questionnaire to assist me in the selection of the twelve pastors who qualified for the study (see Appendix A). Once I selected the pastoral participants, I employed a pretest (see Appendix C) that was completed by the participating pastors on 28 August 2008 at the Penn-Jersey District office prior to the six-month implementation of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*. I designed this

pretest to evaluate the level of each preacher's Christian *ethos* and preaching joy prior to the intervention so that the impact of using the model for six months could also be evaluated at the end of the journey.

A posttest was distributed to, and collected from, participating pastors at the debriefing meeting held in the Penn-Jersey District office on 26 March 2009 to evaluate the impact of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline upon the participants after the six-month intervention period. This instrument is found in Appendix F.

Another instrument utilized by this study was an e-mail that I sent to participating pastors at the end of each month of the six-month intervention period, asking the open-ended question, "How has A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline impacted you and your preaching?" This question provided me with plenty of rich qualitative data.

I developed and distributed a pre-intervention questionnaire to LBA members in each church represented by the twelve participating pastors. LBA members completed this instrument immediately before the six-month intervention period (see Appendix G). A post-intervention questionnaire, found in Appendix H, completed by LBA members after the six-month intervention helped me to assess the impact of the journey upon the perceived *ethos* of the preacher by congregants during the preaching event. I included a letter from me, on one side of these instruments, to remind board members of the importance of their honest feedback, as well as to assure them that their responses would be confidential and certainly not shared with their pastor.

Variables

The independent variable for this study was A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline. The dependent variables were the impact of the journey upon the preachers

who participated in the study, each pastor's commitment to incorporate the journey throughout the six-month intervention period, and the context of each church represented in the study. The anticipated impact was that incorporation of this journey by the preacher for the delivery and development of sermons would increase the cultivation and perception of Christian *ethos* and preaching joy in the preacher. Christian *ethos* and preaching joy were the dependent variables.

Data Collection

I made an announcement at the Penn-Jersey District conference concerning the importance of my project for the church at-large and for the pastors who would be selected as participants. All pastors at the conference were given three minutes to complete the instrument. I recruited help to collect the completed instrument.

I distributed and collected the pretest and posttest that was given to the participating pastors at the Penn-Jersey District office. I collected the pretest at our opening retreat together and the posttest at the debriefing session following the six-month intervention period.

I printed the monthly e-mail responses from each participant, and I sorted this data in individual binders for each pastor.

I gave the pre-intervention and post-intervention instruments for the LBA members to participating pastors. The pastors gave these instruments to LBA members. The vice chairperson of each board collected the completed instruments. The vice chairperson placed these in a self-addressed and stamped envelope, which I provided, and mailed them to me.

Data Analysis

Because most of the data collected was qualitative, I utilized content analysis to discern how the journey increased the preacher's Christian *ethos* and preaching joy, as well as how congregants perceived the Christian *ethos* of the preacher during the six-month intervention period. I used quantitative data from the Likert scale questions to measure the level of increase in preaching joy and the cultivated and perceived Christian *ethos* of the preacher during the intervention period.

Delimitations and Generalizability

The small number of participants in the study and their geographic concentration do not allow me to make broad generalizations. The findings of the study are essentially delimited to those pastors who participated in the study. However, the homogenous sampling group of pastors does suggest that some generalizability may exist for preaching pastors in North America who adopt *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*. The utilization of a mixed method that employed both qualitative and quantitative data can add internal validity and some level of generalizability to the findings. Furthermore, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from two sources through a pretest and posttest, from both the participating pastors and each of their local church boards, describing the impact of the model upon Christian *ethos* in preaching can potentially corroborate, or triangulate, findings. Anyone who preaches within a North American local church context could potentially benefit from the incorporation of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*.

Theological Foundation

The intent of this study was not to dismiss the importance of technical skill in ministry but to elevate the importance of spiritual integrity for ministers. Psalm 78:72 reads, “And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.” Skill and integrity are both vitally important for those who lead God’s people, but it is noteworthy that “integrity” appears first in this verse.

Several key biblical figures were, by their own admission, not skillful, eloquent, ready, or powerful in speech according to the world’s standards but were called and used by God to change the world through a message they delivered. Some of these key biblical characters are Moses (Exod. 4:10), Isaiah (Isa. 6:5), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6), and Paul (1 Cor. 2:1). Perhaps something beyond their rhetorical ability or inability contributed to their impact as proclaimers of God’s Word. These ineloquent speakers spoke with power and authority simply because of their intimate connection to, and identification with, God (Cunningham 104, 131), which was likely enhanced through their practice of spiritual disciplines. This spirituality gave them an *ethos*, a holy and authentic love for God and others, that compelled the hearing and impact of their preaching in ways that mere technical eloquence never could.

This kind of preaching is what the Apostle Paul advocates in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, a portion of text from the “most concentrated place in the Pauline literature where matters of classical rhetoric, proclamation of the gospel, and the role of the preacher as person are treated” (Resner 84). The apostle is writing to a church that tended to prioritize rhetorical eloquence over Christian *ethos*. In this pericope, Paul confesses that his preaching was

not with “eloquence or superior wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:1) but “with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power” (1 Cor. 2:4).

Clearly, Paul’s preaching had impact on the Corinthians, enough impact to establish a congregation in a city steeped in paganism. However, this outcome was not because Paul’s preaching had the rhetorical eloquence and appearance of philosophical wisdom that so many in the Greek culture of Corinth craved and practically idolized (Resner 91). Something else about Paul and his preaching led to the effectiveness of his ministry. His preaching was infused with a “Spirit” and “power” that went well beyond the persuasion of technical eloquence. Paul does not dismiss rhetorical technique altogether, and even utilizes it himself. He made sure, however, that he subordinated it to God by refusing to rest his faith more “on the wisdom of men” than “on the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5).

Authentic engagement with spiritual disciplines has been one of the most significant and consistent ways that Christians have been relying “on the power of God” for nearly two thousand years. This reliance was the power in Paul’s preaching and it must be the power in preachers and preaching today if pastors are going to advance the cause of Christ as the apostle did. The conformity of Paul’s life and preaching to the image of “Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2) was the Christian *ethos* that empowered his preaching. His identification with Christ enabled him to write to the Corinthians later, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

My thesis is that Christian *ethos*, a deep identification with and abiding in Christ that allows the flow of his love into and through the preacher, opens the door to the power of God in the preacher, and the preaching event, in ways that mere rhetorical

technique and eloquence alone cannot. This Christian *ethos* has the best chance of being cultivated in the preacher who consistently incorporates the genuine use of spiritual disciplines throughout the homiletic process. Resner says that Paul is attempting an “epistemological reframing” for Corinthians that moves them away from evaluating preaching based upon cultural standards of rhetoric instead of the cross of Christ (131). My project seeks an “epistemological reframing,” in a sense, for pastors who are deeply desirous of overcoming the tempting shortcut of technique in place of spirituality.

Overview

Chapter 2 traces the biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology that informs the rationale for *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*. Chapter 3 further elaborates on the design of the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings that resulted from the ministry intervention, and Chapter 5 offers a summary and conclusion to this project.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

In the numerous books written on homiletics in the past few decades, books written entirely on the spirituality of the preacher and preaching are scant at best. Because writers write and publishers publish what sells, they cannot be blamed for the scarcity of books on preaching as a spiritual, and not merely rhetorical, exercise. I attribute this apparent lack to the misplaced focus of preachers. Eugene H. Peterson makes this point with force:

American pastors are abandoning their posts, left and right, at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches or getting other jobs. Congregations still pay their salaries. Their names remain on the church stationery and they continue to appear in pulpits on Sundays. But they are abandoning their posts, their calling. They have gone whoring after other gods. What they do with their time under the guise of pastoral ministry hasn't the remotest connection with what the church's pastors have done for more than twenty centuries. (*Working the Angles* 1)

If preaching is going to have the greatest possible spiritual impact on the lives of preachers and those to whom they preach, the homiletic process must be seen more as a spiritual discipline that incarnates Christ, than a rhetorical technique that highlights the preacher.

“The earthen vessel must first be completely emptied,” writes Raniero Cantalamessa, “before it can receive the treasure of the Word of God” (29). The preacher is an “earthen vessel” who is called to receive, live into, and proclaim this “treasure.” As such, the preacher must adopt the spiritual homiletic of John the Baptist, arguably one of the most significant preachers who ever lived, who said and apparently lived the words, “[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). While God most certainly wants to use the best of the preacher’s personality and abilities, a type of self-emptying must

take place in the preacher who wants the “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4) more than to show off “superiority of speech or of wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:1) through the preaching event. Preachers must be emptied of the desire to showcase rhetorical eloquence and seek instead to invite the power of God into their lives and preaching. When preaching is more about the rhetorical eloquence and technical abilities of the preacher than it is about the wisdom and power of God, then preaching will fall short of its intended and potential impact.

This review of the selected literature shows both the warrant and the need for the preacher to view preaching as a spiritual discipline that fosters the intimacy with Christ that heightens Christian *ethos* and accentuates the power of God flowing through the preacher during the preaching event. The review of literature aims to accomplish this goal by drawing upon the rich resources of biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology.

Biblical Theology

Scripture reveals that God uses people more because of their character than their competence. Some of these key biblical characters are Moses, who professed “I have never been eloquent” (Exod. 4:10) and Jeremiah, who admitted “I do not know how to speak” (Jer. 1:6). Perhaps something beyond their rhetorical ability, or inability, contributed to their impact as proclaimers of God’s word. One could assert that their *ethos*, evidenced by their godly character, compelled the hearing and impact of their preaching in ways that mere eloquence never could. The apostle Paul, more than any other biblical writer, answers this question not only through his letters but also through his life.

Paul as a Model

The Apostle Paul addresses this topic most directly in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, writing to a church that tended to prioritize rhetorical eloquence over Christian *ethos*. Anthony C. Thiselton notes that those in Corinth “were influenced by a kind of rhetoric that was more concerned with ‘winning’ than with truth” (15). Corinth was influenced by Sophistic rhetoricians who were less concerned with character than with “seductive, persuasive strategies of presentation” (16). In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul readily confesses that his preaching was not with “superiority of speech or of wisdom ... but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Paul apparently refuses to give in to the rhetorical preferences of his audience that would showcase his ability and downplay the power of God. Paul’s preaching clearly had an impact on the Corinthians, enough impact to facilitate the establishment of a congregation in a city steeped in paganism. However, this impact was not attributable to the rhetorical eloquence or philosophical wisdom (see 2 Cor. 10:10) that so many in the Greek culture of Corinth craved and practically idolized (Resner 98-99).

There was something else about Paul and his preaching that led to the effectiveness of his ministry. His preaching was infused with a *Spirit* and *power* that surpasses rhetoric. Paul refused to rest his faith more “on the wisdom of men” than “on the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5); therefore, his preaching had fruitful and lasting impact. In other words, he realized that preaching success is more contingent upon the power of God than the abilities of the preacher. This awareness caused Paul to concentrate more on intimately identifying with Christ than on showcasing his rhetorical technique. This claim does not deny that Paul was thoughtful or even eloquent in his preaching. Paul, no doubt,

worked hard to present Jesus as the Christ logically and persuasively, as his letters reveal. However, he put more faith in God's power than rhetorical skill to convert unbelievers and make disciples through the preaching event.

Background of Acts

In order to interpret 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, one must first carefully consider the literary and historical context that surrounds the pericope. Paul writes this letter to the Corinthian church three years ("First Corinthians 2:1-5: Perspective Keeping") after he had visited the city on a missionary journey that lasted "a year and six months" in which he was "teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11). This extensive length of time with the Corinthians, compared to his typically brief visits, enabled Paul to have an adequate grasp of the challenges and tendencies of that local church in that particular cultural context.

Immediately before Paul arrived in Corinth, he attempted ministry in the city of Athens (Acts 17:16-34). Paul's experience in Athens may shed some light on his ministry in Corinth, especially as it relates to 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. Athens, much like Corinth, is a city steeped in Greek philosophy and culture. Paul, in this debate at the Areopagus recorded in Acts, never once mentions the name of Jesus or the cross. The absence of these in Paul's recorded message may be attributable to Luke's edition. However, Paul does attempt to speak in the somewhat cryptic, philosophical manner to which Greeks would be well accustomed. His speech seems to have had little impact, though some became believers (Acts 17:32-34). Following this experience in Athens where Paul attempts to employ some of the philosophical and rhetorical devices of Greek culture, he goes immediately to Corinth.

What happened in Athens may shed some interpretive light on 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 where Paul states that when he came to the Corinthians he did not attempt, as he seemed to venture in Athens, to preach with rhetorical “superiority of speech” or philosophical “wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:1). When he came to Corinth, Paul was “determined to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul may have decided he would never again philosophize the Christian message among Greeks.

The concept of a crucified Christ seemed more than a bit odd and counter cultural, especially in the Greco-Roman culture of Athens and Corinth. Regardless, in Corinth, “Paul began to devote himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 18:5). Luke’s portrayal and immediate placement of Paul’s preaching both in Athens and Corinth in the book of Acts may be a key to interpreting Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

First Corinthians

Paul wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians, as mentioned above, three years after his eighteenth month of ministry with them. Although many specific problems are addressed in the letter, taken as a whole, it is mainly a rebuke and warning from Paul not to put more faith in human abilities and wisdom than one puts in the power of God’s Spirit. Human wisdom, in the form of sophist rhetoric, tends to divide Christians through “debates, quarrels, boasting, arrogance, and the like” (Witherington 75) while God’s Spirit unites them. Paul is admonishing the Corinthian church to live as if reliant upon a power greater than self, namely the power of God. He does not want them to use their God-given gifts, rhetorical or otherwise, to showcase self and impress people in a manipulative manner, but to glorify God and transform people. The prominence of God’s

glory above self-glory was the overarching message to the Corinthian church that was immersed in a culture that idolized human ability.

Rhetoric became an end in itself, mere ornamentation, elocution, and execution with an aim to please the crowd. This sort of rhetoric, without serious content or intent, other than to play to and sway a crowd's emotions, was precisely the sort of nonthreatening and apolitical rhetoric that Roman society could encourage and enjoy. (42)

According to 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul refused to adopt this kind of eloquent but empty rhetoric in his preaching. He realized that human wisdom and ability alone cannot do what the wisdom and power of God can accomplish.

Paul begins the body of his letter with an exhortation in chapter 1, verse 10 to the Corinthians to put an end to their divisions, some of which are apparently caused by a form of preacher idolatry (see also 1:12; 3:4-6; 3:21-23). This divisiveness may be attributable to the Isthmian Games hosted by Corinth, which included oratorical contests (Witherington 12). Embedded in the Corinthian culture, then, was a tendency to compare one speaker to another based upon eloquence, "one of the main cultural objectives" (40) of Greco-Roman cities. Paul implies that the rhetorical "cleverness of speech," which the Corinthians apparently crave and commend, can actually get in the way of the cross of Christ (1:17).

The larger section that contains 2:1-5 is 1:17-18 through to 4:20-21. Both of these boundary passages form an *inclusio* emphasizing that the preaching of the gospel is less about human wisdom (*words, talk*) than about God's *power*. Several times within this section of First Corinthians, the role of the preacher is downplayed so that the cross of Christ has prominence. Corinthian divisions and Paul's response in this larger section

sheds interpretive light on 2:1-5, because Paul seems insistent on conveying that the only worthy object of faith is God and not the rhetorical prowess of the preacher.

Paul's Homiletics—1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul describes his homiletic theology succinctly in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. The reason for first looking at Paul's experience in Athens and Corinth as chronicled in Acts, his main emphasis in 1 Corinthians as a whole, and the focus of the segment in 1 Corinthians 1:17-4:21, is to provide a necessary and helpful framework through which to interpret 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. The importance of this contextual framework is evidenced as the main text is explored.

Before taking a careful look at what each verse in this pericope reveals, the overall flow of Paul's argument will be considered. Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 has rhetorical eloquence (Witherington 39), though he tries his best not to showcase it in his preaching. He even notes the lack of rhetorical eloquence in his preaching when he was previously with the Corinthians for those eighteen months of ministry. Self-deprecation seems counter-intuitive for someone who is trying to develop his credibility as an apostle to downplay his rhetorical ability. Paul reveals in 2:5 why he puts his ineloquence on display. In climactic fashion he writes, "that [y]our faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (v. 5). Paul's lack of speaking eloquence, whether intentional or not (I propose the former), prevents people from putting more faith in him than in God. This humility is the very thing that heightened the apostle's Christian *ethos* in preaching, for he was more concerned with God's glory and the spiritual nurture of his congregation than with arrogantly impressing people through his rhetorical skill.

The Corinthians, as mentioned earlier, often exalted the messenger over the message. This idolization of the speaker is why Paul is quick to begin the pericope focusing on the apparent weakness, from a human perspective, of his preaching (v. 1), the cross of Christ (v. 2), and his own emotional state (v. 3). Eventually, he moves from weakness to strength in this pericope by highlighting, not himself, but the Spirit and power of God (vv. 4-5) that comes through those apparently weak things. In other words, the internal development of the passage moves from a focus on Paul's weakness, to a focus on God's power. This shift represents the transition that Paul wants to see take place in the hearts of the Corinthian believers, a move away from an anthropocentric focus to a theocentric focus in and through the preaching event (Fee 90). Paul is, in a sense, advocating a spiritual homiletic that places more emphasis on the power of God than the technique of the preacher.

Several contrasts and comparisons are going on in this brief passage which are vital to its interpretation. Paul contrasts his own "message and preaching" (v. 4) from the "superiority of speech or of wisdom" (v. 1) and "persuasive words of wisdom" that many in the Greek culture idolized ("First Corinthians 2:1-5: The Manner"). Somehow, and this is the irony, Paul's refusal to showcase his rhetorical eloquence and power by "determining to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (v. 2) actually invited and enabled the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (v. 4). Paul's preaching when he was with the Corinthians illustrates what he has been trying to communicate in 1:17-31, that what appears to be foolish, weak, and ineloquent from a human standpoint is actually the wisdom, power, and eloquence of God. Paul wants God to get the credit he deserves for salvation and ministry (see 1:30-31; 2:5). Paul is

essentially saying that if the impact of preaching rested on the preacher's ability and not God's power, it would be a meaningless and vain rhetorical exercise. My suspicion, and the reason for my dissertation model, is that many pastors practice preaching as more of a rhetorical exercise dependent on their abilities than as a spiritual discipline that opens the homiletic process to God's power. Many believe they are reliant upon God's power, but their actual method of developing and delivering sermons often betrays this belief.

In 2:1, the word *ὑπεροχὴν*, *superiority*, appears in this form only once in the New Testament and its root appears only one other time in 1 Timothy 2:2 where it refers to positional authority (i.e., king) and not to speech. The word can be translated high sounding, eloquent, or superior, and coupled with *of speech* here conveys the sense of pompous eloquence that puts the speaker in a position of prominence over the message, the audience, or, in this case, the Christ proclaimed. "It is noteworthy that boasting was a standard feature of eloquence in public oratory and closely associated with eloquent speech" ("Divisiveness and Unity"). Rhetorical skill was highly valued in the First-Century Greco-Roman culture and was used in manipulative ways to *bewitch* an audience. Orators would use *flowery* speech to commend a city and brag about personal accomplishments that might gain them a hearing and financial income among the rich (*New Bible Commentary* 1165). Paul, however, refuses to engage in this kind of popular rhetoric that places more emphasis on the performance of the orator than the content of the proclamation.

Paul may have someone in mind whose rhetorical ability may be blinding the Corinthians to the central message of Jesus Christ crucified. He may be referring indirectly to the style of Apollos, who was known for his rhetorical eloquence

(Witherington 85-87). Support for this possibility is found in Acts 18:24, which describes Apollos as “an eloquent man.” According to Acts 19:1, Apollos did spend some time at Corinth in Paul’s absence. Some Corinthians may have become so enamored with Apollos’ preaching ability that they lost sight of the central message of the cross.

Paul also denies, in 2:1, any claim to have wisdom (Greek *σοφία*). In order to understand the weight of Paul’s claim, one must appreciate how highly esteemed the possession of wisdom was in that culture. Paul is not downplaying wisdom altogether; in 2:6 he does admit, “We do speak wisdom.” He does, however, want to distinguish human wisdom from God’s wisdom, which he will do especially in 2:6-16. The acquiring of wisdom was a socioeconomic status symbol in the Greco-Roman culture. Because the Corinthian church consisted mostly of those with low status, perhaps they were tempted to use their new knowledge concerning Jesus Christ to boast in their new status. Maybe they were getting caught up in the boast of wisdom that was going on all around them in the culture. The reality of this cultural phenomenon is likely why Paul reminded them that “in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God” (1 Cor. 1:21a). In other words, Paul is strongly and consistently admonishing, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1:31), who graciously revealed this wisdom.

