

## ABSTRACT

### THE EFFECT OF VIDEO VENUE PREACHING ON CHRISTIAN LIFE TRANSFORMATION

by

Richard Blackburn Gifford

The purpose of this research was to determine whether delivering videocast sermons in a video venue altered the response of hearers when compared to the same sermons delivered live. The seven areas of connection to God, initiation of prayer, reflection on Scripture, generosity with finances, participation in a small group, zeal for personal evangelism, and commitment to service were used as the measures for response.

Data was collected through pretest and posttest interviews of forty-one randomly selected subjects. The independent variable was whether subjects experienced the messages delivered via video or experienced the messages delivered live. The subjects' self-assessed, Likert-scale responses provided quantitative data for the research. Open-ended interview questions provided a means to explore potential effects of intervening variables.

The research found no statistical significance between subjects' responses to videocast messages when compared to live delivery.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
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ON CHRISTIAN LIFE TRANSFORMATION

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Richard Blackburn Gifford

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THE EFFECT OF VIDEO VENUE PREACHING  
ON CHRISTIAN LIFE TRANSFORMATION

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

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

by

Richard Blackburn Gifford

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

#### Personal Observations

I am an eclectic worshipper. As a child, my formative, Christian worship experiences occurred in a rural, southern United Methodist Church. On Sunday mornings, the worship setting was moderately high church. At other worship settings there, the tone was mostly casual and revivalist. Therefore, I appreciate creeds and altar calls. I enjoy classical hymns and four-part gospel harmony. Sometimes I prefer reflective reverence. At other times I prefer lively spontaneity.

The key years of my faith development transpired as a college undergraduate. During that era, I participated in a nondenominational college ministry that emphasized expository biblical teaching and contemporary choruses. That experience added new dimensions to my taste for different worship experiences. Now, I additionally enjoy expressing my praise through new songs. I covet extended times of prayer. I also appreciate thoughtful, biblical exposition and concrete application.

To find one church that offers all of the above—classical, revivalist, reflective, contemporary worship accompanied by expository preaching—is difficult, if not impossible. I have attended churches that have tried “blended worship.” Nevertheless, for me, trying to “blend” all of the above elements into one service diminishes the worship experience to almost nothing. Other churches I have attended experimented with a variety of worship settings at multiple service times. These experiments typically resulted in pastors lamenting being overextended or fragmented congregations deriving from multiple preachers.

Recently, I have experienced large churches that supplement the worship experience by simultaneously displaying video images of the musicians, liturgists, and preachers to large screens—a practice known as image magnification or IMAG. After a brief season of acclimating to that new practice in worship, I found myself engaging with the leaders of the service more frequently via the screens than I did with the leaders themselves. Visually scanning the congregation, I noticed that many participants seemed to prefer engaging with the projected image. The thought occurred to me: If people prefer watching the projected, magnified image of worship leaders and preachers rather than the leaders themselves, one could have multiple worship settings transpiring simultaneously and project the person preaching the message from one of the settings to all of the others. A person preaching the message from one of the settings to all of the others would permit a church to offer multiple worship environments and still benefit from a common message offered by the most gifted communicator(s) in the congregation. This might also contribute to overcoming the fragmentation that occurs with multiple preachers in multiple worship settings. Additionally, it might reduce the perceived overextension of one preacher.

If people would embrace the video projection of the preacher, worship services could be held at multiple locations around a community during prime attendance hours. These services could exponentially increase a church's presence and influence in the community. They could also provide a platform for church planting. In denominations and communities with a shortage of pastors, a videocast preacher would allow churches to remain open that might otherwise close due to the lack of pastoral leadership. A number of challenges facing the twenty-first century Church might be reduced if people

would choose to engage the projected image of a preacher rather than expecting the person to be present.

I soon became aware that I was not the first person to wonder about such things. Not only were others thinking about a videocast sermon presentation, but churches were experimenting with the practice. Most notable among them at the time was North Coast Church in Vista, California, a northern city in San Diego county. North Coast Church not only was implementing the practice, but they had also coined a term for the practice, “video venues,” and were hosting conferences for churches interested in creating peer groups for shared learning regarding the emerging practice.

My casual interest in the possibilities offered by video venues became the motivation for this research. The potential benefits of video venues are becoming increasingly promoted. The rising momentum of the practice appears mostly unexamined regarding its potential cost. Notwithstanding the upside gains, there could be less obvious but critical losses. Just because video venues can be done does not justify that they should be done. That is ultimately a theological issue.

### **Theological Foundations**

The theological and ethical implications of video venues relate to numerous areas of theological study—from the Incarnation in Christology to matters related to church leadership in ecclesiology. Those broader theological implications can be refined to two root concerns: the purpose of preaching and the relationship between preaching and pastoring.

Because of its emerging nature as a *proactive* practice in churches, at the time of this writing no existing research was available regarding the implementation of video



venues. The use of overflow rooms as a response to overcrowded auditoriums has been practiced by churches for many years. Some overflow rooms utilize only audio technology to transmit from the auditorium to the overflow rooms. More recently, some churches have used audio and video technology, however, apparently, most overflow rooms were not seen as a preferred practice. They were viewed more nearly as a necessary, less attractive alternative to the live sanctuary or auditorium. Therefore, nothing has been written about the use of overflow rooms. As a result, the precedents in literature for the study currently rest almost exclusively in theology.

Much has been written about the purpose and practice of preaching. A diversity of opinion exists regarding who should preach, what form a sermon should take, how emotively a sermon should be delivered, and why sermons should be preached. A survey of that diversity is briefly undertaken in the upcoming precedents of this study. This research contended that the purpose of preaching is to clearly present and to exalt the Word of God. Subsequently, this research contended that the function of God's Word is to demonstrate and bring about increasingly holy, regenerate lives among humankind and ultimately to bring about the redemption of all of creation. Therefore, this research sought to measure the effect toward transformed lives of preaching in a video venue setting when compared to the same measures of life transformation influenced by preaching in a live setting.

### **Practitioners of the Video Venue Paradigm**

Apart from the theological precedents, at the time of this writing, the only other literature sources available to serve as foundations for video venues were the practitioner churches themselves. Many higher profile churches in the United States were in the

process of planning to adopt the implementation of video venues; however, the following churches were among the most prominent actually employing them.

### **North Coast Church**

Presently, in North America, the premier church practitioner of the video venue model is North Coast Church in the north San Diego county community of Vista, California. North Coast Church has developed the video venue concept to the level that the church presently hosts a national conference on video venues.

In the North Coast model, twelve worship communities, totaling approximately four thousand adults, gather on one weekend at one of three time slots: 5:45 p.m. on Saturdays, 8:45 a.m. on Sundays, and 10:35 a.m. on Sundays. One worship community, entitled North Coast Live, is characterized by a large, traditional auditorium, choruses sung to adult contemporary accompaniment, and the preacher speaking live. A second worship community meets in a different area of the church's facility. This venue, entitled Video Café, is characterized by a casual atmosphere, pastries, café drinks, and Starbucks coffee, choruses sung to "unplugged" accompaniment, and the message broadcast from the "live" service via large projection screen. A third worship community in another location on campus is entitled Traditions. This venue is a smaller auditorium. Traditional hymns are sung to the accompaniment of a grand piano, and the message is video projected. A fourth on-site worship community is entitled The Edge. This worship environment is characterized by an industrial, club-like atmosphere. Choruses are accompanied in a modern rock style, and the message is delivered via video. The final venue is entitled North Coast @ Roosevelt. This worship community meets in a middle school five miles from the church building. The atmosphere is festival-like. Refreshments

and the gathering of people take place outdoors under colorful tents. The worship service occurs in a multipurpose auditorium. The musical style is adult-contemporary choruses. The message is delivered via video.

North Coast Live, the Video Café, and the Edge take place at all three hours. Traditions meets during the two Sunday morning times only. North Coast @ Roosevelt gathers only at the second Sunday morning time.

North Coast originally implemented the video venue model as an overflow room to address the strains of an overcrowded sanctuary. Their original strategy, the Video Café, was to create an overflow room with rewards. Participants who chose to free up seats in the sanctuary by electing to worship in the overflow were rewarded with the unique atmosphere and refreshments. The church was surprised to discover that many of its members began to *prefer* the video venue. Church leaders testify, “The main video café has become so popular we’ve had to occasionally close the doors and send people into the sanctuary” (Concurrent Worship Options). Each weekend at North Coast Church, attendance in the video venues exceeds attendance in the sanctuary (Starting a Video Venue). The video venue paradigm has become so popular at North Coast Church that they plan to integrate it into the new facility that they are building to accommodate their rapid growth, retaining the options even when they no longer have to do so (Starting a Video Venue: Frequently).

North Coast offers the following rationale for their video venue model. Multiple worship options and venues provide (1) free sanctuary seats where most first-time guests want to go, (2) a small church atmosphere with all the programs and amenities of a large church, (3) an opportunity to target specifically different subgroups and mind-sets, and

(4) more opportunities for significant ministry and leadership (Concurrent Worship Options).

North Coast Church asserts, “People like the amenities that large churches offer, but often feel a lack of intimacy that can accompany them” (Starting a Video Venue). North Coast senior pastor, Larry Osborne, muses, “I have a saying that leaders like big and most people like small. Larger churches, left and right, are finding that once they reach a certain size, they have to find ways to make themselves feel small. It is just easier to connect” (“Cineplex Church”).

The sometimes disunified aura of many churches that offer multiple worship services is not avoidable altogether even in North Coast’s experience. North Coast Church leaders admit that attendance patterns are transient, as with traditional multiple worship service formats (Concurrent Worship Options). Nevertheless, they are discovering that the opportunity for participants at all services to receive the same message from the same teacher is a significant unifying element for the multiple service paradigm.

With regard to generational preferences, the leaders of North Coast Church insist that the demographics are similar across the board. When originally implemented, they expected that video venues would appeal mostly to younger people. They have since discovered that many GenXers and “boomers” choose them as well. The biggest surprise has been the number of senior citizens who attend a video venue on a regular basis. They like the smaller feel, the fellowship and the fact that the music is more unplugged than in the larger (and louder) sanctuary (Starting a Video Venue: Frequently).

In addition, North Coast uses what they describe as a “lecture-lab” model with

their weekend worship communities and their small group communities. The content of the weekend message becomes the focus of discussion, study, and prayer in the weekday small group meetings; thus, increased unity and an increased focus on meaningful relationships are promoted in North Coast's video venue paradigm.

In response to the objection that video venues create separated communities and identities, North Coast leaders reply that video venues promote this separation no more so than multiple services. Prior to implementing video venues—with two services on Sunday and a service on Saturday—North Coast lost the sense of being one big family. Rather than fighting the inevitable, they began celebrating the fact that they were actually a series of different churches meeting at different times and in different venues. They presented the options and separate identities as a good thing, not something to be fought or overcome (Starting a Video Venue: Frequently).

Some have criticized the video venue model on the grounds that a message delivered through video projection is unacceptably impersonal; however, North Coast responds that when a room is adequately filled to create a worshiping community, people respond to the message in the same way they would a live worship service. A group must be large enough to worship and the room must be a little more than half-way filled or many will be hesitant to enter into worship.

As evidence of the personal interaction between the pastor and the video venue congregation North Coast leaders cite that the pastor asks a fair number of rhetorical questions in his sermons. He often asks for a show of hands and other forms of audience participation. One of the tell-tale signs that the video venue works is that the people watching the screen respond. They raise their hands and answer the screen (Starting a

Video Venue: Frequently).

In the sense of the broader community, North Coast offers a much sought-after alternative to the disconnected atmosphere that characterizes many urban and suburban communities in North America. One North Coast member is quoted as saying, “It’s kind of like neighborhoods within a community, yet under the same leadership” (“Cineplex Church”).

In a recent feature on PBS’s Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, attendees at North Coast Church confess the following:

We just find the variety is great. Because you can bring different family members. And, if you’ve got a mom or dad that are older, they want to be in “Traditions.” You can break off, the kids going here, the parents going there, and brother can go to “The Edge” then still meet up in the plaza. (“Cineplex Church”)

Another North Coast attendee insists, “You’re sharing together in a body of differences and you are celebrating that” (“Cineplex Church”).

North Coast Church does not design worship communities around groups that are not presently a part of their body. Instead, they target those within and on the fringe of their existing ministry (Concurrent Worship Options).

Because North Coast Church leads the way in video venues as a practitioner and teaching church, what is cited above is a significant representation of what has been written about video venues. Nevertheless, additional churches in the United States and around the world are employing and helping to advance the practice.

**Additional Churches Implementing the Video Venue Paradigm**

Although North Coast Church is the highest profile church in North America making comprehensive use of the video venue paradigm, a growing population of

congregations is adapting the paradigm to their unique settings. Heartland Church in Rockford, Illinois, a church with a worshipping congregation of about two thousand, has no person on staff whose primary responsibility is to preach. Rare weekends provide a live message delivered at Heartland.

This church provides a unique context to foreshadow the significant, complex relationship that exists between video venues, preaching, and pastoral theology. Heartland does not have a preacher on staff. As a result, some could, and possibly would, contend that Heartland does not have a pastor on staff. Alternatively, others could contend that pastoring does not necessarily include preaching. This research is made complex by that real but problematic relationship.

Heartland has grown from a new church plant to a congregation of approximately two thousand in five weekend services. At Heartland Church, the sermon is a videotaped message from one of the teaching pastors at Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago.

In addition to their relationship with Heartland Church, Willow Creek has developed a regional ministry in the Chicago area where the weekend message is broadcast live to congregations worshipping in the communities of Wheaton and Chicago's North Shore.

North Point Community Church, in Alpharetta, Georgia, has implemented the video venue model on a distinct, grand scale. North Point is presently a congregation that hosts approximately twelve thousand participants in worship on a weekend. The congregation outgrew its original auditorium in the spring of 2000. In order to address the need for additional space, the congregation chose to build an additional, identical

auditorium where the chancel area of the new auditorium backed up to the existing chancel area. Instead of building a six thousand seat auditorium to replace their existing two thousand seat auditorium, the congregation built another two thousand seat auditorium. The two worship communities experience identical worship services led by separate live musicians and worship leaders while the message is delivered via videocast from one auditorium to the other.

Internationally, Yong Ye Do Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, the world's largest congregation, utilizes satellite technology to broadcast the message of its pastor to multiple live worship sites throughout the city. This Korean church first implemented the venue concept in the early 1970s. The church was unable to accommodate the crowds seeking to attend. The church's urban setting prohibited the construction of ever expanding auditoriums. Therefore, smaller congregations were established around the city of Seoul, and the *entire service* was transmitted by satellite to the smaller congregations. Over time, many of the congregations have developed their own services; however, the preached message is still transmitted from the mother church.

Congregations of a variety of sizes are now beginning to experiment with the video venue model. Some are implementing it to address space restrictions, others are implementing it in order to create diversity and intimacy. A few are trying it solely because it appears to be the "next big thing." Regardless of motivation, the video venue paradigm is gaining momentum and appears to have staying power.

### **Selected Concerns Regarding Video Venues**

The initial success of video venues in attracting and retaining a crowd is indisputable. The video venue paradigm is "doable" and is being implemented well, as



demonstrated by the churches mentioned above. Although it *can* be done, many debate whether it *should* be done.

The diverse objections levied against the video venue paradigm ultimately fall into two general categories. One category is technology aversion; the second is diminished pastoral presence.

