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ABSTRACT

**PROPHETIC PREACHING TO RESISTANT
AUDIENCES: A CALL FOR CHANGE**

by

Charles Rayburn Ferguson

Adviser: James North

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: **PROPHETIC PREACHING TO RESISTANT AUDIENCES: A CALL FOR CHANGE**

Name of researcher: Charles Rayburn Ferguson

Name and degree of faculty adviser: James North, D.Min.

Date completed: May 2001

Problem

Recent trends in homiletics emphasize preaching about the listeners' felt-needs. Often the nature of prophetic-preaching requires the preacher to address needs that are not felt by the listeners. This present study was to create a homiletical strategy for preaching unpopular truths and about needs that are unperceived by the listeners. This study was also to identify some unpopular truths and unperceived needs of the Spokane Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church that were to be addressed in a series of sermons.

Method

A biblical study was conducted into the role of the preacher as prophet. This study compared the techniques used by Jesus and various biblical characters to bring about change. The counsel of Ellen White pertaining to the presentation of unpopular truths and preaching toward a change was analyzed. Contemporary literature pertaining to persuasive communication, conflict management, and prophetic preaching was also investigated. This research was used in devising a homiletical strategy for preaching about unpopular truths and unperceived needs.

Questionnaires were devised to ascertain what listeners consider to render a sermon effective and to identify unpopular truths and unperceived needs in the Spokane Valley SDA Church. These questionnaires were administered to the Spokane Valley SDA congregation, pastors of the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and administrators of the same Conference as well as the North Pacific Union Conference of SDA. Data acquired from these questionnaires were used in creating the homiletical strategy and for determining what were unpopular truths and unperceived needs.

A series of eight sermons addressing unpopular truths and unperceived needs was preached to the Spokane Valley SDA congregation, four utilizing the homiletical strategy and four not using the strategy or ignoring it. A questionnaire was administered following each sermon, involving a preselected group of approximately 30 members, and a feedback session involving this same group was conducted at the conclusion of the sermon series. The data received from the post-sermon questionnaires and feedback session were used to determine the effectiveness of each sermon.

Results

The homiletical strategy discovered and created was the inductive method requiring intentional consideration of a three-pronged process—care-fronting process, prophetic process, and designing process. All sermons appeared to effectively address the unpopular truths and unperceived needs of the Spokane Valley SDA congregation. However, there appeared to be no difference in the effectiveness of the four sermons utilizing the homiletical strategy when compared to the four sermons ignoring or not using the strategy.

Conclusions

It is the calling of the preacher to follow the example of the prophet-preachers of the Bible. This will demand preaching for change in the hearts and minds of the listeners. Unpopular truths and unperceived needs may be effectively addressed in the pulpit. Furthermore, although sermons employing the three-pronged homiletical strategy were not judged by listeners as being more effective than other strategies, they did prove to be just as viable. Therefore, preachers may consider using the proposed strategy when they have to preach to their listeners' unmet needs.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

**PROPHETIC PREACHING TO RESISTANT
AUDIENCES: A CALL FOR CHANGE**

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Charles Rayburn Ferguson

January 2001

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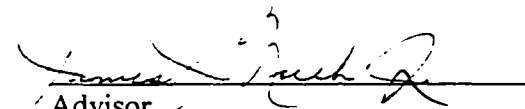
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AUDIENCES: A CALL FOR CHANGE

A dissertation presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
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by

Charles Rayburn Ferguson

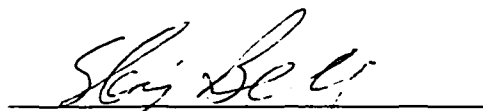
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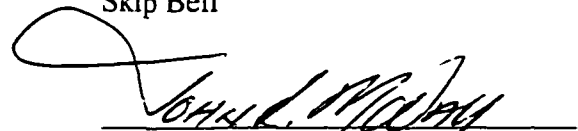
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**Dedicated to my sons, Adam and Carson,
my greatest earthly joy,
and to Mom and Dad,
models of unconditional love**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Project

The task of this project is to devise a strategy of effectively preaching unpopular truths and to unperceived needs in the Spokane Valley SDA Church. The purpose of this project is to discern how best to preach about unpopular truths and to needs not perceived by the congregation so as to affect a change.

Justification of the Project

This project was born out of a personal interest in being faithful to my calling to preach the word. It is motivated by my desire to never compromise my integrity as a preacher-prophet. As the senior pastor of the Spokane Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church I wanted to know what is the most effective and biblical way to preach to my congregation. Having preached to them for six years, I had developed rapport, was confident that I could address their felt needs, and, to a large degree, arrest their attention. I had found that preaching to felt needs solicited a popular response from my congregation. I also found that it is easy to gravitate to topics that I knew would be favorably received. In fact, I suffered somewhat from paranoia of painstakingly answering questions that nobody was asking. This dread that my sermons would not be relevant had haunted me throughout the previous two decades of my ministry. This fear could apparently be remedied by simply asking my congregation what they would like for me to preach about. Such a solution seemed to me to be in harmony with the recent emphasis on felt need sermons from church growth authorities such as George Barna, Bill Hybels, and Rick Warren.

Upon further reflection I pondered, How far should the preacher allow his listeners to influence and even mandate his sermon topics? Is the selection of sermons to be by popular consensus of the congregation? What about unpopular issues, e.g., sins that are pushed to the back burner until a more

convenient time? My sense of responsibility informed me that the commission to “preach the word” demands more than addressing felt needs and being an interesting speaker. Preaching must address unpopular, unwanted, and neglected truths and unmet needs. These are perhaps the most essential sermons yet to be preached to my congregation.

The Holy Spirit will, at times, lay a burden on the heart of the preacher—a truth that he knows will cause conflict and tension in the hearer. Just how straightforward should the preacher communicate this delicate truth? Or, how oblique or causal should the truth be conveyed? Some congregations prefer a conversational-style preaching while others expect a more passionate presentation. My roots are in the “Bible Belt” where I was reared and then pastored for twelve years. Living in the northwest for fifteen years was initially a cultural shock. When God’s Spirit laid a message on my heart I preached with fervor. I found Northwesterners more subdued in self-expression and reticent to reveal emotion. They seemed to have the same expectation of me. My congregation’s response, or lack of response, precipitated a personal reevaluation of my approach in the pulpit. When I shared my dilemma with a respected homiletician he advised, “Just be yourself.” Should this intuitive approach be used as the homiletical strategy? Homiletical techniques should offer a more intentional strategy in delivery of sensitive and yet passionate messages.

Statement of Need

The need to effectively address unmet needs and unpopular truths extends beyond the Spokane Valley congregation. The Holy Spirit will, at times, lay a burden on the heart of the preacher-prophet—a truth that he knows will cause conflict and tension in the hearer. Just how straightforward should he be in communicating this delicate truth? How oblique should truth be presented? In some cultures it is considered pretentious to “cry aloud in Zion.” In other circles to speak of life-and-death truths in casual conversational tones would seem irreverent. How can the preacher most effectively approach unpopular subjects and popular sins? Should the homiletical strategy and style be left to society’s whim and the preacher’s intuition?

History and the Bible bear record that frequently the preacher is subjected to the abuse of a hostile audience. Evangelistic preaching, for example, may evoke resistance from the audience when the

preacher presents an unpopular but essential truth that cuts across comfort zones. The pastor may feel ostracism from the congregation for taking a position true to her conviction but contrary to congregational consensus. A better understanding of the human emotional dynamic would assist the preacher who is working in a hostile environment. It would also provide guidance in building rapport and give direction in resolving tension. Current literature on persuasive communication, conflict management, and homiletic techniques should offer guidance in a more intentional approach to sensitive subjects.

How does the preacher bring to light unperceived needs and unasked questions? Is there a preaching strategy that would hold the listener's attention without compromising the integrity of the Word? How can I be more intentional in determining what truths need to be preached as well as how to preach them? What does the Bible say regarding preaching and how did the writers of the Bible preach? Does the inspired Word outline a homiletical strategy to be followed by the preacher? How does the preacher determine what truth should be addressed in a sermon?

These concerns may be categorized in two groups—the form and the essence of the sermon. Essence deals with the content of preaching, while form focuses on the strategy. Essence wrestles with the substance of the sermon, form on how to address the truth. The preacher must know both congregation as well as Scripture in order to understand these two dynamics in preaching. A homiletical strategy is needed that will ensure a proper balance between the Word and the needs of the listener. Such a strategy would assist preachers to be more intentional in preaching the entire Word responsibly and effectively.

Definition of Terms

Clarification of some terms may assist the reader. For instance, a differentiation is made between “felt” and “unfelt” needs. “Felt” needs are needs the listeners recognize and value. Preaching to “felt” needs most likely will receive a good degree of acceptance and popularity. These “felt” needs may be relevant and very well need to be addressed in a sermon. I am not opposed to preaching to “felt” needs. The burden of this project is to ensure preaching to all needs.

“Unfelt” needs, on the other hand, are needs of which the listeners are unaware. The listeners may or may not be resistant to hearing about these needs. They are not necessarily opposed to having these needs spoken to. They are simply ignorant of the fact that these are truly relevant needs. Then

again, human nature being as it is with people feeling secure in their comfort zone, the preacher may anticipate resistance to the presentation of a need that is new to the listener.

Related to the above are “perceived” and “unperceived” needs. “Perceived” needs are the same as “felt” needs. These are needs of which the listeners are aware. “Unperceived” needs are needs not perceived by the listeners but which are considered real needs by the preacher. “Unperceived” needs are equivalent to “unfelt” needs as “perceived” needs are to “felt” needs.

“Unpopular” truths are issues the preacher perceives the listeners need to hear, but to which the listeners are either resistant or reluctant to listen. These are truths that the listeners perceive and of which they are aware, but they do not desire to hear. The listeners may have previously heard and rejected these truths and feel antagonistic to hearing them again. Or, the listeners might have accepted and even embraced the truths but do not desire to hear them again. The preacher, on the other hand, might feel that the believers are neglecting these old truths and, thus, that they are relevant.

“Care-fronting” is an approach to conflict resolution articulated by David Augsburger. It combines elements of confrontation and compassion. “Care-fronting” is a method used when “speaking the truth in love.”

The letters “SDA” refer to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. North Pacific Union Conference refers to the six SDA conferences located in the northwestern region of the contiguous United States. The Spokane Valley SDA Church is located in eastern Washington but is a part of the Upper Columbia Conference.

Limitations of the Project

This project has limitations on three levels. The first two levels surveyed the administrators of the North Pacific Union and the administrators and pastors of the Upper Columbia Conference. On the third level, the sermon project was tested on the Spokane Valley SDA congregation. No other church was surveyed and the sermons and homiletical strategy were tested only on this congregation.

Another limitation pertains to the nature of preaching itself. This project focuses on the substance and strategy of the sermon. Its scope does not cover the preparation of the preacher’s heart and

spirit nor does it deny or diminish their importance. Neither does time nor space allow a study of public delivery and elocution.

The study is limited to literature in the English language and, even then, the perimeters of space allowed for this paper prevent a comprehensive analysis. Strategies and methods, therefore, were confined to those that were judged beneficial in developing a homiletical strategy that was used in the sermon series of this project. I recognize that there are a number of other homiletical options from which one might choose.

Description of the Project

This project will first present a biblical study of the role of the preacher as prophet. This study will also compare the techniques used by Jesus and various biblical characters to bring about change. The counsel of Ellen White pertaining to the presentation of unpopular truths and preaching toward a change will be analyzed. The research area of this project will conclude with an investigation of literature pertaining to homiletical strategy in persuasive communication and conflict management.

A questionnaire was devised and given to the Spokane Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church to ascertain their favorite and least favorite subjects. A questionnaire was also sent to select pastors and church administrators soliciting input regarding neglected truths and subjects that they feel should be brought to the pulpit. Church records and qualitative data from personal encounters were also used in determining unperceived needs and essential yet unpopular subjects. All of the information was used in determining what topics and texts should be developed into sermons addressing unpopular truths and unperceived needs.

Based on the above studies, a series of eight sermons was preached, four utilizing the homiletical strategy and four not using the strategy or ignoring the strategy. The topics for all eight sermons were derived from questionnaire results. A questionnaire was given following each sermon, allowing a preselected group of 30 members from the congregation opportunity to express how the message was received. The evaluation group represents a cross section of the congregation. The genders were approximately equally represented in this evaluation group. The researcher selected the group. The same group evaluated all eight sermons presented as the basis of this project.

A feedback session was conducted at the conclusion of the sermon series. Qualitative data were recorded and used along with pre- and post-sermon surveys to analyze the effectiveness of the sermons in which the homiletical strategy was employed in comparison with the sermons in which the strategy was not employed.

Chapter Summaries

The purpose of the study was to develop a homiletical strategy for presenting truths that address unpopular or unperceived needs. Chapter 1 presents the introduction and justification for this project. Chapter 2 embarks upon a biblical study into the role of the preacher as prophet. This study investigates methods used by Old Testament prophet-preachers. Chapter 3 investigates methods used by New Testament prophet-preachers including Jesus. In Chapter 4, preaching unpopular truths and unperceived needs toward effecting change are investigated from the counsel of Ellen White, a leading founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This chapter also reviews literature pertaining to prophetic preaching and provides a theological basis for developing a homiletical strategy.

Chapter 5 develops the homiletical strategy that was used in preaching the series of sermons. An analysis is presented regarding how to effect change and the principles of persuasion. Contemporary homiletical techniques are surveyed. The chapter next looks at some suggestions for managing conflict in preaching, especially applying “care-fronting” to preaching. Chapter 5 concludes by proposing a homiletical strategy that may be used in preaching truths that are unpopular to the listeners or in addressing needs of which the listeners are unaware.

Chapter 6 presents the heart of the project. There is an analysis and comparison of surveys given to three groups—the Spokane Valley SDA congregation, pastors, and administrators. These surveys provide insight into the effectiveness of my homiletical method. Data from these surveys also greatly assist in determining what are “unfelt” needs and “unpopular” truths. These truths, determined to be the least favored or most unpopular, were addressed in a series of sermons, four using the homiletical strategy proposed in Chapter 3 and four not using or ignoring the strategy.

Chapter 6 ascertains the effectiveness of the series. Surveys taken immediately at the conclusion of each sermon by a group of 30 members of the Spokane Valley SDA Church provide the basis of this analysis. A report is then given of a feedback session involving this survey group which convened at the conclusion of the sermon series. There is then an analysis of the overall effectiveness of the series, especially comparing the sermons using the strategy with those that did not. Chapter 6 concludes with recommendations for further research and future study.

Summary

The basic goal of this project was to develop a Bible-based homiletical strategy that discovers and addresses “unfelt” needs or “unpopular” truths of the Spokane Valley SDA Church. These needs and truths were preached in a series of sermons with four using the strategy and four ignoring the strategy. The series was preached during the Sabbath worship services from August 29 through November 7, 1998. Findings and conclusions are presented in this study.

CHAPTER 2

PREACHER AS PROPHET

Preaching did not play a predominant role in the religious life of Israel in her infancy, from the call of Abraham until the call of Joel around 800 B.C.E.¹ The early Hebrew religion was by-and-large a “non-preaching” religion.² During the Exodus in the 15th century B.C.E.,³ there were the occasional discourses by leaders such as Moses or Joshua. Even then attention centered on the practices associated with the ceremonial economy. Until the rise of the prophet-preachers, from 800 to 400 B.C.E., focus revolved around the acts of God and the sanctuary services. D. W. Cleverly Ford, a former Senior Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, goes as far as to say that the Hebrew religion was born quite apart from preaching.⁴ Ford says, “Israel not only came into being as the people of God without preaching, but for centuries were sustained in their faith without it.”⁵ Ford observes that a new paradigm was ushered in when the minor and major prophet-preachers emerged on the scene. “Then something utterly new, something dynamic, arose within Israel, the like of which only Israel in the ancient world experienced, namely, the preaching of the prophets.”⁶ Consider the role prophetic preaching played in the times of the Bible.

¹“The Chronology of the Old Testament Prophets,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976), 4:17-18.

²D.W. Cleverly Ford, *The Ministry of the Word* (Great Britain: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1979), 26.

³“The Chronology of Early Bible History,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 1:188-196.

⁴Ford, 26.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, 28.

The Prophetic Role of the Preacher: A Biblical Survey

Preaching is not the same as public speaking. P. T. Forsyth points out, "The Christian preacher is not the successor of the Greek orator, but of the Hebrew prophet."¹ If this is true, it is imperative that the Hebrew preachers of the Bible rather than Greek orators mentor modern-day preachers. Unfortunately, the English word "prophet" too readily connotes "foretelling the future."² Prophets are not to be confused with psychics. John Stott says, "The prophet's calling is not primarily to predict the future or even interrupt the past or present."³ Stott continues, "The prophet spoke neither his own words nor in his own name, but God's words and in God's name."⁴ Prophetic preaching is preaching truth revealed by God.

The Prophetic Nature of Preaching for Change

Ancient prophets were God's spokespersons. Henry Thiessen observes of Paul's sermons, "What he preached was received as the very word of God."⁵ Sermon material was not determined by the prophet-preachers' special interests and hobbyhorses or by the wants and desires of their listeners. When we turn to the Bible we do not find prophet-preachers riding the coattail of consensus. The content and substance of their messages were preached as the "will of God," not the will of either the preacher or the church (Acts 20:26, 27).⁶ John Stott says of the prophet, "The Old Testament regarded him as the immediate mouthpiece of God."⁷

Richard Rice holds, "The prophets, the writers of the Bible, did not speak or write on their own

¹P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 1.

²Michael Griffiths, *Serving Grace* (Berkshire, England: MARC Europe, 1986), 55.

³John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1961), 12.

⁴*Ibid.*, 52.

⁵Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1971), 90.

⁶Biblical quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

⁷Stott, 11.

initiative; their messages originated with God.”¹ God, not man or woman, was the initiator of ancient prophetic sermons (2 Pet 1:21). The messages were “not merely God’s Word as the prophet saw it, but God’s Word as God wished the prophet to present it.”² God was directly involved in the entire process of preaching from the inception of the message through its preparation and strategizing, and even while the message was being delivered—God was there in it all. One homiletician says of God, “He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write.”³ This is not to say that God dictated every word to his spokesperson. He gave the message and then his spokesperson chose appropriate words fitted for the context and culture. On the other hand, let there be no misunderstanding: God did not simply share the initial message and then abandon his spokesperson to finish the job on his/her own. What ensured that the message was the Word of God was God’s presence throughout the preaching event. For this reason Bernard Ramm can state with confidence, “Although the preaching came in words of men it was the word of God.”⁴ Leon Morris can assure, “When we turn to the Bible there is good evidence that it is the voice of God which is decisive, not the best thought of saintly men of old.”⁵

Royal Heralds

The various models of preaching in the Bible indicate that the prophet-preachers were dependent on the Word of God. This study will consider seven of these models. For example, just how dependent the prophetic preachers were on the Word of God is evidenced in two New Testament verbs commonly translated “to preach”—*kerusso* and *euangelizo*.⁶ *Kerusso* emphasized the office of a “herald.” Kittel’s

¹Richard Rice, *Reign of God* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985), 25, 26.

²Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1982), 154.

³E. G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), vi.

⁴Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968), 53.

⁵Leon Morris, *I Believe in Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1976), 23.

⁶W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1961), s.v. “kerusso.” “euangelizo”.

Theological Dictionary says that every ancient prince commissioned his own personal herald to “declare official decrees and announcements.”¹ Having received a message from the prince, the herald would travel through “villages with a bell and publicly read official proclamations with a loud voice.”² He spoke a message on behalf of royalty—a message that was not his own.

When the Bible presents John the Baptist’s preaching it pictures him as a herald crying “aloud so that all who wish to hear may do so.”³ His message was in the context of the soon coming of the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus preached his first sermon in Luke 4:18, Kittel says, “He proclaims, like a herald, the year of the Lord, the Messianic age.”⁴ As the apostles went out preaching the good news they did so as faithful heralds, letting it “ring out on the streets and from the roof-tops.”⁵ A key purpose of their messages was to bring change, both personal and national transformation, bringing about the will of God. Kittel says, “When the whole world has heard the Word of Christ, the commission of the risen Lord will be executed and the end will come.”⁶

God had his heralds in the Old Testament as well. Jonah’s message that brought change to Nineveh was commissioned by God (Jonah 2:1, 2; 3:1, 2). Although resistant at first, Jonah played the part of the herald throughout the city streets and the Assyrians repented (Jonah 1:3; 3:4-10). Noah was commissioned as God’s Herald (2 Pet 2:5). His preaching did not meet the same positive response from his listeners as did Jonah’s but he faithfully delivered God’s message, warning the world of impending doom and pointing to the ark of safety. In the end only eight responded positively—Noah and his family (Gen 6:6-9). The major and minor prophets were God’s heralds. Phrases such as “The word of the Lord that came to Joel . . .” (Joel 1:1), “Hear ye now what the Lord says . . .” (Mic 6:1), “Thus speaketh the

¹Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), 3:684, 686.

²Ibid., 787.

³Ibid., 706.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 709.

⁶Ibid.

Lord of Host . . .” (Hag 1:2, 7, 11), and “Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts . . .” (Zech 1:14) indicate that the prophets of the Old Testament were God’s heralds. Sometimes their messages rendered change but frequently their listeners rewarded them with abuse. Success is not always measured by positive response from the Herald’s message. Success is measured by how faithfully the Herald fulfilled his commission.

This model of the preacher emphasizes the importance of delivering God’s message. It must, however, be seen against other models of preaching which emphasize other aspects of preaching. An over-emphasis of preacher as a herald may lead to assigning more to the actual words of the prophet than intended. Whereas the ancient herald’s words were confined to what his superior handed down to him, the prophetic preacher was frequently assigned the task of selecting the words that convey God’s message.

Preacher as Herald of Good News

Euangelizo focuses on the message rather than the office of the herald. Kittel addresses the misconception that *euangelizo*’s basic meaning is merely, “to deliver a message.”¹ The message delivered is always “good news.” Hebrew preaching often parallels the Greek in conveying an undeniable sense of “joy,” such as the announcement of the birth of a son or “news of victory”² in battle (1 Kgs 1:42; Jer 20:15; 1 Sam 4:10). John the Baptist proclaimed the longed for eschatological salvation. His message is good news.³ Jesus, the embodiment of “good news,” brought joy to the world (Luke 2:10). The Twelve proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-6). Deacon Philip “preached the good news of the kingdom of God” (Acts 8:12, 35, 40). In Acts 10:36 Peter described the process of “telling the good news” as if it had been “sent” directly by God himself.

The final global message is often portrayed as one of doom. Rev 14:6, however, pictures angels proclaiming good news across the sky prior to the end. The intention of proclaiming this good news is

¹Ibid., 2:707.

²Ibid., 707, 710.

³Ibid., 719.

that people will have their perspectives and experience changed. As the angel's good news is proclaimed, the warning of the mark of the beast and the torment of hell also unfolds (Rev 14:9-11). God's "good news" of salvation held in contrast to the alternative leaves the hearer with one option—come out of Babylon before it is too late (Rev 14:8; 18:2, 4). Once again, the prophetic function of preaching is to change the status quo.

Preacher as Witness

Another biblical model for prophetic preaching is *martures*—witness. Kittel points out that a herald, who proclaims what he has been given to say, is not to be confused with a witness, who speaks "on the basis of his personal acquaintance with the facts."¹ Kittel, however, does concede that the preacher may serve as a witness as well. 1 John 1:1-3 blends together both homiletical models—"witness" (*martures*) and "proclaimer of good news" (*euangelizo*). John says,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim [*apangellomen*] concerning the Word of Life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify [*martuoumen*] to it, and we proclaim [*apangellomen*] to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. (1 John 1:1-3 NIV)²

Both models for preaching are biblical. Thomas G. Long, however, raises a concern: "Homileticians have not been greatly attracted to the witness image because it seems out of place."³ The greatest preacher of all times did not draw back from using the witness model when he said, "For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). And again his parting words were, "You are my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Jesus commissioned his disciples, "You also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:27). Paul perceived of his calling as that of a "witness to the gospel" (Acts 20:24). It is the undeniable testimony of Scripture that the early New Testament preachers considered themselves to be witnesses. In the New Testament times the words, "We are witnesses" are repeatedly heard (i.e., Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39; 20:24).

¹Ibid.

²Brackets mine

³Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 43.

Long says the concept of witness is not unique to the New Testament but “grows out of Old Testament precedents.”¹ He appeals to Isa 43:8-13 as an example of the witness motif predating the New Testament period.² The heart of this passage, vs. 12 (RSV), says, “You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen.” Jesus appears to allude to this language in Acts 1:8 (NIV), “You will be my witnesses.” This commission extends beyond the original hearers to all his disciples in every age who witness for Him “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NIV).

Commenting on Acts 2:32 (KJV), “We are his witnesses,” H. M. S. Richards, Sr., wrote that a witness “is supposed to tell what he has seen, what he knows, what he has experienced—not what he thinks.”³ The authority of the witness was in the objective Word rather than his subjective reasoning or musings. Even when portrayed as a witness the prophet-preacher sought to bring change by witnessing to a specific truth that is always about God. When experienced, the witness about him changed lives.

Preacher as Seer

Another term giving insight into the nature of the prophet-preacher is found in the Hebrew word *roeh*, translated “seer.”⁴ Ancient prophets of Old Testament times shared an undeterred focus on God as well as the needs of the world in which they lived. Focus is a function of the eye, and prophet-preachers were the eyes of the church. Known for their divine insight, they were called “seers” (1 Sam 9:9). The term *roeh* “indicated that God had opened to the view and hearing of the prophet that which was indiscernible to one who did not possess the prophetic gift.”⁵

Another Hebrew word, *chozeh*, translated “prophet” was closely associated with *roeh*. T. Housel Jemison observes that *chozeh* and *roeh* are synonymously used in Isa 30:10 thus identifying a seer as the

¹Ibid., 42.

²Ibid.

³H. M. S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 15.

⁴T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), 54.

⁵Ibid.

same as a prophet.¹ He states, “Here is another indication of the fact that the prophet sees supernaturally.”² These preachers’ mouths were anointed to speak what their eyes had seen (Num 12:6, 8). Furthermore, what they saw was not confined to dreams and visions. Prophet-preachers were given spiritual eyes that they might have insight into the things of God. Spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:14). To close their eyes to God’s special revelation would have left the prophet-preacher with nothing to share.

Bernard Ramm appeals to an argument as old as Calvin:

Special revelation is remedial because it is God’s means of reaching the sinner with saving, restorative truth. It is the knowledge of God adjusted for, and given for, sinners. It is the remedial crutch, the healing bandage, the corrective spectacles for crippled, wounded, and blind sinners.³

Without God’s initiative in revealing his Word these seers were as blind as their audience. Richard Rice says prophetic preachers of Bible times were dependent on “an encounter with divine power.”⁴ In sermon preparation their first task was to look to God rather than current events, trends, or personal experience. Notice again, however, that the “special revelation” or “knowledge of God” which seers share is “remedial,” “restorative,” and “corrective”—that is to say—it is life changing.

The Bible is replete with examples of the prophets who prove they saw what others could not see. Consider, for example, Elisha’s servant at Dothan in 2 Kgs 6. He saw the obvious—horses, chariots, and a strong enemy force. The prophet, however, saw beyond the physical to the spiritual and could say with confidence, “Don’t be afraid . . . those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (vs. 16 NIV). In answer to Elisha’s prayer, his servant’s eyes were opened and he too saw “the hills full of horses and chariots of fire” (vs. 17 NIV)—God’s angelic army.

Also consider Caleb and Joshua who were able to look beyond the threat of Canaanite giants. In face of the doubting majority they courageously spoke out, “We will swallow them up. Their protection is

¹Ibid., 55.

²Ibid.

³Bernard Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1971), 20.

⁴Rice, 29.

gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them” (Num 6:9 NIV). When fearlessly confronting Goliath, young David saw what the king and army of Israel had failed to see—“The battle is the Lord’s” (1 Sam 17:47 NIV). Indicators in Isaiah’s day informed political leaders of Judah that it would be prudent to form an alliance with Egypt. God gave the prophet eyes to see beyond the present balance of power. He warned, “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help” (Isa 31:1 NIV). In New Testament times the disciples wrung their hands when they saw a hungry crowd of 5,000 gathered on a hillside. Jesus, on the other hand, saw an opportunity, offered a prayer of thanks over meager resources, and none went away hungry (John 6:5-13). Perhaps the greatest example that indicates a prophet’s ability to possess spiritual eyesight is seen at Calvary. When all appeared to be lost, Jesus saw beyond the grave and with confidence declared to a new convert, “You will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43 NIV).

Preacher as Watchman

Repeatedly the Major and Minor Prophets refer to the prophet-preacher as a watchman, *tsaphah* in Hebrew.¹ The *SDA Bible Commentary* reveals, “This figure is that of a military sentinel on the look out tower whose work it is to warn men of approaching dangers.”² Typically the watchman would sound a trumpet warning of impending danger. Likewise, the prophet-preacher was charged with the responsibility to warn God’s people of the dangers and ultimate consequences of their sins. So serious is this responsibility, that if a prophet neglected to issue a warning, he would be held responsible for the sins of the wicked. God warned, “His [the wicked’s] blood will I require at thine [the prophet’s] hand” (Ezek 3:18, 20; 33:8 KJV).

A scathing rebuke was issued against those watchmen who did not fulfill their duty. In Isa 56:10 God called them lazy gluttonous dogs that cannot bark. The same verse depicts them as blind and lacking knowledge. Perhaps Jesus’ indictment in Matt 15:13 of the Pharisees who were spiritually blind is an allusion to Isa 56:10.

¹Isa 56:10; Ezek 3:17; 33:7; Jer 6:17; Hos 9:8; Mic 7:4. James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1890), s.v. “tsaphah.”

²“Ezekiel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:586.

An indication that the watchman motif is directly tied to the preaching role is readily seen when looking at Ezek 3:17 (NIV) in its context. Vss. 1-4 commanded the prophet to eat the scroll and “speak to the house of Israel.” Vs. 7 warned the prophet that God’s people would not listen. However, in vs. 8, God promised to give Ezekiel more resolve to preach than the people had to not listen. Vss. 10, 11 again commissioned the Prophet to receive all the words of God and faithfully preach them. In vs. 12-15, Ezekiel was filled with the Spirit and taken in vision to the people to whom he was to preach. Finally, in vs. 16, he was given the word of God to be passed on to the house of Israel. On the heels of this event and on the eve of the delivery of this inspired sermon, God proclaimed to Ezekiel, “I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me” (Ezek 3:17 NIV).

Isaiah also directly tied preaching to the watchman motif. First, the well-known passage in Isa 52:7 (NIV), “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation,” is followed immediately by vs. 8, “Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.” The watchmen in vs. 8 were not the messengers of vs. 7. The two should not be confused. The scene was that of watchmen peering in the distance for some sign of good news. Over the mountains ran harbingers of good news, running and shouting good news. Picking up the refrain “the watchmen themselves take up the good tidings and repeat them to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”¹

Readily it is observed that not only was the watchman a messenger of danger and warning but also of good news and hope. The prophetic preacher will balance his proclamation of hope with his message of denunciation of sin and impending doom.

Preacher as Shepherd

Isa 56:10 paints a picture of beasts entering God’s fold and devouring the sheep because the watchmen, who gave no warning, were mute and blind. The following verse refers to these indolent

¹Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), 331.

spokesmen as shepherds “who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way” (Isa 56:11 NIV). Throughout both testaments preachers were called shepherds.¹ Frequently the people of God were referred to as his sheep.² This motif directly bears on the preaching role. Consider the commission from Jesus himself, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). The recipient, Saint Peter, reiterated this command to all preachers in 1 Pet 5:1, 2 (KJV), “The elders which are among you I exhort . . . Feed the flock of God which is among you.”

Ample instruction was rendered detailing the feeding of God’s flock. The inspired pages equate spiritual food with the Word of God (Deut 8:3; Job 23:12; Matt 4:4). This is the food the shepherds are to feed the flock. In his classic, *Feed My Sheep*, H.M.S. Richards, Sr., observes, “One of the greatest sins of the shepherds of ancient Israel was that they did not care for the people, they did not properly feed them.”³

The Bible goes further, enunciating the metaphor, “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14). Jesus himself is the food—Jesus is to be central in preaching. Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, 57, 58). Prophetic preaching encompassed more than preaching a sermon drawn from a Bible text or truth. A good shepherd will feed the flock with a message deliberately and intentionally focused on Christ. He will change the flock from a hungry group of sheep to a well-fed and nourished one.

Preacher as Steward

What is the prophetic calling of preachers today? Do contemporary preachers share prophetic authority with the ancient seers? John R. W. Stott emphatically protests, “The Christian preacher is not a prophet. That is, he does not derive his message from God as a direct and original revelation.”⁴ Stott begs the obvious, “Then wherein does the preacher’s authority lie? . . . ‘The Bible says.’ This is real

¹Strong, s.v. “raah.” *Dictionary of the Greek Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1890), s.v. “poimen.”

²Num 27:17; Pss 79:13; 95:7; 119:176; Isa 53:6; Jer 23:1, 2; 50:6; Ezek 34; 4-6; Matt 10:16; 1 Pet 2:25.

³Richards, 222.

⁴Stott, 11.

authority. True it is an indirect authority . . . but it is still the authority of God.”¹ Preachers today may not be prophets in the forensic sense. On the other hand, they may become modern-day false prophets who “speak their own words instead of God’s word.”² 1 Pet 4:11 says that the faithful Christian preacher speaks “the very words of God” not as a prophet but, according to vs. 10, as a “good steward.”³ Stott proposes, “‘Steward’ is a descriptive title for all who have the privilege of preaching God’s word, particularly in the ministry.”⁴ A steward was given charge over that which pertained to the master’s household. The steward was entrusted with that which was not his own. Likewise, the Christian preacher is to administer his or her master’s counsel to the household of God.⁵ As a steward he or she plays the essential role in the prophetic process. As stewards of God’s Word, preachers dispense the special revelation previously given to the prophets and preserved in the Scriptures. The preacher’s prophetic calling is that of a steward.

Paul modeled the role of a faithful steward when he says in Acts 20:27, “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” Christian preachers do not have the luxury of passing over unpopular doctrines or distasteful passages. The prophetic calling of the steward is to dispense the whole Word of God of the New Testament as well as the Old Testament.

In light of what was previously observed regarding the biblical meaning of preaching as the dispensing of spiritual food, Luke 12:42, 43 has great implications for the steward as preacher: “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.” Commenting on this passage H.M.S. Richards, Sr., boldly asserts, “The importance of feeding the flock is so great that it is the one thing that Jesus mentions as occupying the time and attention

¹Ibid., 29.

²Ibid., 15.

³Strong, *Dictionary of the Greek Testament*, s.v. “oikonomos.”

⁴Ibid., 22.

⁵Ibid., 17.

of the faithful servant when He comes the second time—this one thing.”¹

Summary

God’s Word was preeminent in all seven models of prophetic preaching observed above. The prophetic messages served the purpose of changing the listener into conformity with God’s will. Prophet-preachers were commissioned as guardians of God’s Word, on the one hand, and of God’s household on the other. Was this Word ever insensitive to the needs of God’s people? Did prophet-preachers deliver messages that were out of touch with the needs of the listeners?

Addressing Felt Needs

G. Campbell Morgan holds that authentic preaching is never insensitive to human need, which “is the background” of every sermon. He clarifies, “Whenever we preach, we stand between . . . human need and Divine grace. We are the messengers of that grace to that need.”² The prophet-preacher will be in touch with the needs of his listeners. This notwithstanding, sermons that address the needs of the hearer are not ensured acceptance. Messages in Bible times certainly addressed the listener’s needs and they were frequently unpopular with the prophet’s audience.³ Furthermore, the message God laid on the heart of the preacher was not always what the preacher himself would have chosen (i.e., Balaam and Jonah). Sermons of Bible times did not always tell the people what they wanted or felt that they needed to hear. Success, however, is not measured in terms of the number of favorable responses. Success, rather, is measured by how faithfully God’s message is heralded in uncompromising words.

The story of the prophet Micaiah models this principle in 1 Kgs 22. King Ahab’s 400 prophets told the king what they perceived he wanted to hear, “Go up [into battle]; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the King” (vs. 6). King Jehoshaphat, present at the meeting of Ahab with his prophets, was leery of their counsel and asked, “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of

¹Richards, 224.

²G. Campbell Morgan, *Preaching* (London England: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1955), 12.