Paul states strongly that he intentionally decided to “know nothing” when he preached except “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (2:2). N. T. Wright suggests that “by placing proper emphasis on the crucifixion, Paul ensured that no one could mistake this message for a kind of crowd-pleasing rhetorical stunt, convincing at the time but making no lasting impression” (22). Paul is emphatic here, implied by the use of the *οὐ...μη* construction in this verse. Paul is using a bit of sarcasm to challenge those who claim to

know everything. He resolves to distinguish himself from “wandering sophists and orators” (Fee 92) who showcased their knowledge and skill in an arrogant and boastful manner. He refuses to get lost in the philosophical or theological minutia of the day in order to keep his focus on the cross. The bottom line of Paul’s claim in verse 2, in light of the entire pericope, is that “the cross not only establishes what we are to preach, but how we are to preach” (Carson 9). Paul’s “policy on rhetoric” (38) was informed by his identification with the cross of Christ. This identification is what the Christian spiritual disciplines are designed to cultivate, as Paul’s life illustrated.

The Greek word *καὶ γὰρ*, which begins 2:3 is a special compound word that emphasizes Paul’s self disclosure as if to say emphatically “and I myself.” Paul uses *καὶ γὰρ* as a connector between the notions of Christ crucified (2:2) and his own weaknesses. The careful reader will note what Paul is doing in this pericope. Instead of identifying with the rhetorically wise and clever, Paul is extremely intentional about identifying himself with the Christ of the cross (Fee 93). He seeks to embody and incarnate the cross of Christ through his life and preaching so that “he is what he is describing” (“First Corinthians 2:1-5: Perspective-Keeping”).

When Paul writes that he came to Corinth in “fear and trembling,” these emotions had nothing to do with his concern to please the audience with his rhetorical ability, though this goal was typically the aim of professional rhetoricians (Witherington 47). Paul, instead, “felt the burden of proclaiming Christ effectively without the rhetorical tricks of the trade” (Thiselton 52).

In 2:4 Paul begins to transition from a claim of weakness to power. In the phrase that begins this verse, *καὶ ὁ λόγος μου*, Paul uses the singular of *word* so that the

translation rendered would be *and my word*. The singular is used because Paul is likely describing his style of speech and not the content of his speech, which would be the case if the plural was used. The word is usually translated *message* or *speech*. The use of this phrase seems to be Paul's way of referring to his rhetorical style.

Because *λόγος μου* likely refers to his style of speech, *κήρυγμά μου* probably refers to the content of Paul's speech. The term *κήρυγμα* literally means a message cried by a herald, a public notice, or a proclamation—a word with rich meaning that Paul does not use often, but more often in 1 Corinthians than any other of his letters (three times compared to one use in Romans, 1 Timothy, and Titus). Paul is wanting to emphasize the content of the gospel, “Christ crucified,” as the focal point over and against rhetorical eloquence. He is distinguishing between his communication (*λόγος*) and content (*κήρυγμα*), his style and substance, yet neither conveyed “persuasive words of wisdom,” which orators in the Greek culture prided themselves on attaining and demonstrating.

Persuasive could be translated *skillful*, which focuses on human capacity. Paul's preaching style and content, according to his own assessment and the assessment of others (see 2 Cor. 10:10), was not reminiscent of human wisdom and rhetorical eloquence, but something else. This *something else* that characterized Paul's preaching was not forceful in terms of human constructs, “but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” *But* (*ἀλλά*) is a conjunction that typically signals a major contrast. His preaching style and content may not have been rhetorically clever, *but* it did result in the “demonstration” (or *proof*) “of the Spirit” and “of power” as evidenced by the conversion and transformation of the Corinthians (Fee 95; Witherington 124), as well as the planting and establishing of churches.

Most translate *πνεύματος* as the Holy *Spirit*, instead of simply *spirit*. This translation is plausible because the next time the word appears in this letter (2:10) Paul uses it to develop his theology of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, this letter, employing forms of the word *πνεύμα* more times than in any other of Paul's letters (32 verses), focuses heavily upon the Holy Spirit. The inclusion of Paul's homiletic theology in a letter that focuses predominantly on the work of the Holy Spirit would imply a deep and intimate connection for Paul between spirituality and preaching, an intimate connection that has all too often been severed in preaching today.

Not only did Paul's preaching manifest a "demonstration of the Spirit" but also of "power." *ἀποδείξει* literally means "a clear proof" and was a "technical rhetorical term" (Witherington 125). Paul is likely employing a sarcastic play on words as he denigrates rhetorical demonstration by comparing it to the even greater demonstration of *δύναμις*, the Greek word for *power*. The big and obvious question is, how was Paul's preaching a demonstration of the Spirit and power. Paul never answers this question directly, but he does describe the result of his Spirit-empowered preaching in the following verse.

First Corinthians 2:5 is Paul's climactic conclusion about his spiritual homiletic concerning the relationship between preaching and the power of God. His preaching was not powerful from a rhetorical, technical point of view but was nonetheless a display of Spirit and power because of the inward result of the *faith* it produced in the hearts of listeners, a faith that "would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5). The Greek word *ἵνα* begins 2:5 and introduces a purpose clause that alerts readers that they are about to encounter the bottom line purpose behind Paul's words in this pericope as well as the passages leading up to it. What might have previously been

confusing to readers up to this point, Paul now makes crystal clear. His preaching style and content, like the cross of Christ, is intended to elicit the faith of people, not in human ability and conventional wisdom, but in God.

Paul wants his preaching, and the response to his preaching, not to rest on the limited capacity of humanity but in the limitless ability of God. This desire distinguishes Paul's preaching from most rhetorical displays in his culture as well as our own. Moreover, it effectively gave rhetorical eloquence a backseat to the kerygma of Christ crucified. In Paul's estimation, what makes good preaching good is that it will cause people to put more faith in the God who is preached, than in the preacher who is preaching. While overly eloquent and clever, technique-driven preaching seems to promote the latter, Spirit-driven preaching promotes the former. Gordon D. Fee summarizes Paul's emphasis in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 as follows:

What [Paul] is rejecting is not preaching, not even persuasive preaching; rather, it is the real danger in all preaching-self-reliance. The danger always lies in letting the form and content get in the way of what should be the single concern: the gospel proclaimed through human weakness but accompanied by the powerful work of the Spirit so that lives are changed through a divine-human encounter. That is hard to teach in a course on homiletics, but it still stands as the true need in genuinely Christian preaching. (96-97)

Ultimately, the Christian *ethos*, and not the rhetorical eloquence, of the preacher invites the fullness of God's power in and through the preaching event. "For Paul the *ethos* of the preacher is derivative of and organically related to the nature of the logos of the cross" (Resner 125).

Paul was keenly aware, according to 1 Corinthians 3:4-7, that any lasting impact from his preaching ministry is not attributable to his abilities alone "but God who causes the growth" (1 Cor. 3:7). This passage, along with others in the segment that contains

2:1-5, reveals Paul's *ethos* as one who lived and preached to point people to Jesus Christ and not to himself (see 1 Cor. 4:8-16). He was committed, apparently, to bring people into an encounter with the power, wisdom, and Spirit of God and not merely with the rhetorical cleverness and eloquence of his preaching. He knew that if people came away from the preaching event thinking, "That was a great sermon from a great preacher," instead of, "God is a great God," then his preaching failed. "Anything that draws attention to our cleverness, our brightness, or our competence is ultimately sterilizing" (Kinlaw 45).

Paul's Spirituality—Pauline Corpus

There can be no doubt when one reads Paul's letters that the apostle experienced vital spirituality. He has an intimate, even conversational, relationship with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 20:22-23; Rom. 8:26) and with Jesus (see Acts 22:17-21). Paul's spirituality was cultivated not only through prayer but also through the study of Scripture. He insightfully knows, believes, lives, and, as even a casual glance through his letters would reveal, teaches the Scriptures with conviction (see 2 Tim. 3:15-16). For the apostle Paul, "the word of God and prayer" had a sanctifying effect (1 Tim. 4:5) that empowered his preaching.

Paul's spirituality did not end simply by checking prayer and Scripture off of his daily *to-do* list. The tools of Scripture and prayer led Paul to the deepest kind of Christian spirituality, the kind that enabled him to identify with and embody the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ through his life and his ministry. This identification with Christ, cultivated through spiritual disciplines, was the power of Paul's *ethos*. He writes, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal.

2:20a), and, “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him” (Rom. 6:8). Perhaps the most succinct passage that reveals Paul’s notion of deep spiritual identification with Christ is from Colossians 3:1-4:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

The Christ formed within Paul enhanced the impact of the latter’s preaching.

The power of Paul’s preaching flowed out of his spirituality. In fact, and this adds weight to my dissertation focus, the power of God through one’s preaching will always be enhanced through the preacher’s acute spiritual identification and intimacy with Christ through spiritual disciplines. Paul often, and explicitly, connects spiritual disciplines with preaching in his letters. Paul writes the following to the Ephesian church:

Pray [emphasis mine] also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. *Pray* [emphasis mine] that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (Eph. 6:19-20)

Paul emphasizes the connection between prayer and homiletics in his writing to the Colossians as well:

Praying [emphasis mine] at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. (Col. 4:3-4)

In both of these passages, Paul requests prayer for his preaching ministry. He also notes in both instances his identification with Christ’s suffering (i.e., “ambassador in chains”; “imprisoned”). The Ephesians passage focuses on prayer for the *content* of Paul’s preaching (“words may be given”), while the Colossian text shows Paul requesting prayer

to undergird the *style* of his preaching (“the way I ought to speak”). These two passages together inform Paul’s phrase “my message and my preaching” in 1 Corinthians 2:4, which I argue might be Paul’s way of saying “my style and my content” in preaching. Paul wanted both the style and content of his preaching to incarnate Christ for those to whom he preached.

For Paul, preaching was a spiritual discipline that, like all spiritual disciplines, depends upon the power of God and not merely upon human wisdom and ability. This dependence does not negate the importance of human ability and experience in the homiletic process. That would lead to homiletic docetism, an under emphasis of the embodiment of the Word in and through the flesh of the preacher. The preacher’s skill and effort can be important elements through which the power of God is made manifest. However, what is even more important than the ability of preachers is their willingness to cultivate and maintain identification and intimacy with the crucified and risen Christ throughout the homiletic process. This intimate identification is fostered through authentic engagement in spiritual disciplines. Paul made a conscious decision to focus more on alignment with Christ than with the rhetorical devices of his day. Union with Christ is the spiritual homiletic that enabled Paul’s preaching to realize the power of God to a greater degree because it does “not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5b). Hence, a model for *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* is essential and necessary.

Historical Theology

C.S. Lewis, in his introduction to Athanasius’ *On the Incarnation*, shares the following insight:

Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook—even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it. (4)

If a crisis in preaching today exists, perhaps the voice of history can offer wisdom to those who preach. The voice of the past, as Lewis suggests, is necessary both to open blind eyes to the crisis and to provide guidance to resolve the crisis.

While the need for and practice of a spiritual homiletic may be largely ignored among clergy today, it is rooted in historic pastoral ministry. Oden notes, “The pastoral tradition has placed unparalleled importance upon the careful, meditative, study of Scripture that leads toward a unique event—the proclamation of the word. Only then is one prepared to offer the divine word” (135). According to Oden, the “pastoral tradition” was not aimed merely at the technical or scientific reading of Scripture but, in essence, the spiritual or *meditative* reading of God’s word. Therefore, taking the time to consider several exemplars of this tradition whose lives and ministries illustrate preaching as a spiritual discipline may prove beneficial to this study. As Pasquarello notes about the example of those from the past, “We may be encouraged to discover that we are not alone in our struggle to read and speak Scripture as a means of knowing, loving and living faithfully before the Triune God” (*Sacred Rhetoric* 13). Several historical figures will be considered for their contribution to the concept of *ethos* in speaking and preaching.

Aristotle

Although the prophets of the Old Testament were the earliest orators to speak with spiritual *ethos*, Aristotle (384-322 BC) was one of the earliest to develop a philosophy of rhetoric that makes prominent the speaker’s *ethos* over his pathos and

logos. While the philosopher and rhetorician did not connect the concept of *ethos* to spirituality, he did lay some of the groundwork that Christian orators such as Augustine and Chrysostom, for example, would later build upon. For Aristotle, the character of the speaker (*ethos*) matters more than the emotional appeal to the audience (*pathos*) or the intellectual appeal of the content (*logos*). He describes this character as “good sense, good moral character, and goodwill” (*Aristotle’s Rhetoric* bk. 2, chap. 1). He believes that *ethos* makes the greatest difference upon whether or not listeners are persuaded by the speaker. As David S. Cunningham writes, “In Aristotle’s terms: whenever persuasion is possible, it will be influenced by judgments about [speaker] character—especially in those matters which are most open to dispute” (102). Dialogue about God, especially in the postmodern context, is among those issues “most open to dispute.”

Aristotle asserts the following thoughts on *ethos*:

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others.... It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses. (*Aristotle’s Rhetoric* bk. 1, chap. 2)

This quote suggests that some debate occurred among teachers of rhetoric concerning the importance of the speaker’s character. Aristotle insists that *ethos* is the factor that makes or breaks the ability of an orator to persuade and convince listeners of their message.

Exploring the historical development of Christian *ethos* by first looking at a pagan such as Aristotle may, admittedly, seem off. Several reasons surface to support the use of Aristotle’s thoughts. The first is to show that even someone outside of the Judeo-Christian faith understood that what mattered as much as, or more than, the rhetorical

ability of the speaker was the character of the speaker. Aristotle's emphasis stands as a challenge to those who speak within the Christian tradition, a tradition that supposedly acknowledges the prominence of character.

Another reason for considering Aristotle's philosophy of rhetoric is because of his influence upon not only Greek pagan culture but also upon preachers and teachers within Christianity. Augustine, the next person considered in the history of rhetoric, was heavily influenced by the teaching of Aristotle.

Another important reason exists for including the contribution of someone outside of the Christian faith to the development of rhetorical *ethos*. While Aristotle conception of *ethos* can inform Christian preachers, his concept diverts from Christian *ethos*. In the epilogue to *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, Aristotle writes the following thoughts:

Having shown your own truthfulness and the untruthfulness of your opponent, the natural thing is to commend yourself, censure him, and hammer in your points. You must aim at one of two objects—you must make yourself out a good man and him a bad one either in yourselves or in relation to your hearers. How this is to be managed—by what lines of argument you are to represent people as good or bad—this has been already explained. (bk. 3, chap. 19)

Aristotle's conception of *ethos* can only take the preacher so far because it clearly takes a divergent road from the Christian *ethos* evidenced by Christ's love flowing through the preacher.

Christian *ethos* refuses, contrary to Aristotle's advice, to devalue another to elevate self. Aristotle's suggestion contradicts the Christian way of life and love described in the teachings of Jesus and the letters of Paul. Moreover, the cultivation of *ethos* cannot derive from a mere rhetorical motivation; it is spiritually derived. In other words, the goal of developing character should not be to become a better speaker but a

better person who is captured by and submitted to the will and love of the triune God. Finally, Christian preachers must recognize what Aristotle could not have known. *Ethos* is ultimately cultivated in a preacher by the Spirit of God, not by some rhetorical ambition and training. This Christian *ethos* grows in the soul of preachers who open themselves up to God through consistent and authentic engagement with spiritual disciplines. This engagement is something that Aristotle, who stood outside of the Jewish community and lived before the coming of Christ, did not endorse for the fostering of *ethos*.

Augustine

Many in the first few centuries of Christian preaching could serve as examples of the cultivation of *ethos* through the spiritual disciplines that foster intimacy with Christ and growth in his likeness. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) is among them. He is one of the most prominent exemplars of Christian *ethos* because, like Aristotle, he not only practiced but taught and wrote about his rhetorical philosophy in *On Christian Teaching*. He, along with Aristotle, also placed the highest value on the *ethos* of the speaker:

Logos is important. *Pathos* is important. Yet, Augustine said that the most critical component in successful communication is what he labeled *ethos*. *Ethos* is the character of the speaker. People aren't just listening to a message; they are listening to someone speak the message. The "who" of the speaker affects people's listening more than "what" is being said. (Bugg, *Preaching and Intimacy* 3)

According to Augustine, the spirituality of the preacher mattered more than the eloquence of the preacher.

Augustine and Aristotle both valued the use of rhetorical skill in persuading an audience or congregation. Though Augustine lived hundreds of years after Aristotle, he was likely trained under the tutelage of the Greek philosopher's classical writings. When

Augustine converted to Christ he, along with many in the Church, tried to grasp and teach the uniqueness of Christian rhetoric and the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian speech.

Richard Lischer describes Augustine's cultural context:

The church agonized over its use of rhetorical strategies and forms, encumbered as the classical tradition was with pagan associations. Where was the Holy Spirit in the rhetoric of preaching?... Augustine helped relieve the church's problem for well over a millennium by codifying a Christian approach to the rhetoric of preaching. (277)

Augustine, contrary to Aristotle, conveyed a nuanced view of rhetorical eloquence that was really more akin to what I am describing as the Christian *ethos* that results from spiritual disciplines. Abiding in Christ was important to Augustine because he “knew well the enchanting power of human speech and its capacity for harm when separated from God's truth and goodness” (Pasquarello, *Christian Preaching* 164). Augustine taught that a human's relationship with God enabled the “affirmation of human institutions and the discernment of what needs to be redeemed and rejected in them” (Work 232).

Something greater and more influential than mere rhetorical technique, in the classic sense, was available to Christian preachers and Augustine knew and employed this resource. While Augustine did not ignore the importance of rhetorical skills and techniques, he realized that the power of God's Spirit was both necessary and available for Christian preaching to reach its potential and hit its mark. He “offered an alternative way by encouraging pastors to take up a life of prayerful attention to the Word with the love bestowed by the Spirit” (Pasquarello, *Christian Preaching* 56). In other words, unlike so much of the literature and practice in preaching today, Augustine did not want to put the cart of rhetorical technique before the horse of Christian spirituality.

Augustine's theology of preaching comes out most profoundly in Book 4 of his *On Christian Teaching*. He has much to say about the difference between rhetorical eloquence and Christian *ethos*, stressing the latter while not entirely neglecting the former. He writes, "More important than any amount of grandeur of style to those of us who seek to be listened to with obedience is the life of the speaker" (142). Simply put, *ethos* is more important than eloquence for the proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This *ethos*, according to Augustine and many others in the tradition of Christian preaching, is not developed by technique, but by God through spiritual disciplines.

The preacher must be more reliant upon God than rhetorical skills throughout the homiletic process for preaching to result in its potential impact upon both speaker and listeners. In the following quote from Augustine about the preacher, one can easily sense this overall thrust of his homiletic approach:

He should be in no doubt that any ability he has and however much he has derives more from his devotion to prayer than his dedication to oratory; and so, by praying for himself and for those he is about to address, he must become a man of prayer before becoming a man of words. As the hour of his address approaches, before he opens his thrusting lips he should lift his thirsting soul to God so that he may utter what he has drunk in and pour out what has filled him. (*On Christian Teaching* 121)

Augustine asserts here that the preaching life is one that marinates in prayer, for both the task of preaching and those to whom it is addressed.

Augustine believes that teaching and preaching are "only beneficial when the benefits are effected by God" (*On Christian Teaching* 123), and not merely by rhetorical cleverness or manipulation, so he advocates the spiritual discipline of prayer throughout the homiletic process, writing, "Speakers must pray that God will place a good sermon on their lips" (145). A "good sermon" does not come from an Internet download, a book of

illustrations, or the skills of the preacher, but from God. The preacher who recognizes the source of preaching's power and maintains a humble, submitted, and obedient dependence upon God because of that awareness, will experience the cultivation of the Christian *ethos* that gives preaching its most potent power.