The objections raised in the technology aversion category typically assert that presentational technology either diminishes the worship setting because the technology is distractingly gimmicky or that the technology is distractingly impersonal. The root of these arguments is that the affect of worship is diminished by the technology. Technology interferes with engaging God. Some people perceive the technology as more engaging than the experience of God. Some people are averse to presentational technology because of either unfamiliarity or personal bias.

The following quote is reflective of North Coast Church's response to that objection: "We are definitely in the media generation. People are accustomed to watching things on screens.... They cannot do everything on a screen, but there is a piece of it that people naturally can handle" ("Cineplex Church").

The objections regarding pastoral presence take two distinct points of view. The first objection is a theological objection related to the Incarnation. The objection states that in the Incarnation of the Word as Jesus of Nazareth, the means of communicating the good news became irrevocably personal. Therefore, the more closely Christian communication can come to achieving a face-to-face setting, the more ideal. One deploying this objection might say, "People should have a preacher they can touch." North Coast Church alludes to this concern in highlighting the following description of

their “host pastors” in each video venue: “A pastoral presence or tribal chief provides the venue with a sense of stability and roots” (Concurrent Worship Options).

The second objection has to do with a recently de-emphasized area of Christian thought called pastoral theology. These objections assert that preaching demands a pastoral presence. In essence, the objectors ask, “If I am watching the preacher on a screen, who is my pastor?” These objections critically link the act of preaching to the role of pastor/shepherd.

Practitioners of video venues tend to respond to the issue by identifying specialized functions of pastoring and relating them vocationally to different individuals. Geoff Surratt is a pastor at Seacoast Church, a video venue practitioner based in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, whose attendance averages over 6,500 at eight campuses around the southeast United States. Speaking to the connection between pastoring and preaching, Surratt contends that one of the strengths of the video venue model is it allows distinction between the ministries of the “speaking pastor” and the “campus pastor.” Surratt says the following about that distinction:

Traditionally, the senior pastor is responsible for the sermon *and* [original emphasis] taking care of his congregation *and* [original emphasis] planning *and* [original emphasis] implementing the church’s business decisions. In a smaller church, one person can get it done, but—as anyone who has done it knows—it is still a big job. However, in a church that regularly attracts 6,500+, it is virtually impossible to do everything and still be effectively involved with everyone in the congregation. (“Video Venues” 8)

Surratt’s brother, Greg, is Seacoast’s visioncaster. He prepares and presents the weekly message. To the issue of preaching and pastoring, Greg Surratt says, “The campus pastor gets to spend his time building relationships and small groups. It’s the best of both worlds. You get the experience and resources of a large church and the

community of a small church” (“Video Venues” 8).

The tension between relating the function of pastor to the function of preacher highlights an issue raised earlier: Video venues can, and do, draw and retain a crowd. The trade off for obtaining that benefit is unexamined. Less obvious compromises may exist. The exchange may not be worth the loss, if any.

These yet unexplored concerns fuel the timeliness of this research. We know that we *can* videocast a message while attracting and maintaining a crowd. It is presently debatable whether we *should*.

### **Project Description**

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the responses to messages delivered via video projection into an otherwise live worship service. The focus was on evaluating the success of the video venue model of message delivery in the development of maturing Christians. Specifically, my interest in the video venue model arose from its potential application to the following issues facing local churches:

1. For churches hosting multiple worship services, video venues offer the platform for a unifying voice and vision without unnecessarily fatiguing the church’s preacher(s),
2. While providing the unified vision, video venues potentially reduce the strain on churches attempting to offer multiple worship settings and styles at optimum times,
3. Video venues have potential applications to denominations and other church settings experiencing pastoral shortages,
4. Video venues offer a potential advantage for church planting by making new worship settings possible while maintaining the appeal of a trusted teacher/leader, and,

5. Video venues offer a potential advantage for churches committed to weekly integration of their larger worship settings into their small group communities.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions prove helpful in understanding the practice of video venues and especially in precedents, the design, and conclusions of this research.

**Video venue.** A video venue is a corporate worship setting where a videocast sermon is delivered into the otherwise live corporate worship setting. A video venue is distinct from the more common overflow room in that only the sermon is delivered via audiovisual technology. In the typical overflow room, the entire service is delivered by that technology. A video venue is distinct from watching a worship service on television for the same reason. In addition, most persons watching a worship service on television would not be considered truly part of a corporate worship environment.

**Videocast.** A videocast is the act of visually presenting via electronic image. For this study, the term *videocast* is intended to distinguish the alternative to a preacher delivering her or his message live.

**Live.** For this project, the use of the term *live* describes a person who is physically present, contrasted to a person whose image is being delivered via video.

The term *live* is sometimes used to describe two related circumstances. Since those two circumstances fall within the scope of this project, those two uses will be defined here together with the alternative words that will be used for this research in those cases. The word *live* is frequently used to describe an event that is being delivered by audio or visual media in real-time (e.g. “The news conference will be delivered live.”). Additionally, the word *live* is frequently used to describe an event that is being delivered

without editing (e.g. Saturday Night Live). In the place of the first instance, the term *real-time* will be used. In the place of the second, *unedited* will be used.

**Preaching.** Preaching is clearly presenting and exalting the Word of God. In this research the words “preaching” and “teaching” are used synonymously.

**Life transformation.** Life transformation is the increasingly holy and regenerate affections, thoughts, and actions of humankind that result from the gracious work of God through human faith. Life transformation is manifest in the affective, behavioral, and cognitive response to God’s work in human lives.

For the purpose of this research, life transformation was measured by seven areas of connection to God, initiation of prayer, reflection on Scripture, generosity with finances, participation in a small group community, zeal for personal evangelism, and commitment to strategic, gift-based service. Specifically, this research sought to measure whether a difference in effect was experienced by subjects in those areas when comparing sermons delivered via videocast to sermons delivered live.

### **Research Questions**

In its most simple form, the key question of this research was, “Does delivering videocast sermons in a video venue alter the response of the hearer when compared to the same sermons’ live delivery?” Therefore, the specific research questions were as follows.

#### **Research Question 1**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer’s sense of connection to God when compared to the same sermon’s live delivery?

#### **Research Question 2**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer’s inclination to

initiate prayer when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 3**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's inclination to reflect deeply on Scripture when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 4**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's financial generosity when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 5**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's enthusiasm to participate in a small group community when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 6**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's zeal for personal evangelism when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 7**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's commitment to strategic service when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Setting of the Study**

This research was conducted at Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, a twenty-five year old church that presently hosts over four thousand adults in eight Sunday morning worship services. In two of those services, the teaching pastor speaks live in a two thousand seat auditorium on the church's main campus. Two services take place on the main campus in the church's original auditorium as a video venue

entitled *New Community*. Two services take place on the main campus in the church's multipurpose gymnasium as a video venue entitled *The Edge*. The final two services take place at the church's south campus in the community of Bryant, Arkansas. Those services take place in a small multipurpose room/auditorium described as *Fellowship South*.

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study consisted of adults who served as community group leaders at Fellowship Bible Church. Community group leaders were chosen as the population for this research for the following reasons: (1) They were a population I deemed and Fellowship Bible Church staff leadership deemed to be among those likely to attend worship on a regular basis; (2) They were a population whose contact information was the most current and well-maintained; (3) They represented the general demographic makeup of the church; and, (4) The population resulted in a statistically valid sample size that was manageable to the scope of this research.

The population of community group leaders was determined from church records. Based on the size of the population, the number required for a statistically valid random sample of the population was determined.

### **Instrumentation**

This research is primarily quantitative with a qualitative component that is used anecdotally. The research sought to have subjects describe their experience of video venues through means of an interview. Participants were asked both to quantify their experience in Likert-scale form and to expound on that quantified answer in narrative form.

A researcher-designed survey administered in interview format measured the

effect upon the participants related to messages delivered live and messages delivered via videocast. Interview questions included open-ended and selected response items. The instrument was administered prior to participants' experience of a video venue. It was subsequently administered after one month's experience in a video venue. The interview questions moved from general to specific and sought to measure the influence of the foreshadowed problems on the data collected.

The independent variable of this research was the means of message delivery into an otherwise live corporate worship setting. The participants experienced the same set of sermons delivered by the same preacher on the same day. The primary distinction was the means of delivery for the sermon.

Dependent variables were the respondents' perception of connection to God, zeal for personal evangelism, enthusiasm to participate in a small group experience, inclination to initiate prayer, inclination to reflect deeply on Scripture, financial generosity, and commitment to strategic service.

Open-ended survey questions allowed for the exploration of possible intervening variables on the participants' responses. Those intervening variables are described in Chapter 3.

### **Delimitations**

The findings of this research are limited to the population of Community Group leaders at Fellowship Bible Church. Because the demographic composition of Community Group leaders is roughly equivalent to the whole of the church body, the findings can likely be generalized to the church as a whole. Generalization beyond the body of Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock would have to be done cautiously.



## **Overview of the Project**

The recent emergence of video venues as a proactive means of delivering the preached message results in no grounded theory upon which to build. Chapter 2 further describes the lack of grounded theory. That chapter also establishes biblical, theological precedents for life transformation, pastoral theology, and preaching. It describes issues related to the intermingling of faith and technology. Chapter 2 concludes with a brief description of those precedents undergirding the methodology of this research.

Chapter 3 presents the seven research questions probed by this study. The chapter offers a detailed description of the setting at Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock, where this research was conducted and from which the subjects were selected. Chapter 3 concludes by discussing the validity and reliability of this research; its variables; and the instrumentation utilized.

The findings of the study, presented in Chapter 4, demonstrate that at Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock the method of delivering the preached message had no statistical effect on the variables used to measure life transformation. Chapter 5 more thoroughly describes the major findings of the research and expands the discussion of those findings' limitations. That chapter also offers suggestions for expanding this research.

A postscript has been appended to this research to describe the personal questions the research was designed to address, the questions it resolved, and the questions it left open or additionally raised.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRECEDENTS OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction to the Precedents of the Study

The primary question of this research was, “Do videocast sermons delivered in a video venue alter the response of the hearer when compared to the same sermons’ live delivery?” My interest is not primarily the preacher but the listener and how the means of delivery affects her or him.

Because of its emerging nature as a *proactive* practice in churches, at the time of this writing, no existing research was published regarding the implementation of video venues. The use of overflow rooms as a response to overcrowded auditoriums has been practiced by churches for many years. Some overflow rooms have utilized audio technology to transmit the proceedings of the worship service from the auditorium to the overflow room. More recently, churches have used audio and video technology.

Most overflow rooms apparently have not been seen as a *preferred* practice. They have been viewed more nearly as a necessary, less attractive alternative to the live sanctuary or auditorium. Because use of overflow rooms is a less attractive alternative to the live sanctuary or auditorium, it may account for the fact that although the practice has been ongoing, nothing has been written about the use of overflow rooms.

As the result of lacking precedents in the literature related specifically to video venues and overflow rooms, this research is dependent upon the descriptive material cited in the overview chapter and the data acquired through the research design. Precedents in the literature related to this study are in theology, the relationship of technology to faith, and in research design.

### **Theological Precedents**

Since the Fall of humankind, initiating transformation in human hearts, minds, and behavior has been, is, and, until the consummation of the new heaven and earth, will continue to be the primary work of God in humanity, and, subsequently, in all of the earthly creation. In the contemporary, that work is accomplished through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit and the power of God's Word. The task of preaching is to present clearly and exalt the Word of God so that by the power of the Spirit the Word may do its transforming work in the lives of people. Additionally, the task of preaching has traditionally been assigned to women and men whom the Christian community has selected as its shepherd leaders—pastors. As a result, preaching and pastoring historically have been vitally linked.

From the writings of the Old Testament patriarchs, psalmists, and prophets to the epistles of Paul and the apostles, God's shepherds have used impersonal means to deliver God's Word in effective ways. The emerging practice of utilizing video technology to deliver the preached Word into corporate worship raises the question of the relationship between theology and faith. That relationship has been the focus of significant recent writing beginning prominently with the mid-twentieth century work of Jacques Ellul.

Beginning with the foundational proposition that life transformation is God's primary work in creation, the literature review relates the concepts of pastoral theology, preaching, and technology back to life transformation.

### **Life Transformation**

The notion of change is not only a social reality; it is a spiritual imperative. The introduction to John's gospel declares that those who embrace Jesus are reborn, not

through a physical birth but through a rebirth initiated by God (John 1:12-13). From Genesis to Revelation, the Creator is renewing and transforming.

In the early chapters of the book of Genesis succeeding the Fall, God's transforming work is revealed. God begins to renew the earth and humankind through preserving Noah and the company of the ark. God's renewing work is assured by his subsequent covenant with Abraham and the creation of the nation of Israel. As Israel prepares to enter the Promised Land, Moses announced to the Israelite community, "The Lord your God will cleanse your heart and the hearts of all your descendants so that you will love him with all your heart and soul, and so you may live" (Deut. 30:6, NLT). When God announced his intention to restore exiled Israel in Ezekiel, he said, "I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart" (Ezek. 36:26, NLT). The Old Testament is the unfolding story of God's love as he reaches out to transform humankind, the nations, and all of creation.

The emphasis on renewal and transformation continues in the New Testament. As noted earlier in the passages from John's Gospel, the message of transformation is essential to the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus continually invited his hearers to repent. Repentance was a call to change and renewal.

The book of Acts and the subsequent New Testament epistles continue revealing God's desire for human transformation. In Romans, Paul encourages Christians not to conform to the world but to be transformed through the renewal of the mind (12:2). In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul proclaimed that God is transforming humankind into the

likeness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:19). Later, Paul insists that those who follow Christ are re-created into new persons (2 Cor. 5:17). The New English Bible proposes a unique translation of that passage: “When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun.” Not only humankind itself, but all of creation is transformed by human faithfulness. God is at work transforming humankind and the world. The letter to the Romans also asserts that as God lovingly renews humankind the whole of creation is positively transformed (8:18-20).

In the closing chapters of Scripture, God says, “Look, I am making all things new!” (Rev. 21:5, NLT). The final revelation of Scripture concludes that God will transform all of creation into a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21-22). Thus, the final fulfillment of all God’s work in the world is the transformation of humankind and, with humankind, all of creation.

Everything in creation rises and falls on God’s initiative and humankind’s faithful response. God’s primary desire for humankind and all of creation is renewal, and his primary plan to bring about that transformation is human faithfulness.

Life transformation takes place most effectively in the encouraging atmosphere of the Christian community. The relationship of the local church to God’s priority of life transformation is highlighted in the ministry of local churches by statements similar to the one from Southland Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky, which asserts the following core value: “Life change takes place best in community.” (Southland Christian Church).

In the Gospel of John, Jesus locates life change in the church. In his prayer for his

followers, Jesus petitions, “Make them [the community of followers] pure and holy [transform them] by teaching them your word of truth” (John 17:17, NLT). Jesus’ words place the life-transforming power within the context of the faithful community.

Author Robert M. Temple, Jr. makes the following connection between life change and the local church:

The church is the rallying fellowship ... of those who have been changed by Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is oftentimes—and I would say, *most often* [original emphasis]—in the “church,” within the fellowship of believers, that change occurs. It is where changed persons are created. The church is quite frequently the *locus* [original emphasis] of transformation or conversion.... The church is the setting for the change. It is ready for the change, it expects the change.... The church is not only the fertile field for change but it cultivates it and nourishes it when it happens. (87)

The church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is God’s primary tool for transforming individuals and all of creation.