³Jer 38:4; Luke 4:28, 29; Acts 7:51-52.

him” (vs. 7). Micaiah the prophet was summonsed before the two kings (vs. 9). Before appearing before the kings, the messenger escorting the prophet prompted him to repeat to the kings the same counsel previously given by the 400 prophets (vs. 13). Micaiah’s response to the messenger’s well-intended counsel was—“As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak” (vs. 14). Although outnumbered 400 to 1 by the false prophets, before the kings Micaiah stood his ground and advised the exact opposite. He boldly informed the kings that if they went up into battle they would meet disaster (vs. 17). For his faithful witness to the truth, Micaiah was struck in the face and imprisoned (vss. 24-27). The kings rejected his counsel and went into battle where Ahab met his death (vs. 37).

False prophets told the listeners what they wanted to hear, but “Holy men of God” (1 Pet 2:21) took their lead from God.¹ God’s Word, as previously stated, was not insensitive to human need. However, God saw his people’s need from his vantage point.² Perceiving their need better than they, he then took the initiative to address that need through his spokesperson, the prophet-preacher. “He revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). Thiessen shares this insight: “Since He is omniscient, He knows all about man’s need . . . since He is omnipotent, He can not merely reveal Himself, but can also set forth in writing such revelations of Himself as are needful for the experience of salvation.”³ Thiessen concludes, “God will provide for the profoundest needs of man.”⁴

Although the focus of the homiletical process is upon God’s sovereignty apart from human interference, nonetheless ancient sermons were born out of God’s concern for his people’s needs. To the original ears those messages may have appeared to fall short of addressing felt needs. However, needs addressed in those messages were genuine needs seen first through the eyes of God. They were sifted through his perception and handed on to his spokesperson. God gifted his prophet-preacher to see from

¹Isa 6:1-8; Ps 19:14; Josh 1:8.

²Prov 15:3, 11; Jer 23:23-25; Ps 147:5; Isa 46:10; Matt 10:30; Heb 4:13; 1 Cor 2:11.

³Thiessen, 81, 82.

⁴Ibid., 82.

his vantage point.¹ These were felt needs to be sure—needs felt by God but not necessarily by his people. Disturbing as God’s messages have been, they were very much attuned with genuine human needs.

Summary

The various biblical models of the prophetic role of the preacher indicate that their authority resided in the Word of God. This Word was sensitive to the needs of the listener as perceived by the preacher who was under the auspice of God. Their prophetic messages served a purpose—to get sinful mankind and Holy God back together. Preachers today, likewise, are commissioned to fulfilling their prophetic calling. John Fowler challenges contemporary preachers, “In the New Testament, church pastors, as successors to the apostles, were expected to define the moral and spiritual issues of the community and to clarify what was right and what was wrong, what was good and what was bad—in short, to bring about a spiritual and moral awakening.”² The prophetic nature of their calling is to preach in such as way as to bring about change in the lives of their listeners.

Prophetic Methods Used by Old Testament Prophets

Attention will now focus on methods used in the Old Testament by prophet-preachers. In his D.Min. project, Vilmar E. Gonzalez selects seven Old Testament sermons and compares them with homiletical devices that he considers to be “very common among preachers” today as well as “advocated by modern homileticians.”³ Gonzalez identifies these contemporary homiletical devices as being the following ten:

- Focus on one specific subject
- Clarity and simplicity
- Two options only
- Positive and negative aspects clearly presented
- Practical/adaptable to life
- Use of illustrations
- Some dialogue style

¹Rev 1:1-3.

²John Fowler, *Adventist Pastoral Ministry* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1990), 28.

³Velar Gonzalez, “A Design for a Segment Based on the Methods of Selected Old Testament Preachers to Be Included in a Course in Homiletics” (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1990), 4.

Call for urgent decision
 Call to action
 Emphasis on the Redeemer aspect.¹

Moses, Joshua, Solomon, Elijah, Amos, Jeremiah, and Haggai preached the seven sermons Gonzalez analyzed.² He concluded, “The sermon characteristics that came out in this study match the ones advocated by modern homileticians.”³ Gonzalez, however, holds that, unlike many modern preachers, these seven Old Testament preachers do not use the popular contemporary three-point sermon method. He states, “There is no set pattern following our modern methods of commonly dividing a sermon—in three (or more) major sections, usually one following the other and blended together in a sort of ‘crescendo’ toward the ‘resolution,’ conclusion, and appeal.”⁴ The sermons of the prophets had a natural flow that seemed to dictate the time and place for an appeal. Some ancient preachers made their appeal at the end, some at the beginning, others in the middle or throughout the sermon.⁵

Centrality of the Gospel

Gonzalez observed one determining factor among Old Testament preachers. He singles out the tenth homiletical device cited above, “Emphasis on the Redeemer aspect,” as the most determining factor.⁶ He insists, “The Old Testament is as concerned with salvation as much as the New Testament.”⁷ Old Testament theologian, Walter Kaiser, fully agrees, “I would like to suggest that the main theme of the Old Testament is ‘the promise’.”⁸ Kaiser equates “the promise” with “the gospel,” by which he means the

¹Ibid., 4.

²Ibid., 2, 3.

³Ibid., 75.

⁴Ibid., 69.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 70.

⁷Ibid., 4.

⁸Walter Kaiser, Jr., *The Old Testament in Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), 38.

same “good news” mentioned in the New Testament.¹

Sermons of the Bible times were not confined to moral platitudes. Even the Ten Commandments had covenant relationship as their backdrop. “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt. . . . You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod 20:2, 3 NIV). Then, as today, bonifide preaching primarily announced salvation and secondarily denounced sins.²

Use of Literary Devices

Prophet-preachers were very much interested in the impact of the message they heralded. These preachers were not dispassionate regarding listeners’ responses. Rice says they “were more concerned with communicating the message than they were with receiving it.”³ Referring to ancient preachers, as well as their modern counterparts, Otto Baab says,

This need for tangible results makes the problem of communication all the more acute. How can the preacher bridge the gap between the human and the divine? How can he enable the ways of men to be patterned after the ways of God? How can his furious word of judgment become a word of grace and hope . . . ? Can the prophet who by the nature of his call is set against his people also be for his people in an effective way? Can he minister to them even though, or as he denounces them?⁴

Baab continues, “The books of the prophets indicate that these ancient preachers were greatly interested in proclaiming the word in such a way as to make it understood.”⁵ Their liberal use of literary devices provides evidence of how interested they were in effective communication. Ample use of illustrations, rhetorical questions, and passionate appeals leave an undeniable impression that they went to great lengths at being understood and affecting change.

Gonzalez informs that Old Testament preachers used other homiletical elements and devices than

¹Ibid.

²“Too often preaching tends to be negative. Your first calling is not to denounce sin, but to announce salvation.” *SDA Minister’s Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Assn. of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 140.

³Rice, 30.

⁴Otto J. Baab, *Prophetic Preaching: A New Approach* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1958), 39.

⁵Ibid.

those that he identifies.¹ Use of homiletical devices differed from one prophet to the next; they are not clones of one another. Richard Rice observes, “Literary styles . . . vary in the Bible from one writer to another.”² Some were more poetic while others were more dialogical. Some used drama; others a narrative. Even the prophets themselves might have varied their literary style from time to time. One thing, however, is clear from the record of the Bible—all used literary devices.

Use of Illustrations

Old Testament prophet-preachers commonly used illustrations. Baab writes, “Prophets drew their language and imagery from the routine experiences of their people.”³ Leavell adds, “The prophets used apt illustrations and graphic metaphors in order to fix spiritual truth in the minds of the hearers.”⁴ One would have been hard pressed to shake from the mind’s eye Zechariah’s “woman in a basket,” and “flying scroll,” or Amos’s “basket of ripe fruit” (Zech 5:2, 7, 8; Amos 8:1, 2).⁵ Amos drew from simple everyday Mid-eastern life experiences—two friends walking together, a hungry lion roaring in the thicket, and a bird trap (Amos 3:3-5). Joel referred to a plague of locusts to illustrate the approaching “Day of the Lord” (Joel 1:1-2:11). Ezekiel vividly portrayed a valley of dry bones coming to life to illustrate the resurrection of God’s nation (Ezek 37:1-14). Micah and Isaiah illustrated peace between nations in the new earth by describing the recycling of war weapons into farm tools (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3 NIV). Old Testament preachers’ frequent use of word pictures drew from practical everyday life situations familiar to the listener.

Use of Drama

Several prophets used drama as windows of understanding. Ezekiel cut his hair, divided it in

¹Gonzalez, 70.

²Rice, 27.

³Ibid.

⁴Roland Q. Leavell, *Prophetic Preaching Then and Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1963), 17.

⁵Zech 5:2, 7, 8; Amos 8:1, 2.

three parts, burned one part, threw another part to the wind, and hacked the third part with a knife (Ezek 5:1-4). His bizarre illustration was in compliance with God's direct command (vs. 1). God instructed Isaiah to strip down to his undergarments and wander through the streets of Jerusalem barefooted for three years (Isa 20:2, 3). Old Testament preachers were not afraid to use teaching aids. God does not draw back from the use of drama either for occasionally he dictated the object lesson to be employed. Thus Jeremiah went to see the potter (Jer 18:2). On another occasion he purchased a girdle and clay jar as props for an illustration (Jer 13:1; 19:1, 10). Later he wore a yoke (Jer 27:2).

Prophet preachers made liberal use of prop devices as seen in the above. Ezekiel was instructed to make a miniature model depicting Jerusalem under siege that included battering rams and ramps (Ezek 4:1-3). Again, he was told to cook and eat bread "in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel" (vs. 12). These props were more than attention-getters. They enabled the preacher to act out his message. God himself used a teaching device when he sacrificed the first animal in Eden (Gen 3:21).

Use of Figure of Speech

Figure of speech is another literary device commonly used by Old Testament preachers. Amos called oppressive women "cows" (Amos 4:1). The lying prophets were compared to the stinging tail of a scorpion or hornet (Isa 9:6). God was likened unto a rock (Isa 44:8) and his promised Messiah to a cornerstone (Isa 28:16). Isaiah compared the morning mist to forgiven sins (Isa 44:22); Hosea, on the other hand, compared mist to Israel's shallow love for God (Hos 6:4). Obadiah described pride as an eagle seeking to build its nest among the stars—still not out of God's reach (Obad 1:4). Moses, on the other hand, said the Lord is "like an eagle that . . . hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them" (Deut 32:11). Several times God is described as having protective wings for his people (Pss 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 91:4; Mal 4:2). God's people are symbolized as sheep (Pss 23:2; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3; Ezek 34:31) as well as grass (Isa 40:6). Old Testament prophet-preachers were not timid in employing figures of speech.

Use of Repetition

The prophet-preachers of the Old Testament utilized repetition. Eight times the prophet Amos

preached, “This is what the Lord says: ‘For three sins . . . even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.’” Each such proclamation was followed by an indictment, e.g., “Because she threshed,” or “Because she took captive whole communities,” “Because she sold whole communities,” or “Because he pursued his brother with a sword,” etc. (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6 NIV). And each indictment was followed by the same judgment, “I will send fire upon . . .” (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5). The repetition was broken in the last indictment that pronounced judgment on his audience, Israel. Rather than repeating himself for the seventh time, the prophet refrained from repeating, “Because she . . .” and instead indicted, “They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals . . .” (Amos 2:6). Rather than repeating for the seventh time, “I will send fire upon . . .,” hearers were confronted with, “Now then, I will crush you as a cart crushes . . .” (vs. 13). Establishing a rhythm and then breaking sync was an effective device that arrested attention and placed emphasis on a truth.

The psalmists also used repetition. Twenty-nine times Ps 118 methodically drove home the inspired message, “For his mercy endures forever.” In Ps 107 the phrase, “Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men” (vss. 8, 15, 21, 31), was chorsed four separate times in response to, “Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he saved them from their distress” (Pss 107:6, 13, 19, 28). Five times in his second chapter Habakkuk repeated, “Woe to Him who . . .” (Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19) before the elevating the climax, “But the Lord is in his holy temple . . .” (vs. 20). Repetition was an effective device employed by various Old Testament preachers.

Use of Inductive Style

Amos utilized another rhetorical device when confronting Israel—the inductive method. One by one, to the delight of the audience, the preacher railed against the sins of his audience’s enemies. Moving closer home, he pointed to the sins of Israel’s estranged relatives, Judah. Then, while they are shaking their heads in agreement, he pointed to the sins of his audience. Frank Holbrook calls this “Amos’ Bulls-eye.”¹ This inductive method echoes Nathan’s, “Thou art the man,” to the adulterous king in 2 Sam 12:7

¹Frank Holbrook, class notes for Old Testament Survey, Southern University of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, TN, 1970.

and Malachi's, "Yet you rob me," indictment to tithe withholders (Mal 3:8). Similarly in Isa 5 God sang a love song to his vineyard, "the house of Israel," which in the end he indicted for being unfaithful (Isa 5:1-7). Old Testament preachers freely used tools of inductive preaching—storytelling, posing a question, dialogue, imagery, and common experience.¹ The tools of the inductive method are more than a ploy to catch attention—they were, in fact, part of the message.²

God was not afraid to make use of inductive communication as evidenced in Gen 3, his first Old Testament sermon. God heightened Adam and Eve's moral awareness by patiently leading them through a series of questions—"Where are you?" "Who told you that you were naked?" "Have you eaten from the tree?" (Gen 3:9-11 NIV). He was not afraid of the initial ambiguity such questions might create. This line of questioning could have led Adam and Eve to think that maybe they were truly lost from God's view. If he could not see them hiding in the trees then perhaps he had not seen them eating the forbidden fruit. They could have reasoned, "Maybe God does not know that we ate from the tree. God wouldn't have asked if he didn't know. Perhaps if we lie and say 'No, we did not eat from the tree,' God will never know." There would have been no misunderstanding had God at first declared, "You have sinned and now must reap the consequences of your action." God's inductive approach, however, led the hearers through a maze of ambiguity to discovery of the truth.

The same holds true when God confronts Cain with, "Why are you angry?" "Where is your brother Abel?" and "What have you done?" (Gen 4:6, 9, 10 NIV). Posing questions is a tool of inductive communication.³ Old Testament prophet-preachers used this inductive literary device. As seen above, when God confronted Adam, Eve, and Cain, he did so with a series of questions (Gen 3:9-11; 4:6, 9). Such questions were used for teaching truth inductively. Isaiah's love song concluded with the question, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isa 5:4). On God's behalf, Malachi confronted hearers with the question, "Will a man rob God?" (Mal 3:8). Proverbs initiates his

¹Ralph Lewis and Gregg Lewis, *Inductive Preaching* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1987), 58-61.

²*Ibid.*, 60.

³Lewis and Lewis, 37, 38.

inductive anti-alcohol message with the question, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?” (Prov 23:29 NIV).

Lewis and Lewis observe, “God doesn’t start with the answer.”¹ Then, where does God start?

They explain,

Generally in the Bible the concrete comes before the abstract, the particulars before the general, the data before the rule. While some decrees and dogma may be found in Scripture, they tend to follow experience, examples and cases in an inductive way, rather than preceded them in a deductive authoritarian manner.²

Frequently God starts with a question designed to lead the listeners into discovering the truth for themselves.

Ralph and Gregg Lewis contend that the inductive method is God’s way of communicating and was commonly used by his prophet-preachers as well.³ In fact, the authors hold the conviction that if you remove the inductive elements from the Scriptures, “you would reduce Holy Writ to a few scattered shreds.”⁴ They admit that “the Bible includes deductive treatments for the instruction of believers. But any essays of doctrines, words of wisdom on theological treatises are landscaped amid a multitude of persons and their experiences.”⁵ Building support for inductive preaching the authors propose, “God teaches two ways: by revelation and by reason. He combines highest authority and greatest freedom of investigation. He reveals himself and his truth gradually. Progressively he shows mankind his will and his way. He prepares the way; he awaits human readiness.”⁶ God adjusted his method to accommodate his slow-thinking creatures.

¹Ibid., 61.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 60.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 61.

Precedents for Inductive Preaching

This study investigates several precedents for inductive preaching as recorded in the Bible. Rather than focusing on preaching methods in general, this study is primarily concerned with preaching methods that address unpopular truths and unperceived needs. I, therefore analyze only biblical sermons that addressed either of these two issues. These messages must exhibit the qualities that qualify it as being a sermon according to H. Grady Davis—"the embodiment, the development, the full statement of a significant thought."¹ The following criteria were used in the selection of sermons for this study.

1. It must have developed a significant thought designed for human ears.
2. It may be largely a quotation of the words of God.
3. It is plausible that the prophet-preacher audibly preached the sermon.
4. It is not necessarily distinguished from prophetic exhortations and reproofs.
5. The sermon must either address unpopular truths or unperceived needs.

Attention will be given to the tools of inductive communication as evidenced in the sermons of the prophet-preachers—Narrative, simplicity, dialogue, questions, comparison and contrast, analogy, and references to common experience.²

This study is not so much interested in evaluating the talent and skills of the prophet as it is in identifying homiletical strategies that they employed. It matters not that their message quoted largely the words of God. If the prophet-preacher's message embodies, develops, and makes a full statement designed for and spoken to a human audience, then it is considered a bonifide sermon for analysis in this study. Great portions of the Old Testament sermons were quotations of God's words but they still exhibit the elements of a sermon as defined by Davis. For example, of the seven chapters comprising Micah's sermon, the first six appear to be a collection of dictations of God's words. Bridging statements composed by the prophet-preacher hold these quotations together. The last chapter alone mainly contains the words of Micah. Nonetheless, the entire sermon could be cited as an example of preaching unpopular truth.

¹H. Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 20.

²Ralph Lewis and Gregg Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 23.

Of the twenty-one verses in Obadiah, all are quotations of God except the first and final three verses. Evidently the divinely appointed purpose of this message was a reciting of God's words. Obadiah develops a "full statement" regarding the judgment of God on the Edomites. It is possible that he preached this sermon to the Edomites. It is doubtful, however, that such a message would have been popular among the listeners of Edom. Obadiah's sermon, therefore, could serve as an example of a sermon that addressed unpopular truths.

1 Sam 15 provides an example of a message that brought to light an unperceived need and yet does not qualify as a sermon. God had explicitly instructed King Saul, "Attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them" (vs. 3 NIV). Saul felt that he had obeyed God by ceremonially sacrificing animals taken in plunder (vs. 20). Samuel responded, "To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (vs. 22 NIV). The *SDA Bible Commentary* shares, "In his [Saul's] spiritually blinded state he now took wrong for right."¹ Saul was so blinded by his own arrogance (vs. 23) that he did not perceive the error of his way. This passage could provide an example of how the prophet-preacher inductively presented an unperceived need; however, it does not sufficiently develop a statement. Samuel spoke the truth to Saul but did not preach a sermon.

Mal 2:17-4:6 is shown by its contents to be an independent word of God regarding the inevitable coming of "The Day of the Lord." In this section it is apparent that the people had so long backslidden that they now believed their own lie—"All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them" (vs. 17 NIV). The *SDA Bible Commentary* says that the Jews of Malachi's day were like the Laodiceans of Rev 3:14-22—"Utterly insensitive to their true spiritual condition and felt their 'need of nothing'."² Divine forbearance had been misunderstood to mean that God condoned their evil. God spoke through Malachi alerting the listeners with that which they did not know or had forgotten—"I the Lord do not change" (Mal 3:6 NIV). Malachi awakened the listener to the reality that God saw their sin

¹"1 Samuel," *SDA Bible Commentary*, 2:524.

²*Ibid.*, 4:1123.

and it still was abhorrent to his eyes. This section of Malachi's message is an example of a sermon addressing an unperceived need.

Preaching to Unpopular Truths

Our focus now turns to samples of sermons preached by Old Testament prophet-preachers that addressed unpopular truths. It is not hard to find sermons that tackled unpopular truths in the Old Testament times. Obadiah confronted the Edomites for their betrayal of Judah. As a *narrative*¹ sermon, his method of communication was inductive. The prophet depicted their sin and painted a word picture of what their world would soon look like under the judgment of God. Frequent references to the personal pronoun "you" were intended to draw the Edomites into *dialogue* (vss. 2-5, 7, 9-16). Posing rhetorical *questions* also invited dialogue (vss. 5, 8). Vs. 3 (NIV) depicts the prophet-preacher role-playing by vocalizing the Edomites' thoughts, "Who can bring me down to the ground?" This device was designed as well to pull the listener into mental *dialogue*. Obadiah spoke in *simplicity* by referring to everyday things (i.e., rocks, an eagle, robbers, grape pickers, bread, etc.). Metaphors were used, e.g., "You soar like the eagle" (vs. 4 NIV) and "The house of Esau will be stubble" (vs. 18 NIV). The tools used in this sermon are those employed in inductive communication. This sermon is an inductive approach to preaching to unpopular truths.

In Jer 7:1 to 8:3, the first of a series of discourses, the prophet-preacher denounced Judah for their idolatry and pollution of the Temple. His strong warning started with an appeal to turn to God and he "will let you live" (Jer 7:3 NIV). *Questions* were used to invite dialogue—"Will you steal and murder, commit adultery . . . and then come and stand before me in this house, which bear my name, and say, 'We are safe . . .?'" (vss. 9, 10 NIV). In this question Jeremiah also expressed the undeniable sentiment of the people. In the next verse he asked, "Has this house, which bears my Name become a den of robbers to you?" (vs. 11 NIV). Three questions were also used in vss. 17 and 19. He also frequently referred to his listeners with the pronoun "you." He confronted his congregation with a *narrative* of their unfaithfulness that spanned "from the time your forefathers left Egypt until now" (vs. 25 NIV). Jeremiah's sermon is an

¹Italics indicate inductive tools identified by Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 30.

example of an inductive sermon dealing with unpopular truths. Eventually the prophet-preacher met rejection from his listeners and was persecuted for sermons such as this (Jer 19:14-20:60).

Another example of addressing unpopular truths is found in 1 Sam 12. This sermon is chosen not only because it is successfully measured by the established criteria of a sermon for this study but also because it is typical of the setting of contemporary sermons. Samuel has a well-defined congregation before him: “all Israel” gathered for the coronation of King Saul (vs. 12). The events that precipitated Samuel to preach this sermon are recorded in the Bible in the previous four chapters. The people’s response to Samuel’s sermon is also recorded, rendering it desirable for analysis.

In the aftermath of the coronation of the first king of Israel, Samuel faced the responsibility of confronting Israel with their great error. They had demanded of Samuel, “Now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have” (1 Sam 8:5 NIV). Samuel laid the matter before God who responded, “It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king” (vs. 9 NIV). God instructed Samuel to listen to the people and warn them of the consequences of having an earthly king ruling over them (vs. 9). Samuel’s message to the people was rooted in the Word he received from God.

The prophet-preacher graphically described to the citizens of Israel what life would be like if a king reigned over them. Samuel clearly told the people—A king will take sons, daughters, vineyards, fields, cattle, and flocks and you “will become his slaves” (vss. 11-18 NIV). In response to Samuel’s straightforward message, “The people refused to listen to Samuel. ‘No!’ they said, ‘We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles’” (vss. 19, 20 NIV). In spite of Israel’s refusal to recognize the error of their way, God instructed Samuel to grant their demand and give them a king. Saul was anointed to be the first king of Israel (1 Sam 8: 22; 10:24; 11:15).

1 Sam 12 1-25 records a second sermon that Samuel delivered addressing the very truth the Israelites had rejected in chap 8.¹ Samuel stood before them and once again addressed the “evil thing” that they had done in “asking for a king” (vs. 17 NIV). Although Samuel was aware of their feelings, that

¹See Samuel’s sermon in Appendix B.

they desired to have a king (vss. 2, 13), his goal was to help them realize their genuine need—that God still remained sovereign over Israel and their king (vss. 24, 25). This time, however, when confronting the people with what they did not want to hear, Samuel preached an inductive sermon. With the exception of parable, he employed all tools outlined of inductive communication as identified by Lewis and Lewis—narrative, parable, simplicity, dialogue, questions, comparison and contrast, and references to common experience.¹

Samuel introduced his sermon in a warm and “homey” manner—“I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand” (vs. 3 NIV). These words make use of *simplicity*. Samuel also found common ground with his audience by employing the inductive tools of *references to common experience*.

Rather than initiating his message by reciting their error, Samuel posed a series of *questions*—“Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes?” (vss. 12, 3 NIV). These questions may appear to have little to do with the issue of their demand for a king. A comparison, however, of his previous sermon, outlining the consequences of having a king (1 Sam 8:11-18), reveals that Samuel may be drawing a *comparison and contrast* between his behavior with that of a king. In rejecting God’s appointed leader, Samuel, the people had rejected God. Whereas God, in the person of Samuel, had taken nothing from the people, a king would take what he wanted.

The inductive tool of *comparison and contrast* is again utilized when the prophet-preacher sets before Israel two choices—obedience or rebellion. “If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God—good! But if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers” (1 Sam 12:14, 15 NIV).

Before confronting Israel with their error, Samuel “confronted” them with “all the righteous acts performed by the Lord” for them as well and their fathers (vs. 7 NIV). He rehearsed in *narrative* terms

¹Ibid., 23.

the rebellious cycle of their ancestors—their forgetting and forsaking God, resulting in misfortune, causing them to cry for help to God, who in turn delivered them. In reminding his hearers of their ancestors' mistakes, opportunity was also available to remind them of God's unfailing goodness. This inductive narrative approach disarmed the people and set the stage for Samuel's main concern—his listener's resent unfaithfulness in demanding a king. The natural flow of the narrative led to their present situation. Samuel related, When you saw the Ammonites “moving against you, you said to me, ‘No, we want a king to rule over us’—even though the Lord your God was your king” (vs. 12 NIV).

Samuel's question also invited his listeners into *dialogue* with him. Three times they interrupted his message in positive response to his words. In response to his questions regarding his personal conduct, they chorused, “You have not cheated or oppressed us . . .” (vs. 4 NIV). Samuel further reinforced his invitation for dialogue by speaking directly to his listeners with the pronoun “you,” i.e., “The Lord is witness against you” (vs. 5 NIV). Immediately the people audibly expressed themselves, “He is witness” (vs. 5 NIV). The third response came towards the end of his sermon. Following his most severe words referring to the “evil thing you did . . . when you asked for a king” (vs. 17 NIV), there was a demonstration of God's power in a thunderstorm (vs. 18 NIV).¹ Their stubbornness changed to repentance as they voiced, “We have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king” (vs. 19 NIV).

Samuel responded to Israel's change of heart by offering hope, “Do not be afraid” (vs. 20 NIV). Samuel then appealed to his listeners to turn to God, not to idols (vs. 20). Samuel offered hope through God's covenant. “For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people, because the Lord was pleased to make you his own” (vs. 22 NIV).

Through inductive preaching Samuel was able to lead Israel from resistance to repentance. He confronted the people with their error only after establishing rapport and identifying with their history. Their repentant response is phenomenal in the light of the negative reaction to Samuel's previous sermon. Samuel's reaction to their response offered hope, reiterated God's pledge to his people, and encouraged Israel to serve God faithfully or “both you and your king will be swept away” (vs. 25 NIV). The prophet-

¹It is arguable that the thunderstorm was an illustration to Israel of God's power.

preacher untiringly preached for change in the lives and hearts of his listeners.

Inductive preaching was not the only method used by the prophet-preachers. It was, however, their primary homiletical strategy. Since it was highly favored by prophet-preachers, I will focus on inductive preaching and highlight it for the duration of this study.

Preaching to Unperceived Needs

Mal 2:17-4:6 is an example of a sermon addressing unperceived needs. This final section of Malachi's message fully developed a significant thought—God is not pleased with evil and he will deal with those who refuse to return to him. Malachi exploited most of the inductive tools identified above by Lewis and Lewis.¹ He confronted his listeners through the *narrative* method that led them on a journey from their misconceptions of God (Mal 2:17-3:1), to a description of the consequences of their thinking (Mal 3:2-15), and ultimately he offered hope to the faithful (Mal 3:16-18; 4:6). Malachi speaks to them in *simplicity* referring to refiner's fire and launderer's soap (Mal 3:2), robbing God (vs. 8), "windows of heaven" (vs. 10 KJV), crops, vines, and fruit (vs. 11), a scroll (vs. 16), and ashes (Mal 4:3).

He masterfully used *questions* and *dialogue*. He introduced the sermon by making a statement, "You have wearied the Lord with your words (Mal 2:17 NIV). Then he expressed his listeners' feelings, "How have we wearied him? You ask" (vs. 17 NIV), followed by his answer, "By saying, 'All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord'" (vs. 17 NIV). He repeated this strategy again in vs. 7-9 (NIV), "Will a man rob God? . . . But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings." This dialogical method of role-playing is repeated a third time in Mal 3:13-14. Through a series of questions and answers Malachi led his listeners into discovering just how far they had declined—they had become robbers of God.

Malachi also made liberal use of the pronoun "you." He offered hope in Mal 3:7 (NIV), "Return to me and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty." God's abundant blessing was also offered to those who responded by returning their tithe and offerings (vs. 12). This portion of the book of Malachi is an example of addressing unperceived needs through inductive preaching.

Another example of an Old Testament prophet-preacher preaching to an unperceived need is

¹Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 30.

found in Ezek 36:16-38. Although this sermon is part of a larger message, its introduction in vss. 16-21 and the content indicate that it is an independent word of God. This sermon reveals what would motivate God to restore his people—it would glorify his name (vs. 22). The people of Judah had been exiled because of their inability to obey God (vs. 17). How were they going to live up to God’s expectation upon their return home? The *SDA Bible Commentary* says of those whom Ezekiel addressed, “They did not understand that without divine grace and a change of heart they could not render the necessary obedience.”¹ Ezekiel informed Israel of their unperceived need of allowing God to give them a new heart that would enable them to follow him (vss. 26, 27). Ezekiel’s sermon method was *narrative*, taking his listeners on a journey into their future. He posed no *dialogical* questions but he did make liberal use of the pronoun “you.” This message addressing unperceived needs clearly offers hope to all who have a renewed heart. History reveals that Israel “completely spurned the experience that alone would enable them to keep his law.”²

God assigned the prophet-preacher Haggai the responsibility of confronting Israel with a truth they apparently did not perceive—the time had come to build the Lord’s house (Hag 1:2, 8). This sermon makes a full statement of a well-developed thought.³ There is movement in its rationale from a definite beginning to a firm resolution and conclusion. Its bulk is largely the literal words of God rather than the prophet’s. There is strong evidence that the prophet preached this message to an audience who in turn visibly responded. This sermon is distinguished because it resembles contemporary preaching settings—a preacher with a message confronting a congregation.

Having recently returned from exile, citizens of Judah were not so much refusing to build the temple as they were delaying its construction. They felt that recovering from the exile and building their own homes took precedence over building God’s house. God identified the problem to Haggai, “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come for the Lord’s house to be built’” (vs. 3 NIV). They did not

¹“Ezekiel,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:697.

²*Ibid.*, 613.

³See Haggai’s sermon in Appendix B.

perceive that God expected them to first build his house.

The Scripture's introduction of this sermon states that this sermon was the Word of God spoken through Haggai—"Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai" (vs. 3 NIV). Repetition of the words, "Now this is what the word of the Lord Almighty says" (vss. 3, 7 NIV) reminded his listeners that his authority was in the Word of God.

Haggai's method of preaching this sermon was inductive. Haggai first identified his listener's "felt needs," i.e., shelter, food, clothes, drink, money, security (vss. 4, 6 NIV), through a *narrative* approach making reference to *common experiences*. The first sentence of his sermon was a *question*, "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" (vs. 4 NIV). In this opening statement, Haggai did not chastise but rather invited his hearers to *dialogue* with him. His style was personal and inviting when he appealed, "Give careful thought to your ways" (vs. 7 NIV).

Dialogue was further elicited by the liberal use of the word "you." Eight times in vss. 3-6 and three times in vs. 9 Haggai referred to "you." Utilizing this pronoun made the message concrete. Hag 1:3-6 also utilized the deductive tool of *contrast and comparison*—you plant much but harvest little, eat but are hungry, drink but are thirsty, have clothes but are cold, earn wages but lose your money. Vs. 9 (NIV) as well uses *contrast and comparison*—"you expect much" but see little, "what you brought home, I blew away." Having arrested their attention, Haggai poses another *question*, "Why?" (vs. 9 NIV)—why have these things happened? The answer to this question bore the indictment, "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house" (vs. 9 NIV).

Vss. 10, 11 informed the listeners that God is the one in charge of nature. The implication was clear—put God first and he will bless. Not only did the people understand the message but the "whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord" (vs. 12 NIV). In his closing statement, Haggai offered hope to his audience by reassuring them that God was with them (vs. 13 NIV). The people responded and work commenced on the temple of God (vs. 14 NIV).

Summary

A commonality exists in Samuel's homiletical strategy in preaching to unpopular truth and

Haggai's to unperceived need. Both preached inductively and thus made use of the tools of inductive communication. Each sermon started with a statement that identified with the listeners' feelings and acknowledged their thinking. Both followed up that statement by posing a question that led into the body of the sermon. There was a mutual use of questions as well as addressing the listener throughout the sermons with the personal pronoun "you." The inductive method proved equally effective in either sermon as evidenced by the positive responses.

Both messages were rooted in the authority of the Word of God. Both confronted their listeners with their error and appealed for change. Both offered hope through a relationship with God. And the people's response to both sermons was one of repentance and change. These two sermons demonstrate how inductive preaching was used in the Old Testament times to address unpopular truths as well as unperceived needs.

Concluding Summary

Having observed Old Testament preachers we are left with the conclusion that rather than embracing one inspired strategy, these spokesmen for God practiced a variety of methods and devices in preaching for effect. The messages are God-inspired but their delivery takes on various forms within a rather broad human spectrum.¹ These ancient messages shared commonality with each other in that the restoration of the broken relationship between God and his people is of paramount importance. All were commissioned as spokespersons for God—they did not speak apart from his word. Their words were meant to bring their listeners' hearts and lives into closer harmony with the will of God.

Beyond these common threads, Old Testament preachers used literary devices commonly employed by communicators today (i.e., figures of speech, narrative, repetition, contrast and comparison, analogy, questions, poetry, illustrations, drama, etc.). Some messages were deductive but most appear to be inductive. All of the sermons analyzed in this study addressing unpopular truths or unperceived needs were inductive. Ralph and Gregg Lewis firmly hold that the inductive method of communication was

¹Gerhard Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1980), 6.

most preferred by God and his Old Testament prophet-preachers. The Old Testament, however, does not prescribe an inspired homiletical strategy to be used by all preachers. God dictated some homiletical strategies that the prophet-preacher was to use for specific circumstances. Occasionally he even prescribed the prop devices to be used in their illustrations and drama. Otherwise, Old Testament preachers were given great liberty in choosing how they would address their audiences. The same Spirit who impressed these preachers with the content of their message also guided them in designing the homiletical strategy.

CHAPTER 3

NEW-TESTAMENT ERA PREACHING

Our attention now considers the preaching techniques of Jesus and his disciples in the early church of the first century A.D.E. Of vital interest in this study are the techniques prophet-preachers deemed best when addressing unpopular truths and unperceived needs.

Methods Used by Jesus

It is paramount that we investigate the homiletical methods utilized by Jesus, as he was the ultimate “prophet.” Albert Richmond Bond in his analysis of Jesus as a preacher offered this appraisal, “His preaching has a norm-value for the ministry of today. It was the perfect standard.”¹ Gregg and Ralph Lewis chastise homileticians for not giving more consideration to Jesus’ preaching model.² They conclude, “If we want to be heard in the twenty-first century, maybe we need to take a closer look at our Master’s preaching in the first century.”³

Raymond Bailey takes a “closer look” and compares Jesus’ methods with traditional homiletic approaches:

Jesus’ preaching was nearly always inductive in nature. He sought to involve His listeners in the thinking reasoning process rather than asking them to accept a performed truth. Most Western preaching has derived from Greek persuasion and has been deductive in nature, that is, a premise or truth is stated and then there is an attempt to prove or apply it. Rarely did Jesus employ a deductive methodology. Exposition tells or directs; narrative shows or leads.⁴

¹Albert Richmond Bond, *The Master Preacher* (New York: American Tract Society, 1910), 280.

²Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 27.

³*Ibid.*, 14.

⁴Raymond Bailey, *Jesus the Preacher* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990), 115.