Love for God expressed especially through prayer is not the only emphasis for Augustine. He also stresses the importance of preaching in a manner that conveys love for people. Both love for God and love for others defines Christian *ethos*. *Ethos*, for Augustine, comes from the Holy Spirit and through the preacher when the latter does not get so enamored with the rhetorical *how* and *what* questions that they lose sight of the *who* and *why* of Scripture, "the goal constituted by love" so that "whatever we are doing or saying, our eyes should never be turned away from this goal" (Augustine, *Instructing Beginners* 76). Augustine admonishes the preacher to "live in such a way that he not only gains a reward for himself but also gives an example to others, so that his way of life, in a sense, becomes an abundant source of eloquence" (*On Christian Teaching* 144). Just as he believes that genuine *ethos* enhances preaching, its lack detracts from the potential benefits of the preached message upon hearers. This belief surfaces in his description of those who preach what they do not practice when he writes, "They benefit many people by preaching what they do not practice, but they would benefit more people if they practiced what they preached" (143). In this quote, Augustine masterfully avoids both homiletic donatism, which overemphasizes the role of the preacher and underemphasizes the role of God, and homiletic docetism, which totally under-values and virtually ignores the importance of the preacher's *ethos* in the preaching event.

Preachers should not only live in such a way that appeals to listeners; they should preach that way, too. Augustine is passionate about conveying the gospel in a manner that is true to God but also sensitive to the needs of the listeners. He goes so far as to suggest to preachers that if a listener begins to open “his mouth no longer to express approval but to yawn” the preacher “should reawaken his attention by making a remark spiced with seemly good humor and appropriate to the subject under discussion” (*Instructing Beginners* 100). Notice that humor can also be *ethos* driven when it is in some way connected to the sermon or “subject under discussion.” Augustine continues his practical guidelines on being sensitive to the listener by noting that if someone in the congregation seems to be losing interest, “We should then move quickly through the rest, promising that we will soon be finished—and keeping our word” (103). “Keeping our word” is also a matter of Christian *ethos*.

Augustine suggests the connection between *ethos* and joy that this dissertation sought to establish. He tackles the issue of depression among preachers and teachers because he recognizes that “we are given a much more appreciative hearing when we ourselves enjoy performing our task” (*Instructing Beginners* 58). The bottom line is that joy in preaching likely enhances its fruitfulness. Of course, this joy comes not merely from rhetorical technique; it comes from abiding in Christ through the spiritual disciplines. For preachers, joy ultimately comes not from effectiveness or commendation but from the realization that, at the end of the sermon’s day, they are “in harmony with God’s will to relieve that feeling of depression, and then we may greatly rejoice in the fire of the Spirit” (91). The joy derived from being intimately related to Christ is what accentuates the *ethos* of the preacher, enabling him to communicate beyond mere

rhetorical eloquence. This joy was cultivated in the preachers who participated in *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*.

John Wesley

Thirteen hundred years after Augustine, Wesley (AD 1703-1791) came on the preaching scene. While many preachers between Augustine and Wesley modeled a spiritual homiletic, there is good reason for highlighting Wesley. He preached during the modern period, an era that led to a spiritually deficient Anglican Church due to the rise of English Deism and a scientific empiricism that detached technique from spirituality, making the former more pronounced than the latter (Cunningham 107). While Wesley was certainly a man of his times, educated among the intellectual elite in Oxford, his preaching avoided over-intellectual rationalism and took on a deep spiritual *ethos*.

Wesley was better known for his *ethos* than his eloquence. He did not possess the rhetorical skills of George Whitefield, his friend and contemporary, who preached with him in the fields of England. Despite Wesley's lack of oratorical ability he had something going for him that gave incredible power to his preaching; it was his "personification of piety" (Willimon and Lischer 502) that made him "the most powerful and awakening preacher of his day" (Burdon 8). "His magnetic attraction was a combination of the authority with which he spoke, and the sense of the presence of God which oozed from his very being" (14). Wesley was clearly a man who walked intimately with God. His spirituality cultivated in him the *ethos* that made up for his apparent rhetorical lack, much like it did for the apostle Paul as previously described.

Wesley's spiritual *ethos* was apparent to others in profound ways. John Nelson writes about the first occasion when Wesley preached at the Moorfields: "His

countenance struck such an awful dread upon me, before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like a pendulum of a clock” (qtd. in Burdon 9). Richard Moss had a similar experience. Upon seeing Wesley rise to the pulpit, say a prayer, and recite one line from a hymn before he even preached, Moss remembers, “Immediately I felt such love in my heart, and such joy, that I could not refrain from tears” (qtd. in Burdon 11). These are subjective reflections, but they provide clues that lead to the conclusion that the power of Wesley’s preaching was due in large part to his Christlike character, his *ethos*.

Pasquarello, in a paper entitled “John Wesley and the Preaching Life,” emphasizes not only the spirituality of Wesley that gave his preaching authority; he also highlights Wesley’s challenge to preachers who might be tempted to expend more energy on rhetorical technique than Christian spirituality. He notes, “[Wesley] expected his ministers to invest as much as five hours a day in reading and prayer.” Wesley viewed the “preaching life” as an “invitation to take up a way of rigorous study, prayerful devotion, and loving obedience in discerning the Word of God spoken in Scripture under the guidance of the Spirit’s grace.” Wesley modeled in his own life what he expected from Methodist preachers. That is, he encouraged his preachers to focus primarily on their relationship with Christ because he knew that was the well from which preaching’s power flowed. Wesley believed in Scripture as a “means of grace” and wrote, “God richly blesses those who read and meditate upon the Word. Through this means God not only gives, but also confirms and increases true wisdom” (qtd. in Chilcote 41). He realized that one of the most effective ways to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land was for that holiness to be incarnated in and through his life and preaching as well as that of the Methodist ministers.

Wesley did not, however, so spiritualize homiletics that he ignored or dismissed the importance of rhetorical and exegetical skill development among preachers. In his “Directions on Pronunciation and Gesture,” Wesley was very concerned, emphatic even, about the rhetorical skills of Methodist preachers. Throughout this treatise, Wesley gives technical and practical advice about how preachers ought to use their voices and bodies to work together with the words they preach. However, even while reflecting on very practical issues in homiletics, Wesley turns attention to the heart of the preacher: “On all occasions let the thing you are to speak be deeply imprinted on your own heart; and when you are sensibly touched yourself, you will easily touch others, by adjusting your voice to every passion which you feel” (*Works* 13: 523). Christian *ethos* inside the preacher sanctifies the outward practices of rhetoric.

The willingness of Wesley to hold together the importance of both spirituality and technique for preachers, while giving priority to the former, comes through most pronounced in his “An Address to the Clergy.” Wesley begins the address by encouraging preachers to seek after certain “gifts.” He advises preachers to acquire philosophical, rhetorical, mathematical, exegetical, and etiquette skills. At first, his address reads almost like one of the purely pragmatic, technique-driven books on homiletics that are en vogue today. However, a major shift in his address occurs about halfway through when he compares skills to spiritual graces, which he is about to highlight. “But all these things, however great they may be in themselves, are little in comparison of those that follow. For what are all other gifts, whether natural or acquired, when compared to the grace of God?” (*Works* 10: 486). He says that the character of the preacher is a “higher consideration than that of gifts” (493).

The preacher must inwardly desire to “glorify God and save souls,” a phrase Wesley uses several times throughout “An Address to the Clergy,” for any of the gifts to full be used for holy purposes. This dual love for God and others that Wesley strongly and consistently emphasizes informs my definition for Christian *ethos*.

The Contemporary Crisis

The spiritual homiletic of Wesley, Augustine, and the Apostle Paul are voices “crying out in the wilderness” of today’s preaching crisis to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Matt. 3:3). The crisis has been caused by a disconnect between doing and being, technique and spirituality. The modern period ushered in a focus on pragmatic technique that tended to divorce spirituality from homiletics, as well as piety from hermeneutics.

Lischer notes this crisis:

The person of the preacher is a good example of a topic that was of great importance for the medieval church but is now seldom discussed in homiletics. Most homiletic treatises from Augustine through the Middle Ages deal with the formation and holiness of the one appointed to preach.... Despite the interest in spirituality in both the church and popular culture today, however, one does not discern a revival of the classical preoccupation with the holiness of the preacher. (xiv)

Cunningham is even more blunt and succinct, writing, “The persuasive role of character was seriously devalued during the Enlightenment.... This narrow focus contributed to the reduction of the meaning of *ethos* from a complex, holistic *habitus* to a mere series of rules and regulations” (107). Preachers today are influenced by this *reduction*.

Wesley sensed that the times were changing. The modern era initiated a discernable departure from theism to humanism. Wesley points out the significant implications and challenges for the church resulting from this slide. His thoughts, though

not intended specifically for preachers, stand as an affront to any who would sanction a homiletic divorce between spirituality and technique:

Thus almost all men of letters, both in England, France and Germany, yea, and all the civilized countries of Europe, extol “humanity” to the skies, as the very essence of religion. That this great triumvirate, Rousseau, Voltaire, and David Hume, have contributed all their labours, sparing no pains to establish a religion which should stand on its own foundation, independent of any revelation whatever, yea, not supposing even the being of a God. So leaving him, if he has any being, to himself, they have found out both a religion and a happiness which have no relation at all to God, nor any dependence upon him. It is no wonder that this religion should grow fashionable, and spread far and wide in the world. But call it “humanity,” “virtue,” “morality,” or what you please, it is neither, better or worse than atheism. Men hereby willfully and designedly put asunder what God has joined, the duties of the first and second table. It is separating the love of our neighbor from the love of God. It is a plausible way of thrusting God out of the world he has made. (*Works* 7: 271)

Perhaps if Wesley were around, he might suggest that much of preaching today seems disconnected from and independent of God.

In short, modernity aimed at the scientific, technical mastering of the biblical text and the rhetorical skills to communicate it. The result is that much of preaching today feels more like an encounter with information, entertainment, cleverness, and skillful oratory than with the power and love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The time has come for preachers to be mastered by God through the hermeneutic and homiletic tasks. My model for *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* sought this kind of mastering.

Systematic Theology

The Word of God often comes through flesh. That is, God almost always comes to persons through persons. The most profound coming of God was through the incarnation of Jesus. He is the eternal “Word” of God who came *through* the flesh of Mary *in* the flesh of a First Century Jew. The doctrine of the Incarnation not only asserts

that Jesus, the Word, came *through* the flesh, or person, of Mary, but that the Word actually came *in* the flesh. While the Incarnation of Jesus two thousand years ago is unique and preeminent, the Word continues to become flesh through the life and witness of the preacher who intimately identifies himself or herself with the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ.

While the Word must be revealed through all the people, the *flesh* that makes up the church, this revelation of Christ the Word must necessarily be embodied in and through the life of the preacher. The preacher, of course, does not become Christ in any way, shape, or form. The Word comes through the preacher when the former's life makes known, reveals, and bears witness to Jesus the Christ. Dawn pulls no punches when she asserts that "The incarnation of the Word in our lives is indeed crucial" (76). The Word must become flesh. That is, the gospel message must be embodied in the life of the messenger (Demaray and Johnson 57; Bugg, *Preaching from the Inside Out* 34). If a disconnect exists between the two, people will know it and sense it. If incarnation is God's main method of communication, then preachers who abide in Christ through spiritual disciplines that foster love and obedience are necessary.

Athanasius and the Incarnation

The importance of the doctrine of the Incarnation did not take too long to surface in the first few centuries of the Church's existence. Athanasius (AD 293-373) in the early fourth century AD sums up what he perceives to be God's rationale for the Incarnation of the Word into flesh when he writes, "[Jesus] has been manifested in a human body for this reason only, out of the love and goodness of His Father, for the salvation of us men" (8). The incarnation, then, is an expression of God's love that is so potent it is able to

flow even through humanity for the salvation of humanity. God's decision to communicate the deepest expression of his love through something as earthly and fleshly as, well, flesh is more than a bit risky. The Word coming through flesh is precisely what happens when the eternal Son becomes a man and, to a lesser though still powerful extent, when the preacher's life is congruent with the gospel of Christ crucified.

God has chosen to come to humanity through a cooperation of divinity and humanity. This choice is the reality that the doctrine of the Incarnation accentuates.

Telford Work, describing Athanasius' theology, makes this point with force:

The correspondence between God and human speech about God is built right into the relationship between creature and creator. This relationship is nowhere closer than in the incarnate Christ, where the two unite perfectly. But divine-human words prefigure, testify to, and re-present Christ in all holy language. (37)

Work's reflections stand as a challenge to anyone who might suggest that the human preacher has no role to play in making known the incarnate Christ, for that would lead to "verbal docetism: the possibility that the humanity of inspired speech will go unappreciated" (47).

According to Athanasius, God's *love* for humanity makes him willing to come in and through a human form. I propose that God's love for humanity still makes him willing to come through the human form and words of the preacher who lives and preaches the cruciform life of the ultimate Incarnate One, Jesus the Christ. Furthermore, this *love and goodness* of God surfaces in and through the preacher who authentically engages in the spiritual disciplines that cultivate this Christian *ethos*. Christian *ethos* is the Incarnation of the loving Word of God flowing through the preacher toward those to whom he preaches. This Incarnation happens most powerfully through the preacher

whose life and message are indivisible, just as the humanity and divinity of Christ was indivisible.

The Problematic Divide

Unfortunately, a problematic divide has taken place in culture during the modern era. This divide is not the same as the one Athanasius faced, namely those wanting to divide Jesus' divinity from his humanity in order to stress one over, or to the exclusion of, the other. The problematic divide of the modern era, as mentioned previously, surfaced in a variety of ways that affected the preaching life. Scientific empiricism won the day so that anything considered objective, such as the historical-critical method of exegetical hermeneutics, was extracted, divorced, and prioritized over apparently subjective *tools* such as spirituality and piety. Basically, tasks were separated from the person doing them (Pasquarello, *Sacred Rhetoric* vii). This divide, if taken to its logical extreme, allows for, and almost encourages, preachers to disconnect homiletics from spirituality so that they can preach a good sermon even if they do not really embody the *good* message they preach. Pasquarello notes the problem:

A particularly corrosive effect of this separation has been an increasingly anthropocentric emphasis in preaching that is reflected in excessive self-consciousness and dependence on the communication skills, style, techniques, innovative methods, and personality of the preacher and a correlative preoccupation with the likes, preferences, opinions and "deeply felt needs" of listeners. (*Christian Preaching* 14)

The past few decades of literature on preaching is more enamored with homiletic technique than Christian spirituality. While the modern era affirmed that a preacher could have one without the other, the Bible, theology, and history suggest otherwise.

New Testament scholar Joel B. Green, in a course on hermeneutics, bemoans this great divide. He believes that the character of the preacher is more important than

technique. Premoderns, before the divide, prioritized *ethos* first and foremost. The modern period, however, fostered a tendency toward the separation of person from practice. This trend is evident in the field of biblical studies, which in the modern era, has advocated a detached relationship to the biblical text instead of spiritual engagement with the text. A similar crisis occurred in preaching. A detached relationship exists between the practice of preaching and the person of the preacher. This detachment makes incarnational preaching impossible.

Authors Frost and Hirsch also discuss the importance of incarnation. They highlight some thoughts from Soren Kierkegaard who, ironically enough, was in many ways a product of the modern era in which he lived. However, he did not give into the temptation to divorce what God has brought together. Frost and Hirsch note, “In Kierkegaard’s world, knowing the truth and being the truth is the same thing” (155). Kierkegaard writes, “The truth consists not in knowing the truth intellectually but in being the truth” (qtd, in Frost and Hirsch 155). Clearly, this modern theologian held onto the belief that the truth of what one says could not be divorced from the way one lives, in the same way that the divinity of Christ could not be divorced from his humanity.

Henri J. M. Nouwen, continuing these thoughts but writing specifically for Christian ministers, challenges the propensity for dualistic divides: “We have fallen into the temptation of separating ministry from spirituality, service from prayer” (12). The crisis in preaching today is the rationale that makes clear the need for *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*. This model must be developed and incorporated into the twenty-first century preacher’s life and practice, for it has the potential to hold

together as one the importance of rhetorical technique and spiritual *ethos*, giving priority to the latter because it redeems and baptizes the former.

Incarnational Preaching

When people gather with their local church for worship, their predominant need is not to encounter the presence of their preachers, in terms of eloquence, cleverness, or relevance. They need and, I hope, want to encounter the incarnate Christ through the worship and preaching event. This encounter is helped or hindered, at least to some extent, by the preacher's *ethos*. "The hearer wants to have some modest assurance that what the preacher is saying is plausibly manifested in the preacher's own life" (Oden 138). Frost and Hirsch make this case in their interpretation of Marshall McLuhan's phrase "the medium is the message":

If we take seriously that the medium is the message, then there's no way around the fact that our actions, as manifestations of our total being, do actually speak louder than our words. There are clear nonverbal messages being emitted by our lives all the time. We are faced with the sobering fact that we actually are our messages.... Your existence as an authentic human being communicates more than what you say or even what you think.... The only essential sermon one can listen to and appropriate comes not from the pulpit via the minister's words but from one's own existence. (154)

Perhaps Frost and Hirsch are putting too much emphasis on the life of the preacher.

However, their point is well-taken and more in line, as I have hopefully shown by now, with the Bible and Christian tradition than the overemphasis upon technical methodology that the modern era promoted.

Cantalamesa expresses some of the most profound thoughts regarding incarnational preaching that are written. Cantalamesa's spiritual homiletic surfaces in a comparison he presents between "studying" and "swallowing" Scripture (30-31). The

proclaimer who merely studies Scripture keeps it at a safe and detached distance. On the other hand, the preacher who swallows Scripture experiences a relationship with the Word that is “immediate and personal” so that the “Word becomes ‘incarnate’ in the proclaimer” (30). In order for preaching to be Christian, the preacher must not only study Scripture but have Christ, the Word, formed in his life.

Preachers proclaim Christ not only through their words, but perhaps more so through their lives. This kind of preaching begins not in the mouth but in the heart of the preacher who has “an intimate relationship with Jesus, made up of absolute devotion, deep friendship, and admiration, [which] is the secret of the true proclaimer of the gospel” (Cantalamesa 39). The Word is incarnate in the life of the preacher who is totally consumed with Christ. Without this incarnation, preaching will not have its full effect for “human beings are not converted by having truths about Jesus presented to them but by having Jesus himself presented to them” (43). Cantalamessa raises the bar for preachers with his high view of preaching’s potential to make Christ known. A sobering challenge is to accept that the most significant content of preaching on display to make Christ known is not words but one’s life. According to Cantalamessa, preaching is less about rhetorical eloquence and more about Christian *ethos*.

Again, when preachers ascend to the pulpit their words cannot be divorced from their person. The words they preach and the Word they embody are inseparable. Anna Carter Florence describes this phenomenon, asserting the following about the person of the preacher:

[The preacher] is so transparent that in a sermon, there is nowhere for the preacher to hide. I often wonder why we debate the issue of first-person stories in sermons, when we preachers don’t need to say a word about

ourselves for our listeners to know all about us. All they have to do is watch us “living in” the text. (106-07)

This reality is inescapable for the preacher.

Reformed versus Wesleyan Theology

I realize that several tenets of Reformed theology would counter my view that the person doing the preaching matters (*ethos*) at least as much as the content of the sermon (*logos*). Reformed theology overall has put more emphasis on *logos* than *ethos* or *pathos*. The *logos* of the sermon, in addition to the *ethos* of the preacher, must also incarnate Christ. However, Reformed theologians, by and large, argue that humans are so deprived and limited that one must not expect too much congruence between message and messenger. This assumption is evident in Karl Barth's *Homiletics*. He never once deals with the importance and development of holy *ethos* in preachers. His writing on the *spirituality* of the preacher takes up a mere half page of space (86). All that Barth does in this section is to admonish the preacher to pray with humility for God to show up and speak during the preaching event. When Barth deals with *holiness*, again taking up half a page of space (88), he does not even hint at the possibility that the preacher be transformed into Christ's likeness. He only describes how God sanctifies, or makes holy, the sermon despite the total depravity of the preacher.

Reformed theologians such as Barth dismiss the importance of preacher *ethos*, fearing it leads to homiletic donatism, the belief that the power of preaching depends more on the preacher than on God (Resner 3). This fear led the Church virtually to ignore preacher *ethos* in favor of sermon *logos* during the modern period. Reformed homiletics follows this line of reasoning: *Since the preacher is totally depraved beyond the hope of holy transformation, the only thing that matters is that the truth of God's Word is*

proclaimed in the words (logos) of the preacher and that God decides to make use of those words for His purposes with no help from the person of the preacher. The rationale for refusing to place too much emphasis on the *ethos* of the preacher is warranted, because preaching's ultimate power rests in God and not the preacher, as Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. However, the *ethos* of the preacher must not be ignored or under-emphasized either. The preacher who cultivates Christian *ethos* through intimate connection to Christ will invite and not prohibit the power of God through the preaching event in a heightened manner. "Preacher hypocrisy or moral uprightness are factors in listener receptivity to the message spoken whether Barth likes it or not" (Resner 3). Ignoring the importance of the preacher's Christian *ethos* results from a failure to acknowledge that God has decided to work out salvation in the world through a partnership between divinity and humanity, the incarnation of divine Word through human flesh.