Similarly, Avery Dulles suggests a paradigm for understanding the work of the church that he describes as the “servant church.” Of that paradigm, Dulles insists that the Church should be not only a place where holiness is found, but more importantly, a catalyst for holiness in the larger human community. According to Dulles, the servant Church would seek to break down estrangement and alienation, to reconcile men with themselves, with their brothers, and with God (128). As a catalyst for holiness, the Church is the center for life change. The locus of transformation is the context of the local church.

In addition to the Gospel passages cited, elsewhere in the New Testament, Peter reminds the persecuted church in his first letter, “God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple” (1 Pet. 2:5, NLT). The epistles are further permeated with passages exhorting Christ’s followers to encourage one another (1 Thess. 4:18), to carry

each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2), to love one another (John 13:34), and to spur one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24). The New Testament is filled with countless "one another" passages.

Carl George highlights forty such passages from the New Testament in which the transformational benefits of Christian community are described (129-31). Each life-transforming act takes place in community. Life transformation takes place most effectively in the context of Christian community.

### **Pastoral Theology**

William H. Willimon contends that no single normative style or focus exists for pastoral work. Christian ministry is multifaceted and multidimensional. Predominate pastoral images that might have been fruitful in one age may not be so in the next (70). Willimon proposes ten images for pastors: priest, interpreter of Scripture, servant of the Word, counselor, teacher, evangelist, prophet, leader, character, and disciplined Christian (9-10).

Ultimately, the meaning of "pastor" may rest in the etymology of the word itself. The English "pastor" is derived from the Latin "pāstor," which was the word for "shepherd" ("Pastor", 798). The English "pastor" and "pasture" derive from the same Latin root. Pastor is originally an agrarian term.

E. Glenn Wagner shares Willimon's commitment and struggle to define "pastor." Within the church women and men have been chosen to oversee the Christian community and guide its mission of transforming lives. These people are referred to in the Bible by many titles: elders, overseers, bishops, shepherds, pastors, and deacons. Nevertheless, the dominant image is that of shepherd.

Wagner asserts that the Apostle Paul thinks of “elder” and “overseer” more or less as job titles. Paul urges the adoption of “shepherd” as the central model of ministry.

Wagner insists that in this area form must be distinguished from function. One could represent Paul’s distinction between the two as follows: their position (or form)—elder and overseer, their identity (or function)—shepherd (96).

The dominating image of the shepherd for pastoral leadership begins early in the Old Testament. In Exodus, the image of the shepherd emerges as God’s model for leaders of communities of faith. In Exodus 3:1, Moses is shown tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, in Midian. There he experiences God’s call to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Later in the prophecy of Isaiah, Moses is referred to as the shepherd of [God’s] flock (Isa. 63:11). In the book of 2 Samuel, David is called by God to be shepherd of my people Israel (2 Sam. 5:2).

The image of the shepherd is especially vivid in the Psalms where Asaph reflects on the reign of David:

[The Lord] chose his servant David, calling him from the sheep pens. He took David from tending the ewes and lambs and made him the shepherd of Jacob’s descendants—God’s own people, Israel. He cared for them with a true heart and led them with skillful hands. (Ps 78:70-72, NLT)

The shepherd model for leadership continues into the New Testament. In the Gospel of John, Jesus charges Peter to feed and care for the sheep (John 21:15-19). Paul charges the Ephesian elders to be sure to “feed and shepherd God’s flock” (Acts 20:28, NLT). In the passage that establishes the shepherd model as the dominant one for church leaders, Peter says the following to all elders:

Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don’t lord it over the people, but lead them by your good



example. And when the head Shepherd comes, your reward will be a never-ending share of his glory and honor. (1 Pet. 5:2-4, NLT)  
Church leaders, no matter the title, are called to be shepherds. The shepherd is, in every way, the root image, including the linguistic root, behind the word “pastor.”

Pastors and other church leaders are gifted in a variety of ways to fulfill their responsibilities. The Bible provides multiple lists that describe diverse “gifts” and “callings” related to church leadership; however, consistently prominent among the requirements for pastoring is the aptitude to teach. Effective teaching is crucial to pastoring, encouraging, cultivating Christian maturity, and promoting life transformation. For that reason, one of the primary criteria for shepherds of the church is that they be willing and competent to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit.1:9).

### **Preaching**

The critical link between preaching and pastoring is evident through the work of Willimon. He insists, “Preaching derives part of its power because it is done by *pastors* [emphasis mine]. The one who stands in the pulpit to speak on Sunday is the one who has been with the flock, in a variety of settings, throughout the week and over the years” (67). Although the ministry of Jesus is multifaceted, the most visible aspect of his ministry is teaching. All of the significant events of Jesus’ ministry took place in the context of his travels to proclaim and teach the good news of the kingdom (Matt. 9:35). The title by which Jesus is most frequently addressed in the gospels is *Rabbi*, or *Teacher* (John 1:38; 20:16).

The importance of the act of teaching is highlighted throughout the Old and New Testaments. In Exodus, Bezalel and Oholiab were chosen to lead in building the Tabernacle not only because they were skillful craftsmen but also because they were able

to teach their skills to others (35:30-35). Proverbs states that the teaching of the wise is like a life-giving fountain (13:14). The book of Ecclesiastes asserts, “A wise teacher’s words spur students to action and emphasize important truths. The collected sayings of the wise are like the guidance from a shepherd” (12:11, NLT).

In the call to spiritual growth presented in Hebrews, the writer insists that maturing Christians “ought to be teaching others by now” (5:12, NLT). Ultimately, the Great Commission compels all Christians to penetrate the world, teaching about Jesus and his kingdom (Matt. 28:20). Preaching and teaching are crucial acts to the life of the pastor, the life of the church, and to the work of life transformation.

The book of Romans directly links preaching to life-transforming faith when Paul asks how it is possible for people to experience saving faith without someone to preach the good news to them (Rom 10:13-15). Peter insists that readers of his letter are born again because of the good news that was preached to them (1 Pet. 1:23-25). The first chapter of Romans highlights Paul’s urgency to preach God’s good news to the people of Rome so they might receive a spiritual blessing from him and grow in their faith (Rom. 1:10-16).

The connection between preaching and life transformation is highlighted by Warren W. Wiersbe:

The purpose of preaching is to achieve an object, not explain a subject. We want something to happen in our hearts and in the hearts of our people. We want the Spirit of God to use the truth to make Jesus Christ real *and to transform us to become like Him* [emphasis mine]. (216)

The potency of Christian preaching to change lives is anticipated by the Scripture and throughout Christian history. The assumption for almost all teaching, in its original biblical context, is that the communicator is physically present. Nevertheless, the

impersonal delivery of a Christian message, where the communicator is not physically present, is not unknown to first-century Christians.

### **Precedents Related to Faith and Technology**

In a personal interview with Larry Osborn, pastor at North Coast Community church, he mused about his experience speaking before large crowds in church settings where image magnification was used. He said, “Preaching to large groups is difficult because after the first seven rows the remainder of the people are [sic] looking at the screens.” He suggested that video screens are a magnet because they give a close up of the presenter’s face to everyone in the room. Trusting his observations, the evidence would support that given a large crowd in a large room, many prefer to watch the video delivery of a message rather than watch it live.

A recent report by the Barna Research Group entitled More People Use Christian Media Than Attend Church indicates that 46 percent of all adults typically listen to a Christian radio broadcast sometime in a month. That percentage has declined by 10 percent over the past fifteen years. Similarly, 45 percent of adults watch Christian television programming monthly, a percentage that has remained unchanged over the past fifteen years. The report also states that sixteen percent of adults and 41 percent of evangelical Christians spend time visiting faith-oriented Web sites. Those proportions are increasing rapidly (Barna).

Barna’s research indicates two-thirds of adults absorb information from one or more forms of Christian media over the course of a month. The number increases to more than 90 percent when limited to evangelical Christians. A significant share of unchurched adults, more than one-third, utilizes Christian media on a monthly basis.

The Barna research indicates that demographics are significantly influential in a person's bias toward Christian media. Adults under the age of forty are most likely to utilize the Internet; however, adults under the age of forty shows the least interest in Christian media on the whole. Women and African-Americans have the most positive bias toward Christian media. Christians of mainline denominations, Catholics, and Asian-Americans were least likely to use Christian media (Barna).

The New Testament epistles are examples of teachers using an impersonal means, a written letter, to teach others. Apostles originated a message then utilized the impersonal method of a letter to communicate that message. One might even say that God also used this method when he inscribed the Decalogue onto the stones for delivery to the Israelites.

Haddon W. Robinson says the following:

Paul was a writer. From his pen we have most of the inspired letters of the New Testament, and heading the list of his letter is the one to the Romans. Measured by its impact on history, few documents compare with it. Yet when Paul wrote this letter to the congregation in Rome, he confessed, "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom 1:11-12 RSV). Paul realized that some ministries simply cannot take place apart from face-to-face contact. Even the reading of an inspired letter will not substitute. "I am eager to preach the gospel to you . . . who are in Rome" (1:15 RSV). A power comes through the preached word that even the written word cannot replace. (19)

That could be true of videocast preaching as well. A power may be present in the delivery of a message by one who is physically nearby compared to the power being present when the same message is delivered by video. The purpose of this research was to investigate these two possibilities.

The technology of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have expanded the

impersonal means by which preachers are able to deliver their messages. The relationship of technology to faith is not one lacking current reflection. The impersonal technology that makes video venues possible and the relationship of that kind of technology to the life of Christian faith is the subject of reflection for an increasingly large body of pastors and scholars.

George Gilder, noted author on technology, characterizes the following current state of affairs in technological advancement:

[We are approaching an age] when anyone can transmit any amount of information, any picture, any experience, any opportunity to anyone or everyone.... [The] resulting information becomes a transfiguration. The powers it offers brings us back to the paradigms of paradise and its perils, prophets and their nemeses: infinite abundance and demonic scarcities. (qtd. in Schultze, Habits 4)

If Gilder is correct, persons of faith should not embrace the possibilities of technological advances with unreflective enthusiasm.

One cannot offer biblical proof texts regarding the use of technology; however, the Bible does offer counsel on the appropriate relationship between “things” and “people.” The summary of Scripture’s counsel is that one should love people and use things. The Scripture’s counsel in itself is a cutting word in this age where people are more inclined to love things and use people.

The verses of Romans 14 reflect a first-century argument among Christians over vegetarianism and holy days. Paul’s response, when distilled to the general proposition that underlies it, offers unique insight to the present accelerated, uncritical adoption of any and all technological advancements. Paul says to the Romans, “[T]here is nothing wrong with these things in themselves. But it is wrong to eat anything if it makes another person stumble” (Rom. 14:20, NLT). Distilled to a general proposition, Paul teaches that

*things* in and of themselves are neither bad nor good. *How things are used by people* should give Christians cause for concern.

When this proposition is applied to audio technology, it would imply that audio technology, in and of itself, is neither good nor bad. *How humans use the technology* should be cause for reflection.

Quentin J. Schultze insists that our tendency to adopt every new information technology uncritically—without discerning the options, setting appropriate limits, and establishing humane practices—is irresponsible. He further asserts that North Americans are largely unreflective, voracious consumers of cyber-novelty and informational trivia. We have naively convinced ourselves that cyber-innovations will automatically improve society and make us better people, regardless of how we use them. For Schultze, the benefits of information technologies depend on how responsibly we understand, develop, and employ them in the service of venerable notions of the meaning and purpose of life (Habits 17).

This research thus assumes that if video technology is being used for the purpose of life transformation, and if the use of the technology does not impose such collateral harm as to offset those advances, then the use of video technology to deliver a pastor's message into a video venue is an acceptable, honorable pursuit in the expansion of the kingdom. The following precedents regard the research design used to measure possible effects of videocast sermons.

### **Precedents in Research Methodology**

William Wiersma indicates that research questions and the conditions of the research determine the appropriate research methodology (157). D. R. Krathwohl

distinguishes between two major approaches. Qualitative research describes phenomena in words instead of numbers or measures. Quantitative research describes phenomena in numbers and measures instead of words (740). Because this research was designed to measure and contrast the affect of a sermon delivered live and the affect of the same sermon delivered via videocast, the quantitative approach was selected. Nevertheless, because this research took place in the dynamic, natural setting of a local church, it has some qualitative elements.

### **Precedents in Quantitative Research**

Wiersma cites four basic ways by which to control variances: (1) randomization, (2) designed independent variables, (3) constants, and (4) statistical adjustments (84). This research deployed three of those four. Subjects were chosen at random from the population of community group leaders at Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. The means of sermon delivery, live versus videocast, was designed as the independent variable. Consistency was maintained in that all subjects were interviewed about their experience related to the same set of four sermons, delivered by the same preacher, on the same weekend. The fourth means of controlling variance, statistical adjustment, was not utilized; however, a qualitative approach was undertaken to explore the possibility of effect from certain variables related to video venues for which statistical adjustments might have been used or by which they might have been neutralized by being held constant.

The quantitative approach to this research utilized a pretest-posttest experimental model (Wiersma 107). In utilizing that model, a group of participants was randomly chosen. Some had been attending a live venue when chosen. Others had been attending a

video venue. In pretest interviews, the participants were asked to describe the effect in seven key areas of Christian growth of the sermons they had heard recently. They were then asked to switch venue types for one month. Following the month in the distinct venue, they were asked in posttest interviews to describe the effect in the same seven key areas of Christian growth of the sermons they had heard during the month. The results from the pretest interviews were then compared to the results from the posttest interviews to determine any difference in sermon effect.

### **Precedents in Qualitative Research**

Fred N. Kerlinger identifies two basic purposes of research design: providing answers to research questions and controlling variances (280). The latter purpose is what dictated that this research be primarily quantitative. The hypothesis of the research was that no significant variance in effect would be identified between that of a sermon delivered live in contrast to a sermon delivered via videocast. Therefore, the design of this research was to measure and contrast the variance. This research also postulates intervening variables that may influence a person's response to a live or videocast message distinct from the means of delivery itself. Rather than attempting to neutralize the intervening variables or manage them through statistical control, a qualitative approach was taken to explore their potential effect and to provide anecdotal support for the qualitative research.

Survey research is probably the single most widely used research type in educational research (Wiersma 157). A longitudinal panel survey was chosen in order to compare and contrast the effect of preaching in a traditional venue where the teaching pastor is physically present with preaching in a video venue when the message is



delivered via video technology. The panel study permitted not only a means to measure perceived change but also a way to identify the source of changes in the lives of the panelists. Wiersma proposes that panel studies are most applicable with static populations over a short time period (163). The survey period was limited to one month in order to reduce the threat of history to validity.

Interviewing was chosen as the method to survey the panel because it offered the opportunity for in-depth probing not provided by a questionnaire. William Newman and Michael Lemming propose that interviews are most appropriate in this kind of setting where data of a sensitive nature (e.g., religious preferences) is collected (28).

Nevertheless, some authors insist that self-administered questionnaires, where the presence of the interviewer was minimized or reduced completely, result in more accurate data, especially when dealing with sensitive subjects (Tourangeau et al. 297).

A standard script was utilized to maximize interrater reliability—that is, to assure consistency between interviews conducted by the same interviewer and among multiple interviewers. Raters were trained by conducting mock interviews prior to engaging research subjects.

Newman and Lemming warns that the validity of interviews is controlled by compelling the interviewer to be sensitive to personal bias (28). Therefore, audio-taping of interviews provided a means for review to evaluate interviewer bias and reliability.