Inductive Characteristics

By the very nature of the incarnation, Jesus was very much a part of his culture and time. The thinking process of the Oriental world dictated that he communicate inductively.¹ Jesus spoke deductively on occasions when alone with his disciples.² He made exception to his inductive approach also when confronting the incorrigible religious opponents.³ But one must understand that this was a rare divergence, for his standard practice was to approach “His enemies inductively by use of parable.”⁴ In this way he disarmed his accusers.⁵

Perhaps none have been more vocal regarding Jesus’ inductive method than Gregg and Ralph Lewis. In their book, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, they raise the question, “Could it be that Jesus’ preaching doesn’t fit the traditional homiletics mold?”⁶ They observe that in two thousand years of Christian preaching those who stand out as most effective are those who follow Jesus’ method of preaching inductively.⁷ The authors identify eight inductive characteristics common to Jesus’ preaching: narrative, parables, simplicity, dialogue, questions, comparison and contrast, analogy, and references to common experience.⁸ When I compared the inductive devices Lewis and Lewis assign to Jesus with the classical homiletical characteristics identified by Vilmar Gonzalez, several similarities were evidenced. See table 1.

Jesus’ sermons embraced both lists of homiletical devices. His parables “focused on one specific subject.” He presented “two options only” with the words, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that

¹Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 48-49, 80-81.

²Lewis and Lewis, *Inductive Preaching*, 75.

³Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 85.

⁴Ibid., 27.

⁵Ibid., 28.

⁶Ibid., 27.

⁷Ibid., 31.

⁸Ibid., 30.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF PREACHING CHARACTERISTICS

Gonzalez's Classical Devices ^a	Jesus' Inductive Devices ^b
Clarity and simplicity	Simplicity
Two options only	Contrast
Positive and negative aspects clearly presented	Comparison and contrast
Practical/adaptable to life	References to common experience
Use of illustrations	Parables/analogy
Some dialogue style	Dialogue/questions
Call for urgent decision	
Call to action	
Emphasis on the Redeemer aspect	

^aSee pages 22, 23, above.

^bTaken from Ralph Lewis and Gregg Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 30.

leadeth to destruction . . . narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Matt 7:13, 14) and "You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matt 6:24 NIV). His "call to action" was challenging—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt 16:24). And who would deny that his preaching exhibited an "emphasis on the Redeemer"? As with the Old Testament preachers, he worked these devices towards an inductive end.

Narrative

Narrative is one of the leading identifying characteristics of inductive communication. Jesus' preaching frequently included stories, and stories are inherently narrative. Lewis and Lewis explain what they mean by narrative: "Narrative invites involvement. It seizes interest and postpones the punch line until speaker and listener reach the conclusion together. Thus a story can inductively lead the hearer toward a cooperative conclusion without having to defensively protect or prove the speaker's proposition. Instead, attention resides inherently in the narration as hearers listen and accept the message couched in story form."¹ Jesus' preaching was punctuated with such stories frequently told as parables.

¹Lewis and Lewis, *Inductive Preaching*, 37.

Narrative does not necessarily have to be inductive but Jesus used it for this purpose. In answer to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29 NIV), Jesus contrasted a good neighbor with a bad neighbor in the story of the Good Samaritan (vss. 30-37). The story concluded with a question directed at the inquirer, “Which . . . was the neighbor?” (vs. 36 NIV). Jesus could have first defined what a good neighbor was and then interjected the story as a supporting argument. Instead he elected to define “neighbor” by telling a story. Raymond Bailey concurs with Ralph and Greg Lewis when he states, “The overwhelming majority of Jesus’ preaching was narrative. Rather than explaining or defining, he told a story or recalled a familiar historical event.”¹

Jesus explained his relationship with the church by describing a sheepfold. The story climaxed with his declaration, “I am the good shepherd. . . . I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14, 15 NIV). His sermon in Matt 6:25-33 depicts vignettes of God’s caring for his creation. The words “do not worry” are repeated four times culminating with “seek first the kingdom . . . and all these things will be given to you as well” (vs. 3 NIV). His sermon to Nicodemus had the flow of a story.

1. You must be reborn (John 3:5-5),
2. which is like the blowing of the wind (vss. 6-8),
3. spiritually speaking (vss. 9-13),
4. as it was with the snake Moses lifted up in the wilderness that brought life (vs. 14),
5. so the Son will be lifted up (vss. 14-15),
6. for eternal life comes through the Son of God (vss. 16-18),
7. through Him light has now come into the world but evil hates light (vss. 19-21).

Each thought led naturally into the next thought as if Jesus were unfolding a story to Nicodemus.

Deductive elements also are evidenced in this message thus rendering it a hybrid design.

Parables

Matthew and Mark report, “Without a parable spake he not” (Matt 13:34; Mark 4:34). Parables go hand-in-hand with the narrative technique and likewise easily lend themselves to inductive

¹Bailey, 116.

communication. Parables move from the concrete to the abstract. The *SDA Bible Commentary* lists forty parables recited by Jesus in the four gospels.¹ Matt 20:1-16 relates a parable of life in the vineyard where laborers hired throughout the day were all paid the same—a full day’s wage. Jesus saved the abstract point of his sermon for the very last sentence, “So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (vs.16 NIV).

Parables enabled Jesus to broach sensitive issues while simultaneously retaining the attention of a resistant ear. Before informing the chief priests and elders that “the kingdom of God will be taken away from you” (Matt 21:43 NIV), he first arrested their ears with the parable of the wicked tenants who had killed the landowner’s servants and son. Among a more receptive audience Jesus prefaced some of his parables with an introduction identifying the subject he was addressing—“The kingdom of heaven will be like . . .” (Matt 25:1 NIV) and “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like . . .” (Matt 7:24 NIV). Jesus used parables to foster listener participation and assist his hearers in discovering truth.

Dialogue

Jesus’ style of preaching invited interaction from the audience. Frequently he addressed his listeners with the personal pronoun “you.” He directly referred to himself in the first person—“My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink” (John 6:55 NIV), “I will come again” (John 14:3), and “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord . . .’” (Matt 7:22 NIV). Occasionally Jesus commanded attention by introducing a thought with demonstrative phrases such as, “Listen” (Mark 4:3 NIV), “Consider” (vs. 24 NIV), “Watch out” (Matt 7:15 NIV), “Be careful” (Matt 6:1 NIV), and “Now learn” (Matt 24:32 NIV). Directly addressing listeners, making personal references, and using demonstrative language are tools of dialogical communication.

Questions

Bailey corroborates with Ralph and Greg Lewis that a favorite tool that Jesus employed for

¹“The Fourfold Gospel Narrative,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 5:205-207.

dialogical purpose was the “rhetorical question.”¹ Jesus asked 153 questions which are recorded in the four Gospels.² He involved people in his sermons with questions—“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Matt 7:3 NIV), “Do people pick grapes from thornbushes?” (vs. 16 NIV), “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8 NIV), “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” (Luke 6:32 NIV), “Why do you worry about clothes?” (Matt 6:28 NIV) and “You are Israel’s teacher . . . and do you not understand these things?” (John 3:10 NIV). He asked his detractors, “Haven’t you read the law?” (Matt 12:5 NIV), “How can Satan drive out Satan?” (Mark 3:23 NIV), and “Do you still not understand?” (Mark 8:21 NIV). Such questions solicited mental involvement from the audience and occasionally received an audible response.

Comparison and Contrast

The literary devices “comparison and contrast” were also components of Jesus’ inductive method. Six times in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus he repeated, “You have heard that . . .” or “It has been said . . .” followed by, “But I tell you . . .” (Matt 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43 NIV). Thus Jesus revealed to the listener faulty human righteousness in comparison with God’s lofty righteousness. At another time Jesus delineated between Caesar’s things and God’s things (Mark 12:13-17). In Matt 7:13 he contrasted the narrow gate that leads to life with the wide gate that leads to death. He referred to the wheat and the tares (Matt 13 24-30), the wise man and the foolish man (Matt 7:24-29), the wise virgins and the foolish virgins (Matt 25:1-13), as well as the sheep and the goats (vss. 31-36). Often his comparison and contrasts simplified for the listeners their basic choices—life or death.

Analogy

Analogy is a literary device that explains abstract and difficult matters with that which is better known. Jesus utilized this device in his parables: “The Kingdom of heaven is like”—a man who sowed

¹Bailey, 113.

²Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 28.

seed (Matt 13:24 NIV), a mustard seed (vs. 31), hidden treasure (vs. 44), a net catching fish (vs. 47), a king who prepared a wedding banquet (Matt 22:2), ten virgins (Matt 25:1), and a man going on a journey (vs. 14). He said that the negative influence of the Pharisees was like leaven subtly permeating bread (Mark 8:15). The new paradigm he was ushering in he illustrated as being like new wine in a new wineskin (Luke 5:37-39). In his discourse to the woman at Jacob's well, water was analogous to eternal life (John 4:7-26). He articulated the theology of sanctification by faith with the analogy, "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John 15:5 NIV). Jesus' profuse use of analogies served an inductive purpose.

References to Common Experience/Simplicity¹

Frances J. Handy says, "Jesus was a master of soul-capturing imagery."² Handy reminds us that the "human mind is not a debating hall, but a picture gallery."³ Jesus drew vivid pictures from nature, from customs, family, animals, agriculture, humans, shepherds, servants, and masters. Familiar, concrete terms were Jesus' vehicles for conveying abstract concepts, i.e., the common lily, a beam, a splinter in one's eye, etc.⁴ Jesus was down-to-earth, unpretentious, and in touch with the world around him. No doubt some would have considered him to be rather earthy. He drew his language from the earth and from everyday experiences commonly recognized by his listeners. He wove the simple things of life and made references to common experiences for the purpose of inductive communication.

Affective Effect

Beyond the above-mentioned characteristics, Lewis states that Jesus' speaking was affective in nature.⁵ Albert Bond says, "He was intensely emotional. He was 'moved with compassion,' 'Jesus wept,'

¹Ralph and Gregg Lewis do not identify "simplicity" as a separate characteristic from "common experience" in *Inductive Preaching* or in *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*.

²Francis J. Handy, *Jesus the Preacher* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Cokesbury Press), 57.

³*Ibid.*, 58.

⁴Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 29.

⁵*Ibid.*, 81.

he looked upon his audience 'with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts.'"¹ Jesus was no stoic. He "talked at the visceral level of lust, love, life and self-respect. He met gut-level needs and issues head-on."²

Not only did Jesus personally exhibit emotion but he also moved his listeners' emotions. Bailey observes, "Jesus used ambiguity and surprise to create suspense and evoke response."³ And again, "Jesus sometimes used shock as a tool."⁴ This gives evidence that he was interested in more than simply conveying truth. His goal was to move his listeners to response and action. "He secured and held the attention of his listeners by first establishing a point of contact and then appealing to something familiar from their own realms of experience."⁵ He started with the concrete and moved his hearers to the abstract. Handy goes so far as to say, "His thoughts were always concrete, not abstract; his intellectual processes were intuitive, not argumentative."⁶

Lewis and Lewis contend, "Jesus' preaching technique dovetails beautifully with the latest brain research and recent learning-theory discoveries about the ways people process information to form convictions and beliefs."⁷ The authors buttress this claim by presenting recent research studies regarding the two hemispheres of the brain. They propose that Jesus' preaching is right-brain oriented, which is more imaginative, creative, and affective.⁸

Use of Authority

Chapter 2 identified Scripture as a basis for the authority of Old Testament prophet-preachers.

¹Bond, 146.

²Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 29.

³Bailey, 113.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 29.

⁶Ibid., 66.

⁷Ibid., 13.

⁸Ibid., 35-43.

How did Jesus relate to the Word of God? Lewis and Lewis observe, "Jesus doesn't quote much from the Bible. He absorbs it."¹ It was not necessary for Jesus to quote Scripture because those in his presence were acquainted with it. This allowed Jesus to make allusions to the Bible. Without indicating the source, much of what Jesus said was borrowed from Old Testament passages. A cursory look at Jesus' words in *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* reveals striking evidence of how frequently Jesus alluded to the Bible of his day.² A sample of such allusions is seen in table 2:

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF JESUS' WORDS WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT

Jesus' Words	Old Testament
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. (Matt 5:5)	The meek shall inherit the earth . . . (Ps 37:11)
Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears hear ye not? (Mark 8:18)	O foolish people . . . which have eyes, and see not; which have ears and hear not. (Jer 5:21)
Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. (Luke 23:30)	And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us . . . (Hos 10:8, Isa 2:19)
My house shall be a house of prayer but ye have made it a den of robbers. (Luke 19:46)	Mine house shall be called an house of prayer (Isa 56:7b). Is this house . . . become a den of robbers in your eyes? (Jer 7:11)

Bailey makes the observation, "Jesus usually referred to only short passages or made allusions to texts. He explained texts in terms of their application to contemporary contexts. . . . The Scriptures are not magical potions or secret knowledge but a key to reality."³

Jesus appealed to specific Bible passages on several occasions. In John 10: 34 he quoted Ps 82:6, "Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are god?'" His strongest

¹Ibid., 81.

²Robert G. Bratcher, ed., *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1967).

³Bailey, 113.

statements were aimed at the incorrigible and yet enlightened religious leaders whose influence remained a growing barrier for innocent souls seeking the kingdom of God. In the summation of one sermon he preached in response to the chief priests and elders, Jesus confronted by quoting Ps 118:22, 23, “Have you never read in the Scripture: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone?’” (Matt 21:42 NIV). Jesus considered the Bible a source of authority for all mankind including him. When confronted by Satan in the wilderness he clearly revealed his position regarding the inspired Word, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4)—a quotation of Deut 8:3.

Preaching Unpopular Truths and Unperceived Needs

As stated in the previous chapter, the purpose of this study is to investigate methods prophet-preachers employed when preaching about unpopular truths or unperceived needs. The same criteria that determined what Old Testament messages were appropriate for analysis were applied to Jesus’ sermons.¹

1. It must have developed a significant thought designed for human ears.
2. It is plausible that the prophet-preacher audibly preached the sermon.
3. It is not necessarily distinguished from prophetic exhortations and reproofs.
4. The sermon must address either unpopular truths or unperceived needs.

Attention will especially be given to inductive characteristics identified by Ralph and Gregg Lewis.²

Precedence for Inductive Preaching

Luke 18:9 (NIV) says, “To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable.” Jesus could have boldly declared the error of those holding such a position. He could have buttressed the declaration with several arguments and Bible verses that proved the truth. Instead, Jesus confronted this “better-than-thou” attitude with a parable that depicted

¹The criteria, “It may be largely a quotation of the words of God,” that measured Old Testament sermons did not apply to any of Jesus’ sermons.

²Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 23.

two worshippers—a well-respected Pharisee and a despised tax collector (vs. 10).

This *parable* exhibits all of the characteristics identified by the Ralph and Gregg Lewis with the exception of a *question* and *analogy*.¹ As a *parable* it is also a *narrative* that used common *simplicistic* language as well as referred to *experiences common* to his listeners, i.e., going to the temple, prayer, admirable lifestyle of the Pharisee. It *compares* and shows the *contrast* between the attitudes of the two worshippers. *Dialogue* was engendered at the end of the parable as Jesus directly addressed his listeners, “I tell you” (vs. 14 NIV). Jesus concluded this parable with a declaration, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (vs. 14 NIV). This sermon is an example of how Jesus designed an inductive approach when addressing an unpopular truth.

Matt 12:22-37 records how Jesus set straight another erroneous belief held by the Pharisees. They had taken the position that Jesus cast out Devils by the power of “Beelzebub, the prince of demons” (vs. 24 NIV). The unpopular truth Jesus sought to convey was, “I drive out demons by the Spirit of God” (vs. 28 NIV). This short discourse, likewise, is inductive. Unlike many of Jesus’ messages it is not a parable but, nonetheless, it is a *narrative*. It has strong *dialogical* elements as Jesus poses four *questions* and directly addresses the Pharisees with the pronoun “you.” He also employed commanding language that solicited dialogue, e.g., “I tell you” (vss. 31, 36), “you brood of vipers” (vs. 34 NIV), and “you will be condemned” (vs. 37 NIV).

Jesus made several *comparisons and contrasts*, e.g., those with Jesus and those against Jesus (vs. 30), speaking a word against the Son of Man as opposed to speaking a word against the Holy Ghost (vs. 32), a “good tree” versus a “bad tree” (vs. 33 NIV), and a “good man” versus an “evil man” (vs. 35 NIV). Jesus spoke in *simplicity* making frequent references to the *common experiences* of his listener—a divided kingdom/city/household (vs. 25), judges (vs. 27), “kingdom of God” (vs. 28), robbing a house (vs. 29), fruit on a good and bad tree (vs. 33), a bed of vipers (vs. 34). Their ugly spirit rendered the Pharisees *analogous* to a “brood of vipers” (vs. 34). Jesus did not mince words when confronting the incorrigible

¹Italicized words are associated with inductive communication.

Pharisees who “attributed to satanic agencies the holy power of God.”¹ Ellen White states, “Stubborn, sullen, ironhearted, they determined to close their eyes to all evidence, and thus they committed the unpardonable sin.”² For these religious leaders who had the advantage of knowing so much and yet were resistant to considering truth that ran contrary to their ideas, Jesus adopted an inductive approach.

How Jesus Addressed Unpopular Truths

The story of the Prodigal Son, in Luke 15:4-32, is an example of how Jesus presented unpopular truth to the Pharisees. They along with the teachers of the law were resistant to the truth that the gospel was open to the sinners with whom Jesus was associating. Their indictment was, “This man welcomes sinners” (vs. 2 NIV). This was not the first time someone had railed this accusation against Jesus.³ Jesus responded with a sermon comprised of three parables that confirmed how God aggressively pursues and welcomes sinners. This sermon has all of the inductive elements identified by Lewis and Lewis: narrative, parables, simplicity, dialogues, questions, comparisons and contrast, analogy, and references to common experiences.⁴

Through this inductive strategy Jesus led his accusers on a journey of discovering the truth about God as well as about themselves. The climax of the sermon, which emerged towards the end of the third parable, mirrored the exclusive attitude of those who were “muttering.” At that point in the sermon the angry older brother, rejecting his repentant sibling (vss. 25-32), became a reflection of the Pharisees’ exclusive attitude. The first two parables concluded with the declaration that in heaven there is rejoicing when a sinner repents (vss. 7, 10). The third parable pictured the father and servants rejoicing as well. Then, a new feature is added—a picture of the older brother refusing to rejoice. His attitude is seen in contrast with those who have been rejoicing. Thus the spirit of Jesus’ critics is unveiled in the older brother. The *narrative* flow of this sermon moved from heaven rejoicing, to the older brother refusing to

¹“Ellen G. White Comments—Matthew,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 5:1092.

²Ibid.

³Cf. Matt 5:11; 11:19; Luke 5:30.

⁴Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preaching Like Jesus*, 30.

rejoice. Parables are by nature *narrative*, but the movement throughout the sermon reveals a *narrative* design binding all three parables together.

Jesus' sermon exhibited *simplicity* and referred to *experiences common* to his listeners—rescuing a lamb, hunting for a lost coin, and a wayward son coming home and having a party. He spoke of lighting a lamp, sweeping the floor, settling an inheritance, a wayward boy, a famine, feeding pigs, hunger pains, the father running, a hug, the family robe, a ring, a pair of sandals, a party, and a jealous brother—all typical events and things pertaining to everyday life that rang a familiar bell in the minds of his audience.

The first words of his sermon, “Suppose one of you . . .” (vs. 4), drew those listening into *dialogue*. Again, the second parable was introduced with, “Suppose a woman . . .” (vs. 8). Jesus also engendered *dialogue* by asking the *questions*—“Does he not leave the ninety-nine . . . and go after the lost sheep? . . .” in the first parable (vs. 3) and, “Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully? . . .” (vs. 8), in the second parable. In the first sentence of his sermon, Jesus also directly addressed the Pharisees with the pronoun, “you,” which is another technique that solicited *dialogue*.

Jesus employed the inductive device of *comparison and contrast*. The rejoicing of the shepherd finding the lamb, the woman her coin, and the angels over a sinner who repents (vss. 7, 10) were *compared and contrasted* to the older brother who refused to rejoice (vs. 28). The acceptance of the father of his returning son was contrasted with the older brother's rejection of his brother. A subtle *contrast* was made between the older son calling his brother “this son of yours” (vs. 30), and the father's response “this your brother” (vs. 32).

Analogy was seen throughout all three parables as a sinner is likened to things lost—a lamb, a coin, and a son—and God was likened to a shepherd, a woman, and a father. The father welcoming back his lost son was analogous to God welcoming back the lost sinner. The faithful saints were alluded to in the ninety-nine sheep safe in the fold. Sin was represented as wild living in a distant country. Putting the robe, ring, and sandals on the son represented being welcomed back into the family of God.¹ The older brother who had faithfully remained at home represented the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

¹“Luke,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 5:821.

Jesus offered hope to his listeners by painting a picture of the father eagerly accepting the wayward son. The words of the father to the older son, “Everything I have is yours” (vs. 31), were words that Jesus especially reserved for the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Jesus’ final sentence in this sermon directly addressed their accusation, “This man accepts sinners” (vs. 2)—“We had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (vs. 32). Through a relationship with the father, Jesus offered hope for brokenhearted sinners as well as self-righteous Pharisees.

Although Jesus never quoted or directly appealed to a Bible passage, this sermon assumed that the listeners were aware of its teachings. Angels and heaven were mentioned without explanation indicating that Jesus considered his hearers to have a firm grasp of these truths (vss. 7, 10). The mention of a shepherd and sheep would have brought to the minds of his Scripture-literate audience passages such as, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps 23:1), “We are his people, the sheep of his pasture” (Ps 100:3), as well as, “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa 53:6). Introducing a compassionate father to the story jogged the minds of the scripturally astute listeners to recall, “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him” (Ps 103:13 NIV) and “Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer” (Isa 63:16).¹ Jesus assumed that the audience was familiar with the Scriptures and would comprehend its allusions to the Old Testament.

The Bible does not record the listeners’ response to this sermon. Ellen White comments that many present upon this occasion “rejected Christ’s reproof” but after he ascended to heaven they “united with his disciples in the very work outlined in the parable of the lost sheep.”² The initial response to Jesus’ sermon appeared less than positive but his words were recalled years later and thus helped effect change.

¹Cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 64:8; Mal 2:10.

²Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 192.

How Jesus Addressed Unperceived Needs

The bread of life. What strategy did Jesus select when addressing unperceived needs? John 6 records a sermon addressing such a need. The multitude was unaware of the great reality that only Jesus could satisfy their soul. Rather than declare this great truth and then offer proof of its validity, Jesus led the listeners into discovery. He exploited the experience of the feeding of the multitude the previous day by using the metaphor of bread to communicate regarding this need. Jesus started his sermon addressing their felt need—a need for food. He addressed his listeners, “You are looking for me . . . because you ate the loaves” (vs. 26 NIV). This naturally led into drawing an *analogy* between physical bread and their need for spiritual bread of eternal life (vs. 27). His manner of direct communication aided in evoking a spontaneous response, “What must we do?” (vs. 28 NIV). Jesus allowed the *questions* of the audience to determine the direction of his sermon. He answered, “Believe in the one he [God] has sent” (vs. 29 NIV). The people again demanded that Jesus provide a sign that he was the one God had sent. They implied that Moses gave proof of being from God by causing bread to come down from heaven (vss. 30, 31). Jesus moved closer to the unperceived truth by clarifying, “It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven” (vss. 32, 33 NIV). They asked, “Give us this bread” (vs. 34 NIV). The Bible says, “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life’” (vs. 35 NIV). The rest of the sermon is an enlargement of this declaration. Throughout the sermon Jesus never broke with the bread of life metaphor.

This sermon has all of the inductive characteristics identified by Lewis and Lewis with the exception of *parable*. Traveling from the felt need to the unperceived need, this sermon has a *narrative* strategy. It rates high dialogically with the listeners audibly responding five times (vss. 28, 30, 34, 41, 52). Although Jesus did not pose a question, his remarks were tied into the *questions* raised by his audience. He *compared* the bread in the wilderness—which a man may eat and die—with the bread of life, “which a man may eat and not die” (vss. 47-51 NIV). Throughout the entire sermon he used a strong *analogy* by comparing himself to bread. He spoke *simply* and referred to *common experiences* such as the necessity of food and drink. He identified with the heritage he shared with his Jewish audience. In vs. 45 Jesus appealed to Scripture by quoting Isa 53:13.

The response of the multitude was not promising. Even his disciples grumbled about the claims expressed in this sermon (vs. 61). The Bible notes that this sermon marked the turning point in the ministry of Jesus, “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him” (vs. 66 NIV).

The water of life. Another example of Jesus addressing an unperceived need is found in his discourse with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4:7-26). This message has several similar features to his “bread of life” sermon. Both messages addressed the same unperceived need—only Jesus satisfies the soul. Rather than referring to *analogy* of bread, at Jacob’s well Jesus made himself analogous to “living water” (vss. 10, 14). As in the “bread of life” sermon, Jesus played off of the questions and responses of the listener thus rendering the sermon *very dialogical*. Both sermons are *narrative* but neither is a parable. Jesus waited until the final sentence of the message before resolving the essential truth of who the Messiah was—“I who speak to you am he” (vs. 26). Waiting until the end of the story to unveil the “punch line” is a tool of inductive communication. This message to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well is an example of inductive preaching to an unperceived need. This strategy reaped an abundant harvest for it is recorded that the woman left her water jar at the well, “went back to town and said to the people, ‘Come and see a man’” (vs. 29 NIV). Scripture documents, “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony” (vs. 39 NIV).

Jesus’ hometown sermon. Luke 4:18-27 shares an account of Jesus preaching to an unperceived need in the synagogue of his childhood town, Nazareth (vs. 16). Jesus was probably halfway through his public ministry.¹ As was the custom of the day, he was asked to read the scripture and deliver a sermon addressing the texts.² His reputation as a preacher as well as miracle worker encouraged his childhood friends to listen to what he had to say (vss. 14, 15).

This sermon confronted the listeners with the truth that Jesus was their Messiah who had come to

¹“Luke,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 5:726.

²*Ibid.*, 727.

rescue them from their spiritual bankruptcy. They did not perceive that Jesus was the Messiah or that they were in need of spiritual deliverance. They expected Jesus to reassure them that the promised Messiah would indeed come and successfully lead their armies in eradicating Roman oppression. Such sermons were typical of those preached by the elders of the synagogues of Christ's time.¹

It was left to Jesus to select the scripture that he read before the congregation and from which he preached.² No doubt, Jesus deliberately chose Isa 61:1, 2 because it addressed the unperceived needs of his congregation. As it was initially read the hearers considered its references concerning the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed as applying solely to someone else such as the Gentiles (vss. 18, 19 NIV). Jesus did not read the entire passage in Isaiah but stopped short of the words, "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa 61:2 NIV). To his listeners he had left off the climax of the entire passage for they interpreted this last part of the text as speaking of their national greatness and retribution on the Gentiles.³ Besides Isa 61, Jesus also alluded to two other Bible passages—the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:7-24), and the healing of Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs 5:1-27). Jesus' sermon was saturated with the Word of God.

With the exception of "parable," the sermon incorporated all of the inductive tools listed by the Lewis and Lewis: narrative, parables, simplicity, dialogue, comparison and contrast, analogy, and references to common experience.⁴ First, Jesus read Isa 62:1, 2, no doubt a favorite of the listeners. This built rapport with his audience. As his sermon unfolded, however, he surprised them by applying the poor, imprisoned, blind, and oppressed of Isa 61 to them rather than to the Gentiles. This application was accomplished through an inductive *narrative* strategy that reminded his listeners how God had at times passed over Israel and blessed Gentiles (Luke 4:25-27).

Jesus also invited his audience into *dialogue* with him by mimicking their thoughts. He said,

¹Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 236.

²"Luke," *SDA Bible Commentary*, 5:727.

³*Ibid.*, 729.

⁴Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 30.

“Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum’” (vs. 24 NIV). Jesus generated *dialogue* by addressing his congregation with the pronoun, “you”—“Surely you will quote . . .”, “I tell you . . .”, and “I assure you . . .” (vss. 23-25 NIV).

Comparison and contrast was employed, comparing the Jewish widows and lepers with Gentile widows and lepers (vss. 25-27). Jesus contrasted his listener’s proverb, “Physician, heal yourself!” (vs. 23 NIV) with his proverb, “No prophet is accepted in his hometown” (vs. 24 NIV). *Analogy* was present in his implied application of Isa 61:1, 2—the listeners were like prisoners and blind people (vs. 18).

The goal of the sermon was more than an announcement that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. This announcement of his Messiahship provided the introduction to his sermon. Immediately following the reading of Isa 61:1, 2 Jesus proclaimed, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (vs. 21 NIV). The initial response of the people was not necessarily resistant as evidenced in the next verse, “All spoke well of him” (vs. 22). Perhaps at first they reasoned that if he could perform miracles then maybe he could also act the part of the Messiah and deliver them from Roman rule. When, however, they realized that Jesus was referring to them as being the spiritually impoverished and that he was claiming to be their Savior, they turned on him in anger (vss. 28-30). Thus, the response to Jesus’ sermon was negative. It appears that the congregation brought Jesus’ sermon to a premature close when they attempted to murder Him.

Some might consider Jesus’ effort at Nazareth a failure. Success is not to be measured by how many accepted or rejected the sermon’s message. Success is measured by how faithfully the prophet-preacher delivers God’s truth. The inductive design of Jesus’ sermon enabled him to present the entire burden of his message without the listeners prematurely closing their ears. When they rejected Jesus’ revelation that they had spiritual needs that only he could fulfill, they rejected a truth they now perceived. Jesus had aimed at clarity and to this end the inductive strategy served.

Summary

These sermons demonstrate how Jesus preached unpopular truths as well as unperceived needs. The Word of God is foundational to all sermons analyzed above. Although he quoted Scripture in only

two of the sermons considered, Jesus made liberal references and allusions to biblical truths, i.e., angels, Kingdom of God, Devil, Holy Spirit, etc. Jesus took into consideration his audience's knowledge and understanding of the Bible. In his sermon in the synagogue (Luke 4: 17-27), Jesus read the Bible as well as made references to two Old Testament stories. His teaching has the flow of a story as opposed to a classroom lecture.

In common with the Old Testament preachers, Jesus makes use of all of the homiletical devices associated with inductive communication, narrative, parables, simplicity, dialogue, questions, comparison and contrast, analogy, and references to common experiences. Bailey observes, "His approach is not strictly expository. His style and practice differ drastically from traditional homiletics. He uses stories."¹ These stories and parables are shared with passion and emotion. Questions are employed to arrest the listener's mind in mental dialogue. He meets the people where they are with the sole intent of changing them into what they ought to be. Like a gentle shepherd Jesus leads the people into self-discovery of truth rather than goading them with the whip of authority. The people, rather than the task, seemed to determine the direction the message took. In Luke 4 his listeners were hometown friends who were eager to hear what he had to say, so he was more direct. When confronting the Pharisees he met resistant ears, which may account for a more oblique approach.

All sermons exhibit the genius of Jesus—his superior ability to communicate, his understanding of his audience, his use of rhetoric and literary devices, and the uncanny ability of being tacit. Jesus was not content with merely sharing information and truth. Every sermon investigated in this study served an inescapable purpose—to change the hearts and lives of people. Jesus proved himself to be a master communicator. Of the six sermons above analyzed only one met immediate positive response—the sermon at Jacob's well to the Samaritan woman. The remaining five sermons met resistance even to the point of violence. Yet, who would deny Jesus the place as the most successful prophet-preacher of all time?

¹Bailey, 113.

Methods Used in the New Testament Church

Attention now focuses on prophetic preaching in the Early Church as carried out by Christ's apostles and other followers. The same criteria applied to sermons preached by Old Testament prophet-preachers and Jesus likewise determine what constitutes a sermon preached by disciples in the New Testament. As with the analysis of Old Testament prophet-preachers and Jesus' sermons, the tools of inductive communication—narrative, simplicity, dialogue, questions, comparison and contrast, and references to common experiences—will be given special scrutiny.

Ralph and Gregg Lewis contend that as the disciples ventured out on their own they preached largely in the same manner as did Jesus. "The New Testament preachers who followed Jesus all exhibited their own strengths, personalities, and style. But they all had one thing in common: they all used some of Jesus' inductive style. They all preached like Jesus."¹

Inductive Characteristics

Ralph and Gregg Lewis investigate Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39), Stephen's sermon before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1-8:1), and portions of the epistle of James as examples of the inductive format used by New Testament preachers. The authors point out that the rabbis at the synagogue services also commonly used this approach.² It could be argued that the apostles preached inductively because this method was the culturally acceptable way of communicating. However, when Paul stood at the Areopagus addressing the non-Jewish "men of Athens" he opted for an inductive strategy.³ Although the Ralph and Gregg Lewis present this sermon as an example of inductive preaching in the New Testament, they do not note that it targeted those outside the Hebrew culture who were accustomed to a deductive approach. Certainly Paul was familiar with Greek as well as Hebrew thought processes.⁴ Yet, when in Greece he

¹Ibid., 122.

²Ibid., 114.

³Ibid., 115. See Acts 17:16-17, 22-34.

⁴Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 116.

chose to preach inductively. The Lewises point out that even when his life was at stake, Paul “chose to defend himself with an inductive approach. He trusted his life, his ministry, and his message, not to learned, logical argument or Greek-style debate, but to narrative logic.”¹

Preaching to Unpopular Truths

Paul’s Defense before the Jews

One such occasion is documented in Acts 22:3-21, a discourse delivered by Paul in response to the angry Jewish accusation, “He brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place” (Acts 21:28 NIV). The Bible records that “the whole city was aroused” and tried to kill him (vss. 30, 31 NIV). Paul silenced the mob by establishing common ground: “When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic; they became very quiet.” Thus, in speaking the language of the people Paul effectively employed the inductive tool of *reference to common experience*. He further utilized this tool by informing listeners of his Jewish pedigree and reminding them of his background as a crusader for the Jewish faith (Acts 22:3-5). This naturally led into the story of his conversion to Christianity and his call to reach the Gentiles for God.

Paul’s discourse took the form of a *narrative* that started with his Jewish roots and ended with his Christian commission. Although he posed no questions, communication was *dialogical*. His introduction directly addressed his audience, “Brothers and fathers, listen now . . .” (vs. 1 NIV). In the narrative he presented the dialogues that transpired between him and Jesus (vss. 7-10), the prophet Ananias (vss. 12-14) as well as “the Lord” (vss. 17-21). His language, sentence structure, and reasoning were *simple*. He did not try to defend himself or prove his story but rather presented the simple facts of the gospel, assuming all should believe. Although in this sermon Paul did not bring into play the inductive tools of parables, analogy, comparison and contrast, it emerges as inductive communication.

In response to the accusation of defiling the temple with Gentiles, Paul could have started his discourse with what became his final remark, “The Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles’” (vs. 21 NIV). Then he could have presented several Scriptures supporting the inclusion of

¹Ibid., 116; see Acts 22:1-21; 24:10-22; 26:2-32.

Gentiles. Instead Paul communicated inductively when facing an angry mob. The mob's felt need was to protect the temple from Gentile desecration. Paul addressed their real need to embrace the truth that salvation was for all people, both Jew and Gentile. It appears that his sermon was prematurely terminated by the mob who rejected this truth implied in Paul's final sentence.

Stephen's Discourse before the Sanhedrin

Stephen likewise adopted an inductive strategy when his life hung in the balance before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1-60). The unpopular truth regarding the person of Jesus whom they had put to death emerged at the end of a narrative of the Jewish nation. He developed a *common experience* by reminding his audience of their commonality with him by repeating the words "our forefathers" (vss. 2, 12, 15, 38, 39, 44). However, in his indictment Stephen twice distanced himself from his hearers with the words "your fathers" (vss. 51, 52). Considering their astute understanding of the Word of God, Paul twice quoted from Scripture (vss. 42, 43, 49, 50). The *comparison* he made between his "stiff-necked" listeners and their fathers was key to vile reaction. He used several *dialogical* techniques such as posing a *question*, "Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute" (vs. 52 NIV), and directly addressing his hearers, e.g., "You stiff-necked people" (vs. 51 NIV). Although his message was severely rejected by men, God's stamp of approval was evidenced in a vision given to Stephen (vss. 55, 56).

Preaching to Unperceived Needs

Paul before King Agrippa

When on trial before King Agrippa and governor Festus, Paul adopted an inductive strategy in his discourse (Acts 26:2-32). As with his previous defense two years earlier before the Jews, he turned the occasion into an opportunity to witness for the gospel. Paul again shared a *narrative* of his history of his life as a crusader for Judaism, his conversion, and his commission to go to Jews as well as Gentiles, and the nature of the person of Christ. He was dialogical, referring directly to King Agrippa in his opening comments (vs. 2) as well as while delivering his message (vs. 19). He posed a rhetorical *question* to King Agrippa, which Paul immediately answered for the king (vs. 28). His language was *simple* with *points of reference* that were certain to be understood by the king. Thus Paul could say at the end of his discourse,

“The king is familiar with these things” (vs. 26 NIV). Paul did not quote Scripture but alluded to the Old Testament Messianic prophecies (vs. 22).