Wesleyan theology is guided in life and practice by the Incarnation. Jesus Christ revealed not only what God is like but how a human being could live in radical partnership with God for the sake of the world. If the life of Christ is any indication of the power that results from a divine-human partnership, then the person of the preacher matters and matters greatly. The Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification flows out of the doctrine of the Incarnation. In fact, if one affirms the Incarnation of the Word into flesh then one must also assume the possibility that a relationship with God will have a sanctifying effect upon personhood. As Athanasius states, "[Christ] became what we are that he might make us what he is." Humans do not become divine, but his incarnation

redeems and sanctifies our humanity so that “in this world we are like Him” (1 John 4:17b).

The main issue in this homiletic debate revolves around the difference between imputed and imparted righteousness. Reformed theologians, especially in Wesley’s day, stressed imputed righteousness with little or no emphasis on imparted righteousness as Wesley understood it. Imputed righteousness is what Christ does for the believer at justification. It is a gift given that secures forgiveness despite total depravity. Wesley did not deny that this kind of justifying righteousness from Christ comes first; he did, however, teach that an imputed righteousness follows justification and transforms the justified believer so that she or he is sanctified.

This conviction in Wesley caused many Reformed Calvinists to dismiss the Methodist as a heretic. Wesley answers his critics tactfully in a sermon called “The Lord Our Righteousness”:

I believe God implants righteousness in every one to whom he has imputed it. I believe “Jesus Christ is made of God unto us sanctification” as well as righteousness; or that God sanctifies, as well as justifies, all them that believe in him. They to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed are made righteous by the spirit of Christ, are renewed in the image of God “after the likeness wherein they were created, in righteousness and true holiness.” (*Works* 1: 458-59)

Wesley believed, based upon his reading of Scripture, that although human beings are depraved and fallen, the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian will inevitably seek to make Christians like Christ. This imparted righteousness was the emphasis of his ministry. He wrote about this kind of righteousness most exhaustively in his book *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, a work in which he articulates his theology of sanctification. This sanctification is not a work one accomplishes but a work that the

Holy Spirit does in the life of the Christian who is yielded and submitted to the purposes of God. Similar to the role of the preacher in the preaching event, humans have a role to play in their sanctification, though the work is squarely on the shoulders of God. One of the primary ways God accomplishes his sanctification of the Christian is through the consistent and authentic use of spiritual disciplines that foster Christ's love for Father God and for people. This dual love is the very thing that heightens the reality and perception of the preacher's *ethos* among his or her congregation.

Practical Theology

The model for A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline developed in this dissertation is designed to put preachers in a position where they can be filled with the love and the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), or Christian *ethos*, for living and preaching.

Engagement in Christian spiritual disciplines is a major means through which the *ethos* of Christ is cultivated in a person. "A discipline is any activity within our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort" (Willard, *Divine Conspiracy* 353). This definition may sound as if Christ formed in a person is a work we accomplish through discipline instead of a work God accomplishes through grace. Richard Foster addresses how God's grace and human will work together in spiritual disciplines to form Christ in people:

A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for the growing of grain. He cultivates the ground, he plants the seed, he waters the plants, and then the natural forces of the earth take over and up comes the grain. This is the way it is with the Spiritual Disciplines—they are a way of sowing to the Spirit. The Disciplines are God's way of getting us into the ground; they put us where He can work with us and transform us. By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God's means of grace.... God has ordained the Disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us. (7-8)

Only God can work the miracle of enabling the character of Christ to flow into and through the preacher's life and ministry. "He invites us to become channels through which He can

work” (Kinlaw 21). However, this flow does not happen unless preachers place themselves “into the ground” of the spiritual disciplines with consistency and authenticity.

Christians have engaged in a variety of spiritual disciplines for nearly two thousand years. Most of them can, however, fit into three major categories of disciplines. This three-legged stool makes use of Scripture, prayer, and fellowship. Peterson’s *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* is basically structured in the form of the three-legged stool of spiritual disciplines that my model incorporated. The only difference is that Peterson highlights fellowship in the form of spiritual direction, and my model considers fellowship mainly in the form of prayer groups. All of the spiritual disciplines listed by Dallas Willard in *The Spirit of the Disciplines* and Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline*, can fit under the rubric of Scripture, prayer, or fellowship. Moreover, the disciplines Jesus practiced as discussed in the Gospels can also fit within the realm of Scripture, prayer, and fellowship.

My contention, though one that is shared with others, is that when the preacher is intimately connected on a regular basis to the three loves most important to the homiletic process, namely God, the Bible, and the people addressed, the preacher will be in the best possible spiritual shape to preach. “As preachers we ought to take care not to discard the grace that God offers us through the practice of spiritual disciplines. By practicing these disciplines we grow in godliness. By growing in godliness our preaching grows in power” (Shriver 111). Therefore, a model that infuses the development and delivery of sermons with spiritual disciplines that incorporate Scripture, prayer, and fellowship is a dire necessity for preaching today. Without these disciplines in the life of the pastor “the best of talents and best of intentions cannot prevent a thinning out into a life that becomes mostly impersonation” (Peterson, *Working the Angles* 15).

The model I developed for this dissertation project did not ignore the importance of sound exegetical and hermeneutical methods, but it viewed these practices through a spiritual

lens that invited God's Spirit to have the first and the last word in exegesis and hermeneutics. Skill development for preaching is important but it must not overshadow and eradicate the more vital need for the spiritual development of the preacher. "We must be traffickers in the Holy Spirit more than traffickers in biblical knowledge and the skills of oratorical suasion" (Kinlaw 62). My hope and prayer is that as I and my preaching colleagues embrace *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*, the Spirit of God will, like a powerful wind, blow into and through our preaching as a breath of fresh, joyful, transformational air. Simply put, "The spiritual life is the foundation for preaching" (Westerhoff 15).

Dealing with any legs in the three-legged stool of Scripture, prayer, and fellowship in isolation of each other is difficult. This challenge is especially evident in the model I am creating for the development and delivery of sermons because it contains exercises that combine simultaneously two or even all three of these legs. While the model itself details specific exercises designed to help the preacher engage Scripture, prayer, and fellowship on a deeply spiritual level, in the following sections I make a brief and general case for the necessity of these disciplines in the life and practice of the preacher.

The Discipline of Scripture

The preacher who ingests the Bible will have much wisdom to share from the pulpit. "The primary manner of communication from God to humankind is the Word of God.... The Bible itself is God's speaking preserved in written form" (Willard, *Hearing God* 53). According to Willard and others such as Foster, Nouwen, and Peterson, the Bible is not just a printed text to be read as a book but the inspired Word of God that requires of all who approach it not just a reading eye but a prayerful, listening ear

(Peterson, *Working the Angles* 87-105). Peterson notes how challenging it is for preachers to listen for the voice of God through Scripture because they so often come to “the book” with a consumeristic mind-set. This mentality leads the preacher into “acquisition mode” so that “when we sit down to read the Scriptures we already have an end product in view: we want to find something useful for people’s lives, to meet their expectations of us as pastors who deliver the goods” (98). A mentality of acquisition makes prayerful, meditative listening for the voice of God through the words of Scripture a challenge.

One of the best ways the preacher can overcome this tendency, and listen for God’s voice in the midst of the weekly grind and pressure of pastoral work, is to practice *lectio divina*. This ancient discipline practically forces one to approach the Scriptures with a deliberate listening posture instead of a controlling, consumeristic posture. *Lectio divina* combines the discipline of Scripture, through which a person listens for God’s voice, and the discipline of prayer, through which a person responds to God’s word with his or her own words.

The process of *lectio divina* has at least four steps, which John H. Westerhoff presents (72-74). The first step is called *lectio* (reading) and involves a slow, repetitive and active reading through which readers invite God to impress certain words or images from the text onto their minds and hearts. The next step, *meditatio* (meditation), incorporates the imagination of the reader for the sake of actually experiencing what God is saying through the text. The third step is *oratio* (prayer), a time for prayerfully reflecting with God concerning how the biblical text intersects the lives of ministers and the lives of their congregants. *Contemplatio* (contemplation) is the final step in *lectio divina*. This final step takes one beyond words and into intimacy with God that allows the

person to actually experience the grace of the Scripture reality being studied. This pattern of *lectio divina*, reading beyond cerebral information for spiritual transformation, was incorporated into *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*.

The Discipline of Prayer

James Joseph Mindling, in a doctoral dissertation he wrote on the topic of the preacher's prayer life, bemoans, "Prayer, the greatest gift God has given believers to know him and to understand his Word, is often the least considered element of preparing biblical sermons" (137). Mindling's exploratory study revealed the need for prayerful intimacy with God to have a more prominent place in the homiletic process. My study sought to remedy this lack by actually giving prayer a vital role in the development and delivery of sermons, for "preaching begins in prayer" (Pasquarello, *Christian Preaching* 39).

Throughout this study, Christian *ethos* has been defined by the love of Christ for the Father and for people that flows into and through the preacher. In other words, Christian *ethos* is the embodiment of the Great Commandment to love God and love others as Jesus did and with his power. Prayer is the main avenue through which people connect with the heart of God and develop a deeper love for God and for others.

Biblical scholar Brevard S. Childs describes how prayer is intended to take a person beyond Scripture toward a vibrant love for its author. He writes, "Prayer is an integral part in the study of Scripture because it anticipates the Spirit's carrying its reader through the written page to God himself" (219). Reading Scripture prayerfully allows preachers to connect with God in loving intimacy.

When preachers are prayerfully connected to God, they will love what God loves, namely people. That is, the further a preacher goes into the heart of God through prayer, the more intensely the preacher will love the people God created in his image. Willard

agrees that prayer accentuates our love for others. Willard adds force to his point by quoting from the book *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “The most direct way to others is always through prayer to Christ and that love of others is wholly dependent upon the truth in Christ” (*Divine Conspiracy* 237).

A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline presents a model for sermon development and delivery that includes various prayer exercises. Prayer is the channel that allows the preacher to abide in Christ so that the love of Christ is incarnated in and through the preacher. The “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) that Paul describes is not the result of one’s good intentions, wishful thinking, or extreme efforts; it is the result of authentic and consistent prayer.

The need for the preacher’s engagement in prayer throughout the homiletic process may seem too obvious even to warrant mention in this study. However, my own personal experience and relationships with other pastors lead me to believe that praying throughout the homiletic process, though obvious perhaps, is not a given among those who preach. This is confirmed by Doctor of Ministry dissertations written by James Arthur Bradshaw and Mindling, which indicate that prayer does not necessarily play a prominent role in preaching today (Bradshaw 122; Mindling 6). Their exploratory work reveals the lack of prayer that my experimental model sought to ameliorate. Prayer is an urgent need, for without it “we will rarely hear anything worth repeating, catch a vision worth asking others to gaze upon, or have anything worth mounting a pulpit to proclaim” (Westerhoff xii).

Fervent prayer does not negate the need for fervent study. Heart and mind, soul and strength must together and equally engage Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the preparation and practice of preaching. John R. W. Stott makes this point extremely well:

Christian meditation differs from other kinds in being a combination of study and prayer. Some preachers are very diligent students. Their desk is piled high with theological works, and they give their mind to the elucidation of the text. But they hardly if ever pray for light. Others are very diligent in prayer, but hardly ever engage in any serious study. We must not separate what God has joined. Speaking personally, I have always found it helpful to do as much of my sermon preparation as possible on my knees, with the Bible open before me in prayerful study. (220)

Stott is calling preachers to the prayerful study of Scripture through which the heart and mind of the preacher are working in sync with the Spirit of God.

While an emphasis on prayer does not negate the need for diligent and mindful study in preaching, E. M. Bounds issues a warning against the opposite danger of elevating study over prayer:

The preacher must be preeminently a man of prayer. His heart must graduate in the school of prayer. In the school of prayer only can the heart learn to preach. No learning can make up for the failure to pray. No earnestness, no diligence, no study, no gifts will supply its lack. Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still. He will never talk well and with real success to men for God who has not learned well how to talk to God for men. (31)

Bounds wants the preacher to be more consumed with the God of Scripture through prayer than with the Scripture of God through study. In other words, he wants the preacher to develop a habit of prayer that redeems and sanctifies the study of the preacher.

The model I developed is aimed at guiding preachers to pray throughout the homiletic process, not just at the beginning, when the preacher selects a biblical text, or at the end, before a preacher steps up to deliver the sermon:

Since it is the Word of God being interpreted, a preacher obviously needs to be in communication with the Author. In sermon preparation, you should pray about your interpretation of the biblical text, about the people

with whom you will share the Word of God, and for yourself as a preacher of that truth. (Fasol 23)

Prayer is an essential element in the homiletic process.

The Discipline of Fellowship

Dawn grieves, “Why do I so often let my busyness or pride, my independence or fears, prevent me from receiving the Body’s gifts for my preaching?” (88). She recognizes that intimate interaction with other Christians, what I am calling *fellowship*, is just as important for the preacher as interaction with God and Scripture. Dawn goes on to explain how God, Scripture, and the Christian community intersect with each other in the preaching event:

The Body of Christ always is a part of how I learn texts, how I envision their connection to our lives of discipleship, how I discern what God wants to do with us. The better I get to know the community for which I preach, the more thoroughly they can preach through me for the glory of God and the strengthening of us all. (88)

While prayer primarily fosters love for God and study mainly fosters love for Scripture, fellowship is aimed at fostering love for the people who make up the church. These three loves, what J. Ellsworth Kalas calls the “sacred triangle” (27-34), are ultimately the goal of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* because they form the substance of preaching ethos and increase preaching joy.

The preacher who is ignorant of the realities and intricacies of the people to whom preaching is addressed will be unable to connect the grace and truth of God through the medium of Scripture to peoples’ lives. Admittedly, a preacher spending adequate time behind closed doors in prayer and study is imperative. However, just as necessary is the preacher being among and knowing the people to whom he or she preaches—their aches and pains, joys, and dreams. “Faithful preaching and teaching requires an awareness of

how much in need we are of life in a community of faith. We [preachers] are as dependent on the community as it is on us” (Westerhoff 38). The preacher “is called not only to listen to God in the word but to listen to the people of God in the world and enable the connection of those two realities” (Willimon and Lischer 449). The discipline of fellowship enables preachers to stay connected to the people to whom they preach.

Fellowship has always been emphasized in Christianity and, except for the first few centuries of the church in which Scripture was discussed and interpreted in community, under-emphasized in the homiletic process. *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* sought to reclaim the importance of Christian community and its role in shaping both the preacher and preaching. Fellowship will be facilitated through exercises that bring the preacher and congregants together throughout the homiletic process not only for prayer to God, but for conversation with each other. Peterson would agree. He wisely points out, “The conversations that take place in the parking lot after Sunday worship are as much a part of the formation of Christian character as the preaching from the sanctuary pulpit” (*Wisdom of Each Other* 20). Fellowship is spiritually and homiletically formative.

Conclusion

The sermon can either be a technical product or a faithful commitment to the God who calls a minister to preach and to the people to whom God calls the minister to preach. Genuine engagement with the spiritual disciplines that involve the three-legged stool of prayer, Scripture, and fellowship will enable the latter and avoid the former. Bathing the homiletic process with spiritual disciplines makes the preacher more reliant upon the Holy Spirit than upon rhetorical technique, which was the essential aim of this

project. Oden challenges preachers toward this spiritual homiletic when he writes, “Leave it to the Spirit to enliven the process of hearing. We can only intercede for the Spirit to be present in our preparation and delivery, and in the hearer’s reception of our preaching” (136). A connection exists between the preachers use of spiritual disciplines and the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the homiletic process.

Synthesis of Selected Literature

This review of the selected literature has sought to show how biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology come together to exclaim that the Christian ethos of the person doing the preaching, enabled by the Holy Spirit, matters as much as any other homiletic consideration. The message and the messenger must both make Christ incarnate, because for this reason people listen to the preacher’s words and life. Even Aristotle, someone outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition, saw *ethos*, the character of the speaker, as the most important factor in the power of speech beyond *pathos* and *logos*. The apostle Paul took Aristotle’s thoughts much further by confessing that his own preaching was made powerful not through rhetorical eloquence but through the “power of God” that came through his cruciform character. His *ethos* was a spiritual one that resulted from Christ in him “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27b). This *ethos* for Paul seems to have been cultivated through the practice of spiritual disciplines that enabled him to identify with and abide in Christ deeply. This identification was embodied, or incarnated, through his preaching life.

Augustine, four hundred years after the Apostle, went well beyond where Aristotle stopped but where Paul’s trajectory naturally led. The Bishop of Hippo knew that the best thing a preacher could do is rely most heavily upon the Spirit of God rather

than his own rhetorical technique and gifts for the preaching event, though he never dismissed the latter.

Wesley's preaching illustrated Augustine's point. The preaching *ethos* of Wesley came through in a manner that was perceived by others who recognized that his preaching was empowered by his spirituality and not his rhetorical ability. While Wesley may not have had the rhetorical abilities of a Whitefield, his spiritual *ethos* clearly made up for any lack. Christian *ethos* for the preacher happens when Christ is incarnated not only through the words but the life of the preacher. Wesley embodied this incarnation.

Through the Incarnation of Christ, the eternal "Word became flesh" (John 1:14a). Incarnation must occur in order for the Word to speak to flesh, to embodied human beings. The preacher whose life is congruent with the gospel of Christ, assisted through authentic engagement with spiritual disciplines, will, in a sense, become this divine-human container through whom the Word is once again made flesh. The message is the medium in the preacher who embodies the Word of the gospel and will be the most effective at challenging the church to do the same. Simply put, preaching is, in my estimation, most effective when the Word becomes flesh through the life of the preacher. Regardless of rhetorical technique, skill-level, or sermonic form, if the Word does not become flesh through the preacher, then preaching will not have reached its full potential.

The spiritual disciplines facilitate the life of Christ, the Word, in and through the life and preaching of the preacher. Authentic and consistent engagement with God through Scripture and prayer, and with people through fellowship, is designed to help people abide in Christ in a way that allows his sacrificial love for the Father and for people to grow in and flow through those who practice spiritual disciplines. The typical

homiletic process among preachers today, based upon the available literature, as well as observation and conversation, is slanted more toward rhetorical techniques than spiritual disciplines. The end result is that the preacher feels somewhat disconnected from God's power and voice. My model for *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* was put forth in an effort to restore the intimate connection between God and the preacher and to place spirituality over technicality in the homiletic process without ignoring either.

Preaching as a spiritual discipline is intended to heighten the preacher's *ethos* from the inside out by enhancing his or her character (love for God) and compassion (love for people). This kind of preacher may never have a TV ministry, fame, or a church attendance of more than one thousand. This kind of preacher, however, is perfectly positioned as an empty "vessel," to borrow Cantalamessa's term, from which the power of God flows. When the preacher's most intense reliance is upon the power of God for the development and delivery of sermons, it is bound to produce greater and more lasting joy in the preacher's life than many of the faddish techniques that come and go.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem

The problem with preaching today appears to be the same problem the Apostle Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. The preacher has often given into the temptation to preach in a manner more congruent with cultural standards of effective communication than with theological standards of cruciformity with Christ. In other words, the tendency in preaching today has been to seek after the best communication technique instead of seeking after intimate identification with Christ through spiritual disciplines that foster the Incarnation of Christ's love in and through the preacher. Resner points out the ultimate danger in this tendency when he writes: "Without an awareness of rhetoric's own powerful presuppositions and assumptions about discourse, situations and outcomes, and without appropriate theological discretion, rhetoric can mean the subversion of the message itself" (56). While technique certainly has a seat at the homiletic table, that seat is not at the head of the table.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop the researcher-designed A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline and evaluate its impact on the cultivation and perception of Christian *ethos* in preachers, as well as its impact on the level of preaching joy the preacher experiences in the homiletic process. The study was focused on helping pastors avoid technique-driven preaching by infusing the homiletic process with various spiritual disciplines involving Scripture, prayer, and fellowship. The hope is this model

will foster in preachers a deeper love for God and for people that ultimately enhances their preaching and joy.