Both selected response and open-ended questions were utilized in the interview to create a partially structured atmosphere that allowed for probing and elaboration (see Appendixes A and B). Variety used among the forms of questions was also intended to reduce potential boredom and fatigue among the panelist interviewees. Wiersma suggests

that interviewees can last up to an hour without fatigue in a well-designed interview (189). The interview script limited the number of open-ended questions that could not be easily controlled with regard to time.

Focus upon the seven measures of life-transformation was a priority. Fred J.

Fowler insists the following about good questionnaires:

In surveys, answers are of interest not intrinsically but because of their relationship to something they are supposed to measure. Good questions are reliable, providing consistent measures in comparable situations, and valid; answers correspond to what they are intended to measure. (74)

The majority of questions in the interview script were designed specifically to determine the relationship between the preached message and the panelists' responses in key areas of Christian discipleship. Nevertheless, I hypothesized that because preaching is one component of a total worship experience, interviewees' self-perception might have been influenced by their responses to additional components of the service that had no means of control. Those factors are musical choice, intimacy of the setting, and personal comfort. Each of those items varied from the traditional venue when compared to the video venue. Therefore, some questions probed the effect of those items on the panelists' perceptions. In addition, a person's general satisfaction with the church was explored to identify that potential influence on self-perception related to preaching.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this dissertation research was to measure the change in effect on the response of the hearer of a videocast sermon in a video venue when compared to the same sermon's live delivery. Effect was measured in the areas of connection to God, initiation of prayer, reflection on Scripture, generosity with finances, participation in a small group community, zeal for personal evangelism, and commitment to strategic

service.

The life changes expressed in those responses are key indicators of the overall life change that is the work of God in humankind. Those responses are precipitated most effectively in the context of the community of a local church. One of the key motivators for life change in the context of the local church is the message delivered in the worship context by a pastor. The question, now, is whether video venues advance or encumber that kind of life change.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

The use of video venues is a rapidly expanding phenomenon in Christian churches. Some churches utilize video venues by necessity to address seating limitations of sanctuaries. Other churches evangelistically offer video venues to afford a variety of worship atmospheres that might appeal to diverse ages, ethnicities, and geographical settings. What once was a reactive solution to overcrowded sanctuaries is becoming a popular proactive practice intended to attract a broader population of worshippers.

The practice of video venues has its pessimists. Many insist that for whatever is gained, something more important is lost. The purpose of this project was to explore the legitimacy of one area of criticism. Specifically, this project sought to determine whether delivering a videocast sermon into an otherwise live worship setting alters the response of the hearer when compared to live delivery. The hypothesis of this research is that it does not.

#### **Research Questions**

In its most simple form, the key question of this research was, “Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter the response of the hearer when compared to the same sermon’s live delivery? This research used the seven areas of connection to God, initiation of prayer, reflection on Scripture, generosity with finances, participation in a small group community, zeal for personal evangelism, and commitment to strategic service as measures for response.

#### **Research Question 1**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer’s sense of

connection to God when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 2**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's inclination to initiate prayer when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 3**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's inclination to reflect deeply on Scripture when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 4**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's financial generosity when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 5**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's enthusiasm to participate in a small group community when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 6**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's zeal for personal evangelism when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Research Question 7**

Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter a hearer's commitment to strategic service when compared to the same sermon's live delivery?

**Setting of the Study**

This research was conducted at Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, a twenty-five year old church that presently hosts over four thousand adults in

eight Sunday morning worship services. In two of those services the teaching pastor speaks live in a two thousand seat auditorium on the church's main campus. Two services take place on the main campus in the church's original auditorium as a video venue entitled *New Community*. Two services take place on the main campus in the church's multipurpose gymnasium as a video venue entitled *The Edge*. The final two services take place at the church's south campus in the community of Bryant, Arkansas. Those services take place in a small multipurpose room/auditorium described as *Fellowship South*.

Fellowship is in the early stages of implementing the video venue model under the guidance of North Coast Church. Fellowship's motivation to implement video venues results from the early pangs of restricted seating in their auditorium, which is less than ten years old. Additionally, they hope to provide more intimate worship atmospheres, develop the capability of reaching more targeted populations of the community, and provide a means to plant new churches.

### **History of Fellowship Bible Church**

Fellowship Bible Church has experienced consistent and substantial growth since its birth in 1977. A detailed account of the church history is recorded in "The Fellowship Story" published through internal church documents and on the church's Web page (see Appendix D).

The church began in homes, grew to meet in a small private school, and presently meets in a worship center that seats two thousand. One of the keys to that growth has been the church's ability to refocus and reinvent itself at pivotal junctures throughout its history. One of those recent reinventions was the launching of video venues in 2003.

### **Demographic Profile of Fellowship Bible Church**

Fellowship Bible Church is located in suburban west Little Rock, which is considered by many to be the city's developing upper-middle to upper class residential and commercial center. Little Rock's population was estimated at near 190,000 in 2004 by the region's Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (Metroplan, "Population Estimates" 2). The population of the broader Metropolitan Statistical Area for 2004 was estimated by Metroplan to be approximately 650,000 (2). Based on 2000 census information, the area's ethnic makeup is estimated to be 75 percent Caucasian, 22 percent black, 2 percent Hispanic, and the remainder "other" ("Demographic").

With regard to Fellowship Bible Church itself, the adult worshipping congregation of over four thousand is composed of the following age and ethnic demographics (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1 Fellowship Bible Church Age Demographics**

<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>
0-12- year-olds	27.2
13-19-year-olds	12.6
20-35-year-olds	19.0
36-45-year-olds	15.6
46-55-year-olds	14.8
56-65-year-olds	7.7
66+ -year-olds	3.1

Source: Noble.

The congregation is estimated to be 95 percent Caucasian. The remainder is composed of small segments of blacks, Hispanics, and Asians.

Casual observations of automobiles in the parking lot and of the brands and styles of clothing worn by worshippers indicate that much of the congregation has the economic means to drive late-model cars and SUVs as well as the means to purchase specialty branded, fashionable clothing. Economic diversity can be found when intentionally sought; however, casual observations would not give the initial impression of such diversity or the presence of a sizable population of those in the middle class or below.

Similar casual observations over the course of one year's staff residency at the church indicate that the ethnic and economic composition of the church's staff reflects the composition of the church body.

### **Doctrinal and Missional Distinctives of Fellowship Bible Church**

Fellowship Bible Church is an independent, evangelical, elder-led body not related to any denomination. A summary of the church's beliefs is available on its Web site. Together with most other churches in the Bible church movement, Fellowship is committed to the supreme authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures. Together with churches of most confessions, creeds, and catechisms, Fellowship Bible Church affirms the doctrine of the Trinity, the fallenness of humankind, salvation by faith alone through Christ alone, and the physical return of Christ. The church practices open communion for all who profess faith in Christ and practices baptism by immersion as the "essential 'first step' for a believer who seeks to become a disciple of Jesus Christ" (Fellowship Bible Church).



In addition to doctrinal foundations, Fellowship purposefully promotes the following core values and missional distinctives. The core values are

WORSHIP: Celebrating the presence of God,

GROWTH: Pursuing the power of God,

COMMUNITY: Sharing the life of God, and

SERVICE: Extending the love of God.

Those core values are asserted by the church to be anchored to the following mission statement that fleshes out the faith on which the church stands:

To equip Christians to change the world through irresistible lifestyles and influential works of service which are:

- Passionately Committed to Jesus Christ
- Biblically Measured
- Morally Pure
- Family Centered
- Financially Faithful
- Socially Responsible
- Evangelistically Bold (Fellowship Bible Church).

### **Physical Setting of Fellowship Bible Church**

Fellowship Bible Church is located on the corner of two significant traffic arteries in suburban west Little Rock. The location is approximately one mile removed from the interstate highway system. The character of the development between the church and the interstate highway is predominantly commercial retail. Beginning at the church's intersection, the character of the development transitions almost immediately to residential.

The church is joined on its west by a private college preparatory school, on its south by a large United Methodist Church, on its east by a public library, and on its north by a significant thirty year old residential development and golf course. The church

campus has expanded over its history to include property on both sides of one of the traffic arteries. The west campus was the church's original purchase and contains the church's first and second phase worship centers, together with facilities for ministries to children under sixth grade and a bookstore. The east campus is home to the church's office building, student ministry center, counseling center, and Fellowship Associates, the church's distinct company designed to execute its church-planting vision, market church resources, and provide consultation to churches wishing to explore or implement Fellowship Bible Church's strategies.

In addition to the two campuses of the central location, Fellowship Bible Church owns property designated to become Fellowship West. That location, situated on the western extreme of Little Rock's current developing edge, is presently undeveloped but envisioned to become home to a fully functioning campus that operates as a video venue for worship on weekends. Fellowship Bible Church also recently merged into its campus system a church that it originally related to as a church plant. Saline Community Church in growing Saline County south of Little Rock became Fellowship South. In that capacity the Saline County location has become a southern campus of Fellowship Bible Church that functions as a video venue on weekends.

The architecture of the central campus is not immediately identifiable as a church. Strategic signage marks the complex as such from the passing streets. Both internally and externally the buildings appear elegantly corporate. The building exteriors and parking areas are lavishly landscaped. The interiors are warmly and richly appointed. With the exception of a large cross located in a primarily pedestrian area of the west campus, near the main entrance to the worship center, there exists little exterior Christian symbolism.

Similarly, the interior common areas of the buildings of the central campus are rich, inviting, and well maintained. Nevertheless, like the exterior, traditional Christian symbolism is sparse.

### **Venue Settings of Fellowship Bible Church**

Fellowship Bible Church presently offers four worship venues: Worship Center, New Community, The Edge, and Fellowship South. Fellowship South is a venue located approximately twenty miles from the central campus in Bryant, Arkansas, a suburb of Little Rock. At the time of this research, only three venues existed: Worship Center, New Community, and The Edge. A description of each of those follows.

Worship Center is the church's live venue. The service takes place in an auditorium constructed in 1996. The auditorium seats approximately two thousand people in theater-style seats. Seating is in a steep, stadium style arrangement with a balcony. Seats are slightly arched around the raised platform in front. The term "chancel" is not used to describe the platform area because no altar or communion table is present. An elevated baptistery is continually visible behind the platform.

The décor of the Worship Center auditorium is warm, simple, and elegant. With the exception of a large suspended retractable cross—that is frequently retracted—no other permanent Christian symbolism is present. Two two-story banners customarily hang on either side of the rear wall of the platform. The banners are attractive text and graphic images that highlight a core value or missional focus of the church. The banners are not often changed; however, their aesthetic impact does not dull.

In addition, the platform typically contains visual items associated with the current teaching series. Examples of those from the tenure of this research were multiple

small banners with graphic images connoting new growth, a large wooden sign comparing fears and hopes, and a stage setting representing a Corinthian home where an ongoing drama highlighting the Apostle Paul was depicted.

The platform area is flanked by instrumentation to accompany singing. The regular instrumentation contains a grand piano, electronic keyboards, guitars, bass, drums, additional percussion, and full brass. Occasionally the platform hosts strings and a full choir.

The musical package is typically praise and worship music published within the past five years. The praise and worship music is occasionally peppered with newer arrangements of familiar hymns and gospel songs. The vocals are typically led by a staff worship leader and a vocal team of six men and women. Occasionally, the vocal team is accompanied by a full choir.

Speakers address the congregation from the center of the platform without a podium. The teaching pastor uses a tasteful wooden pillar podium placed prior to the message. Four men are designated as teaching pastors at Fellowship Bible Church. One of them usually delivers the message. One of the other three customarily serves as the host of the service—delivering announcements, leading the prayer, and otherwise directing spoken elements of the service.

An order of worship begins with participatory singing. Announcements, prayer, and offering typically follow the singing. The singing is followed by a drama, musical presentation, or video presentation supporting the message. The teaching pastor's message is usually allotted forty-five minutes. The service concludes with either participatory singing or a musical performance. Open communion is given every four to

six weeks. Baptisms and testimonies are frequent elements of the service.

Before and after services in the Worship Center, complementary self-serve coffee is available on five foot wooden serving carts located throughout the lobby. Worshippers are permitted to take coffee into the auditorium. In addition to the self-service coffee, Fellowship Bible Church has a coffee shop, Common Grounds, where specialty coffees and snacks are available for purchase. Common Grounds is located in the lobby area of the church's original worship center, which is host to the New Community worship venue.

The New Community worship venue takes place in Fellowship Bible Church's first phase worship center which was constructed in the early 1980s. At capacity the room seats around four hundred people. For the New Community venue, the room is set up with 120 seats. Seating is arranged on a level floor in an arc around a raised platform area. Like the Worship Center, the décor of the New Community auditorium is warm, simple, and elegant. A stained glass window fronted by a wooden cross is behind and well above the platform; however, the window and cross are hidden by a large motorized projection screen that is descended most of the service. The large, arching rear wall of the auditorium is adorned with a textile design depicting the elements of the Lord's Supper and other Christian symbols.

The center of the platform is occupied by a large fixed rear projection screen upon which the message is displayed during the service. When not in use, the projection screen is stark white. When in use, the screen not only displays the teaching pastor, but also displays a significant panorama of the visual items in the Worship Center that are associated with the current teaching series.

The platform area of New Community is flanked with instrumentation to accompany singing. The instrumental ensemble is much smaller than that of the Worship Center, consisting of a grand piano or keyboard, a guitar, bass, and drums.

The musical package is typically older praise and worship music and traditional hymns and gospel songs. The vocals are typically led by a staff worship leader and a vocal team of four. Occasionally, the vocal team is accompanied by a full choir.

The host pastor of New Community—who is typically not one of the previously mentioned teaching pastors—addresses the congregation from the center floor of the auditorium without a podium. The host pastor is responsible to deliver announcements, to lead the body in prayer, and otherwise to direct spoken elements of the service.

The order of worship begins with participatory singing. Announcements, prayer, and offering typically follow the singing. Occasionally a drama that is delivered live in the Worship Center is displayed on the central video screen. A unique element to the New Community atmosphere is creation of time for the congregation to present items spontaneously for prayer or for spontaneous short testimonies. This sharing is followed by the videocast of the teaching pastor's message. The service concludes with either participatory singing or a musical performance. Open communion is offered every four to six weeks concurrent with the offering of communion in the other venues. Baptisms are an element of the service when the one baptized is from the New Community congregation.

Before and after services in the New Community venue, complimentary self-serve coffee is available inside the rear of the auditorium. Worshippers are encouraged to enjoy the coffee and to socialize in the auditorium prior to the beginning of the service. The

church's coffee shop, Common Grounds, is immediately outside the New Community venue where specialty coffees and snacks are available for purchase.

The Edge is Fellowship Bible Church's second video venue. The service takes place in a large gymnasium called the Hanger that was constructed in the late 1990s. The gymnasium was originally designed to double as an auditorium for large youth gatherings. The Edge is located on a portion of the church campus across a significant traffic artery from the portion of the campus containing the other two venues.

A large stage, flanking projection screens, and a state-of-the-art sound system are designed into the Hanger to achieve that end. The floor of the gymnasium can be sectioned off by large black curtains suspended from the ceiling to create a somewhat enclosed atmosphere for the "auditorium." Seating capacity of the enclosed auditorium area of the Hanger is five hundred. Chairs are placed on the gymnasium floor in straight rows paralleling the stage. Approximately three hundred stackable chairs are actually set up for the venue.