Rather than presenting a defense for his life, Paul sought to make known to the king and his court a need of which they did not perceive—their need for Christ who suffered, arose from the dead, and was their source of light (vs. 23). In the end Paul did not conceal his desire for the king to change and be a Christian (vs. 29). The king’s response to Paul was favorable but indifferent to the truth of which he was now aware.

Peter’s Preaching to Judaic Believers

Peter addressed an unperceived need in his sermon delivered at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41). The apostle could not have been clearer in stating their need, “Repent and be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (vs. 38). This command, however, came on the heels of an inductive narrative addressing his Jewish audience. When they witnessed the gift of tongues, his listeners had thought the disciples were drunk. Peter took advantage of the moment and quoted Joel 2:28-32, a promise of the outpouring of God’s Spirit on his people. Peter subsequently spoke directly to the people with the words, “Listen to this . . .” (vs. 22 NIV). Such demonstrative language evokes mental *dialogue*. He also directly addressed his listeners as “Fellow Jews” (vs. 14 NIV), “Men of Israel” (vs. 22 NIV), and “Brothers” (vs. 29). Dialogical technique was further seen by his direct reference to his hearers as “you.”

His *references pertained to common experience* easily identifiable by his Jewish audience. He quoted the patriarch David for scriptural evidence of the resurrection (vss. 25-28, 34). Ellen White observes, “Peter did not refer to the teaching of Christ to prove his position, because he knew that the prejudice of his hearers was so great. . . . Instead he spoke to them of David.”¹ Listener response was phenomenal considering his sermon was interrupted with their inquiry, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (vs. 37). In response to Peter’s command, “Repent and be baptized . . .” (vs. 38 NIV), three thousand became

¹Ellen G. White, *The Act of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 44.

Christians that day (vs. 41). Peter's Acts 2 sermon is an example of preaching to unperceived needs using the inductive method of communication.

Paul's Preaching in Greece

Paul's sermon at Athens (Acts 17:22-31) spoke to the unperceived needs of embracing God the creator who raised Jesus from the dead. When standing before their Hebrew countrymen, Stephen and Peter appeal to Scripture, but Paul at Athens used secular sources and thus employed the inductive tool of *reference to common experience*. Yet, his message is saturated with inspired truth. Paul's epistles prove that the apostle is not above quoting Scripture.¹ As with Jesus, New Testament preachers quoted and alluded to Scripture when addressing the informed ear. It is not overtly referred to when addressing the scripturally illiterate.

Unlike Athens, Lystra was an agricultural community with a less educated populace and fewer of society's upper crust. However the need remained the same. Conversely, as was Athens, so Lystra was a citadel of idolatry. Paul again refrained from appealing to inspired words but "they are not far beneath the surface."² As at Athens his point of reference was to that which the pagan Greeks are familiar, i.e., nature, dead idols, and pushing their thinking beyond to a new truth about an all-powerful yet personal God. The message was essentially the same as at Mars Hill yet more primitive in keeping with the less sophisticated audience: "We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth" (Acts 14:15). Thus, both sermons focus on a message delivered in *simplicity* with an emphasis on the good news.

Both sermons invited the listener to enter into *dialogue* by asking questions. Both called for action and appealed for decision. At Athens he was blunt and urgent, "Now he commands all people everywhere to repent" Acts 17:30). Although not spelled out, at Lystra the "implication is inescapable"

¹Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 128.

²Ibid., 126.

that Paul appeals for the same decision.¹ These two missionary sermons contain all the contemporary homiletical characteristics Gonzalez applies to the Old Testament preachers as well as the inductive devices identified by the Lewises as shown in table 3.

Having found common ground, Paul then broached a sensitive subject—idol worship. He did not labor in articulating the truth; neither did he give error an ear. He simply confronted error with truth. Paul faced the challenge of opening their eyes to their need without closing their minds. He led them on a journey of discovery. Both sermons made liberal use of inductive tools with the exception of “parable.”

Summary

The audiences addressed ranged from common citizens to the great political echelon of the first century. The socioeconomic of cross section was equally diverse embracing the people of Lystra or the sophisticates of Mars Hill, Jewish citizens, or the Sanhedrin. Whether addressing the angry mob or the insensed intelligentsia, the New Testament prophet-preachers preached inductively. Whether before the Greeks, Jews, or Roman kings, the Bible preachers presented inductive reasoning for unpopular truths as well as unperceived needs. All six sermons considered above were inductive in nature.

The prophet-preachers adapted each sermon to the mentality of their audience. Paul, for instance, did not appeal to the Bible when standing before the Greeks as did Peter before the Jews. Furthermore, references made throughout the sermons were familiar and common to the listeners. For example, Paul and Stephen both reminded the Jews of their history. Such references were absent in Paul’s sermon at Athens where instead he singled out the “idol to the unknown god.” Being inductive, all six sermons were narratives and made strong use of dialogical tools, i.e., questioning, directly addressing the hearers, demonstrative language. All six sermons were intent on convincing the listeners of their need to change their minds and hearts for God. This passion especially was evidenced when Paul and Stephen stood before their tribunals. Rather than argue for their lives, they appealed to their accusers to accept Jesus as Lord.

¹Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 126.

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF CLASSICAL AND INDUCTIVE DEVICES

Paul's Sermon	Classical Homiletical Devices	Inductive Devices
"God who made the world . . . is the Lord" (Acts 17:24).	Focus on one specific subject	Narrative
Whereas idols are made of stone, the Creator God is all-powerful.	Clarity and simplicity	Simplicity
Jesus or idols.	Two options only	Contrast and Comparison
God is good; idols are impotent.	Positive and negative presented	Contrast and Comparison
The true God is ever present and personal.	Practical and adaptable to life	
Altar: "To an unknown God" (Acts 17:23).	Use of illustrations	References to common experiences
"Men, why are you doing this?" (Acts 14:15).	Some dialogue	Dialogue and questions
"Now God commands all repent" (Acts 17:30).	Call for urgent decision	
"Turn to the living God" (Acts 14:15).	Call to action	
"We bring good news" (Acts 14:15).	Emphasis on the Redeemer aspect	

Concluding Summary

As with the Old Testament prophet-preachers, their New Testament counterparts did not outline an inspired method of preaching. Likewise, in keeping with preachers who had gone before them when addressing unpopular truths or unperceived needs, Jesus and the apostles' homiletical strategy freely utilized inductive tools. As a rule, appeals to inspired authority were reserved for addresses to those within the context of the community of the church. Great effort was made to intentionally identify with the listener. All sermons considered delivered by Jesus or his first-century followers model Paul's claim recorded in 1 Cor 9:22, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Still Jesus and the apostles did not refrain from confronting error with truth, for their obsession was to preach for change. Whether addressing Greek, Roman, Hebrew, or Christian audiences the preachers of the New Testament sought to lead the hearer into discovery of truth. Preaching for change in the hearts and lives of the listeners was their passion. To this end preachers of the Bible times freely used the strategy they deemed most effective—inductive communication.

CHAPTER 4

INVESTIGATION INTO CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Ellen White's Approach to Preaching

Ellen White was a leader and spokesperson in the Seventh-day Adventist Movement during its formative years. Although deceased, her written counsel continues to bear authority within this religious community, of which I am a member.¹ In light of Ellen White's prominent position within the Seventh-day Adventist Church—and her perceived role as a “prophetic voice”—consideration must be given to her concept of preaching. Leslie Hardinge states that although she is known today for her published work, “Ellen G. White's major tool of propaganda was the spoken word.”²

Ellen White considered preaching and teaching as being inseparable. She pointed out that the gospel commission mandates that we are to be engaged in baptizing and teaching—“not merely preaching a discourse now and then, but teaching them how to find the way to heaven.”³ At times she used the terms “preaching” and “teaching” interchangeably, as in the following: “One of the first things to be considered, is the preaching of the word. The truth should be preached in simplicity, and the ministers should try, as far as possible to imitate the manner of Christ's teaching.”⁴ Again she used the two words interchangeably when she said, “The preaching of the Word is not alone to give information. . . . Men and women must be directed to the path that leads to heaven. The teaching that fails of this is of no

¹*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1976 ed., s.v. “White, Ellen Gould (Harmon).”

²Leslie Hardinge, “An Examination of the Philosophy of Persuasion in Pulpit Oratory Advocated by Ellen Gould White” (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1950), 7.

³Ellen G. White, “An Appeal for More Earnest Effort,” *Review and Herald*, 30 December 1902, par. 9. All periodicals by Ellen G. White are taken from the CD-ROM, *The Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings*, version 4.2, 1998.

⁴Ellen G. White, “No Excuse for Spiritual Weakness,” *Bible Echo*, 26 February 1894, par. 1.

value.”¹ There were times when Ellen White made a clear distinction between preaching and teaching. The two were not synonymous in her thinking, however, she envisioned overlapping. Some of her insight and counsel regarding the teaching ministry of Jesus is applicable to his preaching as well.²

In his work, *Proclaiming the Word, the Concept of Preaching in the Thought of Ellen G. White*, Ed Turner holds that her counsel on preaching does not produce a “unique homiletical tradition.”³ Turner concludes, “One must avoid the temptation of making direct transpositions and applications of her concepts into the contemporary church” without first considering the historical context of the nineteenth century.⁴ After such an exercise, Turner finds that White’s views in the area of preaching are similar to those within the mainstream of American churches of her day with the exception of “her disdain for humor, sensationalism and the use of notes in delivery.”⁵

Preaching to Effect Change

In his thesis, “An Examination of the Philosophy of Persuasion in Pulpit Oratory Advocated by Ellen Gould White,” Leslie Hardinge compartmentalizes Mrs. White’s concept of preaching into the following seven categories:

- Simplicity
- Comprehensiveness
- Freshness and originality
- Compactness
- Brevity
- Directness
- Beauty without Sensationalism.⁶

¹Ellen G. White, “Co-workers with Christ,” *Review and Herald*, 30 July 1901, par. 7.

²See sermons by Ellen G. White in Appendix B.

³R. Edward Turner, *Proclaiming the Word* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), 125.

⁴*Ibid.*, 116.

⁵*Ibid.*, 98.

⁶Hardinge, iv.

Simplicity

Horace Shaw's analysis of her preaching reveals that "simplicity seems to be the one factor that serves as common denominator" through all aspects of her sermons.¹ Shaw observes that simplicity is a key ingredient to her own effectiveness as a public communicator.² She counseled preachers, "But never search for words that will give the impression that you are learned. The greater your simplicity, the better will your words be understood."³ Here, simplicity in preaching meant that the preacher refrain from being pretentiously erudite. She instructed one prideful preacher, "You do not come down in simplicity to understand the best manner to help them."⁴ Of another preacher she observed, "He does not come right down to the understanding of the children and speak in a touching manner which will melt its way to the heart."⁵ Ellen White felt that preachers should adapt their sermons to the level of the listeners.

She appealed to preachers to follow Christ's example and speak to the minds of the common people. She said of his words in the Sermon on the Mount, "The language is plain, and the thoughts and sentiments are marked with greatest simplicity. The poor, the unlearned, the most simple-minded, can understand them."⁶ Again, of Christ's approach she observed,

He unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven through the use of figures and symbols with which His hearers were familiar; and the common people heard Him gladly, for they could comprehend His words. There were no high-sounding words used, to understand which it was necessary to consult a dictionary.⁷

She instructed that sermons be sensitive to the comprehension level of all ears including those of

¹Horace Shaw, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Speaking of Mrs. Ellen G. White, A Pioneer Leader and Spokeswoman of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1959), 566.

²Ibid.

³Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 6:383.

⁴Ibid., 2:419.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 5:253.

⁷Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), 240.

the youth.¹ Preachers were directed to leave a “little corner” in every sermon for the children.² Every ear in the audience is to be addressed. Ellen White’s concept of simplicity is compatible with several inductive techniques, i.e., simplicity, analogy, and reference to common experience.

Comprehensiveness

The second homiletic quality Hardinge delineates as being valued by Ellen White is “comprehensiveness” which he defines as the “absence of excess verbiage.”³ His definition is congruent with White’s usage of the word. For example, she said the “commandments of God are comprehensive; in a few words they unfold the whole duty of man.”⁴ At other instances she linked “comprehensive” with “brief” and “plain.”⁵ She pointed out that Jesus’ prayer was “simple, yet . . . comprehensive.”⁶

Likewise, White described Jesus’ discourses as being “plain, clear and comprehensive”—not “burdened with absurd forms and meaningless exactions” as did the scribes.⁷ She pointed out that truths are “often rendered powerless” by the “words in which they are clothed.”⁸ Rather than pouring “out a mass of matter which the people cannot comprehend . . .,” she instructed preachers, “Take one point at a time, and make that one point plain.”⁹ Ellen White advocated a pithy, terse preaching style.

¹Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1962), 258.

²Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 349.

³Hardinge, 79.

⁴Ellen G. White, “The Way to Christ,” *Bible Echo*, 15 March 1893, .001.

⁵Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 639.

⁶Ellen G. White, “Our Need of the Holy Spirit,” *Review and Herald*, 3 January 1907, par. 6.

⁷Ellen G. White, “Sanctify Them Through Thy Truth,” *Review and Herald*, 6 July 1911, par 4.

⁸White, *Testimonies*, 4:314.

⁹White, *Evangelism*, 202.

Freshness and Originality

For White, there is no room for tired and dull clichés.¹ She recommends, “Do not let the teaching be done in a dry, abstract way, which has been the manner of teaching in too many cases, but present the truths of God’s Word in a fresh, impressive way.”² Her own expositions are far from abstract. Using such techniques as repetition, iteration, re-stating and illustration, her presentations are practical as opposed to theoretical.³ Shaw observes that she appears “to have taken pains to make her ideas clear.”⁴

Ellen White counseled one preacher to put enthusiasm in his work of preaching, to deliver short sermons, and he would “gain the reputation of being an interesting speaker.”⁵ That she did not consider it inappropriate to seek to be an interesting speaker is evidenced by this pointed counsel: “Everyone connected with the work should keep fresh ideas . . . and by tact and foresight bring all that is possible into your work to interest your hearers.”⁶ Her aversion to sermons delivered with the aid of a manuscript is related to a concern regarding stale or stiff sermons. She feared that some preachers would prepare their sermons with such detail and exactness that they would “give the Lord no room to lead their mind.”⁷ Such sermons she said would be no better than publicly read.

On the other end of the spectrum, she took note that some preachers who depended on manufactured or recycled sermons experienced little or no preparation before entering the pulpit, resulting in a lack of freshness of ideas and originality.⁸ She also took note that these “set discourses” prevent the

¹Hardinge, 80.

²White, *Evangelism*, 195.

³Shaw, 252.

⁴*Ibid.*, 556.

⁵White, *Evangelism*, 177.

⁶*Ibid.*, 178.

⁷Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 165.

⁸Ellen G. White, Letter 135a, 1887, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; *idem*, Letter 53, 1876, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

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affective. Preaching for her was intended to motivate and inspire the hearer to change. Her appeal to ministers was to “speak with power and expression, making the words of eternal life so expressive and impressive that the hearers cannot but feel their weight.”¹

Another related concern was the excessive use of jesting and pointless humor commonly used by preachers in her day. Turner contends that her statements forbidding the use of humor should be understood in light of its misuse in the nineteenth-century American pulpit coupled with her Wesleyan roots which frowned on use of humor in the pulpit.² Turner holds that humor had become a common phenomenon in the pulpits aimed at holding attention, handling disruptions, introducing sensitive subjects, to attack infidel positions, and “American idolatries of political and ecclesiastical powers.”³ Her contemporaries Henry Ward Beecher and Dwight L. Moody made such use of humor.⁴ Turner maintains that Ellen White adhered to John Wesley’s admonition given to his preachers to refrain from humor in the pulpit.⁵ Turner notwithstanding, her concern that humor would distract from the truth of the message may have been born neither out of a commitment to Wesley nor from a personal dislike for humor. Her rationale can clearly be seen in the following directive to preachers:

Ministers should not make a practice of relating anecdotes in the desk; it detracts from the force and solemnity of the truth presented. The relation of anecdotes or incidents, which create a laugh or a light thought in the minds of the hearers, is severely censurable. The truths should be clothed in chaste and dignified language; and the illustrations should be of a like character.⁶

Her passion was for the truth to change the hearts of the listeners and she feared the detracting effect of humor.

¹White, *Testimonies*, 6:380.

²Turner, 93, 94.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶White, *Evangelism*, 640.

Miscellaneous Qualities

Place of Scripture. As one who laid claim to the prophetic gift, how did Ellen White relate to the inspired word? Did she place her own visions and counsel as equal to the Bible? White used Scripture throughout her discourses. However, “the text did not control the outline of her sermon neither did it provide the framework for exposition.”¹ She was not an expository preacher. Yet, she made it very clear that “the standard” and source of the preacher’s message was the Word of God.² To White the Bible was preeminent and the rock foundation of all truth.

The Holy Scripture was to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of his will. It was the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.³ She appealed to pastors, “Try to lead all . . . to search the Word” when preaching.⁴ “Those who claim to preach the word should preach the word.”⁵ Furthermore, she gives instruction not to use her writings and counsel in the pulpit as one would the Bible.⁶

Place of visual devices. White encouraged that props and charts be devised. She recommended, Instruction has been given me clearly and distinctly that charts should be used in the presentation of truth.⁷ Let workers for God . . . originate devices by which to communicate light to those who are near and to those who are afar off.⁸ By the use of charts, symbols, and representations of various kinds, the minister can make the truth stand out clearly and distinctly.⁹

¹Turner, 105.

²Ellen G. White, Letter 12, 1890, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³White, *The Great Controversy*, vii.

⁴White, *Testimony to Ministers*, 258.

⁵*Ibid.*, 311.

⁶Turner, 121.

⁷Ellen G. White, Letter 51, 1902, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁸Ellen G. White, “Christ the Minister’s Theme,” *Review and Herald*, 24 March 1896, par. 7.

⁹White, *Testimonies*, 9:142.

She described how Jesus employed a visual aid: “Jesus plucked the beautiful lily, and placed it in the hands of children and youth” as he explained the nature of the kingdom of God.¹ Ellen White considered the master preacher Jesus to be the benchmark for all other preachers.

Place of appeals. White was more concerned with motivating listeners to make decisions leading to changed lives than in merely dispensing truthful information. As with the prophets of Bible times, these appeals for change and commitment were not held to the end of White’s message, but were interspersed throughout.² Turner observes, “She preached for a verdict.”³ Her “stated function of the sermon was arousal, conviction and instruction.”⁴ Her expectation of fellow preachers was no different; she wrote, “Appeal in every sermon.”⁵

Place of Christ. White said that Jesus is to be in the sermon “everywhere.”⁶ To her it was self-evident that every sermon should be Christ-centered. She urged, “Never should a sermon be preached, or Bible instruction in any line be given, without pointing the hearers to ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ Every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words.”⁷ White liberally used superlatives when counseling preachers to make Jesus and the Cross pre-eminent in every discourse. “No discourse should ever be delivered without presenting Christ and Him crucified as the foundation of the gospel.”⁸ Uplifting the cross in every message was not only her counsel but also her self-professed practice. She said, “I present before you the great, grand monument of

¹White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 19.

²Shaw, 260, 360.

³Turner, 102.

⁴Ibid., 103.

⁵White, *Evangelism*, 280.

⁶Ibid., 181.

⁷White, *Testimonies*, 6:54.

⁸Ibid., 4:394.

mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.”¹

For White this presentation of Christ and the cross meant more than a cognitive rehearsal of facts regarding a historical event.

Let those whose hearts glow with the Savior’s love talk of Jesus, dwelling upon His infinite sacrifice in behalf of man. Dwell much upon His second appearing to our world; tell also of His first coming from heaven, His life of constant humiliation and sacrifice. With softened heart and tearful eye, tell the story of His dying upon Calvary’s cross, because He loved us, that we might be saved.²

Perhaps here lies the key ingredient to White’s personal effectiveness in the pulpit. History attests to the fact that people were drawn to her presentations. It would appear that her Christ-centered, affective style consistently connected with her audiences.

Inductive communication. Hardinge points out that even though Ellen White did not refer to the word “induction,” all the same she encouraged preachers to use its elements. This is especially seen in her observation regarding the preaching and teaching methods of Jesus. These observations have implications for this study considering that she instructed preachers “to imitate the manner of Christ’s teaching.”³ She greatly admired his use of illustrations. She said, “The unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.”⁴

Thus, she indicated an understanding of Jesus’ exercise of inductive tools, i.e., comparison and contrast, analogy, and reference to common experiences. As previously observed, the inductive tool of simplicity she likewise valued.⁵ White also acknowledged Jesus’ strong use of the parable, which is another inductive device.⁶ She identified an inductive strategy in Jesus’ sermons when she delineated,

¹White, *Gospel Workers*, 315.

²Ellen G. White, “Workers With Christ,” *Review and Herald*, 2 December 1890, par. 9.

³White, “No Excuse for Spiritual Weakness,” par. 1.

⁴White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 17.

⁵White, *Testimonies*, 4:383.

⁶*Ibid.*, 22.

“Christ seldom attempted to prove that truth is truth. He illustrated truth in all its bearing, and then left his hearers free to accept or reject it, as they might choose. He did not force any one to believe.”¹ Ellen White urged preachers to emulate Jesus’ communicative style that emerged as being strongly inductive.

Preaching Corrective Testimonies

White viewed her calling “for the comfort of the people, and to correct those who err.”² Much of her ministry was taken up in delivering what Roy Graham calls “corrective testimonies.”³ Generally she presented these messages in written form; however, at times they were delivered orally either privately or in a public setting.⁴

One such public confrontation occurred at a tent meeting. The meeting was in progress and the speaker was well into his sermon when Ellen and her husband, James, walked down the aisle to their seats on the front row. James sat down, but Ellen remained standing. Interrupting the meeting she pointed her finger at the preacher delivering the message and in full voice said, “You have no business to be standing by that desk. You are not a fit man to be bringing a message to these people.” The minister immediately left the platform. The preacher’s brother was in attendance and came forward to publicly substantiate Mrs. White’s contention. The speaker was secretly a polygamist.⁵

Incidences such as this in the life of Ellen White may leave the impression that all preachers are to assume the same posture when confronting the erring. Such an approach seems out of harmony with counsel given in Matt 18:15-17 where one is instructed to first go privately to the erring before taking the matter publicly before the church. Should preachers take the same liberty in the pulpit as she did from that front row? Is Ellen G. White’s confrontational approach normative for all preachers?

¹Ellen G. White, MS 24, 1891, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), 78.

³Roy E. Graham, *Ellen G. White, Co-Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, American University Studies (New York, NY: Peter Lange Pub., 1985), 109.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Roger Coon, *A Gift of Light* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), 32.

White's Special Calling

First, Ellen did not relish the confrontational nature of much of her ministry. Regarding the nature of her ministry she commented, "It has been hard for me to give the message that God has given me for those I love, and yet I have not dared to withhold it. . . . I would not do a work that is so uncongenial to me if I thought God would excuse me from it."¹

Of his grandmother Arthur White says, "Ellen White dreaded writing and sending messages to various individuals regarding what had been revealed to her concerning waywardness, sins, and mistakes."² Unlike modern-day rank-and-file preachers she had a direct mandate from God to confront specific error. In the above stated incident, she had not met the erring preacher prior to that tent meeting. However, previous to that meeting she had been instructed in vision to confront the man upon hearing his voice.³ Ellen White was not a self-appointed messenger. She believed such messages she delivered came to her by revelation.⁴ Her counsel was not contrived out of her own personal conviction. The Spirit called and gave her a special ministry of delivering "corrective testimonies" as a prophet. Her confrontational liberty is not normative for those whose calling is limited to that of being stewards of the oracles of God. Exceptions taken by her were under special direction from God.

White's Counsel to Preachers

All the same, as with White and prophet-preachers of Bible times, today's homiletics are ordained to be change agents of human hearts. Just as the prophets were frequently engaged in confronting listeners with sin and truth so we too are called to boldly preach the Word. Understanding that very few preachers have the inspired insight and directive from God as do those gifted as prophets,

¹Arthur L. White, *Messenger to the Remnant* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1959), 13.

²Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years*, vol. 1 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), 403.

³Coon, 32.

⁴A. L. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, 12-14.

just how much license should one take and how far should one push boundaries in condemning sin and striving to change lives?

The following examples of White's counsel to preachers divulge that confrontation from the pulpit should be done with kindness:

1. The bitterest opponents should be treated with respect and deference.¹
2. When reproving, the voice of the speaker is to convey "tenderness and love."²
3. Sharp, harsh, or cutting words are to be avoided as well as a "debating manner."³
4. Words are to be chosen with care and void of anything that might be inflammatory or offensive.⁴

White held the conviction that "the manner in which truth is presented often has much to do in determining whether it will be accepted or rejected."⁵ When presenting unpopular truths she counseled preachers to first find common ground with the listener, gain their confidence, and then present the finer points of our faith.⁶ To initially practice restraint in revealing controversial truth is not deceptive. White is clear, nevertheless, that eventually the whole truth must be unfurled.⁷ When pointing out error she advised,

People cannot be expected to see at once the advantage of truth over the error they have cherished. The best way to expose the fallacy of error is to present the evidences of truth. This is the greatest rebuke that can be given to error. Dispel the cloud of darkness resting on minds by reflecting the bright light of the Sun of Righteousness.⁸

¹White, *Evangelism*, 162, 303, 304.

²Ibid., 174.

³Ibid., 162, 303, 424.

⁴Ibid., 162, 304.

⁵Ibid., 168.

⁶White, *Testimonies*, 3:466.

⁷White, *Evangelism*, 179.

⁸Ellen G. White, "Methods of Labor," *Pacific Union Recorder*, 23 October 1902, par. 3.

Summary

Ellen White did not present a God-revealed or inspired homiletical strategy. She allowed the preacher great liberty in developing a preaching style and devising a homiletical strategy. This liberty operates within certain parameters. For example, she argued for discourses that were to the point, free of unnecessary verbiage, fresh, passionate, and unencumbered by either flowery language or a manuscript. Anything that distracted from the message, i.e., humor or sensationalism, was deemed inappropriate. Listener expectation and capacity as well as cultural mores influenced the homiletical boundary in which the sermon was designed. For instance, the time restraints suggested by White changed with the ebb and flow of the public's expectations. The preacher's judgment played a key role in determining what was suitable both in message and delivery.

Her counsel is applicable to addressing unpopular truths and needs unperceived by listeners. She took a position against a combative approach in refuting error. She encouraged preachers to assume a kind and courteous demeanor even under the most severe circumstances. In presenting truths that were unknown or unpopular, the listener's degree of understanding determined the depth and direction of the sermon. Her homiletical counsel is compatible with inductive communication as it identified and embraced several inductive tools, i.e., simplicity, parable, comparison and contrast, analogy, and references to common experience.

White was adamant that Christ should be the focal point of every sermon and the Bible its standard. She clearly articulated that the object of preaching is to change hearts for Jesus Christ. For her, preaching was purposeful—more than dispensing mere truth. She stood in the tradition of prophet-preachers of the Bible who were called to change human lives. Ellen White challenged preachers to do likewise.

Contemporary Literature: Issues in Prophetic Preaching

Prophetic preaching may bring to mind images of an intense, wild-eyed man passionately bellowing extreme concern, spewing wrath-laden warnings, wild with urgency, animated, acting out his sermon in bizarre behavior and exaggerated gestures. One might imagine a hermit-clothed eccentric in itchy camel hair with an unkempt mane and beard, speaking harshly, even yelling out in straightforward

tones, with little thought given to his listener's capacity to comprehend and act.

Roland Leavell declares, "Prophetic preaching is preaching like the prophets."¹ What does it mean to preach like the prophets? Baab contends that to preach like the prophets is more than generating homiletic "steam" and creating an aura of holy passion.² Baab observes that ancient sermons gave attention to strategy when he challenges the modern-day herald, "The successor to the prophets of Israel cannot escape the responsibility of sharing creatively the faith of the Christian community."³ "Sharing creatively" implies that thought be given as to the best way to convey the prophetic message. The ancient heralds of God's Word creatively designed and shared their messages. Prophet-preachers of Bible times took liberty in designing sermons to effectively reach audiences existing within the context of specific cultures, language, habits, and customs. Bernard Ramm points out that Jewish rabbis so keenly felt this sensitivity to the human situation that they said, "The Lord of heaven speaks with the tongues of men."⁴ Prophet-preachers, following God's lead, likewise took painstaking care in designing their message under the watchful eye of God.⁵ In an attempt to arrest the interest and attention of their audience these preachers established a literary strategy.

To preach like the prophetic preachers means to utilize the same homiletical characteristics and literary devices employed by preachers of the inspired pages. Lewis insists that the prophet-preachers of Bible times preferred to preach inductively.⁶ Gonzalez proposes that the characteristics which Old Testament prophetic preachers used are indeed tried and proven techniques proposed by homiletic teachers today. These preachers no doubt were intense because they were dealing with life and death matters. They were wrestling to bring back souls rushing headlong into despair and destruction. If they

¹Leavell, 13.

²Baab, 28.

³Ibid., 92.

⁴Ramm, *Special Revelation*, 39, 40.

⁵Rice, *The Reign of God*, 25.

⁶Lewis and Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus*, 122.

preached in urgent tones it was out of concern for people. However, they always clearly couched their warnings and exhortations in the context of God's covenant and grace.¹ So should it be with contemporary prophetic sermons.

The Prophet-Preacher's Authority

To preach like the prophets is to preach with authority. Michael Griffiths proposes that although the preacher may not be a prophet in the forensic sense yet "many may prophesy on occasion."² Contemporary preachers anointed and blessed by the Holy Spirit preach with authority akin to the prophets of the Bible. This is not to say modern sermons are on an equal par with Scripture. However, preachers today speak with similar authority, as did prophets of Bible times. Larry Richards gives insight into this shared authority when commenting on 1 Cor 14,

When Paul speaks in this section of 'the gift of prophecy,' he is not referring necessarily to an utterance inspired by God nor to knowledge of the future given to an individual by God. The person possessing the gift of prophecy may or may not be 'inspired' by God in the sense that the Bible writers were inspired. In 1 Corinthians 14, the gift of prophecy refers to an exhortation that communicates a clear message to its hearers.³

Griffiths quotes the *New Bible Dictionary* agreeing that, "Every Christian is potentially a prophet."⁴ Certainly every preacher aspiring to preach like the prophets will manifest the gift of prophecy.

The gift of prophecy is never apart from the Word of God. The preacher cannot rely on the gift of prophecy alone. There is something even more fundamental than the prophetic gift. Michael S. Horton warns, "Authority is derived from the Word, not from the office. If a minister is not faithful to the Word and to the gospel it proclaims, he is a usurper."⁵ Horton holds, "God does not whisper secrets into the ear

¹Gonzalez, 4.

²Griffiths, 51.

³Larry Richards, *1 Corinthians*, The Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1997), 230.

⁴Griffiths, 51.

⁵Michael S. Horton, ed., *Power Religion* (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1992), 19.

of the minister. Knowledge is not locked up, available only to the spiritual elite who have the key.”¹

Alester E. McGrath purports, “Scripture is the sole God-given and God-authorized means by which the people of God can claim to speak in the name of their God.”² Remove or neglect the authority of Scripture and preaching loses its prophetic fervor. The sermon becomes just another lecture. Apart from the word of God the preacher has no authority. To preach like the prophetic preachers is to preach the word.

Overemphasizing preaching to “felt needs” dilutes the presentation of the inspired word of God. Thus, the preacher’s claim to prophetic authority is severely undermined. This trend in diminishing the proclamation of the Bible is seen in works by George Barna, author of more than two-dozen works such as *The Frog in the Kettle*, *User Friendly Churches*, and *Marketing the Church*, books about ministry, the culture, and church dynamics. Barna repeatedly warns contemporary preachers to either live by people-centered, consumer-savvy sermons or become obsolete. Barna contends, “The major problem plaguing the Church is its failure to embrace a marketing orientation in what has become a market-driven environment.”³

Successful church-growth pastor Rick Warren of the Saddleback Church phenomenon has lived by a similar people-centered doctrine to the extent that he is reluctant to use the Scriptures when addressing his own congregation when unchurched listeners are present.

The ground we have in common with unbelievers is not the Bible, but our common needs, hurts, and interests as human beings. You cannot start with a text, expecting the unchurched to be fascinated by it. You must first capture their attention, and then move them to the truth of God’s word. By starting with a topic that interests the unchurched and then showing what the Bible says about it, you can grab their attention, disarm prejudices, and create an interest in the Bible that wasn’t there before.⁴

Warren’s passion is to reach the unchurched with the gospel. He states, “What is . . . important is that

¹Ibid., 310.

²Ibid.

³George Barna, *Marketing the Church: What They Never Taught You about Church Growth* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 41.

⁴Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 295.

you eventually bring God’s truth and people’s needs together through application.”¹ This same theory—of meeting people where they are and leading them to where they ought to be—we have seen advocated by prophetic voices such as the Apostle Paul at Mars Hill, Jesus, and Ellen White. The danger rests in emphasizing the need to identify with the listener at the expense of proclaiming the Word. After all, preaching the Word is an essential element in prophetic preaching. The temptation is that the prophetic mouthpiece will never make the leap in unfurling “what the Bible says.”

Reacting to what he describes as a market-driven approach for ministry and preaching, Douglas D. Webster is convicted that consumer sensitivity is rearing generations of spiritual babes who never get beyond the milk of the Word. Webster differentiates between felt needs and spiritual needs.² With conviction he draws another demarcation, “Love for Christ distinguishes a congregation from an audience and spiritual needs from felt needs.”³ Webster equates the audience’s felt needs as being opinions that are “formed on the basis of taste and preferences” whereas spiritual needs are derived from “careful conviction and thoughtful theological reflection.”⁴ Therefore, Webster contends that the Bible should be freely used in addressing the gathered—the congregation, members and unchurched alike. He insists, “The church must not obscure this truth by transforming a congregation into an audience, transforming proclamation into performance or transforming worship into entertainment.”⁵ Webster is concerned with the trend where public opinion and consensus dictate rather than the Word of God.⁶

Perhaps overstated at times, this concern is not unique to Webster. Michael S. Horton squarely takes the position, “Our job is not to preach to felt needs, but to expose such felt needs as sinful cravings

¹Ibid., 296.

²Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 82.

³Ibid., 30.

⁴Ibid., 29.

⁵Ibid., 16

⁶Ibid., 29.

that must be supplanted by Christ.”¹ Bill Hybels, another successful church-growth pastor known for his sensitivity to the unchurched, warns, “Watch out for going overboard with ‘felt need’ or ‘helpful’ messages.”²

When you’re involved in a seeker ministry, it’s tempting to go for long periods of time on what I call junk-food preaching diets. In other words, giving people biblical wisdom to improve their relationships, smooth their emotions, deal with their daily problems, and put some zip back into their marriage. Believe me, I’m a proponent of dealing with felt needs But we are responsible for teaching the whole counsel of God in a balanced, biblical, and mature fashion so that the teaching diet accurately reflects Scripture as a whole.³

Hybels goes on to say we should not overprotect the unchurched whom he calls “seekers.” Hybels contends that they are coming to church looking for answers and we should not be ashamed to “give them the straight scoop from Scripture.”⁴ When addressing the congregation the prophetic preacher will not shy away from openly preaching from the Bible. Whether they are comforted or disturbed the unchurched sitting with the congregation will equally receive the blessing accompanied by the Holy Spirit. Webster states, “The church cannot afford to feed the insatiable appetite of culturally generated felt needs.”⁵

Summary

To preach like the prophets is to preach the Word. Preachers of the Bible were the mouthpieces of God—heralds, witnesses, watchmen on the walls, and stewards of the household of God. So today prophetic sermons will be based on the Word of God. I. H. Evans told preachers, “That means that every minister must get his message from God out of his Word.”⁶ He also reminded them,

You will recall that when you were ordained to the ministry, a very impressive text was read to you. Lifting his hand, the minister read, “I charge thee therefore before god, and the Lord Jesus Christ,

¹Horton, 331.

²Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1995), 185.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Webster, 113.