Twelve preaching pastors from the Penn-Jersey District of the Wesleyan Church participated in this study by using the researcher-designed model, *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*, in their preaching for a period of six months. I then evaluated the journey's impact on the cultivation and perception of Christian ethos in the participating preachers, as well as its impact on the level of joy the preachers experience in the homiletic process.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill this study the following questions were identified.

Research Question #1

What impact did the incorporation of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* by the preacher throughout the homiletic process have upon the cultivation of Christian *ethos* in the preacher?

My hypothesis was that when the homiletic process is driven by spiritual disciplines that connect the preacher intimately to Christ, it will cultivate Christian *ethos* in the preacher evidenced by the deep and passionate love for God and for the people that Christ embodied. The researcher-designed pretest and posttest for pastors, as well as the monthly feedback from these participants through e-mails regarding the impact of the model upon them and their preaching, were my data-collecting tools for answering this question.

Research Question #2

What impact does the incorporation of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline by the preacher throughout the homiletic process have upon the congregants' perception of Christian *ethos* in the preacher during the preaching event?

My assumption is that when Christ's actual love is incarnated through a preacher's Christian *ethos*, it will likely be perceived by congregants. A pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaire given to the board members at each of the churches represented by the participating pastors were the instruments that assisted me in answering this question.

Research Question #3

What was the correlation between the cultivated *ethos* in the preacher and the perceived *ethos* of the preacher by the congregation?

I compared the pretest and posttest responses from the pastors with the pre-intervention and post-intervention responses from board members to see if what was really happening in the preachers correlated with the perceptions of congregants.

Research Question #4

What impact did A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline have upon the level of preaching joy the pastor experienced throughout the homiletic process?

Both quantitative and qualitative questions on the pretest and posttest for the participating pastors as well as data from the monthly e-mails allowed me to measure whether or not incorporation of my preaching model fostered greater joy for them in the homiletic process. My hypothesis was that when preaching is undertaken as a spiritual

discipline that connects the preacher more intimately to Christ greater joy will be inevitable throughout the homiletic process.

Participants

Because this project is predominantly a qualitative study, I selected participants based upon certain criteria. I developed a questionnaire that assisted me in the selection of the participating pastors based on the following criteria:

1. Participants were not very satisfied with their level of engagement with spiritual disciplines throughout their homiletic process.
2. Participants affirmed the importance of a model that was driven by spiritual disciplines to the extent they were willing to commit to the model for the six-month intervention period.
3. Participants were the primary preachers in their churches.
4. Participants had at least three years of preaching experience.
5. Participants had been preaching at their churches for at least one year.

This criterion-based questionnaire (see Appendix A) was distributed to 140 pastors at the annual Penn-Jersey District conference held on 18 June 2008. They were given three minutes to complete the questionnaire before I collected them. Out of the 140 pastors, twenty-two met all the criteria. The twelve participating pastors were chosen through the process of purposeful homogenous sampling. William Wiersma says, “Homogeneous sampling is used when the purpose of the study is to focus on a particular subgroup” (287). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to explore, uncover, understand, and gain insight from a subgroup “from which the most can be learned” (Merriam 61).

Members of the Local Board of Administration (LBA) from each church served by the twelve preaching pastors also participated in the study by completing a pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaire concerning their perceptions of their pastor's preaching. The LBA is the highest governing board in the local Wesleyan Church and typically meets monthly to oversee the ministry of the church. Participating LBA members have been in their church for more than one year and, according to Wesleyan polity, are nominated and elected to the board because of their spiritual maturity.

Design of the Study

This project was primarily a mixed method qualitative study that utilized a researcher-designed pretest and posttest for participating pastors and congregants.

Instruments

Wiersma provides a helpful guide in constructing effective questionnaires (165-69). I attempted to follow these guidelines as much as possible to the end that they would assist in providing the data most vital to this study.

Criterion-Based Selection of Participants

I used several, researcher designed instruments in this overall qualitative study. I utilized a questionnaire to assist me in the selection of the pastors who qualified as participants for the study based upon predetermined criteria (see Appendix A).

Pretest for Pastors

Once I selected the pastoral participants, I employed a pretest that was completed by the participating pastors before the six-month implementation of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* (see Appendix C). This instrument consisted of both

text open-ended questions that were qualitative and ten-point Likert scale questions that were essentially quantitative. The pretest helped me to gauge the self-assessment of participating pastors in terms of Christian *ethos* and preaching joy before the intervention began. Participants completed this instrument at the 28 August retreat held at the Penn-Jersey District office.

Model for A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline

The model delineated the process of developing and delivering sermons that each participant employed for the six-month journey (see Appendix D). The model was designed with the goal of increasing each participant's Christian *ethos* and preaching joy.

Posttest for Pastors

A posttest helped me gather data to discern if and how incorporation of the model cultivated in the preachers a deeper love for God and for others (i.e., Christian *ethos*; see Appendix F). It also consisted of open-ended questions and a variety of Likert scale questions. This instrument also included questions that enabled me to measure if and how preaching joy increased in participating pastors as a result of using this model. This instrument was completed at the 26 March 2009 debriefing meeting at the Penn-Jersey District office.

Monthly Feedback Tool

The monthly feedback tool helped me to gather consistent qualitative data without requiring any travel from pastoral participants (see Appendix E). At the end of every month of the six-month study, I would send out an e-mail asking the open-ended question, "How has A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline impacted you and your preaching this month?"

Pre-Intervention Questionnaire for Board Members

I developed the pre-intervention questionnaire for LBA members who serve with each participating pastor (see Appendix G). Participants distributed this questionnaire to LBA members at the September 2008 board meeting of each local church represented immediately before the six-month intervention period. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended questions and ten-point Likert scale questions that sought to assess the perceived *ethos* of the preacher by congregants during the preaching event before the intervention period began.

Post-Intervention Questionnaire for Board Members

This post-intervention questionnaire was almost identical to the pre-intervention questionnaire given to board members except for the addition of the first question, which was designed to explore whether or not congregants perceived any change in the preaching of their pastors throughout the six-month journey (see Appendix H). Pastoral participants distributed the questionnaire to LBA members at the March 2009 board meeting of each local church represented immediately after the six-month intervention period. This questionnaire also consisted of both open-ended questions and ten-point Likert scale questions.

Variables

The independent variable for this mixed method study was the A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline model (see Appendix D). The dependent variables were the impact of the model upon the Christian *ethos* and preaching joy of participating pastors and the perceived *ethos* of congregants. The anticipated impact was that the

incorporation of this model by the preacher for the delivery and development of sermons would increase Christian *ethos*, perceived *ethos*, and preaching joy in the preacher.

Reliability and Validity

Internal validity, especially in qualitative research, “relies on the logical analysis of the results... [and is enhanced by] verifying results and conclusions from two or more sources or perspectives” (Wiersma 215). In this study, I have sought to triangulate data by utilizing multiple instruments for multiple sources (pastors and board members). Instruments for participating pastors and board members were standard for each group. Even my e-mail contacts were uniform in their focus so as not to ask leading or different questions from one pastor to another. Internal validity was also enhanced by having only one researcher collect and evaluate the data. These factors all worked to strengthen the internal validity of this dissertation project.

The question of external validity is impacted by the qualitative nature of the study as well. Due to the small number of participants in the study, broad generalizations would be unwarranted. However, the homogeneous sampling group does have generalizability among preachers who fit the basic criteria outlined for the sampling group.

Data Collection

I made an announcement at the Penn-Jersey District conference concerning the importance of my project for the Church at-large and for the pastors who would be selected as participants. All pastors at the Conference were given three minutes to complete the survey. I recruited help to collect the completed survey.

I distributed the pretest and posttest to the participating pastors and collected it at the Penn-Jersey District office. I collected the pretest at our opening retreat together and the posttest at our debriefing session following the six-month intervention period.

I printed the monthly e-mail responses from each participant. I sorted this data, gathered monthly, in individual binders for each pastor.

I gave the pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires for the LBA members to each pastor, which they distributed to their respective boards. After reading my letter, which was included with both questionnaires, the vice-chairperson of each board distributed and collected the questionnaires. The vice-chairpersons placed these documents in a stamped envelope addressed to me, which I provided, and sealed it in the presence of all board members before mailing it. The pastors excused themselves from the meetings while board members completed the instruments.

Data Analysis

Because most of the data collected was qualitative, I employed content analysis to discern how the journey impacted the Christian *ethos* and preaching joy of participating pastors, as well as how the model impacted the perceptions of congregants concerning the Christian *ethos* of their pastors during the six-month intervention period. I also sought quantitative data to measure the level of increase in preaching joy, Christian *ethos*, and perceived *ethos* of the preachers during the intervention period. I compared both the qualitative and quantitative sources of data from the pastors and their board members to detect if there was correlation between the assessments of the pastors and the board members regarding the impact of the journey.

Although certain predetermined categories were in place, such as Christian *ethos* and preaching joy, which gave me a lens through which to view the data, I attempted to allow “specific categories [to] emerge from the data” (Wiersma 207) as well. This aim enabled the study to maintain an inductive bent.

Delimitations and Generalizability

Broad generalizations cannot be made from this study due to the small number of participants and their geographic concentration in the Northeastern region of the United States. The findings of the study are essentially delimited to those pastors who participated in the study. However, the homogenous sampling group of pastors does suggest that some generalizability may exist for preaching pastors in North America who adopt A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline.

The utilization of a mixed method that employed both qualitative and quantitative data can add internal validity and some level of generalizability to the findings. Furthermore, collecting data from two sources, the participating pastors and each of their local church boards, describing the impact of the model upon Christian *ethos* in preaching corroborates, or triangulates, findings. Anyone who preaches in a local church setting in a North American context could potentially benefit from the incorporation of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline.

Ethics

All data collected from participating pastors and their board members have been kept confidential, which means that I was the only one who knew which pieces of data came from which actual source. No real names of pastors or churches were used in this study. The data was, and is, locked away for safekeeping.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

Too many pastors engage the homiletic process as a task needing completion instead of a devotional journey into the Christ they proclaim. This tendency results in the frustration and burnout of pastors that my study sought to remedy. The purpose of this study was to develop the researcher-designed A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline and evaluate its impact on the cultivation and perception of Christian *ethos* in preachers, as well as its impact on the level of preaching joy the preacher experiences in the homiletic process. One of the participants at the debriefing retreat following the six-month intervention admitted, “After preaching for more than twenty years, this journey helped kick start my preaching again.” This spiritual *kick start* really was the aim of this project.

Participants

The twelve participating pastors happened to all be males, pastoring in rural or suburban Pennsylvania or New Jersey. The participants ranged in age from late 20s to late 60s, and years of preaching experience from less than two years to more than forty-two years.

Research Questions

This study was designed to answer four questions.

Research Question #1

What impact did the incorporation of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline by the preacher throughout the homiletic process have upon the cultivation of Christian *ethos* in the preacher?

Research Question #2

What impact did the incorporation of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline by the preacher throughout the homiletic process have upon the congregants' perception of Christian *ethos* in the preacher during the preaching event?

Research Question #3

What was the correlation between the cultivated *ethos* in the preacher and the perceived *ethos* of the preacher by the congregation?

Research Question #4

What impact did A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline have upon the level of preaching joy the preacher experienced throughout the homiletic process?

The Impact of the Journey upon Christian Ethos

Research Question #1 was aimed at exploring the impact of the six-month journey upon the Christian *ethos* of participating pastors. Christian *ethos* is defined as love for God and love for people. Of course, the two loves are so extremely intertwined that to increase in love for God will inevitably result in an increasing love for people. This project anticipated that A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline would heighten the Christian *ethos* of participating pastors. Participant responses from the posttest, as well as from their monthly reply to the question, "How has A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline impacted your life and preaching this past month?" has provided

extensive qualitative data and some quantitative data from which to describe the findings from this project.

The process for developing and delivering sermons during this journey, found in Appendix D, was designed to enhance the preacher’s intimate connection to God and to people within the homiletic function. Table 4.1 shows how the twelve participating pastors responded to questions 9 and 10 on the posttest (see Appendix F) concerning their Christian ethos.

All participants experienced an increase in Christian *ethos*, according to Table 4.1. Specifically, 50 percent of the participating pastors sensed more than just a “very little” or “moderate” increase in their love for God and for people (i.e., their congregants) as a result of the six-month journey. The category with the highest number of respondents was in the area of love for people. Eight of the twelve pastors felt a “significant” increase in love for people. Movement #3 in the model was aimed at facilitating this increase (see Appendix D).

Table 4.1. The Level of Increase in Christian Ethos

Rating	Increase in Love for God	Increase in Love for People
	n	n
Not at all	0	0
Very little	2	2
Moderate	4	2
Significant	5	8
Very significant	1	0

Numbers cannot tell the whole story. All but four of the twelve participants mentioned specifically in their monthly feedback how the journey had increased their love for their congregants. One pastor shared the following:

The model focuses not only on my preaching and personal discipline, but also causes me to interact more with my people in a pastoral manner, sometimes through prayer and sometimes through personal interaction with them.... Preaching was more academic to me, but now it's more of a connection to people, to what's happening in the church and the community.

Another pastor commented, "My loving concern for each of my people has grown deeper.... My heart is growing closer to the people as I pray for them in preparation for my sermons."

Questions 15-18 of the posttest also asked participants to rate, on a ten-point Likert scale, their love for God and for people before and after the six-month intervention journey. Table 4.2 lists the before rating followed by the after rating in each category. The table also shows the frequency and extent with which pastors utilized the model, which was generated from questions 4 and 5 of the posttest. *Frequency* is determined by how often participants used the model. *Extent* refers to how much of the 5 movement model was utilized. I wanted to see if any correlation existed between the level of increase in Christian *ethos* and the level of each participant's use of the model.

Table 4.2. The Level of Christian Ethos before and after the Journey

Pastors	Love for God	Love for People	Frequency/Extent of Use %
A	7/8	5/8	61-80/81-100
B	8/8	8/8	61-80/61-80
C	5/7	10/10	81-100/81-100
D	7/9	7/9	81-100/61-80
E	7/8	8/8	41-60/81-100
F	9/10	9/10	81-100/81-100
G	10/10	7/9	61-80/41-60
H	9/9	8/8	61-80/81-100
I	7/8	5/8	61-80/81-100
J	7/9	7/9	61-80/61-80
K	5/9	8/10	81-100/81-100
L	9/9	6/9	81-100/61-80
Group Avg.	7.5/8.7	7.3/8.8	70/81

The data from Table 4.2 shows that every pastor utilized the model frequently and extensively in their preaching and that every one of them, except for Pastor B, noted an increase in Christian *ethos*. Apparently, no clear-cut correlation exists between the level of utilization of the model and the level of increase in Christian ethos among participants. However, one of the pastors, Pastor I, did suggest a correlation between engagement in the preaching model and Christian *ethos* in his monthly feedback, which he submitted four months into the journey:

Honestly, I slipped in December. The last two weeks I fell back into old, and not so good habits. The interesting thing is that I missed the discipline and study associated with using the preaching model. The best feedback that I can give to you is that not using the model negatively affected me. I found myself a bit grumpier and less disciplined in other areas of my life. So the good news is that the model has had a very positive effect on me and when not followed, it is noticed.

Perhaps the correlation between Christian *ethos* and engagement in the journey is best captured by the response of participants to questions twelve and thirteen of the posttest, which asks how often and how extensively they will use the model in their future preaching. The average response for the group in both of the respective categories was that they would utilize A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline approximately 80 percent of the time in their preaching ministry. The conclusion could be drawn that because participants sensed a difference in their Christian *ethos* and preaching joy based upon whether or not they engaged in the journey, they want to continue its use the majority of times that they preach.

Each participant had a chance to state their response succinctly to the first open-ended question on the posttest, which asks, “In what way has A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline most significantly impacted you and/or your preaching over the past six months?” Through a careful content analysis of participant responses to this question, several categories of positive impact surfaced (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Most Significant Impact of the Journey

Area Impacted Positively	n
Spiritual life	8
Relationship w/God	5
Relationship w/congregation	5
Preaching passion and joy	4
Homiletic skill	4

Clearly, participants experienced a renewing of their spiritual lives. This category includes comments such as, “[The journey] had an impact on my own spiritual life,” and

“My prayer life vastly improved.” The number of participants who stated that the journey positively impacted their spiritual, devotional life was eight. Pastor D expressed poignantly, through his monthly feedback at the six-month mark, how the journey profoundly impacted his overall spiritual life:

In the past month I have grown closer to my Lord as I walk through this journey.... When I first started this journey at the end of August it was exhilarating. Then, at times it became tedious and frustrating, adding more to the task than I felt I needed to deal with. But I stuck with it and will use it all the days of our ministry. And as I have walked in this I began to find more in the text that the Spirit of God was *speaking to my life* [emphasis mine], and I found the text spilling over and shaping conversations and interactions all through my week. The Word was never far from me, so the Bible passage I was studying and praying through began to shape me, instead of me trying to hammer and force the text into some useful “message” for the people hearing it Sunday morning. The journey is not shaping my preaching; *through the journey God is shaping me* [emphasis mine].

Another pastor noted that the journey impacted his spiritual life so much that it kept him from retiring. He shares the following feedback five months into the journey: “The prayer time has helped to draw me closer to the Lord and I feel I have been reawakened in my spiritual life. While I was contemplating retiring, I now feel that I have a few more years to offer to the Lord.” This participant experienced the kind of spiritual renewal that reinvigorated his preaching.

The next highest areas of impact pertained specifically to the participants’ relationships with God and with congregants. Each of these categories was noted as an area of impact by five pastors. Four pastors noted how the journey impacted their passion and joy with comments such as, “[The journey] gave me a basic guideline that made sermon preparation more enjoyable.” Perhaps the greatest surprise was that four of the twelve participants mentioned how the journey gave them some homiletic skill and

structure for developing and delivering sermons. One participant wrote about the journey, “It has given me a plan, a process to go by instead of just saying ‘today is Thursday and I have to do a sermon now.’” This benefit from *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* will be further evaluated and explained in Chapter 5.

The Impact of the Journey upon Congregants’ Perceptions

Research Question #2 was focused on exploring whether or not church members would perceive an increase in the Christian *ethos* of their pastor if it did, in fact, increase. Table 4.4 shows the data for this inquiry. This data was gathered through the distribution and collection of a pre-intervention (see Appendix G) and post-intervention questionnaire (see Appendix H) from the board members who serve the congregations of each participating pastor. I also included in this table the frequency and extent of each pastor’s engagement in the journey. The local church boards represented in this study range in size from three to ten laypeople, with most having five to seven members.

The findings revealed in Table 4.4 are perplexing. I averaged the ratings for all board members from each church to come up with the numbers. In six of twelve cases, church boards thought that the love for God in their pastors actually decreased after the six-month preaching journey. Since two of the twelve boards rated their pastor with no perceived increase or decrease in love for God, only a mere four of the twelve boards believed there was some increase in their pastor’s love for God at the end of the intervention. The average for all church boards represented remained the same with a rating of 8.8 both before and after the journey.

Table 4.4. Congregants' before and after Ratings of Christian Ethos in Their Pastor

Pastors	Love for God	Love for People	Frequency/Extent of Use %
A	8.3/7.8	8.4/7.9	61-80/81-100
B	8.6/8.3	8.9/8.5	61-80/61-80
C	8.7/8.6	9.7/8.8	81-100/81-100
D	9.8/9.9	9.8/9.9	81-100/61-80
E	9.5/9.3	8.5/9.5	41-60/81-100
F	8.1/8.1	7.6/8.3	81-100/81-100
G	9.3/9.2	9.3/9.5	61-80/41-60
H	9.5/8.8	9/9	61-80/81-100
I	7.1/7.5	7.1/6.9	61-80/81-100
J	8/9.2	7.8/9	61-80/61-80
K	8.6/9.8	8.8/10	81-100/81-100
L	9.5/9.5	9.5/9	81-100/61-80
Group Avg.	8.8/8.8	8.7/8.9	70/81

Board members' ratings of the love for people they perceived in their pastor were not much better. An increase is evident in the overall combined average of only .2 points from 8.7 before to 8.9 after the journey. In five of twelve cases, board members rated their pastor lower in the category of love for people after the six-month period than before. Only six of twelve church boards believed their pastor experienced any increase at all in love for people and one church board did not perceive any change at all in their pastor. Only three church boards perceived in their pastor an increase in the areas of both love for God and love for people (Pastors D, J, and K).