The décor of the Hanger is stark and dark. The ceiling, curtains, and stage background are all black. Retracted basketball goals and structural beams are clearly visible in the ceiling areas. The atmosphere is similar to one of a concert or nightclub.

Similar to the New Community platform, the stage area of The Edge has a large fixed projection screen at its center. The screen remains stark white except when used to project the teaching pastor or to project an occasional drama being performed live in the Worship Center. The projection screen is flanked by instrumentation to accompany singing. The regular instrumentation contains guitars, bass, drums, and an unobtrusive keyboard.

The musical package is praise and worship music of the modern rock or alternative genre. The vocals are led by the instrumentalists, one of whom is typically a staff worship leader. Like New Community, in The Edge the host pastor addresses the congregation from the center floor of the worship area and is typically not one of the previously mentioned teaching pastors.

The order of worship begins with participatory singing. Announcements, prayer, and offering typically follow the singing. The singing is followed by the teaching pastor's message. The service concludes with either participatory singing or a musical performance. Open communion is offered every four to six weeks concurrently with other services. Baptisms occur in the service when the baptized person has come out of The Edge worship community.

Before and after services at The Edge, complimentary self-serve coffee is available in an area separated by one of the suspended black curtains. Worshippers are encouraged to take refreshments into the worship area and to socialize prior to the service. In addition to the self-service coffee, the Student Ministries building that houses the Hanger also houses Crossroads Café at which specialty coffees and snacks are available for purchase.

In summary of the venue settings, at the time of this research Fellowship Bible Church offered three worship venues:

Worship Center—The venue where the teaching pastor's message is delivered live. The setting is a two thousand seat auditorium with a mostly contemporary musical offering;

New Community—A video venue set in an auditorium with a capacity of four



hundred chairs, set up with seating for 120, with a musical offering of older choruses and traditional hymns; and,

The Edge—A video venue set in a gymnasium with staging and seating for three hundred with a musical offering of recent praise and worship music and an alternative rock accompaniment.

### **The Preaching Event at Fellowship Bible Church**

At Fellowship Bible Church the preaching event is primarily didactic. The didactic preaching is most clearly evident in the title ascribed to the church's senior staff leadership team, the teaching pastors. Fellowship Bible Church's commitment to teach the Scriptures is additionally evident in the following excerpt from its doctrinal summary:

We believe that the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired of God, error-free in the original writings, and the supreme authority of faith and practice for the believer in Jesus Christ. We further believe that there is but one method of Bible interpretation: the literal method. The literal method recognizes the fact that the authors of Scripture meant what they said. Therefore, the literal method consistently applies the rules of grammar, literature, history, and culture to Scripture in order to unlock and understand the author's meaning. (Fellowship Bible Church)

The preaching event at Fellowship Bible Church is primarily a teaching event. In their capacity as teaching pastors, the preachers attempt to convey a biblical writer's intended meaning while at the same time demonstrate a contemporary application of the biblical message.

In terms of homiletic descriptors, the preaching style of the Fellowship Bible Church teaching pastors could most clearly be identified as expository. Occasionally the exposition takes place in line-by-line form. On other occasions, the exposition addresses entire paragraphs or pericopes.

Preaching is alternated among the teaching pastors. The teaching pastors' messages are often arranged into series. The series are typically ordered around a book of the Bible; however, occasionally series are unified by a theme.

Sermons are accompanied by outlines in the bulletins distributed prior to the worship service in all venues—live and video. Major headings of the outlines are typically presented in fill-in-the-blank statements. Under each major heading, space is provided for additional notes. The message outline page of the bulletin is perforated and three-hole-punched in order to facilitate further study by the congregation at a later time. Additionally, the bulletin contains discussion questions related to the message to be used in the church's extensive network of community groups—small groups that meet weekly in homes.

A final key characteristic of the preaching event at Fellowship Bible Church is the extensive presence and use of personal Bibles by the congregation in conjunction with the message. Many in the congregation highlight passages as they are expounded. Similarly, many record notes in the margins of their Bibles during the message.

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study consisted of adults who served as community group leaders at Fellowship Bible Church. Community group leaders were chosen as the population for this research for the following reasons: (1) They were a population deemed by me and Fellowship Bible Church staff leadership to be among those likely to attend worship on a regular basis; (2) They were a population whose contact information was the most current and well maintained; (3) They represented the general demographic makeup of the church; and, (4) The population resulted in a statistically valid sample size

that was manageable to the scope of this research.

Community group leaders at Fellowship Bible Church consist of adult men and women who voluntarily completed the church's Discovery process—an orientation for inquiring visitors. At the conclusion of the Discovery process, the community group leaders voluntarily committed to participate in the small group network of the church called community groups. After a season of involvement as a participant in a community group, potential community group leaders volunteered themselves for leadership or were identified by the leaders of the groups in which they had participated. Community group leaders were trained and then assigned groups to lead. Therefore, community group leaders had at least two years of participation in the life of the church. They had demonstrated a commitment to the church's vision, values, and doctrine. Also, they had ascended to a role of leadership among those in the church who were involved in the community group network. Participation in the community group network is Fellowship Bible Church's primary means of identifying "members" and maintaining a database for membership.

The population of community group leaders was determined from church records. That population was determined to be 233. The entire population of community group leaders was mailed a letter over my signature and the signature of Tim Lundy, Teaching Pastor and Directional Leader of the church (see Appendix C). The letter affirmed community group leaders for their commitment to the church, informed them that some of them would be contacted to participate in a survey that would benefit the church and this research, and thanked them in advance for their willingness to participate.

Upon recommendation from the Doctor of Ministry office at Asbury Seminary, a

sample number of forty was identified as an adequate size for statistical validity. A list of sixty random, non-repeating numbers between one and 233 was generated by the Doctor of Ministry office using computer software. Sixty numbers were selected to allow for attrition in the sample and to allow for some who would decline to participate in the research when invited.

The listing of community group leaders generated by the church was numbered in alphabetically ascending order. The random numbers were applied to the ascending alphabetical listing of community group leaders. Beginning with the first randomly generated number, each potential subject in the population was contacted by me via telephone to inquire whether he or she would participate. Potential subjects were given a brief overview of the research and were given the opportunity to ask questions. Those responding affirmatively were told to expect a follow-up telephone call to schedule an initial interview. The sample initially consisted of the first fifty affirmative responses. Five community group leaders who received the letter but who were not among those called initiated contact with the church to ask if they could participate. They were included in the initial sample.

A follow-up telephone call was made to those who had committed to participate in the survey. Of the initial sample of fifty-five (fifty secured by telephone, five who asked to be included), nine dropped out due to scheduling conflicts with the interviews or an inability to participate in the minimum number of worship services included in the research. Therefore, the population that participated in the pretest interviews was forty-six.

Following the period during which the subjects were asked to change worship

services, the month of March 2004, the subjects were contacted again to schedule a follow-up interview. As a result of scheduling conflicts and unexpected absences from worship, five of the initial forty-six did not participate in the posttest interview, therefore, the final sample was forty-one.

### **Categories and Characteristics of the Research**

This project was a study of the affects of videocast sermons in key areas of Christian discipleship upon worship participants at Fellowship Bible Church. Although the chief interest of this research was the affect, specifically, of the message delivered via video compared to the affect of the message delivered live, care was taken to measure both the effect of the message itself and the total effect of the venue atmosphere. A worshipper potentially could respond more favorably to a videocast message, not because the message was videocast but because the atmosphere was more intimate or because a preferred musical style had been experienced. Therefore, the research methodology of this study, while primarily interested in the videocast message, also accounted for the other variables.

Wiersma proposes that basic and applied research can be distinguished by determining whether the research is designed to solve an immediate, practical problem (10-11). This research is primarily basic in that it seeks to add to the body of knowledge related to the expanding practice of worship in video venues. In addition, implications related to video venue praxis accompany the research. If video venues do not affect Christian discipleship at the level of live venues, then their continued expansion in use should be seriously questioned. If the level of affect in video venues meets or exceeds the level of affect in live venues, then their continued use is mandated in the life of the

church and possibly in other congregations.

In addition to being primarily basic research, this study is also primarily characterized as quantitative research. Krathwohl proposes that quantitative research can be distinguished from qualitative research in that qualitative research describes phenomena and records data in words, whereas quantitative research describes phenomena and records data in numbers and measures (740). Further, Wiersma distinguishes qualitative research from quantitative by asserting that quantitative research is inductive, atheoretical, context-specific, and narrative (13).

This research sought to have subjects describe their experience of video venues through means of an interview in the context of Fellowship Bible Church. Participants were asked both to quantify their experience in Likert-scale form and to expound on that quantified answer in narrative form. This research was primarily quantitative with a qualitative component to it used anecdotally.

The lack of theory (even grounded theory) in the practice of utilizing the method of videocast to deliver a preached message into an otherwise live worship setting created an element of qualitative discovery to this research as well. In summary, this research was an applicational, qualitatively experimental survey project.

Within the field of qualitative research, this was *ex post facto* case study survey conducted by means of personal interview (Wiersma 158). The survey was a longitudinal, panel study where data was collected on two occasions over the course of one month from the same sample of worship participants. Data was collected prior to subjects' experience of worship in a video venue and approximately one month following subjects' initial experience of worship in a video venue.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The sample and the instrumentation of this study tend to a high degree of validity. The internal validity was ensured by the fact that overall the differences among the sample was their switch from live to video venues or vice versa. All subjects were surveyed related to the same set of sermons delivered on the same days by the same teaching pastors. Additionally, the random nature of the sample from among a representative population of the church strengthens the validity of the survey results.

The external validity of this research was strengthened first by its strong internal validity. With regard to generalization, the random nature of selection gives a high degree of external validity to the population of community group leaders as a whole. Because the population of community group leaders was asserted by the leaders of Fellowship Bible Church to be demographically representative of the church population as a whole, the results should have a high degree of validity for the entire church population. The degree to which the results can be generalized to other churches besides Fellowship Bible Church is dependent upon the logical similarity of the other church to that of Fellowship Bible Church Little Rock.

With regard to reliability, the internal reliability of the research was strengthened through the use of a script to diminish interrater error. With regard to external reliability, I attempted to document thoroughly the necessary details to ensure consistent replication. Whether a consistent replication would produce a similar result is difficult to project given there currently seems to be no similar research with which to compare.

The research methods deployed here have a high degree of credibility because they are replicable, accurate, and appropriately generalizable.

## Variables

The independent variable of this research was the means of message delivery into an otherwise live worshipping community. The subjects experienced the delivery of the same set of sermons given by the same preacher on the same day. The primary distinction was the means of delivery for the sermon.

Foreshadowed problems to research of the affect of sermon delivery in the video venue model are the influence of the intimacy of the worship setting, a preferable musical style, the availability of refreshments, and the ability of the subjects to attend all worship services for the duration of the research. Those variables, presumably, affected respondents' overall perception of the video venue experience and, therefore, influenced their perception of the video delivery component. Those variables are considered intervening to this research. Interview questions were designed to determine how those variables affected participants' overall experiences in the video venue setting; however, the research did not specifically correlate these items to the responses of participants to the message.

Dependent variables are the respondents' perception of connection to God, zeal for personal evangelism, enthusiasm to participate in a small group experience, inclination to initiate prayer, inclination to reflect deeply on Scripture, financial generosity, and commitment to strategic service as described here.

Connection to God is understood to be both immediate and ongoing. Respondents may have had an immediate experience of God's presence at some level of intensity as part of the worship experience. Respondents may have been motivated to perpetuate that connection to God following the worship experience. Therefore, the variable "connection



to God” is further broken down into the following: prayer, study, giving, and perceived imminence.

More specifically, the research inquired whether as a result of worshipping subjects were motivated immediately to prayer and/or to perpetuate prayer. Subjects were queried whether they were motivated to grow immediately in their knowledge of God by engaging the proclaimed Word and/or to engaging the Word in further study following the worship experience. Subjects were asked whether they were motivated by the message to give enthusiastically and generously in the immediate worship setting and/or to give later. Lastly, in the area of connecting to God, subjects were asked whether they sensed an immediate immanence of God in the worship setting and whether they experienced further immanence of God following the worship experience.

Intentional, personal evangelism was defined in this context as a motivation to share a testimony with others or to invite others to experience the church community as a result of the respondents’ worship experience.

Participation in a small group was defined as worshippers’ motivation to take part actively in an organized community of Christians of less than twenty. That group’s covenant was to meet at least monthly and for one year. Among the group’s primary purpose was to be spiritual growth and encouragement. Participation was defined as attending at least 75 percent of the group’s meetings.

Strategic service was defined as intentionally choosing to serve, either individually or as part of a team, in ministries to which the respondents felt strategically called or gifted. The ministries could be in the context of the church or in some other context. The key was respondents be able to identify God-given calling or gifting to those

forms of service.

### **Instrumentation**

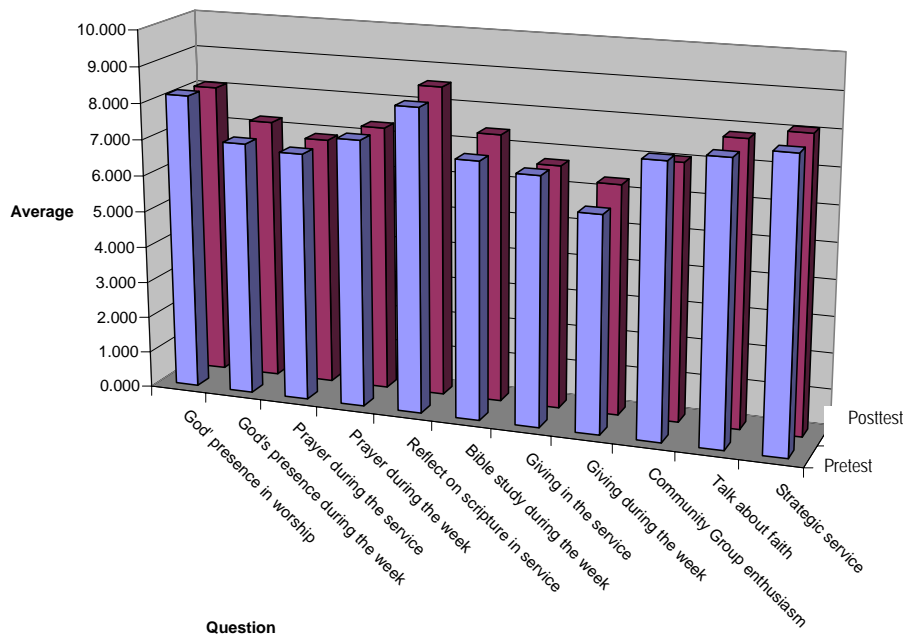
A researcher-designed survey administered in interview format was the instrument used to measure the affect upon the panel related to messages delivered live and messages delivered via videocast. Interview questions included open-ended and selected response items. The instrument was administered prior to a panelist's experience of a video venue. It was subsequently administered after one month's experience in a video venue. The interview questions moved from general to specific and sought to measure the influence of the foreshadowed problems on the data collected (see Appendixes A and B).

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Since this research was primarily concerned with whether delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alters the response of the hearer when compared to the same sermon’s live delivery, the survey data specifically related to the dependent variable is reported first.

The survey also explored the possible effect of certain intervening variables. The data related to those variables is presented second. The comprehensive presentation of all quantitative data from the survey is reported in Appendix E.