⁶I. H. Evans, *The Preacher and His Preaching* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1938), 89.

who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word” 2 Tim 4:1, 2.¹

Jesus commissioned his disciples with the reassuring promise, “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16). C. Raymond Holmes believes that today, as then, “when the Word of God is spoken we are listening to the voice of God through His appointed servant.”²

Concluding Summary

God’s great concern for his people centers in their broken relationship with Him. Their sins have separated them from him. For this reason one might think prophetic preaching to be preoccupied with denouncing sin. However, God’s “seers” see more than the sin. More pressing to the Old Testament preacher than the sin issue is the covenant relationship between God and his people. The prophet preacher’s calling is to get Holy God and sinful man back together. The preacher speaks with the authority of the gift of prophecy and the inspired Word of the Scriptures. As with ancient preachers he is the mouthpiece of God. Likewise, he is just as burdened that the listener be motivated to respond to his message. This yearning to see change compels the preacher to construct a plan that will lead the congregation from where they are to where they ought to be.

In this as well as the previous two chapters, both Old and New Testaments prophet-preachers, including the counsel of Jesus, the apostles, and Ellen G. White did not prescribe an inspired homiletical strategy. They did, however, employ a variety of homiletic devices and found a commonality in the use of an inductive approach. The inspired Word is silent in prescribing a homiletical strategy. Great liberty and latitude were given in designing sermons to effectively reach audiences existing within the context of specific cultures, habits, and customs.

We have observed that when addressing unpopular truths or sharing unperceived needs, prophet-preachers had a bias towards inductive preaching. Ellen White, as well, was partial to utilizing a strategy

¹Ibid.

²C. Raymond Holmes, *The Last Word* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 19.

that has the flow of a story or narrative. Prophetic preachers used devices commonly taught by homiletic teachers today. Also, biblical preachers liberally used illustrations, drama, props, as well as literary devices such as poetry, embellishment, repetition, and word pictures. Finally, they preached with passion. Their presentations were affective in nature. The target was the listener's heart and not just the head.

To preach like the prophets means to preach with the authority of the inspired Word of God. If the Word is not employed, then the preacher has no authority. The numerous comments in the Bible, made in reference to preachers, all indicate that the preacher is the divine mouthpiece. On the other hand, discretion must be used in unfolding inspired truth. Consideration must be given to the biblical literacy of the congregation on any given subject and to their literacy in the presentation of God's message; language and words must be chosen that will not be intentionally caustic to the listener.

Although the prophetic preacher seeks to be in tune with the needs of his listeners, his message is rooted in the inspired word, not in felt needs. Prophetic preaching is indeed "felt need" sensitive, but "mission," not "market," driven. The ultimate goal of prophetic preaching is to change hearts and lives for God. Preachers are "change agents." Their message, at times, may appear to be out of step with culture and insensitive to society's needs. Yet, God best knows the needs of his people. The success of the sermon is not to be measured by the favor with which it is received. A sermon's success is measured both by how true it is to God's message, as well as how effectively it is articulated to the heart of the listener.

CHAPTER 5

HOW TO PREACH ON UNPOPULAR TRUTHS AND TO UNPERCEIVED NEEDS

Prophetic preaching is preaching for change. Ancient homiletics understood the twofold goal of delivering God's message and changing the hearts of men and women. Preachers in the twenty-first century desiring to preach like the prophets will use their same methods. Our ancient mentors were as likely as we are to face an audience hostile or indifferent to a message of eternal consequence. No doubt they, as we today, wrestled before God with how to effectively articulate in uncompromising terms the Word of God.

Lee J. Gugliotto states in his ECPA Gold Medallion award-winning book, *Handbook for Bible Study*, that all preaching is actually persuasive in nature with the purpose of convincing the listener to adopt another position.¹ This does not mean that all preachers are equally persuasive. Ronald E. Sleeth identifies key elements of what makes an effective persuasive preacher in his classic, *Persuasive Preaching*. Sleeth articulates, "The persuasive preacher is the preacher who lives, thinks, and preaches in the spiritual environment of the needs of his congregation."² Persuasive preaching connects with the needs of the listener. However, could it be that the "needs of the congregation" might be unperceived by the congregation? Also, a sermon that brings to the listener's attention unperceived needs or unpopular truths might evoke a negative response. It is, nevertheless, the task of the faithful prophetic preacher to present these unpopular truths and address these unperceived needs. The preacher must be in touch with both perceived and unperceived needs in order to be persuasive. Prophetic preaching is "felt need" sensitive but "mission" driven.

¹Lee J. Gugliotto, *HandBook for Bible Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1995), 140.

²Ronald E. Sleeth, *Persuasive Preaching* (New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1956), 10.

Methods of Persuasion

In *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher and William Ury offer a strategy for negotiators and arbitrators in which they refer to “interest-based” bargaining as opposed to the traditional “position-based” approach.¹ Preachers, I believe, can learn how to address unpopular truths and unperceived needs from this negotiation model. An interest-based strategy addresses the merits of the speaker’s proposal in light of the underlying interests of the listeners. In traditional negotiational strategies, positions are taken and then defended, thus polarizing opposing parties. Interest-based negotiation attempts to understand and openly communicate what interests lie behind the position taken. The authors explain, “Your position is something you have decided upon. Your interests are what caused you to so decide.”² Identifying the other side’s interests—discovering what lies beyond their position—is key to resolving conflict. Effective arguments and appeals will target those underlying interests rather than the positions taken. Fisher and Ury say,

Reconciling interests rather than positions works for two reasons. First, for every interest there usually exist several possible positions that could satisfy it. . . . Reconciling interests rather than compromising between positions also works because behind opposed positions lie many more interests than conflicting ones.³

Journeying from Felt to Unfelt Needs

Reconciling interests is akin to discovering and addressing a congregation’s felt needs. Understanding the purpose of addressing the listener’s interests or felt needs is key to persuasive preaching. An interest-based presentation has an agenda beyond simply fulfilling the needs and interests of the listener. Interest-based bargaining intends to bring the client or listener around to the presenter or speaker’s way of thinking. Likewise when preaching, the purpose of identifying and addressing felt needs is to bring the congregation over to truth. Addressing the listener’s felt needs is only a step in the process of reaching the real needs that the congregation may not perceive or may be resistant in accepting.

¹Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), xii. This book is based on studies and conferences conducted by the Harvard Negotiation Project.

²*Ibid.*, 42.

³*Ibid.*, 43.

Communicators who make felt needs the primary target in communication run the risk of never getting beyond the symptoms of the listener's problems and confronting their root. Milton Crum feels that the preacher should articulate the "*symptomatic behavior*, which needs to be changed."¹ If done effectively, the listener will respond, "That's me; I behave that way." The less obvious and yet more demanding insight "gets at the *root* of the symptomatic behavior." This evokes the listener to respond, "That's me; that is why I act that way."² The root of the behavior might very well be unperceived by the listener until identified by the preacher.

Television evangelist Mark Finley refers to unperceived needs as "ultimate needs." He holds,

Here it's useful to make a distinction between a felt-need and an ultimate need. **A felt-need is an area of life where an individual already senses that he's in need of help.** It's a perceived need. . . . **An ultimate need, however, is what human beings need most—in the long run. We believe that every person on this planet needs God most in his or her lives.** Reconciliation with Him is man's ultimate need.³

Finley outlines ten steps the listener must take in crossing the bridge from having "no spiritual interests" to experiencing "spiritual concerns."⁴ This concept is in harmony with James F. Engel's observations in *Contemporary Christian Communications*. Engel proposes eight degrees of conviction in the listener's journey from an elementary knowledge of God to repentance. Then, Engel suggests that an infinite number of degrees follows repentance thus leading the listener on to spiritual maturity.⁵ Engel contends that much of Christian evangelism targets listeners who are positioned at an advanced level of conviction. Evidence suggests, however, that the vast majority of listeners are at the elementary level of spiritual awareness. Effective preaching will be sensitive to the needs and interests perceived by the listener yet never lose sight of the goal—meeting "ultimate needs." These "ultimate needs" may be unperceived or

¹Milton Crum, Jr., *Manual on Preaching* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1988), 20 (emphasis his).

²*Ibid.*, 20.

³Mark Finley, *Fulfilling the Gospel Commission* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1989), 33-34 (emphasis his).

⁴*Ibid.*, 43.

⁵James F. Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communications* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1979), 83.

unpopular truths by the listener.

David Buttrick states that when moving the listeners to consciousness of truth, the preacher “must pay attention to connective logic and be sure that such logic forms in the congregational consciousness.”¹ In his work, *Homiletic*, Buttrick insists that the building blocks of an effective sermon are “a sequence of moves.”² This he places in opposition to “categorical” sermons. Buttrick says people do not normally think in categories unless making shopping or laundry lists.³ G. Gardner Taylor concurs with Buttrick when he says that when he preaches he imagines his sermon taking the listener with him on a journey traveling from one place to the next until reaching his final destination.⁴ The goal of preaching to unperceived needs is to take the listeners on a journey starting where they are and moving them through the logical steps until they arrive at where they ought to be (i.e., starting with felt-needs and journeying to genuine spiritual needs).

Psychological Resistance

Christian-communication educator Em Griffin purposes that the key to mentally moving listeners from one position to another is in changing their attitudes. It matters not whether the hearers are resistant to the truth or unaware of their needs, a change of the listener’s attitude is paramount. In his book *The Mind Changers* Griffin suggests a three-step process in persuasion. First, he says, the listener’s attitudes must be “melted.” The second step “molds” a new attitude and, third, the new attitude is made “firm” (i.e., set or hardened). Griffin proclaims, “Most people don’t want to be persuaded—of anything! ‘Don’t confuse me with the facts, my mind’s made up.’ They seem to have a built-in antagonism toward anyone trying to change their attitudes or behavior.”⁵ Griffin refers to this attitude as “psychological

¹David Buttrick, *Homiletic* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 71.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 70.

⁴G. Gardner Taylor, lecture on homiletics for the Resurrection Seminar, sponsored by *Ministry* magazine, March 31, 1998, Pioneer Memorial Church, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁵Em Griffin, *The Mind Changers* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub., 1976), 5.

resistance.”¹ The more the preacher attempts to convince, the more set the listeners become in their position.

Griffin holds that we melt the resistance by being human. Barriers will come down when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable.² What does being vulnerable mean? It is the communicator’s willingness to share personal doubts and fears; to open up and honestly face to the inevitable gamut of feelings evoked by life’s situations. Vulnerability means sharing the journey taken by the preacher in experiencing through personal obstacles, pain, and even failure. Vulnerability may lead to admitting to the congregation that the journey is not over but that the preacher is in the process of working through the issues. Griffin also appeals to the Christian communicator to not be afraid to laugh at oneself. He is convicted that “*Humor makes us human.*”³

When the listener reaches the point of being willing to lend an ear to the message, this does not mean the attitude has changed, that she has “bought” into the truth. It simply means that she is listening. Griffin says that at this point the task of changing the attitude is a matter of leading the listener over a series of hurdles starting with the easier hurdles of lower height and ending with the “biggies.”⁴ This is in harmony with what Finley and Engel have said about gradually moving people from where they are to where they should be. Unfortunately, this is contrary to the way we usually try to change people. Griffin observes, “The way we usually try to get people to change what they do is by attempting to shift their whole attitude.”⁵ Griffin proposes aiming for a series of small changes in attitude. Sometimes several sermons preached in a series could be necessary to effectively mold a new attitude. Griffin reminds us, “Molding a life takes time.”⁶

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 6.

³Ibid., 56 (*italics his*).

⁴Ibid., 181.

⁵Ibid., 180.

⁶Ibid.

Effective communicators concerned with changing the listener's attitudes will wrestle with minimizing psychological resistance. The key word is "minimizing" as there is no guarantee that the hearer will respond in a positive manner regardless of how effective the message is presented. The greatest of all prophetic preachers, Jesus, met tremendous resistance from many listeners. Some people will be recalcitrant even after clearly discovering the truth. Still, like Jesus, one aspiring to be an effective preacher will aim at leading the hearers on a journey of discovering truth and their ultimate needs. Minimizing psychological resistance will enable the truth to have a fair hearing without suffering from premature foreclosure.

Perception

Effectively molding and bringing about change in attitude must be done while guarding two fronts—"substance" and "relationship."¹ These are the two horns of the dilemma upon which prophetic preaching sits. The preacher's sensitivity to listeners' perceived needs and interests keeps the relationship intact. In order to accomplish this, Em Griffin encourages Christian communicators to practice "nudging rather than judging."² However, in the process there may be a tendency to compromise "substance"; i.e., to water down or alter the message in an effort to make it more palatable and acceptable to the listener. To keep "relationship" and "substance" in balance, Fisher and Ury suggest thinking in terms of "three basic categories: perception, emotion, and communication."³

First, accept the fact that reality for the listeners is as they see it. James F. Engel holds, "The difference itself exists because it exists in their thinking."⁴ He advises, "What this comes down to is that hard sell and confrontation are dangerous strategies. Usually a much better approach is to start with

¹Fisher and Ury, 20.

²Griffin, 52.

³Fisher and Ury, 22.

⁴Ibid., 23.

genuine empathy for other persons, even if they are wrong in what they believe.”¹ Recognizing and appreciating a differing party's perception of the issue is key to resolving tension. Discussing with the “other side” their point of view can reach this resolution by enabling them to express their fears, hopes, and questions out loud.² In sermon preparation the effective preacher will engage in mental dialogue with his anticipated listeners and be ever cognizant of their feelings, e.g., fears, hopes, and questions.

Second, change the listener's perceptions by sending “them a message different from what they expect.”³ Design the unpredictable. When confronted by a coed who took the position, “I don't see any thing wrong with wearing jewelry,” Robert Folkenberg, a former President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, replied, “So wear it.” She came back, “Hey, you can't say that. You're the General Conference President.” This opened up the door for dialogue about the core issue of a relationship with Jesus Christ.⁴ Third, “give them a stake in the outcome by making sure they participate in the process.”⁵ For this reason, the inductive approach is superior as a communication method in resolving conflict and bringing about desired change. The opposing side becomes part of the process of discovering the solution. They are involved in jumping the hurdles from “perceived needs” to “ultimate needs” and thus are more apt to take ownership upon arrival.

Finally, having identified the values lurking behind their positions, make your proposals consistent with those values.⁶ Show how your proposal is consistent with the listener's value system and interests. Griffin calls this “making hard” the new attitude.⁷ Help them catch a vision of the new attitude.

¹Engel, 196.

²Fisher and Ury, 26.

³Ibid., 27.

⁴Robert Folkenberg, North Pacific Union Conference Ministerial and Evangelism Retreat, Seattle, WA, April 18, 1998.

⁵Fisher and Ury, 27.

⁶Ibid., 29.

⁷Griffin, 4.

Emotions

Fisher and Ury also propose that simultaneously with understanding the listener's perceptions the communicator must get in touch with the feelings of the opposing party. In the first place, this means that the communicator must get in touch with her or his own feelings. Fisher and Ury inform, "Emotions on one side generate emotions on the other."¹ Sleeth corroborates, "The preacher who realizes that members of the congregation listen to a sermon with their whole being will not only verbalize words, but will communicate also emotions and feelings."² Mirror what you desire them to feel.

Validate and identify the listener's emotions and discuss their fears, hurts, and joys. Authorities in conflict management counsel any who find themselves in a bargaining situation to invite the other side to recount their grievances first.³ Stephen Covey, communications consultant and author of *Seven Success Secrets of Highly Successful People*, says one should always insist on the other side expressing their position first.⁴ If one desires to be understood, she or he must first understand. Normally the communicator is eager to be heard first. However, effective communicators will first fully understand the interests of the other side.⁵

O. C. Edwards, professor emeritus of preaching at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, appeals to ministers to exegete the congregation as well as the biblical text.⁶ By this he means that just as preachers try to understand the original meaning in its context, so they should make effort to "understand what is going on in the world in which our people live."⁷ Edwards says that this means more than sizing

¹Fisher and Ury, 30.

²Sleeth, 59.

³Fisher and Ury, 31.

⁴Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 239-241.

⁵Ibid., 237.

⁶O. C. Edwards, "Bringing Together the Text and the Congregation," *Ministry*, May 1998, 13.

⁷Ibid., 12.

up the needs of the individual believer. It means assessing the situation of the “community of faith” as well as the community beyond the church. The tools of this process of exegesis are observations made from visitations with members, counseling, working together, newspaper, magazines, observations from the media, and art. Edwards says that through all of life we should ask the question, “What’s going on here?”¹ Then we should place the insight of the biblical reality over these observations. In the preparation of the sermon, the preacher will especially attempt to understand the feelings, fears, struggles, and *a priori* bias of the listener. In the pulpit this process of empathetic listening continues through dialogical preaching and articulating of and identifying with the listener’s sentiments.

Communication

While grasping perceptions and emotions the communicator must also connect substantively with the listener. Fisher and Ury contend that there are three problems with most communication. First, parties talk past each other and frequently “talk merely to impress third parties or their own constituency.”² This is akin to the proverbial practice of “preaching to the choir.” For example, fire and brimstone preaching may elicit a chorus of “Amens” from the saints, but will it connect with the lost?

Speed B. Leas, in *A Lay Person’s Guide to Conflict Management*, observes,

It is often the case that people have not been talking to each other, or they have been so cautious, vague and less than candid that they communicate only partially with one another, or (in worst situations) they have communicated invalid and inaccurate information. In these kinds of situations it will be very helpful to support the various parties in talking through their difficulties.³

Just because someone is talking does not mean communication is taking place. As stated earlier, the persuasive preacher will aim at connecting with the listener by engaging in “mental conversation” with his listeners in sermon preparation as well as in the pulpit. Rather than preaching in moral platitudes or dispensing information, the effective preacher will enter into conversation with the congregation, reach out, and arrest their attention with the substance of the message. Gugliotto says, “Aim at making contact

¹Ibid., 14.

²Fisher and Ury, 33.

³Speed B. Leas, *A Lay Person’s Guide to Conflict Management* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1979), 15.

with the audience rather than merely giving them information.”¹

Fisher and Ury suggest a careful listening to what the other side is saying while they are talking. Too often we tend to be thinking about what we will say next rather than truly listening.² Homiletician Thomas G. Long reminds us that the preacher, likewise, should listen to and focus on the congregation. He observes, “All that is done in a sermon is done with and for the people who hear.”³ After all, Lewis agrees, “The people are the *only* reason for preaching.”⁴ The ultimate end of preaching is not just to speak the Word but for the Word to be heard. In the preparation process of the sermon, the persuasive preacher will be listening to what her or his listeners would say about the truth to be presented. The preacher will not impose arguments and questions that are out of the listeners’ scope of perception. At each step, the preacher will anticipate and listen to their reaction in the sermonic journey. This is also in harmony as well with Covey’s principle of first listening to the other side.

A third communication problem, according to Fisher and Ury, is in either party’s misinterpreting and misunderstanding the other.⁵ This is especially true where different languages are involved. Church jargon could be one of these “languages.” The persuasive preacher will be sensitive to vocabulary as well as to the Bible literacy of his audience.

To minimize misunderstandings, the ultimate goal must be crystal clear in the mind of the speaker. Fisher and Ury suggest the negotiator must ask himself, “What decision do people on the other side now see you asking them to make? If you have no idea what they think they are being called on to do, they may not either.”⁶ Furthermore, it serves no one to know what you expect of the listener but never articulate it. Em Griffin points out, “the reason most sales flop is that the salesman never gets around to

¹Gugliotto, 144.

²Fisher and Ury, 34.

³Long, 112.

⁴Lewis and Lewis, *Inductive Preaching*, 25.

⁵Fisher and Ury, 34.

⁶*Ibid.*, 47.

asking the person to buy.”¹ Griffin applies this principle to preaching regarding sexual conduct,

Unless you’re willing to call a spade a spade, you’ll have very little influence on dating behavior. You need to be willing to lay concrete practices out on the table where they can be discussed and examined. Then close the sale. Make a specific request.²

Know from the start of the sermon what change you expect of the listener and articulate that expectation.

Visual Aids

Minimizing misunderstandings and psychological resistance will require any communicator to go the second mile in connecting with his listener. Illustrations, pictures, printed information, charts, use of media, etc., are readily available in all developed countries. Furthermore, previous investigation revealed that prophet-preachers of Bible times utilized props and three-dimensional objects to assist in connecting with their hearers. Perhaps today’s prophet-preachers should more frequently use them.

Since the 1960s teachers have purported that we learn 10 percent of what we hear, 30 percent of what we see, but 60 percent of what we do.³ News publishers know “that readership will triple or quadruple with any story bearing a picture.”⁴ Bryan Chapell says,

Some believe these trends result from modern culture’s audio-visual addictions. Television and stereos have become the sensory wallpaper of many an American’s daily existence. Electronic sights and sounds accompany every thought and waking moment. Computer software companies and cassette tape publishers bank on our need for sensory input by marketing interactive learning programs in *TV Guide* and on airline flight magazines.⁵

Contemporary preachers must acknowledge these cultural challenges, even if they are unsure how much to accommodate them.⁶

Chapell quickly adds that we should “not too hastily abandon our rich preaching heritage,” but we must

¹Griffin, 187.

²Ibid., 189.

³Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992), 54.

⁴Ibid., 56.

⁵Ibid., 56.

⁶Ibid. 57.

be sensitive to our listeners' need for "experiential discovery."¹ Visual aids enhance this process.

Visual aids may be "low-tech," e.g., whiteboards, flipcharts, or blank overheads, or they may be more polished, e.g., overhead transparencies, 35mm slides, and computer-generated presentations. User-friendly, versatile, and economical software programs are readily available that enable the preacher to create slides. Still frame pictures or movie clips can be interjected in the program. Professional-looking charts and graphs may be easily created with a few keystrokes. Media-savvy congregations may judge preachers less than credible if visual aids are of poor quality. Computer-generated slide presentations enable the preacher to integrate on-screen displays that are representative of the message.

Addressing the Substance

Having considered issues that improve the preacher's connecting with the listeners, how can the prophet-preacher best present the "substance" of the sermon? Fisher and Ury insist that effective negotiators produce objective criteria.² Appeals to standards, contracts, established policies, and precedents present a superior argument. One of the first tasks at the bargaining table is to identify and establish objective criteria. Having established that standard criteria, dialogue with the listener in the following fashion:

1. Frame each issue as a joint search for objective criteria.
2. Reason and be open to reason as to which standards are most appropriate and how they should be applied.
3. Never yield to pressure, only to principle.³

In previous chapters it has been observed that the "standard" and "objective criteria" for the prophet-preacher was the inspired Word. Sermons addressing unpopular truths and unperceived needs should be Bible-based. The "substance" of prophetic preaching is the message of the Bible.

Fisher and Ury also suggest an inductive negotiation strategy, "If you want someone to listen and understand your reasoning, give your interests and reasoning first and your conclusions or proposals

¹Ibid.

²Fisher and Ury, 84-98.

³Ibid., 91.

later.”¹ This is congruent with the inductive approach we have previously seen used by the prophet-preachers of the Bible and contemporary homiletic teachers.

Inductive Strategy

Gugliotto draws a demarcation between two primary communication strategies.

The most common extended argument states its thesis right away and adds supporting material as it draws to a conclusion. In other words, it moves from the general to the specific. As the argument proceeds to develop, it promotes its thesis from one feature to the next, which is the common thread that binds every element together from start to finish. A second and less frequent format begins with supporting materials and concludes with a thesis. In other words, it works from the specific to the general.²

The first method Gugliotto referred to as “most common” is the “deductive” method. The second “less frequent format” is the “inductive” method. These are the two basic structures for all human thought patterns.³ This project suggests that an inductive strategy is most effective in preaching to an audience regarding needs for which they are yet unaware or truths they resist embracing. Therefore, for the sake of this project, contemporary homiletical strategies considered will be narrowed to those with an inductive bias.

Ralph and Gregg Lewis explain, “An inductive sermon is one that starts where the people are . . . and then leads to general conclusions.”⁴

Deductive preaching starts with a declaration of intent and proceeds to prove the validity of what the preacher says is already determined to be true. Inductive preaching, on the other hand, lays out the evidence, the examples, the illustrations and postpones the declarations and assertions until the listeners have a chance to weigh the evidence, think through the implications and then come to the conclusion *with* the preacher at the end of the sermon.⁵

Again, as seen in the previous chapters, inductive communication was a method preferred by prophet-preachers of the Bible times. Em Griffin, when preaching, prefers a deductive approach to Christian

¹Ibid., 53.

²Gugliotto, 140.

³Lewis and Lewis, *Inductive Preaching*, 35.

⁴Ibid., 43.

⁵Ibid.

communication. However, even he urges that it is best to preach inductively when facing a hostile crowd.¹

Inductive sermons may assume any number of strategies. In recent years several inductive approaches have been suggested. Gugliotto presents two strategies that he feels warrant close consideration—one developed by Milton Crum, Jr., and the other by Eugene M. Lowry. Both strategies design and tell the sermon as if it is a story.² Rather than referring to the traditional thesis, Crum speaks of getting the synopsis of the sermon “in my head so clearly and simply that I can ‘see’ what I want to say.”³ He refers to “telling the sermon” so that it “moves with the flow of a story.”⁴ Likewise, key for Lowry is the sermon’s “plot” which he compares to the plot of a story.⁵ Where these two homileticians differ is in the actual strategy of unfolding the plot or flow in the story.

Crum’s approach is to first develop “some commonly experienced *symptomatic behavior*” with which the listener will identify, then to move on to describing the less obvious “*root*” underlying this behavior.⁶ Next he articulates the “*resulting consequences*” for such behavior and follows by replacing the “old way of believing and perceiving” with a new perception, i.e., the “*gospel content*.” Crum concludes his strategy by motivating the listener to choose “the new way of believing and perceiving,” i.e., the “*new results*.” This strategy Crum calls “the five Dynamic Factors.”⁷

Lowry has five steps, as well, in his homiletical strategy. First, Lowry “*upsets the equilibrium*.”⁸

¹Griffin, 135.

²Crum, 26; Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1975), 15 (italics his).

³Crum, 32.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Lowry, 15.

⁶Crum, 20.

⁷Ibid., 20-21.

⁸Lowry, 28.

He creates an angst, a state of ambiguity, or what he calls a “sermonic itch.”¹ The second step is that of “*analyzing the discrepancy*.”² Lowry says this is usually the lengthiest of his five steps and involves a probing of the problem or ambiguity. The third step “*discloses the clue to resolution*.”³ This identifies the missing link and suggests a solution to the problem. At this juncture a reversal takes place in the story’s plot usually surprising the hearer and offering a positive new insight.⁴ In the fourth step, with the underlying problem uncovered, the listener is ready to “*experience the gospel*.” The final step paints a picture of the “*anticipated consequences*” of the new life and invites the hearer to take courage in these consequences.⁵

In both strategies, the steps or movements may be cemented by “transitional expressions” such as, “It seems . . . , but still . . . ,” “Of course . . . , and yet . . .” or “Both this and this . . . , yet in a larger sense . . .”⁶ Thus the sermon has the feel or flow of an unfolding story. Table 4 shows the similarities between the two inductive strategies proposed by Crum and Lowry.

TABLE 4
COMPARISON OF CRUM AND LOWRY’S STRATEGY

Crum	Lowry
Symptomatic behavior	Upset equilibrium
Root cause	Disclosure of the solution
Resulting consequences	Disclosure of the solution
Gospel solution	Experience the Gospel
New results	Anticipate consequences

¹Ibid., 29.

²Ibid., 36.

³Ibid., 47.

⁴Ibid., 48.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Long, 98.

The similarity may be readily seen between the last three steps in the two strategies. The main difference lies in steps one and two. Crum starts his sermon with an analysis of a behavior. In order to be effective, it is imperative that this behavior is something that the listener identifies with—thus it is termed “symptomatic.” It is at this point that a high level of listener interest is ensured. If the preacher misjudges or misreads the listeners and settles on a behavior not common to the listener, then perhaps the sermon would not be considered effective by listener standards.

Lowry, on the other hand, starts his sermon by creating an angst, a puzzle to be solved. Again, one wonders if the effectiveness of his homiletical plot depends on how skillful the preacher is at perceiving and choosing plots that will have high listener interests. If the listeners are never drawn into the plot then they will never care about the resolution, the solution of step three, or they will never stay with the plot long enough to experience the gospel in step four.

Crum’s and Lowry’s inductive strategies give step-by-step instructions to follow when preaching. My purpose of investigating their methods is for their persuasive potential. These methods share some of the same elements in persuasive communications observed earlier by Fisher and Ury. They identify with the listener’s perception, emotions, and feelings, while at the same time offering a vehicle to communicate truth in unswerving terms. These inductive methods also provide an unsuspecting and natural avenue to journey from “felt-needs” to “unfelt-needs” that we have seen is essential when faced with listener resistance or apathy. Crum’s and Lowry’s methods, however, are only two of many paths that may be taken in using the inductive method in preaching.

Elements of a Story

Along with Lewis, Crum and Lowry present their message as one would present a story. Investigating the elements of story telling will assist in preaching a sermon as if it were a story. Leila Ashton in her guidebook, *Successful Storytelling*, is straightforward, “A story is a story because it introduces someone and tells what happened to him. If you don’t have a main character and a plot, you

don't have a story."¹ The author says, "The character must be someone with whom the listener can identify."² The listener must be led to care about the main character, to identify with her. Furthermore, something must happen to the character—"a problem, some type of conflict, and it builds suspense as to the outcome."³

This is in harmony with what Steven Mosley presents in his homiletics seminar, *Show Is Better Than Tell*, subtitled, *Creating Sermons That Captivate*.⁴ Mosely says a good story must have three things:

1. A setting we can visualize
2. A character we can care about
3. Actions that speak loudest.⁵

The effectiveness of each of these elements is dependent upon how well the storyteller embellishes the setting, presents the character, and gives commentary on the action—the plot has to go somewhere. As Dawson Bryan suggests, a good story will have a beginning, action, a climax, and a conclusion.⁶

The Storyteller's Companion to the Bible identifies biblical narratives as containing the basic essentials for a story—"plot" and "character" and a third component is added—"point of view."⁷ The storyteller needs "to examine the narratives with an eye on who is telling the story and on whom the story itself is focused and not focused."⁸ This enables the listener to have perspective. The storyteller is able to manipulate the details of the story by determining how much the listeners know at any given point.

¹Leila Ashton, *Successful Storytelling* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1988), 9.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Steven Mosely, *Wield the Word* (Newbury Park, CA: 607 S. Fowler, 1996).

⁵Ibid.

⁶Chapell, 99.

⁷Michael E. Williams, ed., *The Storyteller's Companion to the Bible*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 17.

⁸Ibid.

When considering the overall design and flow of the sermon one of the first considerations is to identify the character of the sermon, as suggested in component number two. This may be a person, animal, or even an inanimate object, i. e., “the little train who said, ‘I know I can!’” The preacher must depict the character in such a manner that the listener will be intrigued, curious, or identify with it.

Steven Mosely suggests that a story without a character is an example rather than a story.¹ Likewise, for a sermon to be told as one would tell a story it must have a main character. On the one hand, intentionally featuring a main character facilitates listeners in identifying with the message, and on the other hand, aids the preacher in connecting with the emotions and perception of the audience. Earlier we have seen that such a process is essential in leading people to change their minds and hearts.

Perspective

Crum’s and Lowry’s strategies are compatible with Ashton’s elements of a good story. Their strength is in the unfolding of a story’s plot. Neither strategy, however, mentions the necessity of identifying a character with whom the listener identifies. If the principles of good story telling are credible, if a bona fide story truly requires both a character as well as a plot, then both elements are essential for homiletical strategies, which purport to tell the sermon as one would tell a story. In sermon preparation the preacher must clearly identify, in his own mind, both the story line as well as the story’s main character. The preacher must know from whose perspective the sermon, or the narratives within the sermon, will be told. Will it be told from the preacher’s perspective or from the listener’s perspective?

Role-play

Em Griffin appeals to preachers to use role-play as an effective homiletical tool.² Role-play can take on a variety of forms that would include any of the above-mentioned perspectives. Griffin says, “Role play is a means of getting a person to identify with someone else.”³ Griffin says role-play demands

¹Mosely, A-6.

²Griffin, 79-94.

³Ibid., 81.

emotional involvement, requires physical movement, and verbal expression.¹ It is pretending.² It “portrays another person’s attitude” and “guarantees a high level of attention.”³ Role-play is drama and is most effective when the preacher improvises and interjects her own ideas.⁴ Griffin is convicted that role-play “generates the best possible argument for changing opinion.”⁵ Just as role-play is an essential element in good story telling, so it may be utilized in prophetic preaching. Role-play may bring to life the homiletical plot. It provides the circuit for connecting with the ear and heart. It offers a venue for the character of the story.

Emotional Investment

Regardless of the perspective from which the sermon is told, the effectiveness to which a listener identifies with the character is in direct proportion to the ability of the speaker to embellish that character’s plight and life situation. This embellishment must draw the listener into the story. It must touch a common cord, ring a bell. Posing a question or series of questions that are relevant both to the story and listener interests may do this. Or, embellishment may paint a vivid picture of the situation; bring it to life and express truth experientially. These are elements of role-play.

Bryan Chapell holds with conviction that this process of uncovering the concrete is “the most rigorous of homiletical tasks.”⁶ Chapell asks, “What minister has not discovered the ease with which an expositional truth can be propositionally stated, only to agonize for hours on how to illustrate that truth in a moving, relevant fashion?”⁷ He continues,

¹Ibid., 85.

²Ibid., 82.

³Ibid., 87.

⁴Ibid., 90, 92.

⁵Ibid., 92.

⁶Chapell, 61.

⁷Ibid., 60.

Illustration requires preachers to think about what can be heard as well as what can be said. They must do a sort of “double-think.” Preachers must first think on what a passage means to them, and then they must think of what will communicate that meaning to the persons for whom God has made them responsible. In other words, they must journey through the lives and experiences of others as well as search their own souls. It is hard, grueling, sacrificial work, which may be precisely why illustrations are so often shunned under the guise of erudition.¹

No doubt, this requires the preacher to “travel an intellectual ‘second mile.’”²

This “hard, grueling, sacrificial work” is essential to drawing the listener into the story with compelling force. The preacher should not expect the listener to search her soul if he has not first searched his own before entering the pulpit.

In order to relate truths experientially, the preacher must himself delve to that level of being where mind, soul, body, world, and psyche are real. Until he has done so—until he has plumbed the depths of his emotions, relationships, and experiences and integrated what he discovers in those oceans with what he knows intellectually—his own understanding is not complete.³

This goes back to what we have previously observed Ury and Fisher counsel, “If you have no idea what they think they are being called on to do, they may not either.”⁴ If the preacher has not experientially entered the truth of which he preaches, then chances are his listeners will not either. Prior to his standing before his congregation the prophetic preacher has “plumbed the depths of his emotions” and his message is contagious. Ears are compelled to tune in to the message and truth is taken to heart.

Summary

This investigation of homiletical techniques and methods of persuasion has been to understand how to better preach about unperceived needs or truths the listener is resistant to accepting. We have observed that effecting change in the listener is possible by first identifying and addressing his or her attitudes, interests, and establishing common ground. Furthermore, we have seen that an inductive method is preferred over the deductive approach. Through an inductive sermon strategy the listener is led

¹Ibid.,67.

²Ibid., 61.

³Ibid., 60.

⁴Fisher and Ury, 47.

on a journey from perceived felt-needs to genuine spiritual needs. This inductive strategy assumes the form of the plot of a story—something that is essential for moving the listener from felt to unfelt needs.

It has also been noted that in order for the sermon to truly follow a story line there must be a character with whom the listener identifies. Identifying this character provides the avenue in which the listener identifies with the story's plot. This enables the preacher to connect with his congregation. Intentionally determining the perspective from which the sermon is to be told provides clarity thus making it easier for the listener to identify with the story's plot and ultimately the message. This facilitates changing the attitude of the resistant and apathetic ear to one more accepting of truth.

Conflict Management in the Pulpit

The spectrum of contemporary prophetic preaching ranges from bringing comfort to the hurting to conviction to sinners. Faithfulness to the inspired word will sooner or later require that the preacher address neglected truth or confront favorite sins. Anyone can stand up and point out omissions and errors. It takes great wisdom and judgment to bring home unpopular truth to the heart of a congregation. Finesse and grace are essential to effectively challenge the ear in such a way that the behavior change is considered and even desired. When running contrary to God's word, the pulpit presents a rare opportunity to bring the church into harmony with truth. How should the preacher best utilize this God-given forum?