The lack of correlation between the increase in Christian *ethos* the pastors experienced and the inability of congregants to perceive it was discouraging at first until I read board member responses to the open-ended question at the top of the post-intervention questionnaire for board members. The question is stated as follows: "Have

you noticed any observable changes in your pastor and his preaching over the past six months? If so, describe those changes.” Many of these board members already felt positively about their pastor’s preaching and Christian *ethos*. Some wrote statements such as, “I have not noticed a big change; he has always been a good preacher in my opinion.” The fact that board members did not perceive a change in their pastor’s Christian *ethos* may suggest that many of them already felt positively about their pastor’s love for God and for people. The range of ratings of their pastor’s Christian *ethos* before the journey from eight to ten for 75 percent of the church boards represented would support this observation.

A few board member responses to this open-ended question revealed some underlying tensions between board members and their pastors. One board member commented, “[Pastor] seems to go into fits ... as though he is just trying to meet a specific goal and not following the lead of God.... He has issues sometimes with some people and seems often to have a control issue.” Perhaps objectivity is impossible for church members when it comes to assessing the preaching of their pastor. There are so many other ways outside of the preaching event that a local church pastor relates to his or her people, for better or for worse.

Table 4.5 is a summary, through content analysis, of board member responses to the open-ended question from the post-intervention questionnaire (see Appendix H). The most prevalent response from board members was that twenty-seven noted “no change” in the preaching of their pastor throughout the six-month journey. This type of comment, again, was not usually an indicator of a board member’s disappointment with the preaching of their pastor, only an admission that no perceptible change was evident.

The next two highest concentrations of comments had to do with Christian *ethos*, “love for God” and “love for people.” Fourteen board members mentioned a heightened love for God they perceived in their pastors with words such as, “full of the Spirit,” “inspired,” and “growing.” Twelve board members mentioned the increased love for people they perceived in their pastors with the following descriptors: “compassion,” “urgency for souls,” “encouraging,” and “more loving.” Board member responses to this open-ended question does, in fact, correlate with participating pastors’ profession of increased Christian *ethos* in ways that the ten-point Likert scale ratings did not correlate.

The last three categories were somewhat of a surprise. Twenty-two board member responses were more focused on the preaching than the preacher (i.e., Christian *ethos* of their pastor). Eleven noted that their pastor seemed better prepared to preach. “He seems more relaxed and experienced in his preaching.” Similar comments were sprinkled throughout including, “he preaches with more clarity,” “his preaching seems more organized,” and “he seems more intentional and focused.” The other eleven changes observed by board members involved homiletic skills as well. Six of these board members noted an overall improvement in the preaching of their pastor with general comments such as, “He has gotten better.” Five board members mentioned that the grasp and use of Scripture they perceived in the sermons of their pastor had improved. They used words such as, “depth,” “more bible-based,” “understanding,” and “wisdom” to describe the preaching of their pastor.

Table 4.5. Changes Observed by Congregants in Participating Pastors

Categories	n
No change	27
Love for God	14
Love for people	12
Better prepared	11
Overall improvement	6
Use of Scripture	5

The Correlation between Cultivated and Perceived Ethos

I anticipated with Research Question #3 that a correlation would exist between the cultivation of Christian *ethos*, assessed by the participating preachers, and the perception of Christian *ethos*, affirmed by the board members who observed the participants. My hypothesis was that if the preaching journey increased the Christian *ethos* of the participating pastors, the board members would sense it, too.

Table 4.6 shows the relationship between the ten-point Likert-scale responses of the pastors and the congregants before and after the journey. The pastors' ratings are first, followed by the congregants' ratings. In order to observe if a correlation exists, the pastors' before and after ratings of love for God and for people were compared to the ratings of their church boards in both areas. For example, Pastor A noted an increase in love for God from 7 to 8. His church board observed a decrease from 8.3 to 7.8. Pastor A observed that his love for people increased through the journey from 5 to 8, but his board observed a decrease from 8.4 to 7.9. In this case there is absolutely no correlation between the cultivated and perceived Christian *ethos* of Pastor A.

This lack of correlation is typical throughout Table 4.6. Pastors who felt they experienced an increase in love for God and/or love for people did not usually have board

members who perceived it. Twenty-four points of correlation are possible, twelve in love for God and twelve in love for people. Only nine of twenty-four points of correlation surface in which the pastor and the congregants both agreed, through their Likert scale ratings, that an increase in love for God or love for people was evident. In only three (Pastors D, J, and K) out of the twelve churches represented, the pastor and the congregants agreed that an increase occurred in the overall Christian *ethos* of their pastor in terms of both love for God and for people.

As mentioned previously, a congregation's ability to assess their pastor based entirely upon his or her preaching may be impossible. The fact is, board members work closely with pastors in other venues beyond the worship service and preaching event. They converse in the parking lot, via phone, in board rooms, and during meals in the fellowship hall. Asking congregants to be objective reviewers of their pastor's preaching may be unfair and unlikely.

Table 4.6. Correlation between Pastors and Congregants

Pastors	Pastors		Congregants	
	Love for God	Love for People	Love for God	Love for People
A	7/8	5/8	8.3/7.8	8.4/7.9
B	8/8	8/8	8.6/8.3	8.9/8.5
C	5/7	10/10	8.7/8.6	9.7/8.8
D	7/9	7/9	9.8/9.9	9.8/9.9
E	7/8	8/8	9.5/9.3	8.5/9.5
F	9/10	9/10	8.1/8.1	7.6/8.3
G	10/10	7/9	9.3/9.2	9.3/9.5
H	9/9	8/8	9.5/8.8	9/9
I	7/8	5/8	7.1/7.5	7.1/6.9
J	7/9	7/9	8/9.2	7.8/9
K	5/9	8/10	8.6/9.8	8.8/10
L	9/9	6/9	9.5/9.5	9.5/9
Group Avg.	7.5/8.7	7.3/8.8	8.8/8.8	8.7/8.9

Table 4.5 may actually be a better, more accurate measurement to gauge correlation than Table 4.6. Table 4.5 describes the findings from a content analysis of board member responses to the open-ended question in the beginning of Appendix H. The table shows that twenty-six (fourteen “love for God,” twelve “love for people”) congregants did perceive a heightened sense of love for God or love for people in their pastors as a result of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline. Perhaps Table 4.5 is a more accurate indicator because Table 4.6 shows a comparison of board member ten-point Likert scale ratings before and after the six-month journey. Board members did not likely remember the rating they gave their pastors in the pre-intervention questionnaire (see Appendix I); therefore, the open-ended question may be a better indicator of correlation than a before and after comparison of the Likert scale responses. Still, only

marginal correlation surfaced. Table 4.5 shows that only twenty-six of seventy-five congregants (35 percent) observed an increase in the Christian *ethos* of their pastors. While this data is certainly more promising than the data shown in Table 4.6, there is still only marginal correlation.

Among the participants, Pastor E elaborated most extensively upon this issue of correlation. He wanted to know that the Christian *ethos* that God was cultivating inside of him was being perceived by his congregation, which is precisely what I had hoped for from this project. He wrote of his experience with a certain degree of surprise and disappointment:

I am a bit frustrated. I am working harder and seeing fewer results. Having said that, I do feel a deeper spiritual walk personally with God. The Bible is not just a text book but truly the living word of God. I find myself preaching stronger and feeling I have preached my best. The congregation does not appear to notice any difference in style or depth of the messages being preached. Maybe I should say the folks have not let me know they have noticed any difference. It may also be they know me so well they are waiting to see how long the change will be or if it is just a new thing the preacher is doing.

In his response, this long-time pastor seems to come to the conclusion on his own that the greatest benefit of the journey has been the impact not upon his congregation but upon his relationship with God and preaching joy. He also expresses with candor what many preachers secretly hope—that people will recognize the depth of their pastors' love for God and for them through the blood, sweat, and tears expended in the development and delivery of sermons.

The Impact of the Journey upon Preaching Joy

Research Question #4 assumed that when the preacher stays intimately connected to Christ throughout the homiletic process by engaging in spiritual disciplines, the

preacher will experience a significant degree of preaching joy. If union with Christ produces joy, then the preacher intentionally united with Christ through the process of developing and delivering sermons will inevitably have this joy.

Table 4.7 shows the response of each participant to question 11 on the posttest (see Appendix F). Note that 75 percent of the twelve pastors who participated experienced more than just a moderate increase in preaching joy. None of the participants would say that their joy did not increase at all, and only one participant noted just a slight increase. One of the overall goals of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* was to encourage pastors to join together their devotional life with their homiletic task, their spirituality, and their ministry, together in marital bliss. When pastors abide in Christ through all aspects of ministry, including homiletics, burnout, discouragement, and fatigue are less likely because the joy of Jesus Christ inspires and sustains those who remain in him.

Table 4.7. The Level of Increase in Preaching Joy

Rating	n	%
Not at all	0	
Very little	1	8
Moderate	2	17
Significant	7	58
Very significant	2	17

Two other questions on the posttest helped me to assess whether or not participating pastors experienced an increase in preaching joy as a result of the six-month journey. Question 19 asks participants to rate their joy before the journey on a scale of 1-

10, and Question 20 invites them to describe their level of joy in preaching after the six-month journey on the same scale. The before and after responses from each participant is listed in Table 4.8. The first number is the rating before the journey and the second number is the rating following the journey. The frequency and extent of use percentages are also included to see if a relationship exists between the level of engagement in the journey and the level of preaching joy among each participant.

Table 4.8. The Level of Preaching Joy before and after the Journey

Pastors	Preaching Joy	Frequency/Extent of Use %
A	6/8	61-80/81-100
B	7/9	61-80/61-80
C	6/10	81-100/81-100
D	7/9	81-100/61-80
E	7/8	41-60/81-100
F	9/10	81-100/81-100
G	7/9	61-80/41-60
H	9/9	61-80/81-100
I	7/9	61-80/81-100
J	8/9	61-80/61-80
K	8/9	81-100/81-100
L	9/9	81-100/61-80
Group Avg.	7.5/9	70/81

As Table 4.8 indicates, every participant experienced an increase in preaching joy except for Pastor H, whose joy was very high before he started the journey and did not diminish through the six-month intervention. The person with the most significant increase was Pastor C, whose level of preaching joy jumped up four points as a result of

the journey. Moreover, he is one of the three participants, along with Pastors F and K, who was most committed to the process, as highlighted by the frequency/extent of use percentages. Pastor C said at the debriefing retreat at the conclusion of the six-month journey, “I used to feel like preaching was just a job, but now it’s much more.”

The most consistent positive feedback I received from participants through monthly e-mails and at our debriefing retreat had to do with their heightened sense of preaching joy. I had in mind a variety of goals for this project but chief among them was the hope that most, if not all, of the participants would be overwhelmed with the joy of preaching, as many were in the early days of their preaching ministry. One of the participants wrote halfway through the journey, “I continue to find this journey to be refreshing and invigorating.... I am enjoying the process and find that I want to spend more time in study, reflection, and prayer.” Another pastor wrote about the process:

My preaching life has been restored. I truly admit that, as an older pastor, I was becoming stale, resting on my previous study and knowledge without looking for something new.... Taking this trip with you has been a revitalization of my preaching.

Still another exclaimed, “I’ve always enjoyed Sunday mornings, but now there is an element of continued excitement to the getting ready for the event, which wasn’t always there in the past.” Connection to Christ through the homiletic process revitalizes and renews preaching joy.

Constructive Feedback about the Journey

While every one of the twelve participating pastors expressed gratitude in taking part in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline and in benefitting from the journey, several participants offered points of constructive criticism concerning the journey.

Half of the participants mentioned in their monthly feedback that the model (see Appendix D) for A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline was too time consuming to use extensively every week because of other life and ministry demands upon their time. Three of the twelve participants were bi-vocational pastors, which meant they worked at another job in addition to serving their congregations. One of these bi-vocational pastors confessed the following:

Pouring myself into the model has taken longer than I expected.... Knowing how long it took for the entire model last week (32 hours), has me concerned that I am just trying to accomplish the goals instead of allowing God to speak through His word to me.... I need to be careful not to get caught in the trap of completing the model, but missing what the Spirit would say to the church.

His criticism is a valid one, especially for a bi-vocational pastor.

Another criticism of the journey was that it required the writing of a complete manuscript in Movement 4 of the model. Three participants mentioned how the writing of the manuscript seemed awkward and daunting. One wrote, “As I use a manuscript to preach I find myself more immobile while preaching.” Participants were not required to preach from the manuscript they wrote and I even encouraged them to preach from just an outline or no notes at all. However, I do recognize the temptation to preach word for word from a manuscript once it is created.

One of the twelve pastors, Pastor F, indirectly suggested one of the main issues with A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline. As I read through his monthly comments, I could not find any reflections on his part concerning how the journey impacted his Christian *ethos*. Although he was one of three participants who claimed to utilize the model most frequently and extensively, I could not observe from his comment the significance of the journey upon his life and ministry. As I read through his monthly

feedback several times, I began to surmise that the reason why the journey did not seem to get into his soul was due to the fact that he had already planned out six months of mostly topical sermons and, on multiple occasions, he even utilized sermon starter resources in which the outlines and main point of his sermons were already selected for him. Participating pastors were asked not to preach topically, but this pastor disregarded my guidance. One of his board members noticed this pastor's use of sermon starter materials and wrote, "I believe he has been using 'prepared' sermons and expounding upon those to make them fit our particular situation." The criticism of the model, then, which I prepared participants for in the "Helpful Guidelines" of the model (see Appendix D), is that this journey cannot be fully experienced or enjoyed through topical preaching, especially preaching that makes use of prepackaged sermon starters. This type of preaching will eliminate the joyful surprise of the journey described by one of the participants who observed, "Honoring this process means I must be willing to follow scripture to places I did not necessarily want to go that particular week." "Honoring the process" enabled the majority of participants to experience the journey as just that, a journey.

Major Findings of the Study

Based on the data examined, I present these major findings of the study:

1. A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline gave participating pastors a renewed sense of preaching joy and passion that several of them confessed had diminished over the years of their ministry.
2. A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline did cause all participating pastors to sense an observable increase in their Christian *ethos*.

3. Several of the participating pastors and congregants observed that the six-month journey helped the pastors appear better prepared and equipped to preach.

4. Only marginal correlation occurred between the cultivation of Christian *ethos* in the preachers and the perception of Christian *ethos* in the preachers by congregants.

Chapter 5 focuses on examining these findings in light of the biblical and theological foundations reviewed in Chapter 2 and exploring their implications for ministry today.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to take participants on A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline that would increase their Christian *ethos* and preaching joy as a result of staying connected to Christ by engaging in spiritual disciplines throughout the homiletic process. The journey, by and large, hit this mark for participants, as indicated by the findings in Chapter 4. The participants experienced joy in the journey through intentional engagement with the God who called them to preach.

In this chapter I evaluate and interpret the major findings listed at the end of Chapter 4. The first two findings were expected and hoped for outcomes while the last two findings were more serendipitous.

Evaluation and Interpretation of the Major Findings

Several important insights for the ministry of preaching have surfaced from this study.

Renewal of Preaching Joy

The impetus for this project was the lack of preaching joy that I sensed in my life and in the lives of many pastoral colleagues. While not everyone who preaches may be actually called by God to preach, a burning conviction inside of me insists that those who are called by God to preach should experience joy in the fulfillment of that calling. As the literature review of Chapter 2 shows, Augustine addresses the depression of preachers in much the same way. He advises the preacher that to remain “in harmony with God’s will,” or fulfilling the calling from God to preach, can “relieve that feeling of depression” (*On Christian Teaching* 48).

The problem, which I outline in Chapters 1 and 2, is that too often the homiletic calling is divorced from the One who called the preacher to preach. That is, preaching becomes a task to be checked off the to-do list, much like a list of household chores, instead of a calling from God that flows out of an intimate relationship with him. When preaching becomes a technical, rhetorical task and not a spiritual, devotional fulfillment of a calling from God, the preacher's preaching joy is diminished.

This diminishing joy was occurring in the lives of several participants in this study before the journey. They were ready to quit or were simply coasting along, certainly not putting the time, energy, and, most of all, prayer into their calling from God to preach. This journey renewed their joy as Tables 4.7 and 4.8 indicate (pp. 99-100). Participants began to experience the preaching text for the week as an opportunity to develop a deeper relationship with God. God and their relationship with him was the most integral part of their weekly homiletic rhythm. If they stuck with the model, they were, in a sense, forced to stay connected to Christ throughout the homiletic process. The importance of the preacher's intimate connection to the God who called the preacher to preach was obvious centuries ago for people such as the Apostle Paul, Augustine, and Wesley, but in today's culture that too often values technique, rhetorical skill, and eloquent communication over Christian integrity and spiritual depth, the preacher's relationship with God does not seem all that pressing a matter.

The participants' preaching joy was renewed. No doubt exists in my mind that this increased joy was attributable to the connection between the preacher and Christ that the journey fostered so intentionally. Abiding in Christ is the avenue to joy for the preacher who wants to know Christ and make him known. At the end of a passage in

which Jesus invites followers to abide in him, to stay connected to him as a branch stays connected to the vine, he says, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11). In other words, Jesus promises that those who abide in him will have joy. One of the premier goals of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline was to give preachers a tool that would facilitate their abiding in Christ and result in renewed joy. Based upon participant feedback through monthly e-mails, phone conversations, and the posttest, the journey had its intended impact.

I suspect, based upon my ministry experiences and countless conversations with other pastors, that burnout among clergy is not caused mostly by overwork and physical exhaustion, though these are factors to be sure. Burnout is mostly caused by trying to meet the demands of service to Christ without being connected to Christ. Burnout is not the only monster that surfaces in these circumstances; so does moral failure. Because most preaching pastors are developing and delivering at least forty or so sermons each year, perhaps a model like A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline is necessary to keep the preacher growing in Christ and, therefore, full of joy. Intimate connection to Christ is, in my estimation, the best prevention plan for clergy burnout and moral failure.

The journey renewed joy in one of the participants who was thinking about retirement, perhaps a sign of diminished preaching joy. He decided, after the journey, that he had “a few more years to offer to the Lord.” Some mentioned that they couldn’t wait for Sunday so they could preach; there was an excitement brewing in them to proclaim the good news of the text they were going to preach. Preaching, for the twelve participants, was taken out of the category of “tasks to be tackled” and put into the

category of “a time to journey deeper into Christ.” This renewed focus, I assert, was their joy.

Increased Christian Ethos

The main power of Christian preachers comes not from their rhetorical cleverness or skill but from their relationship with God. This relationship was the power of the Apostle Paul’s preaching, although he preached in a context of people who, much like people today, tended to crave good technique over Christian *ethos* in the preacher. As the biblical theology in Chapter 2 indicates, Paul would not compromise and cheapen the Christian message of the cross by giving it a backseat to the cultural standards of rhetoric when the two were incongruent. In other words, Paul’s relationship with Christ was the primary power of his homiletics. I created *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* to help preachers return to where the power for preaching is found—in Christ and in the love for God and for people that flows out of the preacher’s connection to Christ.

Every participant noted an increase in their love for God and/or their love for people as a result of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*. When the preacher is intimately connected to Christ, the fruit of Christ’s joy, as mentioned above, and Christ’s love will be flowing into and out from the preacher. Christian *ethos*, which I defined as love for God and love for people, is the inevitable outcome as the preacher relates and submits to Christ.

Pastor I was having problems relating to people, loving people in his congregation. He felt that the journey really increased his love for his people; he confessed to being an introvert by nature and a strong leader who can often run over

people. This journey, which incorporated prayer for congregants at several points in the model, softened this pastor's heart toward his people as he noted, "The model causes me to interact more with my people in a pastoral manner." Many Christians have discovered that praying for people increases one's love for them. Those who pray hope that their prayers for others will impact the latter. However, more often those prayers have an even greater impact upon those who do the praying—their love increases for those on whose behalf they pray.

All participants noted, in their monthly feedback and/or on the posttest, that they were growing spiritually. Spiritual growth will, necessarily, increase Christian *ethos*. The more the preacher grows up spiritually, the more that preacher will love God and love people. This emphasis on love was an essential and repeated teaching in the ministry of Jesus and one that shows up throughout the Bible in the form of what has been called the *Golden Rule*.