**Figure 4.1** A comparison of pretest and posttest averages of subjects’ responses.

A summary of results from the qualitative data derived from the open-ended responses of the interviews concludes this chapter. Those observations describe relationships between age and video venue preference, the role of the acquaintance of the hearer with the preacher with video venue preference, and other general observations related to video venues.

Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1 display the data for responses to eleven interview questions designed quantitatively to measure subjects' self-assessments. In Table 4.1 the data is in the form of the average of all pretest responses to each question, the average of all posttest responses to each question, the difference between the pretest and posttest averages, and the t-value for each difference. Figure 4.1 displays the averages from Table 4.1 in graphic form.

**Table 4.1. Pretest and Posttest Averages of Subjects' Responses to Key Interview Questions, with Accompanying t-test Values**

Description	Pretest Average	Posttest Average	Difference	T-test Value
God' presence in worship	8.195	8.098	-0.098	0.606
God's presence during the week	7.000	7.244	0.244	0.298
Prayer during the service	6.854	6.878	0.024	0.925
Prayer during the week	7.366	7.341	-0.024	0.915
Reflect on Scripture in service	8.366	8.585	0.220	0.152
Bible study during the week	7.073	7.415	0.341	0.243
Giving in the service	6.829	6.707	-0.122	0.614
Giving during the week	5.951	6.341	0.390	0.151
Community group enthusiasm	7.488	7.073	-0.415	0.058
Talk about faith	7.707	7.829	0.122	0.360
Strategic service	7.951	8.098	0.146	0.438

The subjects who participated in this study were distributed between three worship venues during the month of research. Eight subjects worshipped and viewed

videocast messages in The Edge worship venue. Fourteen subjects worshipped and viewed videocast messages in New Community worship venue. Nineteen subjects worshipped and viewed the message live in the Worship Center venue. Table 4.2 displays responses to the seven questions distinguished by the worship venue attended.

**Table 4.2. Pretest and Posttest Averages, Differences, and T-test Values Distinguished by Worship Venue**

Question	The Edge (Video) Venue				New Community (Video) Venue				Worship Center (Live) Venue			
	Pretest	Posttest	Diff	T-test	Pretest	Posttest	Diff	T-test	Pretest	Posttest	Diff	T-test
God's presence in worship	8.250	8.000	-0.250	0.649	8.143	8.357	0.214	0.568	8.211	7.947	-0.263	0.235
God's presence during week	6.375	6.750	0.375	0.080	7.286	7.143	-0.143	0.775	7.053	7.526	0.474	0.176
Prayer during the service	6.875	6.500	-0.375	0.402	7.714	7.500	-0.214	0.583	6.211	6.579	0.368	0.421
Prayer during week	7.000	6.875	-0.125	0.785	7.857	7.214	-0.643	0.033	7.158	7.632	0.474	0.235
Reflect on Scripture in service	7.625	8.125	0.500	0.275	8.714	8.786	0.071	0.793	8.421	8.632	0.211	0.297
Bible study during week	7.125	7.125	0.000	1.000	7.071	7.429	0.357	0.819	7.053	7.526	0.474	0.083
Giving in service	7.750	7.125	-0.625	0.250	7.429	7.000	-0.429	0.407	6.000	6.316	0.316	0.285
Giving during week	6.750	6.250	-0.500	0.316	5.929	6.643	0.714	0.165	5.632	6.158	0.526	0.047
Small group enthusiasm	8.000	7.875	-0.125	0.785	8.000	7.357	-0.643	0.082	6.895	6.526	-0.368	0.289
Talk about faith	7.125	7.500	0.375	0.080	8.357	8.143	-0.214	0.336	7.474	7.737	0.263	0.235
Strategic service	7.750	8.125	0.375	0.080	8.286	8.357	0.071	0.865	7.789	7.895	0.105	0.695

### Major Finding

A comparison of the pretest and posttest means of each interview question, as demonstrated in Table 4.1, indicated only a small difference. That difference is indicated between the responses of the subjects to the sermons delivered via videocast when compared to the same sermons delivered live.

When the pretest and posttest means for each question were subjected to a t-test, the t-value for each question was less than 1.0. The critical t-value for a level of significance of 0.05 and  $df=40$  ( $n-1$ ) is 2.021 (Wiersma 446). Since the t-value for each measure was less than the critical t-value of 2.021, the difference between the means was not statistically significant.

The null hypothesis for this research was no difference in effect between sermons

delivered live and sermons delivered via video. Since no statistically significant difference between the two on any of the variables exists, the null hypothesis was accepted. This limited research indicates that when compared to live delivery of sermons, a videocast message does not alter the response of the listener.

Since the subjects of this research were distributed over three distinct worship venues during the trial, the same tests were additionally applied to the participants within each individual venue. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

When the eight participants in The Edge venue are considered separately, the *t*-values were all either 1.0 or below. The critical *t*-value for a level of significance of 0.05 and  $df=7$  ( $n-1$ ) is 2.365 (Wiersma). Since the *t*-value for each measure was less than that critical *t*-value, the difference between the means for that unique venue was not statistically significant.

When the fourteen participants in the New Community venue are considered separately, the *t*-values were all below 1.0. The critical *t*-value for a level of significance of 0.05 and  $df=13$  ( $n-1$ ) is 2.160 (Wiersma). Since the *t*-value for each measure was less than that critical *t*-value, the difference between the means for that unique venue was also not statistically significant.

Finally, when the eight participants in the Worship Center venue are considered separately, the *t*-values were all below 1.0. The critical *t*-value for a level of significance of 0.05 and  $df=18$  ( $n-1$ ) is 2.101 (Wiersma). Since the *t*-value for each measure was less than that critical *t*-value, the difference between the means for that unique venue was also not statistically significant.

In summary, when considered collectively and when considered separately, the

data indicates no statistically significant difference between the responses of the subjects to the sermons delivered via videocast when compared to the sermons delivered live.

### **Additional Findings**

Additional distinctions were present among the video venues beyond the method by which the teaching pastor's message was delivered. Those variables have been previously identified as the potentially increased intimacy of the worship setting created by a smaller quantity of attenders, the variety of musical styles, and the differing availability of refreshments. Those intervening variables, presumably, affected the subjects' overall perception of a venue experience and, therefore, potentially influenced their perception of the video delivery variable. A preached message is delivered into a context. As the context varies, the way the message is heard changes as well.

This research probed those intervening variables, and the results are displayed in Appendix E. Subjects were asked how their experience of those intervening variables affected their overall experience of the service. This research revealed that no significant difference in the degree to which each of those variables affected the subjects' experience of the service. Musical preference was highly influential on the subjects' positive experience. The effect of size and the presence of acquaintances in the service was only moderately influential. The availability of refreshments was mostly inconsequential.

More significant to this research, however, was the fact that the influence of those intervening variables was no more or less significant from one venue to the next. The difference between the pretest and posttest averages of responses to questions about those intervening variables was below 1.0 on each item. Additionally, the pretest and posttest means were subjected to a t-test. The t-value for each question was less than 1.0. The

critical t-value for a level of significance of 0.05 and  $df=40$  ( $n-1$ ) is 2.021 (Wiersma). Since the t-value for each measure was less than the critical t-value of 2.021, the difference between the means was not statistically significant. No statistically significant difference in the effect of the intervening variables in the video venue was found when compared to the live venue. For this research, those intervening variables were not a factor.

### **Qualitative Observations**

Publications cited earlier from North Coast Church indicated that in their experience age was not a factor in a person's positive inclination toward video venues. This research seemed to confirm that fact. While age was not an item of data recorded about the subjects, the sample group reflected a variety of ages of persons who appeared to range from early 30s to mid-70s. Appendix E shows that subjects' level of comfort with video technology was high and remained consistent over the course of the study. When asked to rate their overall experience of video venues, most people indicated that their experience was positive, regardless of their age.

The matter of pastoral theology mentioned earlier was evident in the responses of some who indicated that their level of comfort with videocast delivery was influenced by their personal acquaintance with the teaching pastor or their perception of his authenticity in communicating. Multiple comments were made, such as the following quote from one subject: "I have seen the pastors' real lives and know that they are transparent and have integrity. Therefore, it doesn't matter whether I see them live or on video. I know they are for real." Another subject indicated, "They are so honest with stories about themselves and their own failures that even when you are watching them on video it is



like being right there.”

The interview process revealed a small extreme group of subjects who strongly disliked video delivery. The percentage of the sample was probably near 10 percent. An alternative small extreme group of subjects strongly preferred video delivery. They, too, probably constituted around 10 percent of the sample. The remaining 80 percent were primarily neutral about video delivery. As born out in the earlier quantitative data, they expressed no difference between live delivery and video.

Of those who strongly disliked the video delivery, the cause cited most often was that it seemed excessively impersonal. They felt distanced from the teaching pastor. Of those who strongly preferred video delivery, the overwhelmingly common theme was that they could see the teaching pastor’s facial expressions.

Most of the subjects indicated that they initially expected to dislike video venues but, having experienced them, found that their positive experience exceeded their expectations. When asked at the conclusion of the research which venue they planned to attend in the future, the subjects split about 50/50 between the live venue and video venues. Some indicated that they would likely move spontaneously between the venues. Interestingly, when asked in the end, “If you could design the ideal worship setting to meet your own preferences would the teaching pastor speak live or via video?” the preponderance of responses was “live.” Although many qualified their responses with, “but it really wouldn’t make that much of a difference.”

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

In its most simple form, the key question of this research was, “Does delivering a videocast sermon in a video venue alter the response of the hearer when compared to the same sermon’s live delivery?” This research used the seven areas of connection to God, initiation of prayer, reflection on Scripture, generosity with finances, participation in a small group community, zeal for personal evangelism, and commitment to strategic service as measures for response.

#### **Summary of Major Findings**

When the pretest and posttest means for each research question were subjected to a t-test, the t-value for each question was less than the critical t-test value. The null hypothesis for this research was no difference in effect between sermons delivered live and sermons delivered via video. Since no statistical difference exists between the two on any of the variables, the null hypothesis was accepted. This research indicates that when compared to live delivery of sermons, a videocast message does not alter the response of the listener.

#### **Limitations of the Findings**

The findings of this research reflect the responses of a sample from the population of community group leaders at Fellowship Bible Church Little Rock. The reliability of the research design and the validity of the data would seem to indicate that the responses of the sample are generalizable to the population of community group leaders itself.

I contend and the staff leadership of Fellowship Bible Church contends that the demographic makeup of community group leaders is representative of the demographic

makeup of the church itself. If this contention is indeed true, then the findings are likely generalizable to the church population as a whole.

To the degree that the demographic makeup of other churches is similar to that of Fellowship Bible Church, those churches might expect similar responses regarding the affect of videocast sermons.

Additionally, this research reflects findings limited to one particular homiletical style, specifically, didactic, expository preaching. Whether responses would be similar to a different homiletical style is not generalizable from this research.

Another limitation of the study is its fundamental contention that the primary work of God in the world is life transformation. The biblical warrants for that contention are strong; my commitment to that contention is strong. Nevertheless, many equally passionate Christian theologians would contend that the primary work of God in the world is related to the coming of the kingdom or the fulfilling of covenants. Life transformation, the completion of the kingdom, and the fulfillment of covenants each include some principles of the other; however, ultimately they are more distinct than similar. This research was not the setting to survey the alternatives to the assumption that life transformation is God's primary work and is the primary measure of preaching affect. Still, those alternatives do exist. For a subscriber to one of those alternatives, the findings of this research could prove rather limited.

### **Reflections on the Data and Findings**

The concluding paragraphs seek to return the specific findings of this research to the broader context of life transformation, preaching, pastoral theology, and the relationship between faith and technology that were outlined in Chapter 2. The previous

section of this chapter highlights the limitations of the study and references the distinct perspectives on life transformation and preaching. The following reflections on pastoral theology and technology round out the attempt to return the practice of video venue preaching to its broader context. This concluding section ends with a proposal for local church practitioners who are considering the possibility of using video venues as a proactive means of extending the ministry and influence of their churches.

### **Pastoral Theology**

The writings of Willimon and Wagner, highlight the complexity of pastoring and the theological framing of pastoring. Whether Willimon's ten images are used or whether Wagner's categories of "form" and "function" are used, clearly many parts constitute the whole.

When the principle of pastoring is applied to video venues, one is left with the tension between two realities that were presented earlier in Chapter 2. Willimon claims that preaching derives part of its power from pastoring (67). Alternatively, good fruit is evident in the experiences of practitioners like Heartland Church and Seacoast Church where pastoring and the preaching function have been purposefully severed.

Ultimately, practitioners of video venues will need to consider thoughtfully and prayerfully pastoral theology. Practitioners must consider the pastoral expectations of their hearers. Practitioners must consider the pastoral expectations of their denominations. Practitioners must revisit the constructs of their own pastoral theology to determine whether that theology will hold with integrity in the context of the video venue paradigm.

## Faith and Technology

Jacques Ellul states,

In the modern world, the most dangerous form of determinism is the technological phenomenon. It is not a question of getting rid of it, but, by an act of freedom, of transcending it. How is this to be done? I do not yet know. That is why this book is an appeal to the individual's sense of responsibility. The first step in the quest, the first act of freedom, is to become aware of the necessity. (Technical Society xxxiii)

Ellul asserts that a collective sociological reality influences individuals that is independent of individuals. He further asserts that technology influences society at that collective level and, as a result, influences the individuals who make up the society. As a result, as noted above, he calls readers to appropriate technology and its advances cautiously and purposefully. In his later years, Ellul followed his original work with The Technological Bluff. There he again warned readers to avoid the uncritical appropriation of technology.

Schultze brings that warning uniquely into the context of the church and specifically to corporate worship. He contends that communications technologies are not neutral tools. They have inherent connotations of power, control, and efficiency. They shape how people perceive the world and hear others' messages. Specifically, Schultze says the following of communications technology:

We have to be careful about how, when, why, and where we use it. A wise approach to new technologies, then, is a "yes, but" attitude: *yes* [original emphasis], we will consider using it to serve our neighbors as ourselves, *but* [original emphasis] we will not be duped by inflated rhetoric about its inherent goodness or badness. *Yes* [original emphasis], new technologies are part of the unfolding of God's original creation, *but* [original emphasis] we fallen humans being will never be able to use them to usher in heaven on earth. The "yes" is our faith in God to bless our imperfect use of technology; the "but" is our admission of foolishness and hubris—all sin. (HighTech Worship 43)

Video venues are not ends in themselves. When used to their greatest advantage, they are means to a larger end of transforming lives, connecting people to God, and extending the kingdom. Practitioners who adopt video venues without a clear end in mind, who adopt them because “everyone else is doing them,” or who adopt them without first giving thought to the unique context of the setting in which the practitioner intends to implement them, would do well to heed the warnings of Ellul and Schultze.

### **Questions for Practitioners**

The first question practitioners ought to ask themselves is: What do I hope to gain from implementing video venues? This research confirmed that in its unique setting video venues compromised nothing in the measures of life transformation that it researched. Nevertheless, the results of this research are limited. Unexplored areas of risk remain. In addition broader areas of risk are raised by Ellul, Schultze, and others. Unless practitioners can identify specific kingdom gains that they believe video venues will advance, the remaining questions become immaterial.

The remaining questions, in no particular order of importance, would help practitioners evaluate their unique contexts for anticipating positive results from implementing video venues.

The second question is, How rigidly connected are pastoring and preaching in the expectations of the local body? At Fellowship Bible Church the subjects were able to distinguish between the roles of pastor and preacher. The pastoral identity of the teaching pastors had already been so well established that the video delivery in that church context already assumed the connection between preacher and pastor. Neither of those might be the case in the context of other churches.