Listen

One of the lowest common denominators to conflict management is found in the art of listening. This important step to conflict resolution is so basic that it risks going unnoticed. It is, however, essential to bringing about change in the lives of the listener. How, otherwise, will the prophetic voice perceive what is relevant? The prophetic preacher, Paul, gave evidence that he had listened and heard of the genuine needs of the church. When the apostle confronted a church in conflict at Corinth he was able to reference his sources of information.¹ Paul had been listening and was compelled to make the problems of

¹ 1 Cor 1:11; 7:1.

which he had heard his problems. He could not turn his head and ignore what had been reported to him. It was his prophetic duty to confront the church with its error. Likewise, this is the task of contemporary preachers.

In the hand of the prophet, listening is a tool to bring the church to a level of accountability. This will be reality only if the preacher himself is accountable and responsive to what he understands. Jerrien Gunnink, in *Preaching for Recovery in a Strife-torn Church*, counsels preachers not to skirt the issues when he says, “Sidestepping the defects does not solve them.”¹ Prophetic preachers and writers of the Bible were direct in their treatment of error. Although they steered away from references to personalities and the names of those they confronted, they did not shy away from mentioning issues of concern: worldliness, jealousy, pride, quarreling, prostitution, oppression, materialism, hypocrisy, etc.² Stick with the issues and be direct about them.

Paul spoke boldly in the written page because he was confident of the facts. He had been listening. Jerrien Gunnink says the first step at managing conflict in the pulpit is to listen to the congregation prior to stepping into the pulpit.³ Gunnink asks, “Will we take the time to listen, to feel the hurts, to shed tears with our troubled people? Will we with Moses say, ‘Bring me any cause too hard for you, and I will hear it (Deut 1:17)?’”⁴ This is in harmony with counsel seen earlier given by Speed B. Leas, Roger Fisher, and William Ury.⁵ Em Griffin urges that we need to keep listening. Yet, Griffin observes that when he “bombs” a class lecture he tends to avoid that which he needs the most—feedback from students.⁶ Chances are this is endemic. Perhaps the preacher likewise gravitates to circles of

¹Jerrien Gunnink, *Preaching for Recovery in a Strife-torn Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1989), 93.

²Ibid., 55.

³Ibid., 52.

⁴Ibid., 30.

⁵Leas, 14; Fisher and Ury, 35.

⁶Griffin, 6.

support while she needs to hear the opinions of all factions in the church—including the hostile ones. Painful though it may be, this kind of objective listening is part of the prophetic calling of the preacher.

Listening need not be a complicated process. Questionnaires and “well-conceived surveys” can reveal much. However, the old-fashioned pastoral visit in the home is perhaps the most common listening forum. Listen—in church committee meetings, after church, and while enjoying casual social interaction with members.¹ Gunnink, however, warns that when consulting the leadership of the church, bear in mind that they may be biased and “dominated by specific individuals.”² Effective listening will attempt to discern objective data.

Assess Data

Even as information is gathered, the preacher must begin the process of sorting through the data. Speed B. Leas, the guru of conflict management in the context of church life, says that as simple and obvious as it may seem, making a decision to cope with the difficulty is the first hurdle towards resolution.³ The preacher must ultimately diagnose the ailment and need of the body of Christ, “determine the felt and unmet-needs.”⁴ What are the positions taken and what are the interests laying behind those positions? Those needs demanding an “immediate answer” must first be addressed before reaching deeper into “underlying needs.”⁵ First, determine the weightiness of the issue. Ask, Is this a core issue? Or, Is this peripheral?⁶

Gunnink simplifies this process when he identifies three types of conflict in the church:

1. Moral issues,
2. Doctrinal issues, and

¹Gunnink, 70-73.

²Ibid., 72.

³Leas, 9.

⁴Gunnink, 77.

⁵Ibid., 75.

⁶Ibid., 103.

3. Preference issues.¹

Frequently what at first appears to be central and substantive, upon further investigation is seen to be an issue of preference and opinion. What at first appears to be doctrinal, at closer consideration is a teaching far from the core of the gospel. In this case, the issue addressed may need to be approached through the biblical teaching of tolerance, acceptance, and unity in diversity.²

Be Self-composed and Restrained

The prudent pastor will wade cautiously into the conflict. She will stick with the issues and not be drawn into wrestling with the personalities. Gunnink rightly points out that Paul rarely identified the names of those admonished. The preacher managing conflict will be cautious, not caustic.³ Likewise, putting her personal feelings aside for the sake of the larger issues, the preacher will guard her anger in the pulpit. A good shepherd will keep calm when the sheep are ruffled. In crisis the sheep look to the shepherd. If the shepherd is self-composed the sheep will be more apt to follow suit. Speed B. Leas says one of the “main tasks” of a leader is to “allay” their followers’ fears. He proposes, “Nothing works better in dealing with fear than direct, calm assurance on the part of the leader that the idea of disaster you are now anticipating is not likely to come to fruition.”⁴ Conflict managers will mirror the spirit that they desire their listener to assume.⁵ Gunnink concurs, “We more than anyone else must be calm in the raging storm.”⁶

Exhibiting rage under the guise of righteous indignation serves no one. Crum offers this insight, “Whether done by demanding, scolding, or pleading, moralistic preaching persuades no more effectively than other forms of moralistic communication. Can you imagine being persuaded through

¹Ibid., 105.

²Ibid., 108.

³Ibid., 104.

⁴Speed B. Leas, *Leadership and Conflict* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1991), 61.

⁵Gunnink, 36, 113.

⁶Ibid., 31.

being scolded by a TV commercial for not buying its product? The point is that our behavior is based on our perceptions; therefore, to change voluntary behavior, perception must be changed.¹

Does this not imply that the preacher be dispassionate in the pulpit? No, but it does argue that the message of grace not be contradicted by the demeanor of its bearer.

Preach the Word

Offer Hope

After identifying the core issue of the conflict, it may be tempting to moralize or subject the captive audience to a litany of scathing rebukes. Gunnink, as well, warns that the preacher practice restraint and, without exception, present a solution, i.e., bring hope. Conflict management in the pulpit is more than preaching about the issues. Gunnink reminds us, “We must tell them repeatedly that there is forgiveness, a way out, a path for healing and restoration.”² He continues, “Issues are clothed in the garments of grace.”³ The goal of prophetic preaching is far more than uncovering sin and stepping on toes. Its goal is to bring about change in the life of the listener. This alone will change any life—the grace of God.

Choose Appropriate Passages

Having diagnosed the surface felt-needs as well as the underlying unfelt-needs, the first task in sermon preparation is to choose appropriate biblical passages. Good shepherds will always have one eye on the sheep and the other eye on the green pastures from which they will feed the flock.⁴ This demands that the preacher be well acquainted with the inspired Word, immersed in its rubric as well as saturated in the gospel. Automatically the shepherd will measure the flock by the standard of the Word. Gunnink, for example, applies this principle to dealing with a church in strife, “Our task . . . is to determine what passages of Scripture have a bearing on the . . . controversy. To do this well, we can further examine

¹Crum, 37.

²Ibid., 57.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 35.

what factors in this fight are addressed in Scripture.”¹ Gunnick continues, “Careful exposition of the Bible, pointing to God as the offended party, makes people realize his stake in the matter.”² As the preacher focuses the attention of opposing church factions to God’s solution as outlined in his Word, “They move closer to each other.”³ This results in a change in attitudes and lives of members.

Preach a Series

Preaching for change in the lives of the congregation requires more than one sermon. Healing may not occur in one sermon.⁴ As observed earlier, healing takes time. The preacher must strategize to preach over a longer period of time. As Em Griffin says, “molding takes time.”⁵ Furthermore, he purports, “I realize this runs counter to the typical image of Christian persuasion. We expect sudden conversions and blinding flashes of insight. But actual experience suggests that such instances are the exceptions rather than the rule.”⁶ Gunnick holds that molding over time demands that a repertoire of sermons be developed from a “wide range of texts. No single passage or group of passages is sufficient.”⁷ No conflict is one-sided; it is multifaceted. Gunnink is in agreement with Griffin when he observes, “The conflict in a church has many aspects to it; that is why we must tackle the trauma from many sides. Do not make the mistake of harping on one thing, hoping that will solve the problem.”⁸ The preacher can address each of the angles of an issue over a period of months and even years. For Gunnink, this was a ten-year pilgrimage, which became the basis of his doctoral project. This task demands patience,

¹Ibid., 34.

²Ibid., 57.

³Ibid., 43, 105.

⁴Ibid., 112.

⁵Griffin, 8.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Gunnink, 79.

⁸Ibid., 80.

creativity, and a commitment to preaching comprehensive messages encompassing the whole Word of God. Anything short of this will dwindle into one-legged, hobbyhorse sermons.

Summary

When addressing issues that are not popular with the listeners, or, when leading the listeners into an understanding of a need they have of which they have not realized, the preacher can expect to encounter resistance and conflict. Listening is the most basic tool to managing this conflict. In its earliest stage listening enables the preacher to foresee potential storms brewing. Preaching a message head on that addresses a potential conflict issue on in its early stages will usually be more effective than waiting until after it becomes full blown and the congregation is stressed. Whether before or after a conflict becomes public, the preacher must gather data from all sides. From the data the preacher will determine underlying needs and identify the type of conflict that is at hand—moral, doctrinal, or a matter of preference. Then the preacher chooses appropriate biblical passages that address underlying needs and interests. Issues will not be skirted in the pulpit, yet hope will always be offered. The demeanor and tone of the preacher rightly represent the good news. Attention will focus on the principles of the Word, not personalities. Finally, significant change occurs through a series of sermons in which the preacher stacks up truth upon truth.

How to Confront without Being Confrontational

Psychology teaches that when an animal encounters something that is threatening to its well-being there are two basic options: fight or flight.¹ Likewise, the preacher has the same options when facing a hostile audience or preaching an unpopular message. Which is the acceptable option? Compromising the truth for the sake of peace is an unacceptable option. However, would not avoiding addressing an unpopular truth have the same compromising effect? On the other hand, an unbending approach may alienate the listener. David Augsburger suggests a third option that he labels as “care-

¹Larry I. McSwain and William C. Treadwell, Jr., *Conflict Ministry in the Church* (Atlanta, GA: J. A. Thomas, 1997), 129.

fronting.”¹ In order to fully appreciate this option attention must first be given to the other confrontational approaches.

Fight

In *Conflict Ministry in the Church*, Larry McSwain and William Treadwell, Jr., insist that “fighting is the most harmful form of response to conflict.”² Besides being unChristlike behavior, what are the practical effects of engaging another in a fighting strategy? Fighting postures have a negative influence on “psychological reaction,” the predisposition virtually all have towards resistance to change.³ It has been determined that the more we try to manipulate and argue our point, the more set the opposing listener becomes in their position. It seems self-evident that this reality would urge caution in the use of methods that seek to force the listener to change.

Em Griffin dogmatically renders his opinion regarding the hard-sell approach, “To put it bluntly: The hard sell is out!”⁴ He does give credit for its effectiveness among “those who enjoy being dominated.”⁵ Three factors render it ineffective—“a suspicion of our motives, a distaste at the idea of being wrong, and a fear of being pushed into a corner.”⁶ Griffin says, “I doubt if a Christian has ever argued someone into the kingdom.”⁷

Authoritarian tactics may shut up the opposition, but they are ineffective in changing attitudes and behavior. Studies show that if the listener is overwhelmed with strong truth and yet does not participate in investigating the evidence for herself, there will not be a “hardening” or “settling in effect.”

¹David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1981), 10.

²McSwain and Treadwell, 29.

³Griffin, 5.

⁴Ibid., 52.

⁵Ibid., 51.

⁶Ibid., 52.

⁷Ibid.

Without “hardening” the listener is susceptible to abandoning the new attitude. An idea must be accepted after the process of critical examination in order to be effectively incorporated into the new attitude.¹ To ensure listener participation, the prophetic preacher must engage the listener in “mental dialogue.”

Spouting the truth from an authoritative source is an exercise in futility unless the words connect with the listener.

Authoritarianism as a tool, furthermore, is no more effective than the credibility of the speaker—in the eyes of the listener. Although one cannot deny that this is essential to any public communication, the Christian communicator will be ever mindful that in preaching the focus should be on the “message” and not the “messenger.”²

Fear tactics are frequently associated with “fire and brimstone” sermons. Jonathan Edwards could effectively preach, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” because his listeners were extremely sensitive to the reality of heaven and hell.³ Today’s average American is not as knowledgeable of the realities of hell as the masses were in Jonathan Edwards’s day. Edwards’s message would not connect with today’s audience. Fear, however, is still a legitimate tool of the pulpit if used with good judgment. There are real consequences to the choices of life and people need to be warned.

Studies show that the extreme use of fear can polarize the listener into reasoning, “This will never happen to me” or, “I’m too hopeless. What’s the use in trying.”⁴ Fear must be probable or it will be ineffective. This is why “moderate or medium fear appeal persuades people more than either the low or high scare attempts.”⁵ Griffin warns that the responsible use of fear is always a two-step process. “First you present the threat, then a way of avoiding it.”⁶ Both parts of this process must be believable in order

¹Ibid., 124.

²Ibid., 125.

³Ibid., 72.

⁴Ibid., 70, 72.

⁵Ibid., 70.

⁶Ibid., 74.

to be responsible and effective.

Responsible preaching will, without exception, honor the free choice of the listener. Following the example of Jesus, the preacher will honor the right of the listener to refuse his message. Griffin reminds us, "He lovingly pleads his case while carefully respecting the rights of his beloved. . . . He must always respect the other's right to freely choose, to say no. Jesus let the rich young ruler walk away."¹ It is a fact of life that positive reinforcement works better than the criticism and threat of punishment.²

Guilt is another "in your face" approach to confrontation. The situation at times warrants the use of guilt and it is an effective device. Griffin says, "Guilt is a powerful tool to get people to do what they wouldn't do normally."³ But there are several side effects to guilt.

1. Avoidance. We tend to stay away from someone who makes us feel guilty. This includes God.
2. Devaluation. This works both ways. Listeners tend to not like those who intensify their guilt and the preacher may tend to assume a condescending attitude toward the listener.
3. Backsliding. An outward response is weak in the long run. Repentance comes from conviction within the heart and is the work of God and not the preacher.⁴

Guilt is not completely bad but as with the use of fear it should be used judiciously and it should always be accompanied with a way out.

Along with the use of guilt, blaming and shaming are confrontational techniques that have been utilized. Augsburgur warns that blame "evokes resistance and resentment."⁵ He also holds that whatever probes for shame guarantees its own defeat. Blame and shame are powerless "to effect change and growth."⁶ Why does shame and blame affect some so deeply? Augsburgur suggests that it peels back the veneer and looks at what lies beyond. He says blame and shame tap into our memory. Then he

¹Ibid., 30.

²Ibid., 101.

³Ibid., 62.

⁴Ibid., 63, 64.

⁵Augsburger, 75.

⁶Ibid., 76.

concludes, “The truth of your past is known only in part. Even to you.”¹ No one, therefore, can sit in judgment but God. To abuse the privilege of visiting one’s past is nothing more than spiritual abuse and does not serve the gospel. One the other hand, to recognize the reality of one’s past failures and then to experience grace frees all to be reconciled with the past and make necessary change for the future.²

Flight

When faced with a confrontive situation the opposite position to take is to flee. Placing the issue to the side for the foreseeable future may do this. One does not concede, the subject is simply sidestepped and an otherwise tense, confrontive incident is delayed. This might be compared to the soft-sale approach. It may be a valid and effective strategy at times. Perhaps the preacher needs to build rapport with his congregation, or take time building a series of sermons to bring the listener along with him. But, there comes a time when, after having established one’s credibility, the preacher must take a stand.

Griffin gives a scathing indictment to any preacher who is so paranoid of being manipulative that he never confronts the listener. Perhaps this appears to be the gentle and loving approach, but Griffin calls this kind of preacher a “non-lover.”³ Griffin says, “The detached stance . . . is a luxury unavailable to the Christian.”⁴ Augsburgburger points out that sometimes we think we are doing the kind thing by avoiding honesty but often, in the end, this turns out to be the cruel thing.⁵

Care-fronting

David Augsburgburger suggests another option for resolving conflict is through “compromise.” This is the frequent avenue to peaceful coexistence and saving relationships.⁶ Compromise works well with

¹Ibid., 80.

²Ibid., 82.

³Griffin, 32.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Augsburger, 27.

⁶Ibid., 14.

issues of preference, but to compromise truth is to concede to error. On the other hand, to dig in one's heels and bluntly proclaim truth might be equivalent to picking a fight with another.

Augsburger proposes a model of conflict management that keeps channels of communication open, while at the same time maintaining the credibility of truth. He calls this "care-fronting."¹ Christian psychologist Howard Clinebell, Jr., concurs, "Confrontation plus caring brings growth just as judgment plus grace brings salvation."² Care-fronting is caring enough to confront but doing so while remaining in "respectful relationship."³ Augsburger compares the essential elements of care-fronting to two arms: "confrontation with truth; affirmation with love."⁴

Care-fronting is not to be confused with simple tact nor relegated to mere diplomacy. It shares, however, similar characteristics to these two.⁵ As previously seen in contemporary communicative principles, listening to the other side is key to closure and understanding. So it is with care-fronting. Listening, however, is not a manipulative tool. In care-fronting listening occurs in order to hear another accurately. It is "attuned to the feelings, the joys, the hurts, the angers, the demands of another."⁶ When the time comes to speak, care-fronting speaks simply and directly without innuendo or passing judgment on another's motive and feelings. Speaking honestly is one of the essential tools of care-fronting.

Care-fronting owns up to anger. It is far from being dispassionate. It even recognizes and validates the preacher's anger. Augsburger states, "Anger is a positive emotion, a self-affirming emotion that responds reflexively to the threat of rejection or devaluation with the messages (1) I am a person, a precious person and (2) I demand that you recognize and respect me."⁷

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 20.

³Ibid., 15.

⁴Ibid., 20.

⁵Ibid., 54.

⁶Ibid., 26.

⁷Ibid., 42.

Augsburger observes that the energies of anger can be used for a positive influence: “(1) to change my own behavior which ignored the other’s preciousness and (2) to confront the other with his or her need to change unloving behavior.”¹ Augsburger says “you can be both angry (at behaviors) and loving (toward persons) at the same time.”² Care-fronting guards the value and is mindful of the dignity of another. Care-fronting focuses on the *action* not on the *actor*. Earlier it was observed that in managing conflict in the pulpit the preacher should deal with the issues apart from personalities involved. To condemn a person for his or her action is to devalue a precious child of God. Evoking change in the lives of the listeners is the goal of prophetic preaching. Augsburger shows that care-fronting results in such change when he observes, “To critique the behavior affirms the other’s freedom to change.”³

If that expected change, however, is not forthcoming, love does not stop.

Confrontation invites another to change but does not demand it. The confronter does not make the continuation of the friendship hang on a change of life in the confronted. Acceptance of the other person is not connected to agreement or disagreement. Acceptance does not exclude differing; it frees us to differ more fully, frankly, effectively.⁴

“Caring” is the first task of care-fronting and only after it has been firmly secured can “confronting” follow. This is basic to the concept of care-fronting. More cannot be drawn out than has been put into the relationship. The old adage stands true; “Others will not care to know what I know until they know that I care.” The care-fronter leads with love rather than power.

The care-fronter must first establish trust, the basis to any relationship and essential to building friendships. Trust can only be obtained by taking the risk of being vulnerable. If the care-fronter refuses to open up and be vulnerable the listener will perceive her to be pretending. On the other hand, when the preacher is vulnerable she proves herself to be authentic. Augsburger calls vulnerability repentance,

¹Ibid., 43.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 54.

⁴Ibid., 53.

because in being vulnerable one owns up to her humanness.¹ This humanness enables the preacher to connect with the audience for the purpose of bringing about change.

Summary

Is assuming a fighting posture for truth's sake really an option? This all depends on the objective of the preacher—to defend the truth or change hearts for the kingdom of God. Laying the truth on the line and “letting the chips fly” may be a courageous way of defending the truth but it is not effective in changing hearts! When the preacher confronts her congregation by using guilt, exhibiting traits of anger, speaking in judgmental tones, or brow-beating the congregation, she is assuming a fighting posture. She may win the fight and even gain favor from the “Amen” corner. This strategy, however, is ineffective in winning the opposition over to the truth being shared.

On the other hand, to acquiesce is equivalent to compromising the truth. There comes a time when the preacher is called as “prophet” to take a stand and make the position of the Lord known. Tolerance cannot take precedence over truth. To decline from speaking out on a matter of divine principle is to render one virtually useless to the cause. One becomes an unfaithful servant hiding one's light under a basket.

Care-fronting offers the preacher a vehicle to faithfully proclaim truth while, at the same time, offering friendship to the listener. Care-fronting is in harmony with what has been previously seen regarding contemporary homiletical strategies and techniques of persuasion. The preacher listens to the listener and connects with the listener's concerns. The preacher identifies with those concerns and shares his own struggle and pilgrimage with the matter at hand. He may even share his own anger and failure. But in it all, truth emerges in a simple, unswerving manner. While the listener's dignity and value are never denigrated, honest and strong appeals for change may be made. Yet, the listener's freedom to choose or not to choose is maintained. The preacher presents the truth in love, not because it is the safe thing but because it is the thing that Jesus did!

¹Ibid., 105.

Proposed Strategy for Preaching Unpopular Truths and Unfelt Needs

This homiletical strategy was designed for preaching truths that the preacher senses are unpopular or unperceived by the congregation. These may be needs of which the preacher perceives the congregation is oblivious, apathetic, or resistant. This strategy was based on the inductive communication approach. Attention was given especially to the story line, distinguishing the character of the story and identifying the perspective from which the story was told. The story was presented from the perspective of either the first, second, or third person. Other perspectives entered the story as secondary characters, but one perspective dominated.

This strategy called for the identification of issues, positions, or attitudes of the listeners towards the necessary truth that were presented. It also identified the interests that listeners had behind their positions and addressed those interests in the unfolding story. The preacher took inventory regarding his own feelings or personal life experiences that he had in common with his listeners. These enabled him to connect with his listeners as well as allowed them to identify with him.

After identifying the “unfelt need” or “necessary truth” to be addressed, a Bible passage or a selection of inspired texts were chosen. This strategy did not demand an exposition but required a Bible-based approach. Sources and data outside the inspired Word were employed; however, the Bible was preeminent.

In sermon preparation the most essential thing the preacher desired his listeners to hear was articulated in one or two sentences. Similar in purpose to the traditional thesis sentence, this was a distilled expression of the sermon’s message. In like fashion, the preacher identified what change is desired in the mind and life of the listener.

Computer-generated slides were projected on a screen. These slides assisted the listeners in following the Bible passages, reading supportive sources, graphs, and clusters of points. The slides complimented the sermon but did not overwhelm the main feature—the Word.

The development of this sermon strategy may be understood as a three-pronged “process”:

1. Care-fronting process
2. Prophetic process

3. Designing process

The concept of “processes” better suited this strategy than the term’s “stages” or “steps.” When a step or stage is completed the preacher progresses to the next step. In the process, on the other hand, insights and information secured while working on any of the three processes could have immediate impact on the other two processes. There was always interplay between the three processes. For example, the preacher might discover new insight into the nature of the listener’s animosity towards a truth (care-fronting) while investigating related biblical passages (prophetic). In this event he or she would go back to the previous process and make adjustment. On the other hand, even as the preacher is assessing what truth is being neglected (care-fronting), related Bible passages surface that will be used in the prophetic process.

The sermon strategy along with facilitating questions is shown in the following outline.

I. Care-fronting process

A. What truth needs to be presented?

1. What truth is being neglected?
2. What truth is met with ambivalence?

B. What is my listeners’ position regarding this truth?

1. What are my listeners’ interests behind their position?

C. What is their ultimate need?

1. How will this ultimate need meet my listeners’ interests?

D. What are the necessary steps that need to be taken to lead my listeners from their “felt needs” to their “ultimate needs?”

E. What relevant feelings and personal life experiences do I have in common with my listeners that might enable me to connect and identify with them?

II. Prophetic process

A. What biblical passages best address the ultimate need that has been identified?

1. How will this biblical message meet my listeners’ interests?

B. What other sources and data will clarify the ultimate need or solution?

- C. What hope can be offered to my listeners?
- D. What is the most essential thing I am trying to say or that I want my listeners to hear?
- E. What change do I desire in the life and mind of my listeners?
 - 1. What do I want my listeners to do or feel?

III. Designing process

- A. What inductive story line will this sermon assume, i.e., narrative, exposition, topical?
- B. From who's perspective will this story be viewed—first, second, or third person?
 - 1. Who is the story's main character?
 - 2. In what way will my listeners identify with this character?
- C. What slides are necessary to assist my listeners in connecting with the truth?
 - 1. How can the slides make this message clearer and easier to follow?

This strategy was not intended to be followed as a sermon outline. Any inductive outline suggested by Lowry, Crum, or others may be utilized at the preacher's discretion. The preacher may organize his thoughts and present elements from the above processes in any number of inductive ways. The sermon may be introduced, for example, by presenting the biblical passage that addresses the "ultimate need" rather than first addressing "listeners' interests." Or, the sermon may be initiated by telling a story and presenting the central passage later. In whatever sermon outline the preacher adopts, however, it is essential that the issues and questions in the above three processes all be addressed. When addressing unpopular or neglected truths, the "process approach" proposed in this project would better ensure that God's message is proclaimed in a caring manner without compromising the preacher's prophetic calling.

CHAPTER 6

THE SERMON SERIES

Development of the Sermon Series

Questionnaires were administered to three separate groups—pastors, denominational administrators, and the members of the Spokane Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church. Each group received a different questionnaire. These questionnaires were based on similar surveys used by Daniel Smith in his Doctor of Ministry project and were prepared in consultation with Roger L. Dudley and the project committee.¹ The questionnaires themselves and the results are in Appendix A.

All three questionnaires solicited from each person their opinions and attitudes regarding preaching. Questionnaires administered to all three groups served a twofold purpose: (1) to solicit opinions and attitudes towards preaching and (2) to discover what subjects needed to be addressed in a sermon. The latter was useful in selecting topics worthy of being addressed in a series of eight sermons addressing unfelt needs.

Questionnaire Administered to Congregation

A questionnaire was administered to the Spokane Valley congregation during the eleven o'clock worship service on November 15, 1997. Ninety-six individuals representing a broad cross-section of the congregation responded to the questionnaire. Of the eight age categories, response from ages 46-60-year-olds was the strongest with 29 responding and 36-45-year-olds with 22 responding. The least response came from the 1-12-year-olds with 4 responses and 19-24-year-olds with 5 responses. Seventy-three percent of the responses came from individuals over 35 years of age.

¹Daniel G. Smith, "Preaching to an Institutional Congregation" (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1987).

Question 1

Question 1 asked: *“What particular topic or truth would you personally appreciate hearing addressed in a sermon?”* Eighty members responded to question 1 with several suggesting more than one topic. These responses for the most part fall into seven distinct categories as indicated in table 5.

TABLE 5
TOPICS VALUED FOR SERMONS

Topic	Responses
1. Daily living—how to cope with life, how to have victory, how to be a good citizen, etc.	14
2. Distinct SDA issues—sanctuary, dress reform, Ellen White, health reform, Sabbath, etc.	13
3. Righteousness by faith—assurance, forgiveness, God’s love, etc.	12
4. Last day events—preparing for the Second Coming, end-time events, etc.	11
5. Second Advent and heaven	10
6. Jesus—his life and ministry, the person of Jesus, etc.	9
7. Witnessing—how to share one’s faith, understanding other belief systems, etc.	8

A strong youth contingency favored sermons on heaven and the Second Advent. Several mentioned their imagination was captured when I vividly described heaven and the Second Coming of Jesus. This may be an allusion to several sermons preached on this subject in the previous weeks.

Other topics receiving singular mention were—women’s ordination, creation versus evolution, inspiration and revelation, Bible-based sermons, corporate worship issues, and how to have fellowship in the church family. Christian education, a major ministry in the Valley church, sponsoring a grades K-9 parochial school, received two requests as well as sermons dealing with the Old Testament. Three responses directly affirmed the preaching of the pastor.

No concerns were expressed regarding the social needs of the community such as the plight of the homeless, feeding the hungry, growing gang violence, illiteracy, or abortion. Little reference was made to family issues such as divorce, marriage, and parenting. The issue of innovative corporate worship practices had in recent months received a rather high profile in the Adventist community in North America, yet, in the survey, only one respondent raised this issue.

Question 2

Question 2 asked: *“Is there a truth or belief that is being neglected by our church that should be addressed in a sermon?”* The question is twofold: (1) What truth is our church neglecting? (2) What neglected truth is worthy of being addressed in a sermon? Neglected does not necessarily imply that sermons have not addressed this truth. The phrase “by our church” could imply that there is negligence among fellow members regarding this truth.

Table 6 indicates that responses fell in four major categories. Other truths mentioned dealt with issues of style of worship, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of Sabbath school attendance. One expressed disdain for the pastor’s sermons while another affirmed him.

TABLE 6
NEGLECTED TRUTHS NEEDING TO BE PREACHED ABOUT

Topic	Responses
1. Distinct SDA issues—sanctuary, dress and health reform, Sabbath, etc.	12
2. Christian love—selfless service, nonjudging, kindness, no gossip, courtesy, etc.	6
3. Last day events—preparing for the Second Coming, end-time events, etc.	5
4. Righteousness by faith—assurance, forgiveness, God’s love, etc.	4

Again, this congregation exhibited firm denominational loyalties. Yet, there was a balancing sentiment that adhered strongly to Christian tolerance. The Spokane Valley SDA Church is concerned with preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus. There appeared, however, to be little concern for hearing social problems broached in a sermon. Responses to this question might lead one to conclude that there was a prevalent desire to hear sermons confirming things already believed rather than addressing new concepts.

Question 3

Question 3 stated: *“When you say, ‘The pastor preached a good sermon today,’ you generally mean”* Church members were given six options based on a 10-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being “strongly agree” and 10 being “strongly disagree.” The options were: “The pastor captivated me—held

my attention with humor, illustrations, etc.," "taught me some things I did not know," "confirmed me—in something I already believed," "inspired me—in something I knew I should do," "helped me—encouraged me," and "helped convict me—of sin." Over 60 percent of responses for all of the above questions were marked 1-3 towards "strongly agree." A strong sentiment did not prevail towards a particular option.

Table 7 reveals the importance assigned each.

TABLE 7
WHAT IS VALUED IN GOOD SERMONS?

Ranking	Question 3
1	Helped me
2	Inspired me
3	Taught me
4	Confirmed me
5	Convicted me
6	Captivated me

Although transmission of new information (taught) is not top priority, it is important. When a similar question was posed to the strongly institutional Newbury Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, "taught me" was the least important factor in good sermons, whereas the Spokane Valley church rated it third out of six.¹ Other options were ranked in similar fashion between the two congregations. This would indicate that although the Spokane Valley church feels a need to be motivated and inspired towards what is right and good, it is a matter of importance that they hear or see new truths and insights.

Question 4

Question 4 stated: "*I would rather hear sermons that*" Church members were given five options in response to this question based on a 10-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being "strongly agree" and 10 being "strongly disagree." The options were sermons that: reaffirm in a traditional way what I

¹Ibid., 166.

already know and believe, say things I know and believe in a new and interesting way, bring conviction to my heart or point out a need for a deeper commitment in my life, discuss subjects I have not fully understood, and use quotes from Ellen White.

Eighty percent of the respondents marked between 1-3 towards “Strongly agree” for “bring conviction to my heart” and “discuss subjects I have not fully understood.” These responses seemed to confirm the findings in the previous question, which suggested that the congregation’s highest priority was to be motivated and inspired in what they already knew while at the same time being taught new insights. Reinforcing these conclusions was the strong sentiment expressed *against* “reaffirming in a traditional way old truths.” This congregation was opposed to hearing tired clichés and rehearsals of that which they are already familiar. A strong sentiment also prevailed against using quotes from Ellen White. This could have been a reaction to a previous era of abusive and excessive use of her published statements.

Table 8 ranks these categories according to the ratings assigned by the survey. This finding might indicate that although the Spokane Valley congregation cherished old truths, they did not identify with “old fashion” presentations. They desired to hear fresh new insights that target the heart.

TABLE 8
NEW VERSUS OLD

Ranking	Question 4
1	Bring conviction and deeper commitment
2	Discuss subjects not fully understood
3	Say in new and interesting way
4	Uses quotes from Ellen White
5	Reaffirm in traditional way/already known

Question 5

Question 5 asked: “*What presently causes you a substantial amount of guilt?*” Church members were given eleven options in responding to question 5. The options were: inadequate devotional life, not witnessing enough, not giving more financial support to the church, not keeping the Sabbath properly, not

fully or consistently living up to the standard of the church, not being ready for the last days, acting in an unchristian manner towards others too often, not using time wisely, watching too much TV, inappropriate thoughts, and neglecting to follow health principles more closely.

In descending order based on a 10-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being “problem causing guilt” and 10 being “have no problem here,” those areas that were rated highest as not causing guilt, e.g., “have no problem here,” were, (1) “watching too much TV,” (2) “not keeping the Sabbath ‘properly’,” (3) “not giving more financial support to the church,” and (4) “neglecting to follow health principles more closely.” Moderately weighted on the “no guilt” side were “not full or consistently living up to the standards of the church” and “acting in an unchristian manner towards others too often.”

The areas that rated highest as “problem causing guilt” were, (1) “not being ready for the last days,” (2) “not witnessing enough,” and (3) “inadequate devotional life.” General ambivalence was expressed towards “not using time wisely,” which was weighted in the middle, while “inappropriate thoughts” was spread across the spectrum. Table 9 reflects the order in which I would rank issues related to guilt. Categories are ranked in descending order from those that do not cause guilt.

TABLE 9
AREAS CONTRIBUTING TO GUILT

Ranking	Question 5
1 (No guilt)	Watching too much TV
2	Not keeping Sabbath “properly”
3	Not giving more financial support of the church
4	Neglecting to follow health principles more closely
5	Not fully or consistently living up to the standards of the church
6	Acting in an unchristian manner towards others too often
7	Inappropriate thoughts
8	Not using time wisely
9	Not being ready for the last days
10	Not witnessing enough
11 (Causing guilt)	Inadequate devotional life

Question 6

Question 6 instructed: *“Evaluate the following categories according to which topic or truth you would most like to hear addressed in a sermon during the next two months.”* Church members were given 14 sermon topics based on a 10-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being low priority and 10 being top priority. The sermon categories were: Christian education, witnessing, forgiveness, marriage/family, Sabbath observance, stewardship, social issues, 1844/sanctuary, health/temperance, attire/jewelry, how to build a relationship with Jesus, Spirit of Prophecy, impact of TV/movies, and Second Advent.

Clearly the number one top choice was “how to build a relationship with Jesus” with seventy rating it number one for top priority. “Second Advent” was rated second place and “forgiveness” was third. This is in harmony with earlier indications of desired subjects to be addressed in sermons.

The ranking of the top nine categories in table 9 was based primarily on how weighted responses were on the “top priority” side of the spectrum. Most responses were weighted towards “top priority.” The largest number of points rated “attire/jewelry,” however, as being the lowest priority subject. The exact order in which the four categories of “1844/sanctuary,” “Christian education,” “health/temperance,” and “stewardship” should be ranked could be a matter open for discussion. Data, however, clearly place all four of these categories at the bottom of the list. Based on the above, table 10 ranks the categories in descending order from top to low priorities.

Question 7

Question 7 asked: *“Overall, how relevant and helpful are most sermons to you?”* Church members were given the opportunity to rate sermons on a 10-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being “relevant” and 10 being “not relevant.” Seventy-nine percent responded by circling the three highest numbers indicating most sermons were relevant to them. This suggests a general degree of satisfaction with the sermons heard at the time the survey was taken.

Question 8

Question 8 asked: *“Of any ten typical sermons preached by your pastor, how many would you estimate were fine-tuned to meet your particular needs?”* Church members were given an opportunity to

TABLE 10

CATEGORIES OF SERMONS FOR CONGREGATION

Rank	Categories
1	How to build a relationship with Jesus
2	Second Advent
3	Forgiveness
4	Sabbath observance
5	Marriage/family
6	Spirit of Prophecy
7	Impact of TV/movies
8	Witnessing
9	Social issues
10	1844/sanctuary
11	Christian education
12	Health/temperance
13	Stewardship
14	Attire/jewelry

write a number indicating their sentiment. Thirty-four percent of the responses rated 8 to 10 sermons as fine-tuned. Thirty percent indicated 5 to 7 sermons as being fine-tuned. This indicates that although a degree of satisfaction existed with the preaching in the Spokane Valley congregation, there was room for improvement.