Better Prepared to Preach

Consistent homiletic structure and discipline, coupled with devotional intimacy with God, enabled preachers to sense and come across with more confidence, depth, precision, and focus in their preaching. Tables 4.3 and 4.5 (pp. 89, 95) support this connection between spiritual and homiletic discipline. When mentioning the most significant impact of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline*, four of the twenty-six comments (15 percent) made by participating pastors focused on homiletic skill. Moreover, the monthly feedback from pastors including comments such as "better prepared," "I now have a structure for sermon preparation," and "my sermons are more precise."

Congregants also sensed that participants seemed better prepared and equipped to preach than usual during the six-month journey. This perception is highlighted in Table 4.5 (p. 95) which indicates that twenty-two of seventy-five board members (29 percent) in the twelve participating churches commented about the apparently increased readiness to preach they perceived in their pastors. I did not anticipate this point of correlation. I assumed that participants were already equipped to probe a biblical text exegetically and homiletically, and that Christian *ethos* was the greater lack. I also assumed that *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* might so encourage spiritual discipline that participants might be tempted to neglect the disciplines of exegesis and hermeneutics. However, spiritual discipline actually fostered homiletic discipline.

A number of the participants seemed as appreciative of having a guide for homiletic discipline as they were to have a guide for spiritual discipline. Perhaps this is unique to Wesleyan pastors. The Wesleyan denomination does not require seminary for pastors, and many have not even graduated from college. A number of the participants in this study entered into pastoral ministry as a second career. The Wesleyan Church requires six courses before a pastor is licensed to preach and twenty-four courses before a pastor is ordained. Most of the time, second career pastors take these courses through correspondence or through one-week intensives called FLAME or Equipping for Ministry. Wesleyan pastors could come through the licensing and ordination process without ever exploring or developing a thorough method for their homiletic practice. While the journey provided a helpful structure, it also accentuated the lack of homiletic training that one pastor felt when he wrote, "I have also become somewhat frustrated with the contextual work and the theological reflection [of the model], mostly because I

lack the formal training in some of these areas.” This *lack* is something the Wesleyan Church must remedy.

Study and spiritual devotion, which I assert should be one and the same, create a confidence in the preacher that comes across in the preaching event. Participants took the journey seriously and were able to connect with the Scripture text at a deep level because they did the exegetical digging from movement 1 but also because they stayed engaged to God in prayer throughout the process. When a preacher stands to preach, after considerable reflection and prayer concerning the text to be proclaimed and the people who will hear it, he or she has a confidence, focus, and intensity that becomes evident to the preacher and often, as this study reveals, to the people to whom the good news is proclaimed.

My model’s ability to heighten the homiletic skills of participants was a serendipitous discovery in my study. I was looking for an increase in Christian *ethos* and, while it was cultivated by preachers and perceived by about 30 percent of the congregants (see Table 4.5, p. 95), the journey actually increased the homiletic credibility of the preacher as well. Preacher and people sensed a heightened level of preparedness to preach. Perhaps these findings suggest that too many pastors wait until too late in the week to start engaging the text and have to prepare a sermon out of thin air. Perhaps many pastors are just not sure where to begin the weekly homiletic journey, as well as how to develop a message that contains depth of insight about the Scripture text, the human condition, and, most of all, God. While every preacher must work in conjunction with the Holy Spirit to find a preaching voice and homiletic method, having a starting point and overall guide for the journey would be beneficial. The conclusion may be that

the Wesleyan Church is unleashing pastors to preach before the latter are given adequate tools to prepare them for preaching.

Pastors often feel as if they do not have enough material to preach, so they are tempted to run to Internet resources, worn-out illustrations from the past, or a bunch of other ancillary Scripture passages to proof text the main passage. Several participants mentioned that starting the journey early in the week and prayerfully meditating upon and studying the passage left them with so much material that they had to decide what to keep and what not to use. One of the participants notes, “I have not been relying on illustrations from books or the Internet,” and, “This last month’s [use of the model] helped me stretch a passage of Scripture from one message to three. Personally, I have grown using your model as I ask myself questions and discover meanings [in the Scripture text] which I may not have found ‘just preparing a message.’” Use of the model generated much homiletic material from which participants could preach.

Marginal Correlation

Some correlation surfaced between the increase in Christian *ethos* the participants sensed and congregants perceived. This correlation was more evident in Table 4.5 than Table 4.6 (pp. 95, 97). However, the correlation was not as strong as I had hoped for and anticipated. Perhaps reflecting on some of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 will provide guidance in discovering the reasons for this phenomenon.

Chapter 2 highlighted how Wesley’s Christian *ethos* had an impact upon people, sometimes before they even heard him speak a word. This example from Wesley’s preaching led me to believe that Christian *ethos*, if it really exists in the preacher, can be sensed by those who see and hear the preacher. The contexts for the participants of this

study and for Wesley are quite different. Those mentioned in the literature review who were struck by Wesley's Christian *ethos* were hearing him for the first time. Unlike congregants in present-day local churches, those who observed Wesley were not disappointed by his decision to go from one to two services on Sunday, or to use a questionable video clip with his sermon, or to change the worship music style from traditional to contemporary. Perhaps people who have not experienced the preacher as their pastor can more easily assume Christian *ethos* in the one who is preaching. This is not to say that Wesley did not have a high level of Christian *ethos* or that local church pastors should not be expected to have a high level of Christian *ethos*. I just want to suggest that living among people daily as a local church pastor, as opposed to an itinerant preacher, will inevitably produce at least some degree of conflict between pastor and congregants. The likelihood of conflict will influence how the latter views the Christian *ethos* of the former.

The literature review of Chapter 2 also notes how the Apostle Paul's spiritual power and Christian *ethos* was not always apparent to those to whom he preached. Although he loved God and people so much that he was willing to risk the dangers of travel and of offending various groups with the message of Christ crucified, Jewish and Gentile listeners were not typically impressed with Paul. Scripture records a few instances, especially in Acts, where Paul was beat up or thrown out of the synagogue when he preached. Clearly, not everyone recognized the Christian *ethos* with which Paul preached.

Congregants do not always recognize the Christian *ethos* cultivated by the Spirit perhaps because they do not always have the openness to the Holy Spirit to discern it. In

1 Corinthians 2:14, after Paul expounds his preaching theology, which I explore in the literature review, he writes, “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Paul is asserting, rather forcefully, that people who have the Holy Spirit will recognize the Holy Spirit in Paul and his message. I realize the danger for preachers to think that any person who does not support them is obviously not being led by the Spirit. Often, people do not sense Christian *ethos* of the Holy Spirit in their preacher because their preacher is more carnal than spiritual, especially when that preacher views homiletics as a rhetorical, technical task instead of a spiritual, devotional discipline. However, the point is well-taken that the Christian *ethos* of the preacher will not be evident by the congregant unless a profound openness to the Holy Spirit occurs in both.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

Something much more significant than a dissertation project took place from the opening retreat with participants in August 2008 to the debriefing retreat in March 2009. Thirteen pastors, including myself, went on a journey that reignited a passion and joy in each of us to know and make Christ known through our preaching. Tables, charts, and graphs could never fully capture the impact of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline upon the participants. They experienced spiritual growth, increased Christian *ethos*, renewed joy, and a helpful guide to prepare them both spiritually and homiletically for the preaching event.

Another significant strength of this project was that the journey gave participants a chance to reflect upon their preaching and to do it, to some extent, in a safe community

with other pastors. This journey forced me and the participants to reflect often and deeply about Christian preaching, in terms of its theology, goals, and practice, in the context of community.

Because so much of a preaching pastor's time is devoted to developing and delivering sermons, likely between ten to fifteen hours each week for most, the pastor who engages homiletics as more than just a rhetorical, technical task but as a spiritual, devotional opportunity to love God and love people is bound to grow spiritually. One of the problems this journey sought to address was the very real divide the pastor feels between devotional and homiletic readings of Scripture. Many pastors view these as incompatible, like oil and water. This problem began to surface with the scientific empiricism of the Enlightenment that postulated that in order to explore, observe, and evaluate something thoroughly and accurately, such as the meaning of a biblical text, the scriptural scientist must keep personal spirituality separated from the process. I discuss this phenomenon briefly in the literature review.

A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline addresses this unnecessary divide. One pastor commented after the first month of the journey, "I thank you for helping me in the area of accepting that my personal devotions may and can be part of sermon preparation.... The guilt I felt from doing this in the past was shown to be false." Encouraging participants to combine their devotional lives with their homiletic practices not only gives preaching a renewed depth and richness but also fosters opportunities for preachers to grow as persons through consistent connection to Christ.

Several noteworthy weaknesses to this project are apparent. One of the potential weaknesses was the inclusion of board members from each church in this study. Their

feedback was neither necessary nor fruitful to the overall aim of the journey, which was to increase the Christian *ethos* and preaching joy of participating pastors. The Christian *ethos* of the preacher may or may not be evident to some, or most, congregants. Perhaps another more accurate tool needs to be created to solicit objective feedback from congregants concerning the preaching of their pastors during or after the journey. The pressing question that comes out of this project is whether congregants really can be expected to discern Christian *ethos* in their pastors during the preaching event. I am not sure objectivity is possible among congregants. If it is, better instruments should be developed to measure congregants perceptions than my instruments allowed.

Another weakness is that the participants only had two opportunities to dialogue together, at the opening retreat and the debriefing retreat. Because the participants were spread out geographically, getting together monthly would have been overly challenging. However, participants may have been willing to come together every two months. The group seemed to benefit when this community time was shared. One of the other reasons why I did not have more frequent gatherings for the participants was that I did not want anyone to have their impression of *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* influenced by the impressions of others in the group. This interaction might have skewed the data.

While I believe that the model for the development and delivery of sermons is thorough and that it maintains the necessary homiletic and devotional ingredients for Christian preaching, it was clearly daunting in terms of time and energy. The workload of the preaching model was especially daunting for the bi-vocational pastors who participated. Less necessary exercises within each movement of the model could have

been made optional (i.e., the writing of a complete manuscript). The model, perhaps, could be revised so that it is less daunting in terms of time and yet still maintains the homiletic integrity and devotional intensity that the model was created to foster.

Unexpected Observations

The most significant unexpected outcome of this project is the revelation that even long tenured pastors feel unprepared to preach. My project assumed that participating pastors would enter the six-month intervention with a homiletic structure that guided their weekly rhythm of developing and delivering sermons. If such a structure existed, the participants would have to forego their process to adopt my model. However, for most participants, no such structure existed, even for those who had been preaching for more than ten years. The penultimate goal of this study was to give pastors a homiletic process that would enhance their joy and love through intimacy with Christ. I did not anticipate that the pastors would appreciate having a homiletic guide to their weekly practice of preaching as much as they appreciated the devotional aspects of the model.

During the retreat and debriefing gatherings with the participating pastors, I noted another unexpected outcome. The participants seemed to benefit from an open discussion about the joys, challenges, and other dynamics of preaching. This study brought to the surface an apparent need among pastors, perhaps too often neglected, to reflect together about their homiletic practice.

Recommendations

The participants were so grateful to have a practical and devotional guide for working through their weekly homiletics. Several of them confessed to having a

haphazard approach to developing and delivering sermons. Some mentioned that they never received any training that would guide them in developing a structure for the homiletic process. The Wesleyan Church will need to address this need in order for pastors to be better prepared and equipped to “rightly divide the word of truth.” I plan on making the model for *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* available to all North American Districts of the Wesleyan Church. I will also accept invitations to present the model personally to pastors from districts interested in receiving the training.

Another recommendation to preachers would be to find a group of pastors or lay people with whom they could share their homiletic thoughts. The participants seemed to appreciate and benefit from the conversations they had with me and each other concerning their preaching frustrations, joys, habits, and challenges. Many pastors, especially in smaller churches, feel very alone. If community groups could be facilitated for pastors to dialogue with each other about life and preaching, perhaps fewer pastors would burnout and be inclined to quit ministry.

Clearly, more needs to be written about preaching as a spiritual discipline. As Chapter 2 postulates, not much has been written about this topic. Many books have been written about the nuts and bolts of sermon development and delivery, with perhaps a chapter devoted to the preacher’s relationships with Christ and congregants. Many books have also been written on spiritual disciplines, such as prayer. However, literature that combines solid homiletics with spiritual devotion seems scant, at best. The notion that a preacher can engage preaching as not only a means to help congregants grow but as an avenue to personal spiritual growth seems foreign to preachers who have been taught to keep their preaching ministry separated from their devotional reading of Scripture.

Postscript

The problem I sought to address through *A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline* grew out of my own preaching fatigue and need for renewal. Preaching became for me a rhetorical technique that overshadowed the spiritual discipline it once was in the early days of my ministry. My hunger to engage and be engaged by God through the homiletic process was hijacked by my predominant focus on rhetorical technique and my task-driven propensity. This displaced focus on God eventually diminished for me the joy and spiritual formation inherent in developing and delivering sermons.

A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline is an attempt to recover the paradise lost in the *fall* of many preachers, including my own. One of the participants summed up, with candor and clarity, how the preaching journey has helped in his recovery of the homiletic paradise lost:

I believe that God sent the journey at just the right time for me. I had come far enough down the pastoral preaching road to understand how meager my skills are and how much of what I do has got to be shaped of him if it will bear any lasting fruit. So the journey has shaped and continues to shape me as God's vessel. In my spirit I am humbled to the point that now when I stand before our people I feel that I have received something life giving from God that I have to share with them. And while the journey has brought me closer to the Lord, it has also revealed where I still need so much work.... Yet, as I look back at where I was, I truly rejoice in how God has shaped us through these months.

When the homiletic process becomes for preachers an adventurous devotional journey deeper into Christ, not only are preachers formed in the image of Christ—so are congregations.

APPENDIX A

CRITERION-BASED SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Outstanding preaching is part of the great heritage of the Penn-Jersey District. You are being invited to continue the legacy. I encourage you to take this opportunity to participate in this heart expanding, skill developing investment in your ministry of preaching. You are being invited to an adventure of personal growth.

Harry F. Wood

Name: _____ Church: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Are you the primary preaching pastor in your church?

How many years of experience do you have as the primary preaching pastor in local church ministry?

How long have you been in the local church you presently serve?

1. How satisfied are you with your level of engagement with spiritual disciplines such as praying and fasting throughout the process of developing and delivering sermons?

- Very satisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Moderately dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

2. How important is it for preachers to engage in spiritual disciplines like praying and fasting throughout the process of developing and delivering sermons?

- Very important
- Moderately important
- Somewhat important
- Somewhat unimportant
- Moderately unimportant
- Very unimportant

3. How willing would you be to change your process of developing and delivering sermons for six months and commit to a new practice of preaching that is infused with spiritual disciplines designed to increase your passion for God, for people and for preaching?

- Very willing to commit
- Moderately willing to commit
- Somewhat willing to commit
- Somewhat unwilling to commit
- Moderately unwilling to commit
- Very unwilling to commit

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear

Congratulations! You, along with 14 other preaching pastors in the Penn-Jersey District, have been randomly selected to participate in “A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline.” You were selected from among those who filled out a questionnaire at the 40th Annual Penn-Jersey District Conference. Your participation in this 6 month journey has significant potential to increase your love for the Christ you preach, your love for the people to whom you preach, and your joy in preaching.

As mentioned at District Conference, “A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline” is a project I have developed and chosen for my Doctor of Ministry Dissertation through Asbury Theological Seminary. We will launch this 6 month journey at an orientation retreat on **Thursday, August 28 from 9:00-3:00** at the Penn-Jersey District Office. Munchies and lunch will be provided, along with a limitless supply of coffee!

In order for you to benefit from and participate in this project, your attendance at the retreat is necessary. Please contact me by August 1 to confirm that you received this letter and will attend the retreat on August 28. If you are absolutely unable to attend but really want to participate in the project please contact me as soon as possible. You can contact me by email at laluchetti@verizon.net or by phone at 570-242-6191.

Thank you for your willingness to be stretched in your preaching by adopting a new journey in your weekly homiletic rhythm. Your commitment to this process may not only prove beneficial to your preaching but to other preachers whom I hope will benefit from my dissertation study.

Serving Christ with you,

Lenny Luchetti

PS. You will want to postpone putting together sermon plans and outlines for the Fall, if at all possible, until after our retreat together. This will allow the journey to have its full effect.

APPENDIX C

PRETEST FOR PASTORS

Name: _____

Instructions: Please evaluate the following elements in your preaching as honestly as possible on a scale of 1 (low) – 10 (high) and explain your reason(s) for that evaluation.

1. I engage and experience the homiletic process of developing and delivering sermons as a spiritual discipline that increases my loving connection to God in a manner that causes me to seek His glory and will before my own. I do not engage preaching as merely a technical task that is somewhat disconnected from my relationship with Him and neglectful of spiritual disciplines like, for example, prayer and *lectio divina* (an exercise that helps me to prayerfully listen to the voice of God through Scripture).

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

2. I engage and experience the homiletic process of developing and delivering sermons as a spiritual discipline that increases my loving concern for the people to whom I preach in a manner that causes me to seek their connection to Christ before my own comfort and convenience. I do not engage preaching as merely a technical task that is more focused on impressing or entertaining people than prayerfully interceding for them so that I “speak the truth in love” to them through my preaching.

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

3. I enjoy the challenge of developing and delivering sermons on a regular basis because it allows me an opportunity to faithfully and humbly love God and selflessly love the people to whom I preach. My preaching joy is not derived necessarily from the results of my sermons but from the love for God and for others that I express throughout the homiletic process. Therefore, my level of preaching joy is:

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

APPENDIX D

A JOURNEY IN PREACHING AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Helpful Guidelines

- While the model does not describe the spiritual formation of the preacher outside of the homiletic process, it is assumed. In other words, this spiritual homiletic is not a magic formula that negates the importance of the preacher's formation outside of the homiletic process. The preacher's accumulated thoughts, habits, influences, and experiences will shape the preacher in profound ways, in ways that move well beyond simply weekly routine of preaching.
- It will be nearly impossible to preach a topical sermon with this model because in a topical sermon the preacher has already decided in advance what the text says and how he will use it. In the topical sermon the preacher is not typically led by God through the text but actually controls and, sometimes, distorts the text since it must fit his topic.
- Refrain from running to book or website illustrations until you have spent adequate time prayerfully reflecting upon the text and your personal experiences that surface from it. Try your best to let illustrative material come from your rich life and ministry experiences and observations.
- A good commentary or two should be consulted but only later in the process to check the exegetical credibility of what you sense God is saying to you through the text.
- Enjoy the homiletic process and try your best to see it as a devotional opportunity to be with the God who called you to preach the Gospel.

Movement 1: What is God saying to the original audience through the text? **(Scripture)**

A. Prayerful Preparation: Pray a small portion of Psalm 119 slowly and reflectively. Ask God for revelation and insight into His word. Quiet your soul by sitting before the Lord and allowing him to remind you of his love for you and the important calling he has placed upon your life to preach Christ. Ask God to purify your preaching motives and to spiritually form you through the homiletic process to be the “fragrance of Christ.”

B. Text Selection: Prayerfully select the biblical text to be preached. Be careful to avoid assuming that you already know what God is saying through this text, even if you have preached it before. If you assume the meaning of the text and sermon point at the outset, it will stifle the process of allowing God to speak and it will remove the element of delightful surprise from the homiletic process.

C. Exegetical Insights: Read the preaching text several times, praying for God's guidance, and record your reflections on the following questions that may apply:

- What do you observe about the text as you read it through several times?
- What questions surface regarding the meaning of the text?
- Who is the author and what do you know about him?
- Who is being addressed and what do you know about them?
- What is the historical context (time and place)?
- What light does the literary context (immediate context, book context, canonical context) shed on the text?
- What important words or phrases appear in the text? What do they mean and how are they used (feel free to consult dictionaries at this point)?

D. Playful Imagination: Fast a meal and pray at least 30 minutes for imaginative insight into the text. Read the text slowly verse by verse trying to imagine yourself as an observer of the original scene. Try to see, hear, smell, touch and taste the original scene. In other words, try to prayerfully and even playfully imagine yourself in the original context of the passage through the eyes of the main characters in the biblical text.

E. Theological Reflection: Reflect theologically about the text. How does this text intersect with a Wesleyan theological foundation? How does the text relate to important Christian doctrines like the Trinity, Incarnation, Christology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, Creation, etc.? How might events from Church History and the writings/lives of significant theologians (Athanasius, Augustine, Gregory, Luther, Calvin, Wesley) inform your reading of this text?

F. Text Focus: In no more than one paragraph, record what God is saying through the text to the people who originally received it. This is not the sermon point or sermon idea, which would take into account both the text of Scripture and the context of your congregation. This is simply a summarization of the passage's meaning in its original setting (i.e., Paul is telling the Galatians that it is foolish to look to legalism for what only faith can provide.)