The third question is, How will the homiletical style of the primary communicator(s) convey via video? This research indicated that a didactic, expository preaching style conveyed without diminished effect. Other styles may not convey as well.

Question four is, What is the prevailing theology of preaching in the body? What is preaching intended to accomplish? This research indicated that when life transformation was used as a measure the effect of video delivery was equal to the effect of live delivery. If other measures were used, the results could be different.

Those questions are far from exhaustive. They are intended to highlight that context is critical. The unexamined adoption of video venues could harbor significant risks. Alternatively, the thoughtful, prayerful use of video venues, in some contexts, may be an especially effective tool in preaching Christ to communities and to the world.

### **Summary**

This research confirmed the hypothesis that no difference exists in the subjects' responses to a videocast message when compared to the live delivery of the same message. Nevertheless, anecdotal comments of the subjects in this research overwhelmingly indicated a preference for live delivery. When asked, "If all other things were equal, would you prefer live delivery over videocast delivery?" the vast majority of respondents indicated, "Yes."

In the end, the influence of one's definition of preaching and one's perception of the relationship between preaching and pastoring cannot be underestimated in this field of inquiry. Those who assert that the power of the Word to transform lives rests in what has been written will find this research encouraging should they entertain embracing the current trend toward video venues.

Alternatively, those who assert that the power of the Word rests in its being incarnated in the life of the preacher will likely assert that although this research indicates no difference in affect between live and videocast delivery, the findings apply to one unique, potentially misguided homiletical style. Ultimately, the incarnational value of preaching is diminished by delivering it in any form other than “in the flesh.”

Clearly, deeper theological questions must be answered simultaneously to the practical ones. Even though this research indicates videocast sermons can be delivered without diminished effect, some will wonder, and possibly rightly, if videocasting should be done. Like other issues of theological variety and diversity, that discussion may never be broadly resolved.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

The findings of this study were, ultimately, rather narrow in scope. Much related to video venues remains to be discovered due to the fledgling use of the practice. Much will likely be learned through trial and error by practitioner churches. Their discoveries will do more to broaden the body of knowledge related to the benefits and liabilities of sermons delivered via videocast.

With regard to future research, I would be curious to see if similar findings resulted in smaller, less urban settings where the educational level was lower and the comfort level with technology was less. Similarly, discovering how the findings varied when derived from churches where the preaching style was significantly more prophetic than didactic, or where the style was more narrative than expository, would prove interesting.

Finally, although my observations with this sample of interviewees indicated that



age was not a factor in predicting the affect of a videocast message, if researched more thoroughly, I suspect age and perhaps even ethnicity would be key influencers of a person's response to video venues.

In summary, while attempting to describe thoroughly the contextual setting of this research in the description of its design, the critical importance of context was inherently implied. Context is critical. The video delivery of a preached message into different contexts presents significant opportunities; however, those significant opportunities are accompanied by potentially significant risks as the message is transported out of one context and into another via video.

## POSTSCRIPT

I am neither for nor against video venues. I just want the church and followers of Christ to experience the abundance of life Jesus came to demonstrate, make available, and secure. I am convinced the Bible is God's self-revelation and is, indeed, the only reliable measure for faith and practice. Therefore, the final measure of the usefulness of video venues does not rest in this or any future scholarly research.

Although no passage from Scripture overtly condones or condemns video venues, the prayerful discerning and application of the principles of Scripture should ultimately determine their fate.

Jesus taught that bad trees do not produce good fruit (Luke 6:43). In light of Jesus' teaching, this research indicates preached messages delivered via video produce the same fruit as preached messages delivered live. Judging by the fruit, the tree of video venue preaching must be equally as good as the tree of live preaching. Alternatively, the greatest event of human history is the Word became flesh and dwelt among people (John 1:14). The fact that God loved the world enough to come in person to communicate the truth surely ought to reflect that live communication is preferential to impersonal communication.

The discoveries I have made and the relationships I have developed during this research have exceeded my expectations. Even with the clear findings of this project, for me the jury is still out on the usefulness of video venues.

Like Paul, whether by false motives or true (Phil 1:18), whether by video or in person, I believe that what is most important is that in every way Christ be preached. Like Paul, in that I, too, will rejoice.

## APPENDIX A

### Interviewer's Script: Pretest

Hi First Name. My name is Your Name. (Invite interviewee(s) to be seated.) Thanks for agreeing to participate in this research. Keep in mind that the interview has two purposes. One is to inform Fellowship's commitment to evaluate, refine, and improve our video venue strategy. The other is to inform Richard's doctoral research. Because of the scholarly component, I will be reading from this script and the interview may feel a little formal at times. I hope that in spite of that, you'll still enjoy the opportunity to share your thoughts.

Let me anticipate a few questions that you may have of me. Then I will give you an opportunity to clarify anything before I actually begin posing questions to you.

First, our time together should take approximately forty-five minutes. I will do all that I can to honor your time. In addition you have agreed to a similar conversation the weekend of April 3 and 4. Richard will follow up with you in late March to coordinate that interview.

Second, it would be a great help if you would consent to my recording our conversation. The motivation to record the conversation is to supply a verbatim record of your opinions. That will prevent my missing the force of something you may say because I was taking shorthand notes. In addition, it will allow our conversation to flow more naturally and efficiently because I won't have to take notes. The recording will be transcribed later. Be assured that the tape will remain in Richard's possession and that your anonymity will be protected. No one apart from Richard will have access to your comments in a form that can be traced to you. Bottom line: Your anonymity beyond this interview is safe unless you give additional permission to identify your comments later. Transcribed comments with no names attached will be made available to Fellowship Bible Church for use in evaluating, refining, and improving the video venue strategy. May I have your consent to record our conversation for the purpose that I described?

**Turn the recorder on.** [If the interviewees do not consent to being recorded, do your best to write down what they say.]

Finally, and probably obviously, I hope you will share your candid, honest thoughts about the items that we discuss. We are genuinely interested in your opinions and hope you will give them to us straight.

Are there any items you would like to ask about or get clarification about before I begin picking your mind on some things?

Many of the following questions ask you to rate your response on a scale of 1-10, with one representing the least and ten representing the most. Just as a "heads up" on the 1-10 scale, by design, there is no neutral (or middle) number. [5.5 would be the middle]

Therefore, 5 is slightly below neutral and 6 is slightly above neutral. Following any questions of this type, you are always welcome to elaborate.

**Item One (a single, open-ended question)**

Briefly describe how you initially came to Fellowship and why you have stayed.

**Item Two (a single, selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with ten being *extreme enthusiasm* and zero being *extreme apathy*, rate your general feelings about the church, today.

**Item Three (a series of two questions, one selected response with an open-ended follow-up)**

What percentage of your feelings about the church is influenced by your experience in the worship service?

What other factors influence how you feel about the church?

**Item Four (a series of four selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups, and one final open-ended question)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being no effect* and *10 being an overwhelming effect*, how does *the existence of friendships with fellow worshipers* in the worship service affect your positive experience of the service?

On the same scale of 1-10, with *1 being no effect* and *10 being an overwhelming effect*, how does *the choice of music* in the service effect your positive experience of the service?

On the same scale of 1-10, with *1 being no effect* and *10 being an overwhelming effect*, how does *the teaching pastor's message* effect your positive experience of the service?

Finally, on the same scale of 1-10, with *1 being no effect* and *10 being an overwhelming effect*, how does *the availability of refreshments* at the worship service effect your positive experience of the service?

What other components of the worship affect your experience?

**Item Five (three selected response questions)**

Which worship service have you attended most frequently since the new venues were implemented last fall?

What percentage of the time have you attended that service?

(If less than 100%) What percentage of the time have you attended either of the other worship services?

**Item Six (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being extremely uncomfortable* and *10 being extremely at ease*, how would you characterize your level of comfort with the video technology used in worship services?

Can you identify anything specific about the video technology that contributes to your level of comfort or discomfort?

The following few questions relate exclusively to how you typically respond to the teaching pastor's message each Sunday.

**Item Seven (a series of two selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to experience God's presence *in the worship service*?

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to experience God's presence *during the week between services*?

**Item Eight (a series of two selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to approach God in prayer *during the service*?

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood *to initiate prayer during the week between services*?

**Item Nine (a series of two selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to reflect deeply on the message of the Bible *during the service*?

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to pursue some form of *Bible study during the week between services*?

**Item Ten (a series of two selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to give enthusiastically and generously of your finances *during the service*?

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to give enthusiastically and generously of your finances *during the week between services*?

**Item Eleven (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your enthusiasm to participate in your community group or in another small group?

**Item Twelve (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to purposefully talk about your faith with other people?

**Item Thirteen (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to strategically exercise your gifts by serving others—inside the church or beyond?

**Item Fourteen (one open-ended question)**

Is there anything additional that you could share that would better illuminate how you believe that your experience of the pastor's message on Sunday mornings effects your likelihood to grow as a follower of Jesus Christ?

**Item Fifteen (one open-ended question)**

Do you have any other thoughts that seem pertinent to our conversation that you would like to share before we conclude?

Closing: On behalf of the elders, pastors, and everyone else who will benefit from this information, thanks for taking the time to share your thoughts today. Please be faithful to attend exclusively either the worship center or a video venue during the month of March. It should be the opposite of what you have been attending the most frequently up to this point. If you have any questions, Richard should be available outside. I enjoyed visiting with you.

**(Turn off the recorder.)**

## APPENDIX B

### Interviewer's Script: Posttest

#### Introduction

Hi *First Name*. Thanks again for agreeing to participate in this research. We are especially interested in your experience in worship over the last few weeks.

We covered much of this during your first interview in February. However, let me refresh your memory on a few things. I will conclude with giving you an opportunity to clarify anything before I actually begin posing questions to you.

First, our time together should take approximately one hour. I will do all that I can to honor your time. Following this conversation, you will have fulfilled your commitment to participate in the research. The church is already benefiting from your earlier responses. If, in addition to helping the church, you have any interest in receiving a summary of Richard's dissertation when it is completed, he will be glad to provide one to you so that you can see what you were a part of. Here is his card from Fellowship Associates. Let him know of your interest. The completed project should be available around this time next year.

Second, as you discovered the last time you were interviewed, it will be a tremendous help if you consent to my recording our conversation. Your thoughts, today, like those earlier will remain anonymous. Fellowship Bible Church will have access to your comments only in unreferenced form. May I have your consent to record our conversation?

#### **Start recorder.**

Finally, like last time, please share your candid, honest thoughts on the items that we discuss. We are genuinely interested in your opinions and hope you will give them to us straight.

Are there any items you would like to ask about or clarify before I begin picking your mind?

As it was last time, many of the following questions ask you to rate your response on a scale of 1-10, with one representing the least and ten representing the most. Just as a reminder on the 1-10 scale, by design, there is no neutral (or middle) number. [5.5 would be the middle] Therefore, 5 is slightly below neutral and 6 is slightly above neutral. Following any questions of this type, you are always welcome to elaborate.



**Item One (a single, selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with ten being *extreme enthusiasm* and one being *extreme apathy*, rate your general feelings about the church, today.

**Item Two (a series of two questions, one selected response with an open-ended follow-up)**

What percentage of your feelings about the church is influenced by your experience in the worship service?

What other factors influence how you feel about the church?

**Item Three (two open-ended questions)**

Where did you worship each Sunday in March?

[If interviewee worshipped at a church other than Fellowship] Would you briefly describe the worship style of that church?

**Item Four (one open-ended question)**

In general terms, please describe the settings in which you are most accustomed to worshipping over the past ten years. (size, music style, preaching style, denomination, etc.)

**Item Five (a series of four selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups, and one final open-ended question)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being no effect* and *10 being an overwhelming effect*, how does *the existence of friendships with fellow worshipers* in the worship service effect your experience of the service?

On the same scale of 1-10, with *1 being no effect* and *10 being an overwhelming effect*, how does *the choice of music* in the service effect your experience of the service?

On the same scale of 1-10, with *1 being no effect* and *10 being an overwhelming effect*, how does *the pastor's message* effect your experience of the service?

Finally, on the same scale of 1-10, with *1 being no effect* and *10 being an overwhelming effect*, how does *the availability of refreshments* at the worship service effect your experience of the service?

What other components of the worship effect your experience?

**Item Six (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being extremely uncomfortable* and *10 being extremely at ease*, how would you characterize your level of comfort with the video technology used in worship services?

Can you specify anything about the video technology that contributes to your level of comfort or discomfort?

<p>The next few questions relate exclusively to how you typically respond to the teaching pastor's message each Sunday.</p>
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**Item Seven (a series of two selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to experience God's presence *in the worship service*?

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to experience God's presence *during the week*?

**Item Eight (a series of two selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to approach God in prayer *during the service*?

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood *to initiate prayer during the week*?

**Item Nine (a series of two selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to reflect deeply on the message of the Bible *during the service*?

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to pursue some form of *Bible study during the week*?

**Item Ten (a series of two selected response questions with open-ended follow-ups)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to give enthusiastically and generously of your finances *during the service*?

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to give enthusiastically and generously of your finances to other causes *during the week*?

**Item Eleven (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your enthusiasm to participate in your Community Group or in another small group?

**Item Twelve (one selected response questions with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to purposefully talk about your faith with other people?

**Item Thirteen (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extreme negative effect* and *10 being an extreme positive effect*, how does your experience of the teaching pastor's message effect your likelihood to strategically exercise your gifts by serving others – inside the church or beyond?

**Item Fourteen (one open-ended question)**

Is there anything additional that you could share that would better illuminate how you believe that your experience of the pastor's message effects your likelihood to pursue Christ passionately?

**Item Fifteen (two open-ended questions)**

Before your first experience of a video venue [regardless of how long ago that was], how did you imagine that you would like video venues?

Can you identify *why* you believe that you had those expectations?

**Item Sixteen (one open-ended question)**

Having experienced video venues, how has your experience corresponded to your expectations?

**Item Seventeen (one open-ended question)**

If you could design an ideal worship setting to meet your own preferences would the teaching pastor speak live or via video?

Why would that be your preference?

**Item Eighteen (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being an extremely negative response* and *10 being an extremely positive effect*, how would you rate your overall experience of receiving the teaching pastor's message via video?

**Item Nineteen (one open-ended question)**

Describe, from your perspective, the benefits and liabilities of video venues.

**Item Twenty (two open-ended questions)**

What, if any, additional features would motivate you to become a committed participant of a video venue?

What features discourage you from becoming a committed participant of a video venue?

**Item Twenty-one (one selected response question with an open-ended follow-up)**

On a scale of 1-10, with *1 being extremely repelling* and *10 being extremely attractive*, how would you rate your personal response to the following features of our video venues? You are welcome to clarify or elaborate after any response.

- Convenience and location
- Setting and atmosphere
- Music style
- Music leadership
- Ability to connect to or relate to other attendees
- Ability to feel a part of the overall church
- Leadership of the venue host pastor (not the teaching pastor)
- Opportunities to serve - take ownership w/in venue
- It is where my friends attend
- It is where my family attends
- I have been asked to attend there by church leadership
- Overall worship experience

**Item Twenty-two (two open-ended questions)**

What one thing have you enjoyed most about your video venue experience?

What one thing have you disliked most about your video venue experience?