Summary

These data were of value in determining what are the unmet needs of the Spokane Valley congregation. These unmet needs were addressed in the sermon series. The least favored topics in question 6 warranted further consideration. Data also revealed that the Spokane Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church desired sermons practical in nature and couched in the context of the soon return of Jesus and the end of time. There was a strong loyalty to denominational identity in this congregation. Old truths, however, were better received when presented in new and fresh ways. Furthermore, there was a yearning to more deeply experience a living relationship with God.

Questionnaire Administered to Pastors

In the winter and spring of 1997 a questionnaire was administered to 17 pastors of the Upper Columbia Conference serving Seventh-day Adventist churches in eastern Washington and the panhandle area of Idaho. Eleven of those who responded were 36-55 years of age, while three were younger than this age spectrum and three were older. The size of the congregations these preachers served ranged in membership from 140 to 1,900 with the typical congregation numbering 300. The average length of time they had pastored in their current district was two years and ten months. Two pastors indicated they had been at their current post for 10 or more years, two others for eight years, and one for six months. The average years each had served in ministry was 17.43 years with one indicating 30 years of accrued experience, two with 29 years, one with 25 years, and one with 2 years.

Question 1

Question 1 asked: "*What have you found to be the special needs held in common by members of your congregation?*" This question required the pastors to reveal what they thought their congregation valued. What did the pastors perceive as being their listeners' felt needs? Several responses rendered more than one suggestion. Without question the number one need pastors felt their congregation valued was the need for a devotional life and a relationship with Jesus. Self-esteem was rated equally as high as the need for friendship among members as a third felt need of their congregations. The sanctified life and pastoral mentorship each received two responses. Singular mention was made of the need to worship, witness, and family issues. Only one intimated that members needed distinct Adventist truths addressed.

These perceptions of congregational felt needs do not appear to be in harmony with those revealed in table 5 by the Spokane Valley church. Self-esteem and the need for friendship were issues not once proposed by the Valley membership. Valley members were much more interested in distinct denominational truths. However, both pastors and the Valley congregation agree that topics dealing with a relationship with Jesus are a priority.

Question 2

Question 2 asked: "*Do you perceive congregational needs of which the members are not aware?*"

If so, please describe." This question targeted needs of which the congregation may be unaware but perceived by the preacher. Most needs expressed fall into two areas: (1) A need for renewal and revitalization, and (2) a need for love, acceptance, and forgiveness. Several expressed a need regarding lifestyle issues, and one pastor indicated there was a prevalent social need in his congregation—illiteracy.

Question 3

Question 3 asked: "*What truths are your members neglecting to apply and/or affirm in their lifestyles that are a concern to you?*" This question is another attempt to secure needs that may be unperceived by the congregation. This pertains to truth of which the congregation is aware but not practicing. Perhaps there is a discrepancy in their lives between faith and practice. The clear majority of pastors feel that members are neglecting distinct Seventh-day Adventist truths, i.e., Sabbath observance issues, health and dress reform, and the Spirit of Prophecy. Yet pastors declined to indicate a need in this area when given opportunity in the previous two questions. Previously we have seen that the sentiment of the Spokane Valley congregation values their distinctive denominational values, thus they concur with the pastors.

As with the Valley members, pastors rated strongest a need for members to experience the gospel and have a living relationship with Jesus. Adventist pastors perceived that this is the solution to members' shortcomings. This perception is held in common by Spokane Valley members.

Question 4

Question 4 contained three related parts, the first being: "*What have you discovered to be unpopular subjects or truths about which your congregation would prefer you not preach?*" Seven pastors indicated they could preach with freedom in their congregation. Several mentioned a resistance to sermons challenging members' lifestyle and comfort. The remaining pastors made reference to money, issues involving sex, distinct Adventist truths, love and acceptance, and exclusive attitudes.

The second part of Question 4 asked: "*On the average, how often do you preach on these unpopular truths?*" Pastors were given four choices to circle: (1) *often*, (2) *occasionally*, (3) *infrequently*,

and (4) never. Thirteen of the 17 pastors responded with 8 indicating they “occasionally” preach on unpopular truths, 2 indicated “often,” 3 “infrequently,” and none indicated “never.”

The third part of Question 4 asked: “*How does your congregation generally respond when you preach about unpopular truths?*” The majority of the pastors related a positive response to sermons addressing unpopular truths. One indicated that acceptance depends on the way in which the unpopular truth is presented. Five indicated they meet passive aggression—cold silence. A couple of pastors have experienced criticism.

Question 5

Question 5 directed pastors: “*Evaluate the following categories according to which topics you think your members generally feel they need and would most value hearing addressed in a sermon during the next two months.*” Pastors were given 14 sermon topics based on a 10-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being “low need” and 10 being “high need.” The sermon categories were: Christian education, witnessing, forgiveness, marriage/family, Sabbath observance, stewardship, social issues, 1844/sanctuary, health/temperance, attire/jewelry, how to build a relationship with Jesus, Spirit of Prophecy, impact of TV/movies, and Second Advent. This question solicited the pastor’s perception of his or her congregation’s felt needs. It did not ask what the pastors personally value but what their members’ prefer to hear them preach about.¹

The top seven most-popular topics and bottom six least-favored topics were clearly rated as indicated in table 11. Sentiment was divided at either end of the spectrum regarding “Spirit of Prophecy” and “1844/sanctuary” thus rating these two topics towards the middle of the categories. The perception of the pastors as to congregational felt needs follows fairly close to those indicated by the Spokane Valley congregation. There were no widely held differences in ratings between the congregation and the pastors for the most part. “Impact of TV/movies” was rated noticeably higher by the congregation and lower on

¹The same topics presented in the congregational questionnaire were administered to the pastors. Due to a typographical omission, “Holy Spirit” was not included in the survey administered to the congregation. Pastors rated “Holy Spirit” in the middle of the categories; therefore, it was not a factor affecting either end of the spectrum. For this reason the “Holy Spirit” is not included in table 11.

the scale by pastors, who placed it third from the bottom while the congregation placed it eighth from the bottom. The single topic pastors and congregation agreed upon was “attire/jewelry” which ranked at the bottom of the categories for both groups.

Question 6

Question 6 asked: *“If you could preach only three of the above 15 topics, which three would you*

TABLE 11
PASTORS AND CONGREGATION COMPARED

Rank	Congregation	Pastors
1	How to build a relationship with Jesus	Second Advent
2	Second Advent	How to build a relationship with Jesus
3	Forgiveness	Marriage/family
4	Sabbath observance	Forgiveness
5	Marriage/family	Witnessing
6	Spirit of Prophecy	Sabbath observance
7	Impact of TV/movies	Spirit of Prophecy
8	Witnessing	1844/sanctuary
9	Social issues	Stewardship
10	1844/Sanctuary	Health/temperance
11	Christian education	Social issues
12	Health/temperance	Impact of TV/movies
13	Stewardship	Christian education
14	Attire/jewelry	Attire/jewelry

choose?” Without question pastors’ top sermon choices were “how to build a relationship with Jesus,” “Second Advent,” and “forgiveness.” Three topics not selected by any pastor were “Christian education,” “social issues,” and “attire/jewelry.” Four out of 17 pastors indicated “marriage/family” and “stewardship” were among their favored topics. Two pastors chose “witnessing,” “Sabbath observance,” and “1844/sanctuary.” Receiving one choice were “health/temperance,” “Spirit of Prophecy,” and “impact of TV/movies.”

Question 7

Question 7 asked: *Which do you feel are the two most neglected truths in our denomination*

today?” Their response was not confined to the 15 topics listed in question 5. Two major areas surfaced in the pastors’ minds as being neglected truth in the Seventh-day Adventist community. The first, and perhaps most important truth considering it is the bedrock of Christianity, is a need to get back to the gospel and a relationship with Jesus. Seven indicated subjects related to this great need. The other most frequently mentioned neglected truths were lifestyle issues. Integrating the Bible into everyday living, entertainment choices, living Godly lives, and treatment of fellow humans were mentioned as areas of major concern in the Adventist community.

Also held by pastors as neglected truths are distinct Adventist issues such as dress reform, prophetic destiny of the Adventist church, and the sanctuary message. Several made note of inspiration and revelation or faithful adherence to the Bible as a matter of concern. Also, more than a few mentioned the priesthood of all believers and discipleship. One suggested anger management and marriage.

Summary

Major areas of concern noted by pastors were congruent with those chosen earlier by the Spokane Valley congregation. As with the Spokane Valley congregation, there was a strong desire to remain faithful to the gospel and yet maintain distinct denominational identity. If the Spokane Valley congregation is any reflection of the churches these pastors serve then it appeared that these preachers were in touch with the mind-set of their flocks. In question 5, which categorizes sermons, there was a correlation in the congregational and pastoral selections. The corroboration of data between the Spokane Valley congregation and pastors strongly influenced the topics that I chose to address in the series of sermons addressing unmet needs.

Questionnaire Administered to Administrators

Fifteen questionnaires with self addressed and stamped envelopes were personally hand delivered to administrators and departmental heads of the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Spokane, Washington, on August 20, 1998, with nine responding. Nine questionnaires with self addressed and stamped envelopes were mailed to administrators and department leaders in the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Portland, Oregon, with three responding. These

denominational leaders travel extensively to sister churches, thus proving their broad perspective to be of value.

Question 1

Question 1 asked: "*What have you found to be the special felt needs generally held by your constituent members?*" Administrators were more verbose than either members or pastors in their response. A close look, however, at the responses revealed that the following four categories repeatedly surfaced:

1. Assurance, forgiveness, acceptance, grace, or restoration
2. Community, friendship, help in crisis, or someone to listen to them
3. Devotional life or a relationship with Jesus/God
4. Biblical preaching, spiritual food, and application of biblical principles to real life.

The first three areas are in harmony with both the congregational and pastoral survey responses. Two other categories, distinct denominational doctrines and eschatology, were each mentioned twice. Topics pertaining to Sabbath observance, mission/witnessing, victory/lifestyle issues, and the Holy Spirit received one reference each. In comparing these responses to that of the Spokane Valley congregation, it appears that these administrators clearly understand their members to have a predominant sense of need for grace and salvation.

Question 2

Question 2 asked: "*Do you perceive congregational needs of which the members are not aware? If so, please describe.*" Two administrators expressed that members do not understand their need for a devotional life. Witnessing and mission was also referred to twice. The prevalent concern referred to by administrators was a lack of loyalty and commitment to both the church and its distinct doctrinal message. This perception of administrators is not in harmony with what was previously seen of the Spokane Valley church members, who greatly valued hearing messages that affirmed in a fresh way the distinct denominational beliefs and doctrines.

Question 3

Question 3 asked: "*What truths are our North American Division members neglecting to apply*

and/or affirm in their lifestyle?" Administrators along with pastors clearly rate the distinct Adventist doctrines as being neglected by members. Administrators, however, were more specific in identifying truths such as dress, health reform, and observance of the Sabbath as being predominately ignored by Adventist members. Although prayer and righteousness by faith were each referred to once, administrators did not identify grace-centered truth as the solution to members' shortcomings as did pastors and the Spokane Valley congregation.

Two influences singled out by administrators as having a negative impact on Adventists' behavior was entertainment choices and movies—each mentioned once. Christian education, Bible study, Spirit of Prophecy, the sanctuary/judgment message, and stewardship were, likewise, mentioned once. Witnessing/discipleship was mentioned three times and marriage/family issues, twice.

Question 4

Question 4 instructed: *"Evaluate the following categories according to which topics you think your constituents generally feel they need and would most value hearing addressed in a sermon during the next two months."* Administrators were given 14 sermon topics based on a 10-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being "low need" and 10 being "high need." The sermon categories were: Christian education, witnessing, forgiveness, marriage/family, Sabbath observance, stewardship, social issues, 1844/sanctuary, health/temperance, attire/jewelry, how to build a relationship with Jesus, Spirit of Prophecy, impact of TV/movies, and Second Advent. This question solicited the administrators' perception of his constituency's felt needs. It did not ask what the administrators' personally valued but what sermons their members valued hearing them addressed in a sermon.

There is only one category of sermons that received a complete consensus among pastors, members, and administrators—"attire/jewelry." All three rated it the least favored sermon. All also agreed that "health/temperance" should be placed in the bottom third of sermon categories. Members and administrators agreed that "1844/sanctuary" should be listed among the least popular topics. With the exception of members rating "Sabbath observance" slightly higher, table 12 reveals that all three surveyed groups generally agreed that "how to have a relationship with Jesus," "forgiveness," "marriage/family," and "Second Advent" are the most desired topics of those listed. Whereas members rated "Sabbath observance" among their more preferred sermons, administrators indicated they perceived North American

members at large would rate it among the bottom five. Likewise, members moderately rated “Spirit of Prophecy” while administrators rated it fifth from the bottom.

Table 12 shows that a discrepancy exists between members and pastors/administrators over the “impact of TV/movies” which members rated in the middle of all categories, but pastors/administrators placed second from the bottom. Although pastors positioned “Christian education” lower than members, administrators placed it slightly higher. All three assigned “Christian education” in the lower half of the categories.

Another great discrepancy between members’ and administrators’ perception is with “stewardship” which members rated second to the bottom and administrators, fifth from the top. Sermons addressing “social issues” were also rated slightly higher by administrators than they were by members. Pastors categorized it lower than did the congregation.

TABLE 12
CONGREGATION, PASTORS, AND ADMINISTRATORS COMPARED

Rank	Congregation	Pastors	Administrator
1	How to have a relationship with Jesus	Second Advent	How to . . . with Jesus
2	Second Advent	How to . . . with Jesus	Forgiveness
3	Forgiveness	Marriage/family	Marriage/family
4	Sabbath observance	Forgiveness	Second Advent
5	Marriage/family	Witnessing	Stewardship
6	Spirit of Prophecy	Sabbath observance	Witnessing
7	Impact of TV/movies	Spirit of Prophecy	Social issues
8	Witnessing	1844/sanctuary	Sabbath observance
9	Social issues	Stewardship	Christian education
10	1844/Sanctuary	Health/temperance	Spirit of Prophecy
11	Christian education	Social issues	Health/temperance
12	Health/temperance	Impact of TV/movies	1844/sanctuary
13	Stewardship	Christian education	Impact of TV/movies
14	Attire/jewelry	Attire/jewelry	Attire/jewelry

Note: “Holy Spirit” was not included in the survey administered to the congregation. Therefore, the “Holy Spirit” is not included here.

Question 5

Question 5 asked: *“If you could preach only three of the above 15 topics, which three would you choose?”* Administrators gave the highest priority to “Second Advent” and “how to have a relationship with Jesus.” The second choice for preaching was “forgiveness.” Sharing the third most popular were “marriage/family” and “1844/sanctuary.” “Christian education” and “Sabbath observance” received one vote each.

Question 6

Question 6 asked: *“Which do you feel are the two most neglected truths in our denomination today?”* Responses were not confined to the 15 topics listed in question 5. In comparison to pastors who chose truths pertaining to salvation as the most neglected truths, administrators identified distinct Adventist doctrines such as the judgment and the 1844/sanctuary message. Three church leaders mentioned Spirit of Prophecy. Inspiration and revelation, state of the dead, the remnant church, and discipleship received one vote each. Forgiveness also received a single reference. All other concerns singularly mentioned dealt with areas of distinct Adventist lifestyle and behavioral issues, i.e., dress reform, entertainment, obedience, sanctification, keeping the Ten Commandments, and the mark of the beast.

Question 7

Question 7 asked: *“What criteria do you use to evaluate a pastor’s preaching ability?”* Administrators evaluate sermons in two main ways: (1) their affective results, i.e., how well they catch and hold hearer’s attention, and (2) homiletical technique, i.e., content, organization of material, and clarity. Two indicated it was important to them that Scripture be used. The integrity and credibility of the speaker were two criteria for several church administrators.

Summary

Administrators were concerned with Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle and behavioral issues more than either pastors or the Spokane Valley church members. Also, the Spokane Valley congregation indicated in their responses a stronger commitment to doctrine as well as denominational loyalty than

administrators perceive is generally shared by Adventist church members. Nevertheless, administrators rated sermon topics in similar fashion to both the Spokane Valley congregation and pastors. This combined with the administrators' strong concern regarding a laxness in lifestyle issues gave direction in determining what needs the congregation may have of which they are unaware.

Concluding Summary

All three groups surveyed agreed that a personal devotional life and strengthening one's relationship with Jesus is the ultimate felt need. This is especially revealed in their responses to question 1, which is the same question in all surveys. When ranking the categories of sermons, this need again became apparent.

It does not appear that there were substantive differences in the perception of the needs and expectations of members for preaching between the three groups surveyed. Administrators expressed their concern regarding lifestyle issues among members more strongly than did either members or pastors. Yet, Spokane Valley members indicated they value hearing sermons addressing distinctive Seventh-day Adventist truths (table 6). They make it clear, however, that they want to hear these truths presented in a fresh package. On the other hand, in question 2 in the congregational survey, members indicated they had little guilt over some issues that administrators and pastors perceive as being neglected truth among Seventh-day Adventists, e.g., TV/movies and health/temperance. Members also rated these same categories at the bottom of the list of their preferred sermons. Moreover, pastors and administrators predicted for the most part what sermons members would not desire to hear (table 12). This could be an indication of the members' misperception of their own needs.

Selecting Sermon Topics

The immediate task was to select eight topics for sermons that address needs of which the Spokane Valley church is unaware. This process was not as simple as choosing the eight least popular categories rated in the surveys. Unpopular categories, however, should be closely considered as prime candidates for preaching needs that are not perceived by the congregation. The sermon topics chosen, with the rationale behind their selection, are now discussed.

1. **Attire/jewelry.** All three groups placed this topic at the bottom of the list (table 12).

Administrators buttressed this concern as a neglected area. Also, in six years of pastoring the Spokane Valley congregation, I had never addressed this topic in a sermon. Several visiting speakers have addressed the issue, but no one from the pastoral staff had done so in recent memory.

2. **Stewardship.** This is one area pastors and administrators predicted members would rate higher than they did. Rated second from the bottom by members, this apparently is indeed not a “felt need.” There had been a tremendous emphasis on stewardship in association with the new church building project. But having moved into the new facility, less was being said regarding this issue. On the eve of preaching the sermon series, the church treasurer expressed a concern that there could be a waning in members’ interest in stewardship. Three local church committees—the church board, the building committee, and the capital stewardship committee—requested that stewardship be revived and addressed from the pulpit.

3. **Health/temperance.** Although the health and temperance leaders and committee have addressed this issue regularly from the pulpit as well as offering various educational events, over the previous six years I had not preached a sermon on the subject. I had relegated the topic to the “professionals” in the health industry. In the survey, members indicate they do not want to hear a sermon on health and temperance. Administrators indicated that this is a major area of neglect among members. Although not as adamant, pastors concurred. Members have expressed to me concern over what they have witnessed in the lives of fellow members and requested that I preach on this subject. Pointed out were especially the Levitical laws setting forth clean and unclean food. Furthermore, I personally have witnessed need in this area.

4. **Christian education.** Members indicated that they did not want to hear this area addressed in a sermon. I usually deliver two sermons a year on the subject and have delivered as many as four. The school board, furthermore, requested that I deliver a sermon on Christian education as the new school year was beginning.

5. **1844/sanctuary.** The Spokane Valley church family is no different from the Adventist church at large when it comes to relating to this truth—vastly differing opinions regarding its significance

and relevance. Some members, while loyal to their church, question the traditional position the Adventist church has historically taken. Rated low by members in the survey, some have gone as far as to vocally request that I not preach on the “cleansing of the sanctuary” or the significance of “1844.” Over the past five years evangelists in their nightly meetings have approached this subject when most of the congregation was not present. In the surveys, both administrators and pastors singled this out as a neglected truth.

6. **Social issues.** While other preachers in the community at large address social needs, i.e., plight of the homeless, abortion, gambling, etc., nothing is heard along these lines from the Spokane Valley pulpit. All three groups surveyed equally ignored this issue. Perhaps this is a need unrecognized by pastors, administrators, and members alike. Out of fourteen categories, members rated this issue sixth from the bottom, perhaps showing they were not necessarily opposed to it but rather ambivalent.

7. **Impact of movies/TV.** Members ranked “impact of movies/TV” towards the middle of the fourteen options (table 11). Administrators predicted members would place it second from the bottom and pastors, third. Members felt somewhat of a need in this area. Yet, they clearly indicated this was an area that did not cause substantial guilt. The Spokane Valley church’s youth leaders, school teachers, Sabbath school teachers, elders, and the associate pastor for youth ministries inform me this was an area of major concern among all our members. Several urged me to address this issue in a sermon.

8. **Corporate Worship.** This is an issue virtually ignored by all three of the survey groups. Its not being included in the suggested categories of sermons may have influenced this lack of response. Several members, however, have expressed to me concern regarding a need for reverence in the Spokane Valley church and a desire to have the meaning of the Sabbath worship service explained. These concerns came from both ends of the conservative-liberal spectrum. In the end, choosing “corporate worship” as an “unfelt need” to be addressed in a sermon was spawned by two events. First, since the surveys were set in place I have come under the conviction that this was an area that needed to be included. This conviction was born out of a change in a more open style of corporate worship that has evolved while I have pastored the Spokane Valley congregation. Also, it stemmed from the congregation’s reaction to the recent move into a new facility thus altering the atmosphere in the church auditorium. Second, one month prior to

preaching the series of sermons, the board of deacons formally requested a meeting with me and expressed their concern over the lack of reverence in our new church. The discussion that followed led us to an understanding that the congregation needed to be informed regarding the biblical nature of worship, which is the basis of awe and reverence.

Perhaps an argument could be raised for including “witnessing” and “Spirit of Prophecy” among the “unfelt needs” to be addressed. The congregation rated “Witnessing” slightly lower than “impact of movies.” Administrators and pastors evaluated members’ interest in “witnessing” slightly stronger than did members themselves. Perhaps the lack of interest stems from the fact that there has been an emphasis in this area over recent years and members feel that this is not one of the more pressing needs. True, more than a few indicated that “not witnessing enough” was a cause of guilt, but this could be an indication that this is in fact a “felt need.” The sermons delivered in this project attempted to identify and address “unfelt needs.”

“Spirit of Prophecy” was a need strongly identified by administrators as a neglected truth. Members indicated that they do not desire to hear quotes from the Spirit of Prophecy, i.e., Ellen White (table 8). This does not necessarily mean they are neglecting or rejecting this truth. Members simply desire that the writings of Ellen White be used in a proper and responsible manner. There has been a consistent emphasis on the “Spirit of Prophecy” throughout the history of the Valley church. This subject continues to be given exposure yearly and is not one of the more pressing needs.

Sermon Topics Implementing the Homiletical Strategy

Of the eight sermons chosen, the following four used the proposed homiletical strategy:

1. Christian education
2. Stewardship
3. Corporate worship
4. Health/temperance.

The remaining four sermons, addressing the issues of dress reform, the sanctuary message, the impact of movies and television, and a social issue, ignored the strategy.

Presentation of Sermon Series

A series of eight sermons was preached in the Spokane Valley church between August 29 and November 7, 1998. See Appendix B. The congregation was apprised that these eight sermons were part of a doctoral project and that the survey they had previously filled out would have an impact on the series. No one, however, was privy to the nature of the project regarding a homiletical strategy addressing the congregation's "unfelt needs."

Sermons Implementing the Proposed Strategy

The homiletical strategy used in the first four sermons in this series required me to consider a series of questions found above on pages 126, 127 in preparation for this sermon.

Sermon 1: Christian Education and Reflections on Delivery

Sermon 1, on Christian education, was entitled, "A School Fit for Jesus." It was told from the perspective off the school-boy Jesus. I was disappointed with my delivery of this sermon. It started out well with apparent listener interest. The illustrations and main story about Jesus went well, but when I moved into four points of what constitutes an excellent school, I felt I lost attention. I found it awkward using the computer; yet, one of the weaknesses of this sermon was the lack of effectively using more slides. Bible passages, quotations, and statistics could have been featured on the screen. The greatest weakness, however, in this sermon's design was its use of the Bible. Another problem was with timing, as the worship service was so full that I was not able to start preaching until ten minutes before the normal concluding time. Using the students to illustrate the *Valuegenesis* data was very effective in recapturing attention. However, this should have been better rehearsed, as there was a degree of confusion when positioning the students.

In spite of this sermon's humbling experience, there was a positive response. Registration for the church-sponsored school increased the next week at registration and members made written commitments of \$5,000 for Christian education at the conclusion of the sermon. Also, in the following week several members went out of their way to thank me for a new perspective on Christian education. A pastor from

another denomination in attendance came to my office the following week expressing his interest in the message.

Sermon 2: Stewardship and Reflections on Delivery

Sermon 2, on stewardship, was entitled, "The Gift that Kept Returning." It was told from the perspective of the single-mother of Zarephath. I felt that this sermon was one of the best I have ever delivered. The delivery came naturally, interests seemed to be held, and I found the use of slides not to be cumbersome as in the previous sermon. This sermon was well rehearsed including practicing with the use of the slides. Attention was especially given in strengthening the use of the Bible. There was difficulty again in other elements of the worship service infringing on the preaching time.

Positive response was immediately expressed. The following week, however, affirmed that something special had transpired in this sermon. One elder visited my office and shared that he had dreamed of the day he could give an entire paycheck as tithe. The following Sabbath he did so. A former elder confided that he had stopped tithing. The next Sabbath he put in the offering collection his first tithe in over two years. A single mother inadvertently met me in a department store, urgently reached into her purse and smiled as she pushed into my hand a check already made out to the church for her tithe. One family relocating to the area had been debating whether they should return tithe on the money received from a recently sold home. They went out of their way to come to my office and share the value of this sermon in giving them concrete direction.

Sermon 3: Corporate Worship and Reflections on Delivery

Sermon 3, on corporate worship, was entitled, "Should We Talk in the Church?" It was told from the perspective of the congregation. I felt very good about this sermon. There was freedom in delivery, listener interest appeared to be strong, and manipulating the slides came naturally. As with the previous sermon, this message was well rehearsed enabling me to maintain eye contact with the congregation and the freedom to be more animated. Employing humor in the introduction set the tone for what could otherwise have been a weighty subject. Feedback was strong coming from several directions.

Not only immediately after church but also in the following week while visiting members in their homes and work place, members referred back to the message. My head deacon, accompanied by several of his assistance thanked me for my approach to the subject. One member who does not attend worship every Sabbath sent me an email thanking me for the sermon that she said was for her “a life-time over due.” Members with biases from either end of the spectrum indicated that they had heard the sermon say that in worship God is the spectator and we are the performers. In the ensuing weeks there was a noticeable difference in the atmosphere in the church auditorium.

Sermon 4: Health and Reflections on Delivery

Sermon 4, on health and temperance, was entitled, “Did Jesus Make Pork Clean at the Cross?” It was told from my perspective. There was a two-week lapse since the last sermon had been preached pertaining to this project. One week I had to address a personal crisis to the congregation and the next week a visiting singing group led out in the worship service and message. This time off admittedly gave me opportunity to become well acquainted with this message. Health reform was not a subject I would have chosen to preach on during the worship service. It turned out, however, to be one of the more rewarding sermons. We had a lot of fun with it. The congregation connected and gave verbose feedback throughout. Knowing the material so well enabled me to freely move about the auditorium, leaving the platform several times. The sermon lagged slightly as we looked at the requirements of Lev 11. I found the slides invaluable in expediting rules and lists mentioned therein.

Response was strong immediately after the worship service with numerous attendees verbally responding and interacting to the message they had heard. One elder left a message on my voice mail that this was the best sermon she had ever heard on health reform. Another senior member whispered the same as she left church. A young lady in her late teens said, “Thank you, pastor. I have relatives who are not Adventists, too. This will help me relate to them.” Another middle-aged couple who have been members most of their lives smiled, “Excellent! An intelligent approach to an old subject. We can see that you have restudied this issue.”

Sermons Ignoring the Proposed Strategy

The following final four messages all ignored the proposed strategy that had been used in the previous sermons. All addressed unfelt needs as did the first four sermons.

Sermon 5: Jewelry and Reflections on Delivery

Sermon 5, on Jewelry, was entitled, “Rightly Dividing the Word Regarding Jewelry.” This was a three-point inductive sermon that did not attempt to identify the perspective from which the story line was viewed. The design of the sermon was intuitive. I must admit that I could not ignore the sentiments of many of my listeners who feel agitated by this topic, as I am aware of several who have been the victims of spiritual abuse associated with dress reform. My illustrations and the emphasis on not judging others were influenced by these feelings. Nor could I be indifferent to those who feel that this subject is core to the gospel. I feared their disapproval.

I dreaded delivering this message more than any other sermon in this series. I decided to be upfront with my listeners and candidly shared with them in the introduction my reticence. This message had perplexed me so much that I had given it an inordinate amount of time in my thinking; thus it flowed out of my mind passionately. Acquainted so thoroughly with the material gave me freedom to maintain eye contact and move about with ease. Still, I feared there might be some repercussion for venturing from what some might feel is the denomination’s loyal and official position.

Compounding the situation was a five-week evangelistic series that we were half way into that was responsible for a number of new guests being in attendance—some for the first time! This was not the subject I would have chosen and did so only because of the doctoral project. Response, however, was extremely positive with protests coming (and rightly so) from a few regular members sensitive to the feelings of our guests. One such guest wearing earrings requested membership into our church fellowship that day. She thanked me for the sermon indicating she had heard “some legalistic things about what Adventist believe about how one should dress.” A few long-time members contacted me in the days following the message and expressed a fear that this approach to dress reform would open a floodgate of abuse and license. The months following proved these fears to be unfounded.

I did not sense any difference in effectiveness and response between this sermon and the prior four intentionally using the proposed process approach.

Sermon 6: Sanctuary Message and Reflections on Delivery

Sermon 6, on the sanctuary message, was entitled, “Taking Your Sins to the Laundry.” This message is distinct to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Historically it is rooted in an understanding of Dan 8:14 and Lev 16. I chose to present it on this Sabbath, being five days before the anniversary of October 22, 1844, which many Adventists feel was the fulfillment of the time prophecy of Dan 8:14. I felt that to do justice to the subject in the available time demanded the focus be on an explanation of the “cleansing of the sanctuary” and its end-time significance rather than on the time elements, i.e., the 2300 days, the year-day principle, and 1844. The time elements, however, could not be ignored. Slides displaying the 2300-day time line enabled me to make expedient references to this issue.

Greater attention was given to the slides in this sermon than any other in this series. Particular care was given to slides that displayed an overhead view of the wilderness tabernacle with red arrows moving in the direction the sacrificial blood was applied on the Day of Atonement (the cleansing of the sanctuary) as opposed to the daily sacrifices. This was one of the most essential points in the sermon as it shows the blood removed the record of sin from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement.

I felt I had adequately prepared an exposition of the “cleansing of the sanctuary”; however, I asked myself, “How is this time prophecy relevant to my congregation?” The word “cleanse” in Dan 8:14 jumped out at me as meeting their need—all have a need to be cleansed from sin. As a jumping board into the sermon I used the biblical concept of how we need to wash our robes (Rev 22:14). A laundry basket filled with dirty clothes was used as a prop. I believe this proved to be the highlight of the sermon. One the other hand, I sensed interest slipping away as I moved into an explanation of the earthly sanctuary service and its heavenly counterpart. I do not think most ever understood what I was trying to illustrate on the slides with the red arrows moving in and out of the tabernacle.

This sermon was the most difficult one to design and deliver. It was too complicated in its design and failed at truly connecting with the congregation. Had I to preach it over again, I would be up front

and admit that this is a controversial message and with candor simply ask them to grant me their attention and that I have some new light on an old subject. Then I would start with an explanation of the sanctuary and end with the significance of its cleansing.

Sermon 7: Movies and Reflections on Delivery

Sermon 7, on movies for entertainment, was entitled, "Going to the Movies." Feedback from this sermon was strongly favorable. One mother left a message on my voice mail saying she had discussed this issue of appropriate movies with her 12-year-old son in the week prior to this sermon and felt my preaching it was providential. Many have requested that future sermons and seminars on this subject be planned. This proved to be an effective message that obviously touched a nerve.

Perhaps this was the most deductive of all the sermons in this series. I disclosed from the start that I was talking about movies and television viewing, and how they impact our mind. I then made an attempt to overwhelm my listeners with evidence of the detrimental effect of unrestrained viewing habits. Care was also given to use an array of pertinent Bible passages. Key passages were displayed on slides.

More slides were used in this message than any other in the series. Many of the thirty-one slides had transitional effects besides. This was very effective in the presentation of statistics, percentages, and data. This, however, would have been an encumbrance had I not known my material well. With so much data I decided to preach from a manuscript. Early in the sermon I experienced difficulty in maintaining eye contact, trying to watch both the screen and my manuscript. I turned my attention to the slides and used them as my outline.

It was reported to me by several that one of the most effective moments of this sermon was when I shared my own struggle with watching television and how God had helped me. During the sermon I felt at that moment connected to the listener. The one difficulty with this sermon was its length. I tried to say too much. It would be best to turn this message into a series of three or four sermons.

Sermon 8: Social Issue and Reflections on Delivery

Sermon 8, on a social issue, was entitled, "Are Our Kids Safe from Street Gangs?" It was

perplexing for me to settle on one particular social issue but, after considering abortion, gambling, feeding the hungry, or building shelter for the homeless, I chose to address the growing gang violence in our community. This issue had received recent publicity in the media and had been brought to the attention of local pastors in a minister's meeting. In the forty-five-year history of the Spokane Valley church, minimal concern has been expressed from the pulpit for social issues. Perhaps this was not the most favored of the sermons in this series, but it received some positive feedback.

As with the previous sermon on movies, I attempted to be more deductive in my approach as opposed to the inductive design of the proposed strategy. Slides, again, proved to be invaluable in presenting the data. Also, knowing my material well offered me freedom to connect with the listener and allowed me to use the slides as an outline rather than copious notes. My delivery would have been more effective had I been better acquainted with the data.

In the final stages of the preparation I realized this message had virtually no Bible passages. I introduced the sermon with passages that spoke to the responsibility resting on Christians to care for the social needs of the community surrounding the church. I came back to the same biblical emphasis towards the end. Still, I would rate this sermon low on the use of Scripture.

Evaluation of the Sermon Series

Every week throughout the series a small group consisting of thirty-four members of the Spokane Valley SDA Church gathered in a classroom immediately after the worship service and completed a written evaluation of the sermon. Members of this group came from all age levels of the church and equally represented the genders. No consideration was given to either education or occupation when selecting this group.

The instrument used for evaluating the sermons consisted four questions. Questions 1, 2, and 4 used a five-point scale. The instrument appears in Appendix A. Questions 1, 2, and 4 reflect the value respondents placed on the sermon. Responses to these three questions were tabulated and combined into composite, average figures as indicated in tables 13 and 14.

TABLE 13
POST-SERMON SURVEY RESPONSES
FOR SERMONS USING STRATEGY

Question	Sermons			
	#1 Christian Education <i>n</i> = 34	#2 Stewardship <i>n</i> = 27	#3 Worship <i>n</i> = 28	#4 Health <i>n</i> = 25
Question 1				
Overall quality	4.00	4.66	4.25	4.76
Use of Bible	3.91	4.48	4.35	4.92
Captured attention	4.41	4.59	4.50	4.72
Length	3.67	4.44	4.67	4.75
Clarity	4.38	4.59	4.66	4.76
Subject covered adequately	4.64	4.88	4.51	4.68
Relevance	4.52	4.77	4.67	4.60
Emotional appeal	4.29	4.44	4.35	4.40
Total	4.23	4.60	4.49	4.70
Question 2				
Relevant to congregation?	4.39	4.53	4.62	4.37
Question 4				
Spiritual need filled?	4.41	4.70	4.66	4.76

TABLE 14
 POST-SERMON SURVEY RESPONSES
 FOR SERMONS NOT USING STRATEGY

Question	Sermons			
	#5 Jewelry <i>n</i> = 22	#2 Sanctuary <i>n</i> = 28	#3 Movies <i>n</i> = 26	#4 Gangs <i>n</i> = 26
Question 1				
Overall quality	4.61	4.66	4.76	4.46
Use of Bible	4.81	4.67	4.57	4.03
Captured attention	4.63	4.67	4.61	4.60
Length	4.68	4.46	3.96	4.38
Clarity	4.57	4.64	4.69	4.73
Subject covered adequately	4.61	4.64	4.76	4.69
Relevance	4.61	4.75	4.92	4.76
Emotional appeal	4.28	4.59	4.61	4.34
Total	4.60	4.63	4.61	4.49
Question 2				
Relevant to congregation?	4.50	4.70	4.80	4.75
Question 4				
Spiritual need filled?	4.65	4.57	4.84	4.79

The third question solicited a written response from evaluators.¹ It became apparent after the survey of the first sermon that age should be included as a factor. Reviewing the 34 responses, most seemed to be aware of the burden and subject of the sermon. My sermons, however, seemed to be incomprehensible to five or six individuals. Judging by the handwriting, those who had difficulty understanding my message were the younger ones. Sermons 2 through 8 added data pertaining to age and gender of the evaluators.