G. Commentaries: Read 2-3 reputable commentaries on your passage. How do these commentaries confirm or challenge your reflections? What do they add to what you already observed about the text?

H. Internalize the Word: Memorize the preaching text (or at least a main portion of it).

Movement 2: What is God saying to me through the text? (Prayer)

A. Lectio Divina: Prayerfully read the text using *lectio divina*. As you do, consider the personal implications of the text for your own life. Consider what God is saying to you through the text. How does the text apply to your relationships with Christ and

others? How does it confirm, challenge, or comfort you? What does it reveal about who Christ is and who you are?

- *Lectio*: Read the text slowly several times inviting God to impress upon you the word, phrase, or sentence from the text that he most wants to speak to you. Record these words.
- *Meditatio*: Reflect on this word or phrase from the text and consider its intersection with your life and with other passages of Scripture. What do you sense God saying to you through this text? Give God some time to speak this word of truth into your life. Be still and let the words from Scripture fill your heart and mind.
- *Oratio*: Write a prayer of response to God in light of what He has spoken to you. This prayer can be one of thanksgiving, confession, or intercession, to name a few. Note any changes or commitments you will make to God as a result of being confronted, convicted, comforted, challenged or confirmed by this biblical text.
- *Contemplatio*: This final step takes one beyond words and into intimacy with God that allows the person to actually experience the grace of the Scripture reality being studied. Don't focus on words or even the sermon, but simply enjoy intimacy with God, resting in His presence as you reflect and worship in images and not words. What do you picture? What images is God allowing to surface?

B. Prayer Walk: Take a prayer walk around the church campus, your neighborhood, or in a nearby park or woods looking and praying for God's glory and for His kingdom to come "on earth as it is in heaven" through the sermon. Also, keep an eye out for physical illustrations that highlight the main thrust of the biblical text.

C. Retro Reflection: Prayerfully and honestly reflect upon why and how you chose this text to preach. What is behind your choosing of it? Are your motives for choosing this text pure? Is there some past, present or future concern that preconditions you to choose this text and/or skews or enhances your reading of this text? What part did God play in your choosing of this passage? In what ways did the meaning of the text surprise you?

Movement 3: What is God saying to the congregation through the text? (Fellowship)

A. Intercessory Reflections and Applications: Spend at least 30-60 minutes praying through the church directory and any special congregational prayer requests, incorporating the preaching text into the prayer time as often as possible. Reflect on how the text might address the joys, sorrows, hopes, hurts, sins, and dreams of people in your congregation, in particular, and of humanity, in general, and pray accordingly. Prayerfully consider how God wants to guide, comfort, or confront the church through this text. What changes might God want to initiate in your church through this text? Be careful to let God's desires for the church, and not merely your own desires and ambitions, determine the application of the text to the congregation you serve. Don't force the text to say more or less than it really says. List the possible sermon applications that result from this intercessory prayer time.

B. Initiate Contact: Initiate contact, by phone call or visit, with 2-3 congregants for spiritual care and directing. If possible, select congregants whose lives may be profoundly addressed by the biblical text and sermon for the coming Sunday. Depending on the circumstances, you may not want them to know that the coming sermon applies to them. This, however, does not prevent you from offering spiritual care to them.

C. Human Feedback (optional): In staff meeting, read the text and ask staff members to reflect upon how the text might intersect with their lives. Ask them to express how the text challenges, comforts, convicts, instructs, etc. (If you don't have a staff, you can do this with a group of pastors, your family, or your friends). Record their reflections, but ensure anonymity. If you want to share one of their reflections, get their permission first.

D. Sermon Function: You have already written out the focus of the biblical text, answering the question "*What did God say to them* (the original recipients)." You also reflected on the question "*What is God saying to me.*" Now, prayerfully consider and write out, in one sentence, the main function of the sermon that will connect the meaning of the text with the context of your congregation. Reflect on the question "*What is God saying to us* (the congregation)." This is a crucial step in the homiletic process that will hold all the parts together as one whole.

E. Illustrations: What stories, images, analogies, people, current events, songs, movies, tv shows, statistics, sports, jobs, animals, etc. might illuminate the sermon function? Have fun brainstorming and listing everything that comes to your mind, even if it seems a bit odd at first. Some of the best illustrations come from our past experiences or from the stories of people in our lives. Make sure the story does not detract from but works to illumine the Word of God.

Movement 4: Prayerfully Put It All Together

A. The Big Picture: Prayerfully complete the "Putting It All Together" worksheet by going back through your notes and listing the most significant reflections that answer the following questions: What is the main sermon function around which everything else will revolve? What are the most significant exegetical insights that highlight the text focus? What other significant theological or personal reflections have surfaced? What illustrations illumine the meaning of the text? What applications accurately flow out of the text and challenge the congregation to embody the reality of the text through their lives and community?

B. Prayerful Pause: Spend 15-30 minutes prayerfully asking God to guide you in ordering the parts of the sermon so that it will most glorify Him, clearly communicate the sermon function, and spiritually form believers. This is where preachers tend to rush things. We have all the parts we want to throw in the sermon, but we must remain

prayerful as we consider whether or not all the parts really fit and how they should be ordered into a seamless flow. Think of the parts of the sermon as a recipe in which some ingredients must come first to prepare the way for later ingredients. Pray for guidance and wisdom on this often overlooked element in the homiletic process.

C. Outline It: Since the hard work has been done, it's time to have fun with the sermon parts, putting them together in a seamless flow. You should have more than enough spiritual sermon fodder than you will actually need. Develop an outline of the parts (i.e., exegetical insights, illustrations, applications, personal and theological reflections), including a one sentence idea for both your introduction and conclusion. Try to maintain conversation with God and keep in focus the intersection of the biblical text with its original audience, your life and your congregants' lives throughout the process.

D. Title It: While the title should have attention-grabbing appeal, it is even more important for the title to be a memorable reminder of the main thrust of the sermon, it's function.

E. Manuscript It (optional): Fill in the outline with a word for word manuscript, allowing your language to paint a picture of the Kingdom of God embodied by the people of God. Do it as if every word choice was a devotional act of worship that comes from a heart of deep love for God and for people.

Movement 5: The Main Event

A. Prayerful Practice: Prayerfully meditate on and practice the sermon in your study or home, not for eloquence but to spiritually reflect upon the message to be shared. Speak it aloud 1-2 times, as if you were preaching it to yourself (since the sermon must impact you before it impacts anyone else).

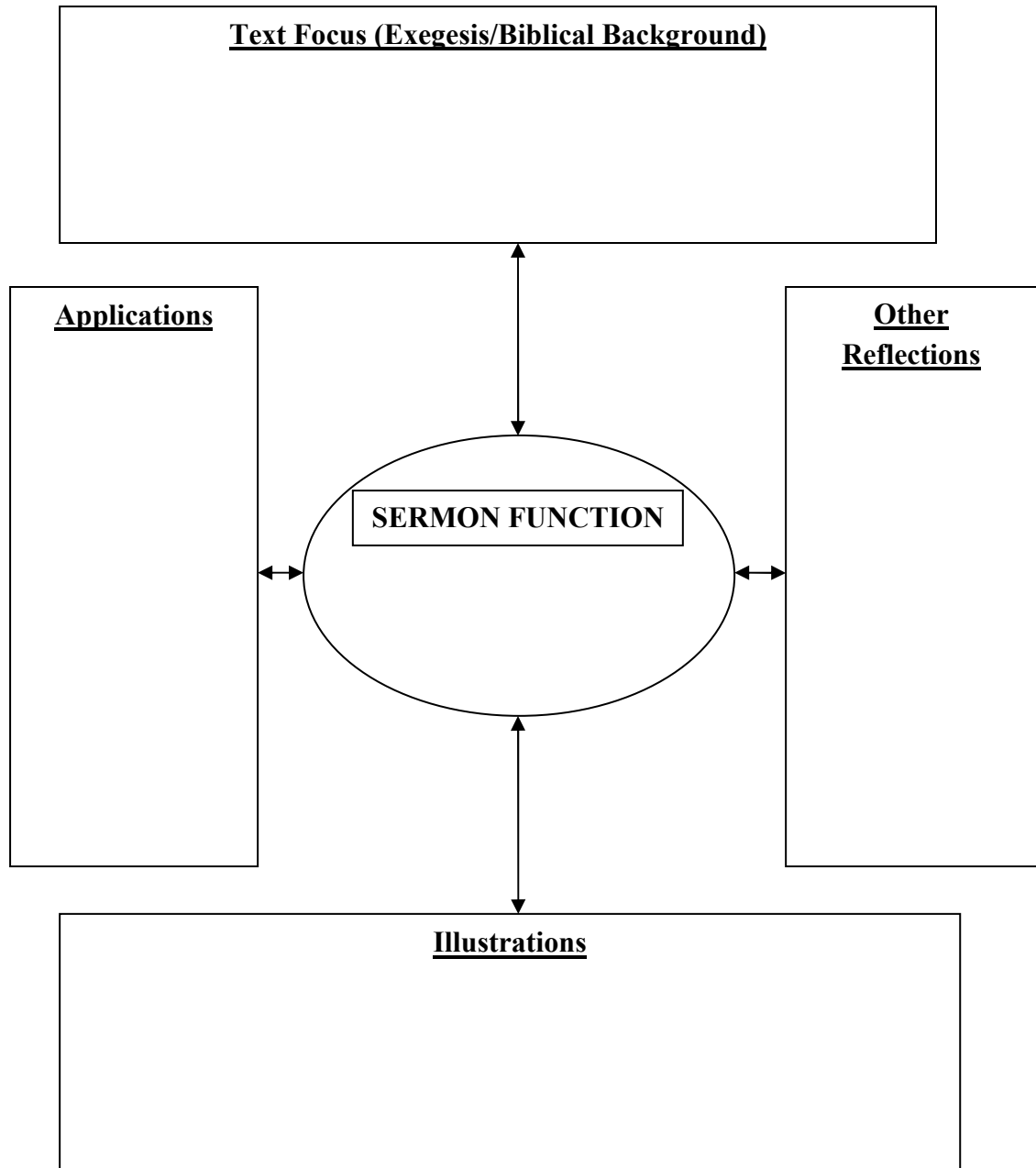
B. Personal Prayer: Pray at the sanctuary altar for personal purity, love, humility, and the ability to incarnate and communicate the sermon through your own life.

C. Intercessory Prayer: Do a prayer walk around the sanctuary, praying for the peoples' receptivity to God's Word and spiritual formation through it.

D. Develop Prayer Teams (2 or more people): Maybe you can delegate the recruiting of these prayer times to someone in your church who is passionate about prayer and its importance. The following teams of people should be recruited and empowered to pray:

- *Pre-Sermon Prayer Team:* to pray with the preacher before the sermon
- *Sermon Event Prayer Team:* to pray during the sermon
- *Post-Sermon Prayer Team:* to be available for prayer with people after the sermon (if no one needs prayer, this team can pray for the impact of God's Word)

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER FORM



APPENDIX E

MONTHLY FEEDBACK TOOL

Name: _____ Date: _____

Monthly E-mail Question: “How has the A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline impacted you and your preaching this month?”

APPENDIX F

POSTTEST FOR PASTORS

Name: _____

In what way has A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline most significantly impacted you and/or your preaching over the past six months:

Instructions: Please evaluate the following elements in your preaching as honestly as possible on a scale of 1 (low) – 10 (high) and explain your reason(s) for that evaluation.

1.) I engage and experience the homiletic process of developing and delivering sermons as a spiritual discipline that increases my loving connection to God in a manner that causes me to seek His glory and will before my own. I do not engage preaching as merely a technical task that is somewhat disconnected from my relationship with Him and neglectful of spiritual disciplines like, for example, prayer and *lectio divina* (an exercise that helps me to prayerfully listen to the voice of God through Scripture).

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

2.) I engage and experience the homiletic process of developing and delivering sermons as a spiritual discipline that increases my loving concern for the people to whom I preach in a manner that causes me to seek their connection to Christ before my own comfort and convenience. I do not engage preaching as merely a technical task that is more focused on impressing or entertaining people than prayerfully interceding for them so that I “speak the truth in love” to them through my preaching.

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

3.) I enjoy the challenge of developing and delivering sermons on a regular basis because it allows me an opportunity to faithfully and humbly love God and selflessly love the people to whom I preach. My preaching joy is not derived necessarily from the results of my sermons but from the love for God and for others that I express throughout the homiletic process. Therefore, my level of preaching joy is:

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

4.) How often did you employ A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline in your preaching over the past six months?

- 0-20% of the time
- 21-40% of the time
- 41-60% of the time
- 61-80% of the time
- 81-100% of the time

5.) When you used A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline over the past six months, how much of the model did you follow?

- 0-20% of the model
- 21-40% of the model
- 41-60% of the model
- 61-80% of the model
- 81-100% of the model

6.) Do you sense any difference between the weeks you followed the model in your preaching and the weeks you did not? If yes, please describe the difference.

7.) Which movement in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline do you think had the most impact upon your preaching?

- Movement 1: What is God saying to the original audience through the text?
- Movement 2: What is God saying to me through the text?

- Movement 3: What is God saying to the congregation through the text?
- Movement 4: Prayerfully putting it all together
- Movement 5: The Main Event

8.) Which movement in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline do you think had the least impact upon your preaching?

- Movement 1: What is God saying to the original audience through the text?
- Movement 2: What is God saying to me through the text?
- Movement 3: What is God saying to the congregation through the text?
- Movement 4: Prayerfully putting it all together
- Movement 5: The Main Event

9.) How has A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline increased your love for God?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Moderate increase
- Significant increase
- Very significant increase

10.) How has A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline increased your love for people?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Moderate increase
- Significant increase
- Very significant increase

11.) How has A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline increased your joy in preaching?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Moderate increase
- Significant increase
- Very significant increase

12.) How often do you plan to incorporate A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline in your preaching in the future?

- 0-20% of the time
- 21-40% of the time

- 41-60% of the time
 - 61-80% of the time
 - 81-100% of the time
- 13.) How much of A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline will you incorporate into your preaching in the future?
- 0-20% of the model
 - 21-40% of the model
 - 41-60% of the model
 - 61-80% of the model
 - 81-100% of the model
- 14.) Which movement(s) in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline will you most likely employ in your preaching in the future (check all that apply)?
- Movement 1: What is God saying to the original audience through the text?
 - Movement 2: What is God saying to me through the text?
 - Movement 3: What is God saying to the congregation through the text?
 - Movement 4: Prayerfully putting it all together
 - Movement 5: The Main Event
- 15.) Before taking A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline the level of my loving connection to God was:
- (low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)
- 16.) After taking A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline the level of my loving connection to God is:
- (low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)
- 17.) Before taking A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline the level of my loving connection to people was:
- (low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)
- 18.) After taking A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline the level of my loving connection to people is:
- (low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)
- 19.) Before taking A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline the level of my joy in preaching was:
- (low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

20.) After taking A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline the level of my joy in preaching is:

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

21.) I used **Movement 1** in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline:

- Never
- Rarely
- Often
- Always

22.) I used **Movement 2** in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline:

- Never
- Rarely
- Often
- Always

23.) I used **Movement 3** in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline:

- Never
- Rarely
- Often
- Always

24.) I used **Movement 4** in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline:

- Never
- Rarely
- Often
- Always

25.) I used **Movement 5** in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline:

- Never
- Rarely
- Often
- Always

26.) What will you change about your practice of developing and delivering sermons as a result of your participation in this journey in A Journey in Preaching as a Spiritual Discipline?

APPENDIX G

PRE-INTERVENTION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BOARD MEMBERS

September 2008

Dear Board Member:

First, I want to thank you for your important service to Christ through your spiritual leadership in your local Wesleyan Church. As a Wesleyan pastor, I know how invaluable it is to have dedicated followers of Christ like you on the Local Board of Administration to assist the pastor and church in fulfilling the Great Commission in the Spirit of the Great Commandment.

I am not only a pastor, but also a doctoral student who is completing a project concerning various elements within Christian preaching. You and your pastor are one of only ten congregations in the Penn-Jersey District of the Wesleyan Church who have agreed to participate in this important study, a study which I pray will enhance the vitality of pastors and churches toward the advance of Christ's kingdom.

Your absolute honesty is extremely important in ensuring the accuracy of my study. Your responses will be kept confidential, which means only I will see your completed form. Your pastor will not see your completed questionnaire. I have asked you to provide the last four digits of your social security number so that I have some way of anonymously identifying you. If you feel more comfortable using your initials please feel free to do so.

You have 15 minutes to complete this form. Please use all of the time allotted to reflect upon and record your responses. When the 15 minutes are up, please pass your form facedown to the vice-chairperson of the board. She/he will then seal it in the envelope I have provided and drop it in a mailbox that evening. Again, no one but me will see those responses.

Thank you for your help with this project that has the potential to significantly guide present and future pastors in the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The magnitude of this study makes it crucially important for you to respond honestly and specifically concerning your assessment of your pastor's preaching.

Loving and serving Christ with you,

Pastor Lenny Luchetti
Senior Pastor, Stroudsburg Wesleyan Church

Last four digits of social security number (to ensure confidentiality): _____

Church Name: _____

Instructions: Please evaluate the following elements in your pastor's preaching as honestly as possible on a scale of 1 (low) – 10 (high) and explain your reason(s) for that evaluation.

1. As my pastor preaches, I sense his loving connection to God in a manner that causes him to seek God's glory and will before his own. I don't sense that he practices preaching as merely a technical task that is somewhat disconnected from his relationship with God and neglectful of spiritual disciplines like prayer and *lectio divina* (reflectively and prayerfully listening to the voice of God through Scripture).

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

2.) As my pastor preaches, I sense his loving concern for the people to whom he preaches in a manner that causes him to seek their connection to Christ before his own comfort and convenience. I do not sense that he engages preaching as merely a technical task that is more focused on impressing or entertaining people than prayerfully interceding for them so that he "speaks the truth in love" for them through his preaching.

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

APPENDIX H

POST-INTERVENTION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BOARD MEMBERS

March 2009

Dear Board Member:

Thank you, again, for participating in this important study by completing a similar form six months ago regarding your pastor's preaching. As you will recall, I am a Wesleyan pastor who is completing a project for my Doctor of Ministry degree concerning various elements within Christian preaching. You and your pastor are one of only ten congregations in the Penn-Jersey District of the Wesleyan Church who have participated in this important study, a study which I pray will enhance the vitality of pastors and churches toward the advance of Christ's kingdom.

Your absolute honesty is extremely important in ensuring the accuracy of my study. Your responses will be kept confidential, which means only I will see your completed form. Your pastor will not see your completed questionnaire. I have asked you to provide the last four digits of your social security number so that I have some way of anonymously matching this form with the one you completed six months ago. If you use your initials last time, please do so again.

You have 15 minutes to complete this form. Please use all of the time allotted to reflect upon and record your responses. When the 15 minutes are up, please pass your form facedown to the vice-chairperson of the board. She/he will then seal it in the envelope I have provided and drop it in a mailbox that evening. Again, no one but me will see those responses.

Thank you for your help with this project that has the potential to significantly guide present and future pastors in the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The magnitude of this study makes it crucially important for you to respond honestly and specifically concerning your assessment of your pastor's preaching.

Loving and serving Christ with you,

Pastor Lenny Luchetti
Senior Pastor
Stroudsburg Wesleyan Church

Last four digits of social security number (to ensure confidentiality): _____

Church Name: _____

Have you noticed any observable changes in your pastor and his preaching over the past six months? If so, describe those changes:

Instructions: Please evaluate the following elements in your pastor’s preaching as honestly as possible on a scale of 1 (low) – 10 (high) and explain your reason(s) for that evaluation.

1. As my pastor preaches, I sense his loving connection to God in a manner that causes him to seek God’s glory and will before his own. I don’t sense that he practices preaching as merely a technical task that is somewhat disconnected from his relationship with God and neglectful of spiritual disciplines like prayer and *lectio divina* (reflectively and prayerfully listening to the voice of God through Scripture).

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

2. As my pastor preaches, I sense his loving concern for the people to whom he preaches in a manner that causes him to seek their connection to Christ before his own comfort and convenience. I do not sense that he engages preaching as merely a technical task that is more focused on impressing or entertaining people than prayerfully interceding for them so that he “speaks the truth in love” for them through his preaching.

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Explain the reason(s) why you chose this rating:

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