**Item Twenty-three (one open-ended question)**

Given your current experience, where do you anticipate worshipping most frequently in the future?

**Item Twenty-four (one open-ended question)**

Do you have any other thoughts that seem pertinent to our conversation that you would like to share before we conclude?

Closing: On behalf of the elders, pastors, and everyone else who will benefit from this information, thanks for taking the time to participate in this study. Your answers will benefit not only Fellowship, but have the potential to inform churches who are just beginning to experiment with video venues around the world.

**(Turn off the recorder.)**

## APPENDIX C

### Letter to Subjects Inviting Participation

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Because of the commitment you have made to Fellowship Bible Church that is evidenced by your participation in Community Group leadership, you have been selected to participate in a group study to provide key feedback regarding our video venue worship communities. Your feedback is strategic in two ways. First, it will help us continue to evaluate, refine, and improve our video venue strategy. Second, it will contribute to the scholarly research of one of our church planting residents, Richard Gifford, who is writing his doctoral dissertation related to the preaching aspect of video venues. Community Group leaders were chosen as a pool with which to converse because we anticipate you will offer candid insights to help our church achieve its best. Your particular name was randomly chosen to permit integrity in Richard's research.

You will be receiving a telephone call early next week as a follow-up to this letter. That call will invite you to commit to the following:

- Participate in a 30-45 minute interview at a time of your convenience, between 9:00 and 5:30 on Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, or between 8:00 and 5:30 on Sunday, February 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Switch your regular worship community from video venue to live, or vice versa, for all Sundays in March.
- Participate in a 30-45 minute interview at a time of your convenience, between 9:00 and 5:30 on Saturday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, or between 8:00 and 5:30 on Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Richard Gifford is coordinating this interview process. If you prefer to correspond by email rather than by phone next week, please indicate that in a brief email reply to this letter directed to Richard's email address ([rgifford@fellowshipassociates.com](mailto:rgifford@fellowshipassociates.com)). If you have questions that you would like answered before you are contacted next week, you may direct them to Richard ([rgifford@fellowshipassociates.com](mailto:rgifford@fellowshipassociates.com), 975-5050) or Tracy Noble in the pastors' office ([tnoble@fbcl.org](mailto:tnoble@fbcl.org), 224-7171).

Thanks in advance for your willingness to accommodate our invitation. Your insights will not only influence the weekend worship experience of our church body, but also will have the potential to inform churches nationwide when Richard's dissertation becomes available for circulation.

Serving Him together,

Tim Lundy  
Teaching Pastor

Richard Gifford  
Fellowship Associates

## APPENDIX D

### The Fellowship Story

#### **Not he who plants, nor he who waters ... but God causes growth 1 Corinthians 3:7**

It was the 1960s at the University of Arkansas when God hooked up a small group of students—Robert Lewis, Bill Wellons, Dennis Rainey, Barbara Peterson, Debbie Brasher, Mike Boschetti, John Rees, Starr Chenault, Carolyn Williams, Bill Carter, Sally Fontaine, Caroline Meyer, Shirley Price, Susie Wilson—none of whom had given much thought to God or His plan for their lives.

Yet through Campus Crusade for Christ staff members Don and Sally Meredith and Bill and Ann Parkinson—who were mere babes in the faith themselves—God gathered this handful of students and slowly unfolded His master plan. This core flock accepted a clear calling first to follow the gospel, and later to plant a church.

“As one of those college students, I can testify that our fellowship was deep and passionate,” wrote Robert Lewis in his book, The Church of Irresistible Influence. After college, however, the students struggled to find a church home that encouraged the same passion and excitement they had found at school.

By 1977, 18 individuals began meeting in each other’s homes to discuss Don Meredith’s vision of starting a new kind of church. Using Fellowship Bible Church in the Dallas area as a model, and the worship and teaching styles they’d experienced at University Baptist in Fayetteville, Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock opened its doors on August 21, 1977. Fifty-nine people attended its first service, which was led by Dennis Rainey at the Anthony School.

Word of this “new” and “different” church spread quickly, with its members gaining strength through the church’s first core value: Community. Building on the deeply formed college relationships, new branches quickly sprouted. The congregation was enlightened through “open sharing,” which was included during each Sunday’s two-hour service. Small groups bonded as elders led “mini church” in member homes. Families strengthened, too, through the Learning Center’s on-the-job training for parents.

#### **Community**

The leadership community bonded as well. Shortly after the church’s formation, Bill Wellons and Bill Parkinson joined Pastor Randy Marshall on staff. Following Randy and Don’s departures in 1980, Robert Lewis moved from Tucson to join the staff, eventually creating the team ministry concept (1982) still shared today by Bill, Bill, Robert, and Tim Lundy (who joined the teaching team in 2001 and assumed directional leadership of the church body and staff in 2003). Also, lay-led Community Groups replaced elder-led mini-church (1980), allowing all members the opportunity to lead and grow. Mini-church later gave way to a fresh perspective of Community Group, moving toward an equipping



orientation (*described more fully below under “Service*) that served Fellowship well for a decade. The most recent Community Group evolution in 2003—based on a more flexible, more relational, and more experiential quarterly calendar—offers groups and their members multiple options for growth, discipleship, evangelism, prayer, service, missions, retreats, and rest.

Attendance increased so much in its first 10 years that the church had to move three times, first to Pulaski Academy (1980), then to Breckenridge Theater (1983), and finally to what is now the Special Events Center (1985). The church also gained significant exposure when one of its members, Frank White, was elected Governor in 1981.

Yet the church’s second core value—Growth—has nothing to do with church size, but everything to do with its members’ love relationship with Jesus Christ.

### **Growth**

A defining moment for this kind of growth hit in the fall of 1983 during the first State-of-the-Church address when Robert Lewis unveiled a new definition for Fellowship, calling it an *equipping church*. “Without practically-attractive, spiritually-compelling, proof-positive lifestyles, what good are our claims and pronouncements about a life-changing God?” wrote Lewis. “If we can’t outlive the world at every point—in our marriages, with our children, at work, with money, in our relationships, in the use of our time—why dare to speak of salvation and the abundant life?”

An illuminating concept, FBC began to characterize itself not as an event-oriented church—i.e., one that organizes around happenings to try to attract new people—but as one organized around *equipping its members for service*.

Rather than relying on staff to perform ministry, FBC encouraged every member to take part in service. Members were not described as passive or busy or comfortable, but as active, purposeful, responsible. Perhaps, most radical of all, success was not calculated by attendance numbers, dollars collected, or facilities. Rather, success was determined by the changes in individual lives, by people reaching out to others, and by their spiritual impact on the community.

As the Holy Spirit radically transformed the lives of members, more people were drawn to Fellowship. In fact, just three years after the church’s first worship center was completed, FBC moved to three Sunday services (1988), then to a larger temporary worship center (1995), then to the current worship center (1996), back to three services once again (2001), and finally returning in 2003 to two services—but with the exciting new twist of multiple worship venues supported by advanced video technology.

New growth-oriented ministries, staff, and outreaches came on board as well. Sister churches sprang up in North Little Rock and Northwest Arkansas (1984), then Ruston, Louisiana (1985), Grace Church in Little Rock (1987), FBC of Tucson (1988), FBC of Conway (1989), and on and on, with over 20 church plants currently in place and others planned for the near future. The first pastoral resident, Dan Jarrell, joined the team in 1988, and he later came on board full time as a fourth Teaching Pastor before joining

forces with former Single Adult Ministries pastor Karl Clauson to lead Change Point Church in Alaska in 2000.

### **Worship**

Another core value—Worship—solidified, referring not simply to the music Allan Mesko led on Sunday mornings in the early days, but to an aspect of the daily Christian walk. Worship referred to the heart-to-heart connection between every individual and God.

As the seasons changed, the tree continued to branch out with diverse musical styles that blended harmoniously, balancing the contemporary with the traditional. Beyond choral and orchestral music, Worship grew to include a wide array of creative arts. Through the innovative use of drama, everything from large-scale stage productions to subtle creative vignettes shed new light on timeless truths. And, to further support and enhance the worship experience each Sunday, a group of prayer warriors gathers during every service to praise God for what He is doing in the sanctuary at that very moment. Far from typical, this comprehensive, multi-faceted approach remains deeply rooted in devotion, yet produces exciting new fruit that continues to broaden Fellowship’s expression of worship.

In 2003, the evolution in the Sunday morning worship experience at Fellowship took a giant step into the future with the introduction of multiple onsite worship venues (New Community, The Edge, and the original celebratory Worship Center service) offered during two service times.

The creation of additional **onsite worship venues** not only allows for a greater utilization of the church campus, which in turn opens up space for newcomers at all venues, it supports diverse worship atmospheres that appeal to different ages and attitudes. Onsite venues are further supported by a Venue Pastor and Worship Leader.

Beyond the FBC-Central campus in Little Rock, the **regional campus** concept came to life in 2004 with the addition of FBC South in Saline County. Regional campuses make the Fellowship experience more convenient to residents of outlying areas and those seeking a “small church” environment with “big church” resources, and are served by a Campus Pastor and staff team dedicated to providing a local expression of FBC in their community.

While the musical and creative worship experience in each setting is distinctly different, the commitment to relevant, biblical teaching remains steadfast as each week’s sermon is broadcast via digital video to various venue and campus locations. This use of cutting-edge technology in concert with a bold new philosophy of ministry presents the many faces of Fellowship in a whole new light, with the entire church body continuing to be strengthened and connected by the constancy of a common message whether they worship onsite or on a regional campus.

## Service

The church hit a turning point in 1989 when a survey of the congregation reported that after four to five years of involvement in small group ministry, people began to feel unchallenged, stifled, and confused as to exactly what they were being “equipped” to do.

“We realized we were at a crossroads,” wrote Lewis. “If we continued on our present path,... we would eventually function as a sort of refuge from the world, a sort of Christian ‘club’ that exhausted itself trying to keep its members happy. Or ... we could make a bold, radical move in a new direction. We could courageously pursue the type of church Jesus envisioned.”

Fellowship chose the latter, and the tree weathered the storm.

The church again reorganized, and another core value came front-and-center: Service. The definition of “*equipping*” was refined into two areas: *equipping for service* and *equipping for life*. The Community Group setting, which simply placed people together at random, began to reflect this new structure. New “Seasons of Life” groups placed people of similar ages and family structures together to grow members in life skills and spiritual disciplines. “Common Cause” groups were also developed to create areas of service, allowing participants to use their equipping to reach their highest calling: bridging “the Great Chasm” between the church and the world.

New ministries arose both within and beyond the church. Some members helped nonprofits, others public schools. Some reached out through mentoring, others by showing mercy to those hurting from divorce, AIDS, imprisonment. Some started new business ventures, like the Bethany Christian Services adoption agency and the inner-city ministry of Serving to Equip People (STEP). The church seemed to have found its calling.

However, the church’s most revolutionary moment was yet to come.

In late 1996, at a staff leadership retreat, the question was posed: “Is our community really being changed?” In the discussion that followed, someone read Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” This big idea of “irresistible influence”—now known simply as “i<sup>2</sup>”—was introduced during the 1997 State-of-the-Church address, and its impact has been astonishing not just in Little Rock, but around the world. In its first year, over 400 people were trained to share the gospel through One-to-One. Men’s Fraternity grew to a citywide outreach (1998). ShareFest began (1999) with support from over 100 area churches who were willing to cross denominational and cultural lines and give back to the community as one voice for Jesus Christ. Other communities have followed Little Rock’s lead, hosting their own versions of ShareFest in areas such as Texarkana (AR/TX), Tuscaloosa (AL), and Phoenix (AZ).

Common Cause groups formed, taking on new challenges and meeting more needs inside and outside the church. Members have reached out to the lost, as over 600 people have

participated to-date in the new “Explore” class which invites seekers to undertake a journey into the Christian faith in a non-threatening group setting. Programs such as Celebrate Recovery, Heartbeat, GriefShare, DivorceCare and others have created unique settings to encourage those dealing with hurts in their lives. Members have stepped out of their comfort zones to “bridge the chasm,” and God has delivered more than they dreamed possible.

### **The Future is Now**

Fellowship’s leadership, too, has expanded its vision and reach over the years, particularly through the birth of Fellowship Associates in 1999. To date, more than a dozen residents have trained under FBC’s leadership before moving on to plant churches across the nation. In 2001, the LifeSkills Institute began providing practical “real life” training with no strings attached to the general public as well as specialized groups including medical students. With each year, LifeSkills advances further into the community in progressively strategic ways.

Men’s Fraternity has spread into prisons, churches, and colleges across the nation. Through a Washington D.C. church, it has reached national leaders in the Pentagon and even been taught in the bunkers of Afghanistan. Global expansion for the program is in the works, with the current talk of taking it into the Australian public school system. And, it could even be said that Men’s Fraternity is “out of this world,” as NASA engineers involved in the international space station project gather weekly to study authentic biblical manhood together. The church is also reaching other communities around the world. Through  $i^2$ , the church gave away over a million dollars last year.

Additionally, over 1,000 church pastors and lay leaders have learned how to implement the  $i^2$  vision in their community through the annual “Church of Irresistible Influence” conference, which began in 2001.

New resources, such as “Your Unique Design,” are being made available across the country and around the world via the Internet. And, speaking of the Internet, the Fellowship website and its Excel Online magazine attract a global audience interested in the church’s ministries, opportunities, resources, insights, and inspirational stories of life change in our midst.

“Today, opportunities and (bridge) construction are everywhere. And we are seeing steps of faith, feats of courage, and spiritual initiatives in the lives of our members that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago,” wrote Lewis.

As exciting and praiseworthy as these things are, it is not the tree that deserves the praise. Nor is it the college students who planted it, nor those who’ve cared for it over the years.

For neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

And by His grace, this tree is still growing.

**Dateline: 2004-05 Ministry Year**

Fellowship's "one church on multiple campuses" is just one aspect of the target as we take aim with God for a new year of ministry. This contemporary approach enlivens God's body, expands God's message, and extends God's love beyond the physical borders of the Little Rock campus. The foundational philosophy of "irresistible influence" will take Fellowship into the future with relevance as we continue to explore fresh ways to proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel of grace. Sharing one mission as one family of faith, our multi-site church is going deeper ... becoming broader ... reaching farther in the name of Jesus Christ!

## APPENDIX E

### Means to all Interview Questions

Description	Pretest Average	Posttest Average	Difference	T-test Value
Feelings about the church	8.390	8.610	0.220	0.118
Percentage influence by worship	65.683	70.000	4.317	0.033
Effect of relationships	6.049	6.317	0.268	0.232
Effect of musical choice	8.317	8.000	-0.317	0.102
Effect of pastor's message	9.098	8.780	-0.317	0.005
Effect of refreshments	2.488	2.122	-0.366	0.210
Comfort with video technology	9.415	9.244	-0.171	0.302
God' presence in worship	8.195	8.098	-0.098	0.606
God's presence during the week	7.000	7.244	0.244	0.298
Prayer during the service	6.854	6.878	0.024	0.925
Prayer during the week	7.366	7.341	-0.024	0.915
Reflect on scripture in service	8.366	8.585	0.220	0.152
Bible study during the week	7.073	7.415	0.341	0.243
Giving in the service	6.829	6.707	-0.122	0.614
Giving during the week	5.951	6.341	0.390	0.151
Community group enthusiasm	7.488	7.073	-0.415	0.058
Talk about faith	7.707	7.829	0.122	0.360
Strategic service	7.951	8.098	0.146	0.438

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