Sermons Implementing the Proposed Strategy

Sermon 1: Christian Education

This was rated as the least effective of the eight sermons in this series. On a scale of 1-5 this sermon scored 4.23. For all questions and in each category, with the exception of “overall quality” and “subject covered adequately,” evaluators rated this sermon lower than any other. The written responses reveal that the evaluators understood the burden of the message. Based on the low scores they chose, however, one would surmise they understood what was said but did not like how it was said. I agree with this overall assessment of this sermon.

Sermon 2: Stewardship

I personally considered this to be my best sermon of the series in terms of my delivery and audience attentiveness. Responses, however, evaluated it as being rather mediocre—sharing fourth from the top along with jewelry. It did rate highest of all eight sermons for “subject covered adequately” and it was a close second highest for “relevance.” It tied with Sermon 6, Sanctuary, for the second highest position of “overall quality.” Most disappointing was in its low rating for “use of the Bible” as I gave careful attention to strengthening this area. This sermon, however, was an exposition and stayed close to one passage as opposed to comparing a plethora of texts, which some may feel better embraces Bible study. Then again, responses may indicate that evaluators did not agree with the way I interpreted the passage. Rated third from the bottom of all sermons for “clarity,” this was also disturbing since written

¹Responses may be found in Appendix A.

responses to question 3 indicate virtually all understood the message. The narrative style may contribute for it being rated rather high for “emotional appeal.”

Sermon 3: Corporate Worship

This is another sermon I felt good about and had positive feedback. Evaluators, however, consistently rated it mediocre and placed it at the very bottom of the series of eight sermons in two areas—“overall quality” and “subject covered adequately.” It was placed third from the bottom in “use of the Bible.” This, again, is perplexing since I used a variety of passages as well as did an exposition of a passage. It rated highest—third from the top out of all sermons—in “length.” Written responses indicate that evaluators understood the thesis but responses to question 4 reveal that their spiritual needs were not met as well as by other sermons.

Sermon 4: Health

This is clearly the highest rated sermon of the series. Sharing the number one position with Sermon 7, Movies, it alone was rated number one for “overall quality,” “use of the Bible,” “captured attention,” “length,” and “clarity,” and it also had the highest total composite score. Evaluated with 4.96 out of the possible 5 points in the area of “use of the Bible,” it earned the single highest score given to any category in this series of sermons. The strong proof-text approach to Bible study might contribute to this high rating. Written responses to question 3 show that all but one grasped the spiritual intent of the message. With such positive response it came as a surprise that this sermon was rated as the very lowest of all sermons for question 2, “relevant and helpful to the congregation.” Embellishing this was its second to the bottom placement for “relevance” in question 1. This might indicate that although the congregation enjoyed or appreciated this message, it did not address their felt or unfelt need.

Sermons Ignoring the Proposed Strategy

Sermon 5: Jewelry

This sermon was the first of four that intentionally ignored the proposed strategy. Similar to the previous sermon in the use of the proof-text method, it rated second highest for “use of the Bible” and “length.” It rated third highest for “captured attention” but a low rating to “relevance.” Answers to

questions 2 and 4 reveal that the sermon did not address a personal need of the congregation. This could be interpreted to mean that though the evaluators found it interesting, they did not feel it was for them. Rated of all sermons lowest for “emotional appeal” could indicate that listeners were detached from the topic. With one exception, written answers to question 3 bear out that the message was understood. One written response suggested that this message was not appropriate for the worship hour with guests present, some of whom were there for the first time. I was especially disappointed with the low response to “clarity”—second from the bottom. One ordained minister who is a member of the Valley church called me on the telephone and asked, “What exactly were you trying to say?” Composite scores for all other categories rated this sermon in the medium range.

Sermon 6: Sanctuary Message

This sermon rated surprisingly high. It rated second place for the total composite score. It was third highest in “use of the Bible” and “relevant and helpful to the congregation,” as well as fourth for “length” and “clarity.” Written responses indicate that there was ambiguity in understanding the sermon’s thesis. All responses, however, touched in some way on a portion of the sermon. Most disappointing was evaluation of, “Did this sermon fill the spiritual need?” where it was rated seven out of the eight sermons. Yet, it was rated third highest as being “relevant and helpful to the congregation.” This might reflect that although the evaluators valued this message and felt it served a real congregational need, it came short of meeting its potential. A very low rating given to “subject covered adequately” seems to substantiate this observation.

Sermon 7: Movies

Sharing the number one position for “overall quality” with Sermon 4, Health, this sermon also rated highest in four other areas—“relevance,” “emotional appeal,” “relevant and helpful to the congregation,” and question 4 pertaining to how well it filled its intended need. It rated second highest of all sermons for “subject covered adequately” and third for “clarity.” Given its overall strong rating, I was surprised at how it was rated mediocre in “captured attention.” This sentiment might be a reflection on the time element considering that the worship service went well beyond the normal concluding time. I

was not surprised when it rated second from the bottom in “length” with a 3.96—one of only three times the rating dropped below 4.00 for any sermon. This notwithstanding, the written responses to question 3 indicate that the majority understood the burden of the message. I was therefore surprised that it was not rated lower for “use of the Bible” since my personal bias conjectured this was one of my weaker sermons in this area, yet it placed fourth from the top.

Sermon 8: Social Issue

Ratings for this last sermon seemed to be contradictory. Categories placed extremely low were “overall quality,” “use of the Bible,” “length,” and “emotional appeal.” “Captured attention” was moderately low; yet, evaluators indicate its “clarity,” “relevance and helpfulness to the congregation,” and “fulfilling the spiritual need” were second highest of all sermons. Likewise, in question 1 it rated third highest in “relevance.” This could reveal that evaluators feel this is a worthy subject but not so effective in its presentation was not so effective. On the other hand, responses placed it third strongest of all sermons for “subject covered adequately” which might imply that this sermon was substantively strong but not interesting.

Post-Project Feedback Session

A post-project evaluation session was conducted on December 5, 1998, involving 26 of the 33 members who had evaluated the eight-week sermon series that was part of the project. A single sheet of printed information was provided to each member present listing the sermons preached, giving a short explanation of my doctorate proposal and sermon strategy, and six questions that solicited discussion and feedback.¹ I initially led out in the group taking them through the outline placed in their hands and summarizing the nature of my project and its purpose. Then after giving opportunity for participants to question me, I dismissed myself. Amos Cooper facilitated the meeting in my absence leading them in a discussion of the six questions on the feedback sheet. Pastor Cooper is a retired minister/administrator holding a Master of Divinity degree and serves the Spokane Valley church as head elder. His wife, Vera,

¹See Appendix A.

also an elder of the Spokane Valley Church, took notes on the responses.

Pastor Cooper later reported to me that the evaluation group asked him to express that they felt that “all sermons preached by Pastor Ferguson are above average including the sermons presented in the doctoral project.” He furthermore reported, “The topics addressed in the sermon series for this doctoral project, however, would not have been their most favorite subjects. These sermons did indeed address topics that would not have been selected as felt needs.” Pastor Cooper shared, “It was the consensus of the evaluation committee that the eight sermons preached in this project effectively addressed topics that were not as popular as others.”

Of the eight sermons, the evaluators specifically mentioned five with several indicating that the sermon on television/movies was relevant and eleven rated high the sermon on health issues because of its “strong use of the Bible.” The sermon addressing Christian education, on the other hand, was identified as an effective sermon but weak in the use of Scripture. The sermon on stewardship was commended for the manner in which it related the ancient context of the Bible times with the present age. The group admitted that the sermon on social issues opened their eyes to see beyond their comfort zones to the needs of the community around them.

There is a decisive difference in expectation of how the Bible is to be used in the pulpit. Twelve of the 26 evaluators indicated that they preferred the proof-text method, while eleven were inclined to an exposition of a central passage. Almost half the group did not feel they have studied their Bibles unless they have compared Scriptures throughout the Bible. These were strongly resistant to calling Bible study a message taken from one passage no matter how long that passage may be or how in depth the study.

All felt the use of the media was very positive and indicated that projecting on the screen passages, data, and outlines were a tremendous assistance in clarity. It helped the listener follow and keep track of the line of reasoning. Evaluators felt, however, that the passion the preacher brings to the message is more important than the use of the screen or props for illustrative purpose.

Concern was expressed over the time allotted for the sermon in the worship service. The overwhelming consensus was that the sermon time is too often robbed by other elements in the worship

service. Several expressed that rating the sermons too long was not so much a reflection on the length of the sermon as it was on the length of the worship service.

Summary

Respondents rated all sermons high with the lowest composite score for any one category being 3.67 out of a possible 5.00. Therefore, all sermons in this series were rated as acceptable. The specific purpose of this evaluation, however, was to draw a comparison between the four sermons using the proposed strategy and those ignoring it. Of all the sermons in the series, both the highest and the lowest rated were among the four using the proposed strategy—Sermon 1, Christian Education, and Sermon 4, Health. Although Sermon 4 rated as the highest, listeners never seemed to feel that it addressed their particular need thus rating it low as being relevant. This would seem to indicate that the strategy failed to meet its designed purpose of bringing to light an unmet need, or perhaps in its inception I misread this topic as an unmet need. On the other hand, in the post-series feedback session, 11 out of 26 respondents volunteered that they had especially been blessed by this sermon particularly in the way it used the Bible. This might indicate that this message effectively served to affirm the congregation's faith in an old truth, and this would fulfill the strategy's purpose.

The apparent failure of Sermon 1, Christian Education, may be due not so much on the strategy as a poor use of the strategy. In the following sermons as attention was given to better "use of the Bible," incorporating more slides for clarity, and guarding the time allotted for preaching, ratings went up accordingly.

Composite scores for Sermons 6, Sanctuary, and Sermon 7, Movies, rated respectively second and third highest although these messages did not use the proposed strategy. In fact, Sermon 7, Movies, rated highest in answer to question 2, "relevance to congregation," as well as question 1 for overall "relevance." In the post-series feedback session, several expressed this message met a particular need of the congregation. Likewise, was the sentiment for Sermon 8, Gangs, also a sermon not using the proposed strategy. The congregation in the survey given prior to the series clearly did not favor either of these sermons. This favorable post-sermon response indicates that messages on these unpopular or neglected truths were well received in spite of their neglect of the proposed strategy.

Sermon 2, Stewardship, which used the strategy, was the sermon most favored by me personally. Yet, it was rated rather mediocre by respondents with a composite score equal to that of Sermon 5, Jewelry, which did not use the proposed strategy. Likewise Sermon 3, Worship, which used the strategy, was rated equal with Sermon 8, Gangs, which did not use the strategy.

Based on the responses and post-series feedback, one may conclude that this series of sermons addressing unpopular or neglected truths did effectively fulfill its desired purpose. There is, however, no conclusive evidence that the proposed strategy used in the first four sermons proved to be more effective than those used in the final four sermons. Neither did the sermons using the proposed strategy rate lower than sermons not using the strategy. Therefore, the proposed strategy, which is designed to ensure a balance between “care-fronting” issues and the “prophetic” calling to preach the Word, may be considered viable as a homiletical strategy but not necessarily more effective than other homiletical strategies.

As I look back over all eight sermons preached I ask myself, “What factor most greatly influenced connecting with the listeners? Is there one factor standing out above all others?” My response is, “Yes, there is one factor—emotional investment.” Bryan Chappell referred to this element in preaching as being paramount. I found this to be true in this sermon series. All eight sermons demanded and received a great emotional investment from me. The goal of this study was not to preach four good sermons using a proposed strategy and four bad sermons that ignored the strategy. I tried hard to make all eight sermons work—prayerfully pouring over each sermon in research, preparation, and delivery. I believe this came through to my congregation and they sensed my passion and authenticity.

Another observation that stands out regarding this sermon series pertains to the three-pronged homiletical strategy. I embraced an inductive strategy because this was the favored method of the preachers of the Bible. I established the three-pronged homiletical strategy—Care-fronting process, Prophetic process, and Designing process—to promote connecting with the listener without compromising the Word. Again, as I look back over the eight sermons I realize that all sermons, whether inductive or deductive, used all three to a degree. For example, all eight sermons used the Word as effectively as possible. Also, all eight used computer generated slides. In fact, comparing the slides from the earlier

sermons to the latter ones reveal that as the series continued the quality and quantity of the graphics and slides improved.¹ The best slides may be found among the final sermons that did not use the strategy.

All eight sermons contained the Care-fronting process. True, there was not the intentional effort to systematically analyze the listener's needs in the four sermons ignoring the strategy. On the other had, I cannot deny that there was an intuitive assessment of my congregations needs. When a preacher is concerned about people, she or he will try hard to preach the best possible sermon and be a blessing to the listeners. This I did equally in the four sermons using the strategy as well as the four that ignored it.

It must be remembered that this project was not confined to the measuring of the effectiveness of a homiletical strategy. This project also set out to identify unpopular truths and unperceived needs of the Spokane Valley SDA Church and then address them in a series of sermons. All eight sermons, e.g., those using the sermon strategy and those not, were aimed at preaching unpopular needs and to unperceived needs. The post-sermon survey indicated that all eight sermons accomplished this goal. So, what do we make of this outcome? I have been impressed with this fact: the well-prepared and internalized sermon will reach people regardless if it is inductive or deductive. The proposed three-pronged homiletical strategy is a viable tool to this end.

Do I still hold that the inductive method of preaching is more preferred than the deductive approach? Yes, because it was preferred by Old and New Testament preachers including Jesus. I also continue to favor the inductive method because it better lends itself in capturing the attention of the hearer.

Certain implications come out of this study for the local and worldwide church. The desire of preachers to preach interesting sermons should not eclipse the prophetic calling to preach the Word. There must be a balance between preaching to felt needs and preaching to unmet needs. Prophet-preachers today must find ways to arrest the listeners' ear while at the same time caringly confront with the truth. To retire from this calling is to cater to "itching ears" (2 Tim 4:3).

¹See Appendix B.

I readily admit that I feel the undertow and tug to preach messages that will be popular with my congregation, to overemphasize subjects that I know will engender personal affirmation. I suffer at times from a fear of rejection if I am not overly sensitive to what my congregation considers to be relevant. Through this study, however, I have experienced a renewed awareness that the prophet-preacher is not called to be interesting but to faithfully preach the Word.

The prophet-preacher will desire nothing more than for the listener to accept the Word preached. This necessitates an analysis of the listeners' interests, life situation, language, comfort level, values, and needs. It also demands that the preacher identify with the listeners and gain their confidence. This effort, however, is for the purpose of preaching the Word and changing listeners into the image of God.

Recommendations

This study compared eight topics that the congregation indicated they did not desire to hear addressed in the pulpit, four using a specific homiletical strategy and four ignoring the strategy. Doctoral students in future projects might select a homiletical strategy and employ it to all eight sermons. Four, however, would address the topics rated most popular with the congregation and four rated as the most unpopular subjects.

This study considered one homiletical strategy that addressed unpopular as well as unperceived needs. Future studies might consider focusing on one or the other of these unfelt needs.

This study considered the issue of effecting change in the listeners. Future studies could survey listeners before the sermon to ascertain their position on the topic to be preached. The same listeners would be surveyed after the sermon to measure any change in the listener's position or perceptions of the subject or truth addressed in the sermon.

Surveys and questionnaires could compare the responses to the sermons based on genders, age categories, or comparing those new in the church with the more seasoned members. The same series of sermons could also be preached in two congregations with a comparison being made between the two.

Finally, the proposed homiletical strategy for this project was inductive. A series of sermons could be preached, half inductive and half deductive, with a comparison being made between the two strategies.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRES

- c. Not giving more financial support to the church 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- d. Not keeping the Sabbath "property" 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- e. Not fully or consistently living up to the standards of the church 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- f. Not being ready for the last days 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- g. Acting in an unchristian manner towards others too often 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- h. Not using time wisely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- i. Watching too much TV 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- j. Inappropriate thoughts 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- k. Neglecting to follow health principles more closely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. On a scale of one to ten evaluate the following categories according to which topic or truth you would most like to hear addressed in a sermon during the next two months:
(1 = top priority, 10 = low priority)

- a. Christian Education 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- b. Witnessing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- c. Forgiveness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- d. Marriage/Family 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- e. Sabbath Observance 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- f. Stewardship 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- g. Social Issues 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- h. 1844/Sanctuary 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- i. Health/Temperance 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- j. Attire/Jewelry 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- k. How to build a relationship with Jesus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- l. Spirit of Prophecy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- m. Impact of TV/movies 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- n. Second Advent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Overall, how relevant and helpful are most sermons to you?
 ← Relevant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not relevant →

8. Of any ten (10) typical sermons preached by your pastor, how many would you estimate were fine-tuned to meet your particular needs? _____

9. Do you regularly attend the Spokane Valley SDA church? _____ Yes _____ No

10. Please circle your age category:

- _____ 0-12 _____ 13-18 _____ 19-24 _____ 25-35
- _____ 36-45 _____ 46-60 _____ 60+

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Spokane Valley SDA Church Survey on Preaching with Summary

This survey was administered during the eleven o'clock worship hour on November 15, 1997 in the Spokane Valley Adventist Church. Ninety-six individuals responded to the questionnaire, though not all answered every question. Of eight age categories, response from the 46-60 year olds was the strongest with 29 responding. Twenty-two responses came from members between the ages of 36-45 years old. The least response came from the 1-12 year olds with 4 responses and 19-24 year olds with 5 responses. Seventy-three percent of the responses came from individuals over 35 years of age.

1. What particular topic or truth would you personally appreciate hearing addressed in a sermon?

There were 34 individuals who responded to the first question. Responses were organized in seven categories.

Daily living—our daily struggles with sin and temptation and how to deal with them; fellowship with fellow Christians, God's power; prophets of the Old Testament; Old Testament stories applied to day; what teenagers are going through being Christians; practical Godliness and the integration of our profession in Jesus in relationship to culture we live in; being a true Christian in the home with your family as being the biggest test of your walk with God; more spiritual, biblical, and devotional substance without long stories to make a single point and with less humor; you are doing a good job, keep it up; how to keep eyes firmly placed on God; Christian values; effects of negative emotions and getting through the frustrations of life—seeing the big picture which is heaven; that little people are just as important as those who live in fancy houses and wear nicer clothes, etc.; authority and accuracy of Scripture; time management.

SDA issues—Three Angels Message; Adventist "hot potato" issues such as jewelry, Sabbath keeping, being holy, grace versus righteousness, meat eating; how much weight should we put on Ellen G White's writings? Ordination of women; really living the Christian life; clean animal for food and issues pertaining to food/health message; keeping the edges of the Sabbath; what makes the SDA message different or unique from other churches/our heritage; why do we receive blessings: by sacrifice or by chance? Seven day creation versus evolution; importance of Christian education (chosen by two) in shaping our children's lives; more on the subject of the Sabbath and our basic doctrines; encouragement; what makes Adventist distinct versus seeker sensitive program's; sanctuary doctrine; the great controversy and Satan's challenge to God

Righteousness by faith—righteousness by faith [four responses], God's love and forgiveness; what can really get you to heaven; the love of God for us all; how to experience faith, hope, and love in Jesus; Faith, faith, faith; forgiveness (including oneself); the gospel, what Jesus wants us to believe and how we can love Him most and share with others.

Last day events—last day events [six responses] false teachings and false prophets in last days; preparation for end times and Second Coming; the Book of Revelation; the latter rain; the reality of the Devil's scheming.

Second Advent—Second Advent [six responses], i.e. in every sermon talk about the Second Coming because the church needs to wake up; imagine for us what heaven is like; paint a mental picture for us of the Second Advent and heaven; soon return of Jesus.

Jesus—Jesus [two responses], His life and ministry; the person of Jesus, etc.; Jesus loves us; works of Christ prior to the crucifixion; we would see Jesus in every sermon (as you always reveal); truth centered on Jesus (I'm glad our pastor does this); the love of Jesus above all else; how to build a relationship with Jesus.

Witnessing—how to share one's faith; understanding other belief systems, etc.; how to experience faith, hope, and love in Jesus and how to witness this to others; the Christian's responsibility to the neighborhood and taking an active interest in the political processes that affect our

children/grandchildren; how to be a better disciple for Christ; practical witnessing (what works and doesn't work) and dealing with other beliefs; being an example to the world.

2. Is there a truth or belief that is being neglected by our church that should be addressed in a sermon? If so, please describe. [Responses were organized in four categories.]

SDA issues—healthful living/clean animals [three responses]; pre-advent judgment; Sabbath observance [three responses]; dress reform/jewelry [three responses]; raising kids in a Godly home; movies, lifestyle;

Christian love—we should be more loving; Christian values; love for one another; must be servants first and bury self; importance of becoming involved in service

Last day events—aspects of events of life in these lat days to be ready fro what's to come; tell church to be ready for Jesus is coming soon; prophecy, end time events, soon Second Coming of Christ.

Righteousness by faith—we are all sinners and have problems; teach what Christ taught rather than running down other churches; more on Jesus; pure simple gospel.

Questions 3-5 asked for a ranking on the 10-point scale, 1=strongly agree, 10=strongly disagree. The numbers shown are the responses members assigned to a number.

3. When you say, "The pastor preached a good sermon today," you generally mean:

(Strongly Agree) (Strongly Disagree)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A. He captivated me—held my attention with humor, illustrations, etc.	33	10	17	11	6	4	9	5	1	6
B. He taught me some things I did not know.	37	18	19	8	9	2	1	8	5	3
C. He confirmed me—in something I already believed.	35	16	21	4	7	3	2	8	2	5
D. He inspired me—to do something I knew I should do.	40	21	10	10	4	3	2	5	2	6
E. He helped me—encouraged me.	45	20	8	4	2	7	6	4	3	5
F. He helped convict me—of sin.	33	14	17	9	6	6	3	4	5	4

- I. I would rather hear sermons that:

A. Reaffirm in a traditional way what I already know and believe.	10	8	6	8	25	12	5	11	12	6
B. Say things I know and believe in a new and interesting way.	24	18	21	10	6	4	4	6	5	3
C. Bring conviction to my heart or point out a need for a deeper commitment in my life.	54	17	13	6	7	1	0	6	3	6

D. Discuss subjects I have not fully understood.	41	48	20	5	3	4	2	5	1	6
E. Use quotes from Ellen White.	10	11	12	5	13	14	9	8	7	9
5. What presently causes you a substantial amount of guilt?										
A. Inadequate devotional life.	16	12	13	19	8	13	6	5	3	7
B. Not witnessing enough.	13	17	11	12	13	12	7	6	3	6
C. Not giving more financial support to the church.	7	4	7	10	18	4	8	13	14	10
D. Not keeping the Sabbath "properly."	10	6	8	7	14	4	10	8	17	13
E. Not fully or consistently living up to the standards of the church.	7	6	12	6	16	10	5	9	12	12
F. Not being ready for the last days.	14	8	12	11	12	7	12	7	5	11
G. Acting in an unchristian manner towards others too often.	9	6	10	6	16	9	9	18	11	4
H. Not using time wisely.	11	10	9	14	21	6	3	9	10	5
I. Watching too much TV.	9	5	8	13	12	9	6	8	10	18
J. Inappropriate thoughts.	10	17	15	10	9	13	9	14	2	9
K. Neglecting to follow health principles more closely.	6	7	6	11	19	10	5	14	12	8

Question 6 asked for a ranking on a 10-point scale, 1=top priority, 10=low priority. The numbers shown are the responses members assigned to a number.

6. Which topic or truth would you most like to hear addressed in a sermon during the next two months?										
(Top Priority)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(Low Priority)
A. Christian Education	19	2	9	5	20	4	12	11	3	12
B. Witnessing	20	14	14	17	5	7	9	5	1	8
C. Forgiveness	36	13	19	7	12	5	2	2	2	1

D. Marriage/Family	27	15	14	8	12	5	4	6	5	3
E. Sabbath Observance	29	14	9	11	10	8	3	6	1	3
F. Stewardship	14	7	11	15	11	10	11	11	0	5
G. Social Issues	19	5	10	20	18	8	3	5	4	4
H. 1844/Sanctuary	19	8	10	1	20	10	7	6	9	9
I. Health/Temperance	15	4	15	8	19	16	10	8	6	3
J. Attire/Jewelry	20	3	10	4	13	6	6	6	9	17
K. How to build a relationship with Jesus	70	14	7	1	1	1	1	1	0	4
L. Spirit of Prophecy	27	9	13	9	11	7	7	4	5	4
M. Impact of TV/Movies	21	9	17	12	12	9	2	7	2	6
N. Second Advent	48	18	10	2	9	3	3	1	1	4

Question 7 and 8 asked for a ranking on a 10-point scale, 1=relevant, 10=not relevant. The numbers shown are the responses members assigned to a number.

(Relevant) (Not Relevant)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. Overall, how relevant and helpful are most sermons to you?	31	24	21	5	9	3	0	2	1	1
8. Of any ten sermons preached by your pastor, how many would you estimate were fine-tuned to meet your particular needs? (10-point scale)	2	5	4	3	14	9	6	16	6	11
9. Do you regularly attend the Spokane Valley SDA Church? Yes=91 No=5										

10. Ages	(Number of Respondents)
0-12	4
13-18	12
19-24	5
25-35	13
36-45	22
46-60	29
60+	19

Pastors
Page two

a. On the average, how often do you preach on these unpopular truths? (Circle one.)

1. Often 2. Occasionally 3. Infrequently 4. Never

b. How does your congregation generally respond when you preach about unpopular truths?

5. Evaluate the following categories according to which topics you think your members generally feel they need and would most value hearing addressed in a sermon during the next two months: (1=low need, 10=high need)

a. Christian Education	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
b. Witnessing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
c. Forgiveness	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
d. Marriage/Family	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
e. Sabbath Observance	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
f. Stewardship	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
g. Holy Spirit	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
h. Social Issues	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
i. 1844/Sanctuary	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
j. Health/Temperance	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
k. Attire/Jewelry	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
l. How to Build a Relationship with Jesus	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
m. Spirit of Prophecy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
n. Impact of T.V./Movies	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
o. Second Advent	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. If you could preach only three of the above 15 topics, which three would you choose? (Indicate the corresponding letter.)

Pastors
Page three

7. Which do you feel are the two most neglected truths in our denomination today? (Feel free to indicate topics not included in the above categories.)

Name _____

Church/es currently pastoring _____

Combined membership _____

Your age () under 25 () 26-35 () 36-45
() 46-55 () 56+

Number of years in current district/church _____

Total number of years in the ministry _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Should you have any questions or need clarification, feel free to contact me.

Charles Ferguson
1601 S. Sullivan
Veradale, WA 99037

(509) 926-5866

Sincerely,

Charles Ferguson, Pastor
Spokane Valley Seventh-day
Adventist Church

Pastor's Survey on Preaching with Summary

In the winter and spring of 1997 this survey was administered to 17 pastors of the Upper Columbia Conference serving Seventh-day Adventist churches in eastern Washington and the panhandle area of Idaho. There was only one female pastor.

1. What have you found to be the special needs held in common by members of your congregation? [Responses were organized in five categories.]

Relationship with Jesus—a sense of vision and relationship with Christ; to know Jesus personally, gospel needs: some don't have assurance; to know that they are right with God; stress, faith, commitment and devotional time; a daily relationship with Jesus Christ.

Self-esteem issues—need for healing of brokenness, how to confront and find deliverance from feelings of inferiority, emotional pain of childhood memories; need for acceptance and inclusion and hope for the future; feelings of worth and being part of the body; need of hope, courage and affirmation instead of more pounding; to know that they are valued and appreciated.

Friendship issues—they need the friendship of one another; loneliness; fellowship [suggested by two]; social needs.

Sanctified life—sin and victory over it; relationship of devotional life with career; spiritual growth and ways to enable doctrine to impact real life issues.

Misc.—more family structure and time together; hands-on special attention from the pastor and leadership; to effectively share Jesus with friends; many don't understand what Adventism is all about; training needs: some feel that they don't know how to do their [church] jobs; hope in the Second Coming.

2. Do you perceive congregational needs of which the members are not aware? If so, please describe. [Responses were organized in four categories.]

Renewal—the perception of what worship is all about; To make the example of Jesus their standard of living; the urgent need to introduce people to Jesus; members don't think much about vision; many are in dead routine all the while they are alive and well; freedom from spiritual abuse which they may have grown up in and perpetuated to the next generation without realizing it and now this seems "normal" religion to them; many are so entrenched in their fears, habits, and problems that they simply accept them rather than experience victory over them in Christ.

Need for love, acceptance, and forgiveness—many think worship is the chosen few on Sabbath; eliminate nationalistic tendencies: among some Hispanic congregations there is a tendency to raise their national customs above the others and put others down; forgiveness and healing in relationships; The need to break out of happy holy huddles and truly learn the language of interfacing with the world.

Lifestyle issues—integration of faith and lifestyle (applying biblical principles to basic ethical issues such as honesty in business transaction, taxes, etc.); members want the "professionals" to do all the work and have a spectator mentality rather than showing a willingness to do the best with their talents.

Misc.—a reading class for adults; member usually perceive as much of the needs as I do because they're on the frontlines of the ministry and the ones with needs.

3. What truths are you members neglecting to apply and/or affirm in their lifestyle that are a concern to you? [Responses were organized into four categories.]

Faith issues—the assurance of salvation; forgiveness; the gospel (if truly received they couldn't help but witness; family worship; gospel; spiritual hypocrisy because they do not keep a clear conscience; the implications of righteousness by faith in face of prevailing bondage; how to experience freedom in Christ.

SDA issues—health reform [three responses]; mostly standards like drinking coffee, eating flesh foods, diet reform and secondarily righteousness by faith; much [too] liberal; Sabbath keeping suggested by two); temperance and adornment; Spirit of Prophecy; living in the nearness of Christ's coming.

Relational issues—social issues so those with emotional damage would be dealt with; putting others ahead of yourself/servant leadership; forgiving each other; address the issue of dealing with marital break-ups and loose sexual morals.

Misc.—they are weak on giving offerings; witnessing [suggested by two].

4. What have you discovered to be unpopular subjects or truths about which your congregation would prefer you not preach? [Responses were organized into three categories.]

Preach with freedom—none; don't know of any; none when preached as an expression of "good news" and a balanced way; none if preached right (I keep away from doctrine Sabbath morning and preach life application sermons); they accept anything; they like anything if presented in an interesting way; none with the exception of "unity."

Lifestyle issues [three responses]—lifestyle evangelism; jewelry and attire; sex; adultery; diet; manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit in the life (it hits too close home) and perfection in Christ alone.

Misc.—personal witnessing, multi-colored diversity issues/prejudice; money [two responses], prophetic doctrines that do not tend toward exclusivism and sectarianism; possessions.

On the average, how often do you preach on these unpopular truths?

	(Number of respondents)
Often	2
Occasionally	8
Infrequently	3
Never	0

How does your congregation generally respond when you preach about unpopular truths? [Responses were organized in two categories.]

Warm response: sometimes critical, few respond openly to what was said, positively [two responses]; very good; one church is positive the other is quiet; positive when approached from a new angle; I've never faced that, usually they know it is the truth and have nothing to say, however, I don't nail them with truth, but show where it can benefit their well being; they like it; very seldom do I hear complaints.

Cold response: coldness and indifferent treatment, (two months ago I was aggressively scolded and told that my preaching is not good and that I don't inspire them); they say, "Great sermon, Pastor," showing that they missed the point; they are quiet; there is silence and no response; silence to my face but remarks surface through the grapevine; silence.

Question 5 asked for a ranking on a 10-point scale, 1=low need, 10=high need. The numbers shown are the responses members assigned to a number.

5. Which topic or truth do you think your members generally feel they need and would value hearing addressed in a sermon during the next two months? (1 = low need, 10 = high need)

	(Low Need)									(High Need)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A. Christian Education	0	4	3	1	4	1	2	1	1	0
B. Witnessing	0	1	0	3	2	4	1	5	0	1
C. Forgiveness	0	0	1	2	0	3	1	1	3	7
D. Marriage/Family	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	3	7
E. Sabbath Observance	0	0	1	0	3	2	5	4	2	0
F. Stewardship	0	1	3	3	1	4	2	1	2	0
G. Social Issues	2	2	3	1	2	3	1	1	1	1
H. 1844/Sanctuary	2	2	2	0	3	2	1	3	2	0
I. Health/Temperance	0	1	2	5	2	1	4	1	1	0
J. Attire/Jewelry	2	1	5	4	3	0	0	0	1	0
K. How to build a relationship with Jesus	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	6	7
L. Spirit of Prophecy	0	0	4	2	3	2	1	2	2	1
M. Impact of TV/Movies	1	0	4	1	2	2	5	0	1	1
N. Second Advent	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	7

6. If you could preach only three of the above topics, which three would you choose?

(Number of respondents)

How to build a relationship with Jesus	15
Second Advent	10
Forgiveness	6
Marriage/family	4
Stewardship	4
Sabbath observance	2
1844/sanctuary	2
Witnessing	2
Health/temperance	1

Impact of TV/movies 1
 Spirit of Prophecy 1

7. Which do you feel are the two most neglected truths in our denomination today?

Total surrender to Christ and the experience of Christ in the life, that God loves all mankind and not just SDAs.

Righteousness by faith, lifestyle issues listed in scripture and Spirit of Prophecy.

Forgiveness, how to build a relationship with Jesus [two responses].

God's call to holy living, living in world but not living by principles of this world.

The sanctuary service and its meaning, forgiveness.

Discipleship Christina discipline.

Jewelry, movies, entertainment, personal sacrifice.

The atonement (the cross), righteousness by faith, anger management, forgiveness, marriage intimacy.

Our destiny which is prophetic, urgency for soul winning.

Fellowship and Second Coming.

The right use of the will is the determining factor in time and eternity.

Sanctification, priesthood of all believers [two responses].

Truths in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians (we major in truths taught in Daniel and Revelation).

The significance of how we treat others and how that impacts our walk with God.

Denial of self, faithfulness to scripture.

How to integrate biblical truths into our modern lifestyle.

Ages	(Number of Respondents)
Under 25	1
26-35	2
36-45	5
46-55	6
56+	3

Administrators

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4. Evaluate the following categories according to which topics you think your constituent members generally feel they need and would most value hearing addressed in a sermon during the next two months.

(1=low need, 10=high need)

a. Christian Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
b. Witnessing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
c. Forgiveness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
d. Marriage/Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
e. Sabbath Observance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
f. Holy Spirit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
g. Stewardship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
h. Social Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
i. 1844/Sanctuary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
j. Health/Temperance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
k. Attire/Jewelry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
l. How to Build a Relationship with Jesus	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
m. Spirit of Prophecy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
n. Impact of T.V./Movies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
o. Second Advent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. If you could preach only three of the above 15 topics, which three would you choose? (Indicate the corresponding letter.)

6. Which do you feel are the two most neglected truths in our denomination today? (Feel free to indicate topics not included in the categories above.)

Administrators
Page three

7. Specifically, what criteria do you use to evaluate a pastor's preaching ability?

Name _____

Conference/Union/Institution _____

Position/office _____

Years of denominational service _____

Years at present position _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Should you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Charles Ferguson (509) 921-1325 (collect)
1601 S. Sullivan Rd.
Veradale, WA 99037

Sincerely,

Charles R. Ferguson, Senior Pastor
Spokane Valley Seventh-day
Adventist Church

Administrator's Survey on Preaching with Summary

Questionnaires were administered to administrators and departmental heads of the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Spokane, Washington, on August 20, 1998, with eight responding. Nine questionnaires were mailed to administrators and department leaders in the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Portland, Oregon, with three responding

1. What have you found to be the special 'felt' needs generally held by you constituents?

For grace and personal forgiveness, for strength through times of personal crises, for a clearer view of Jesus, for encouragement to keep the Sabbath.

Assurance of salvation, how to maintain a daily walk with Jesus, how to develop a healthy prayer life. Assurance and hope.

Victory, peace, restoration, reinforcement for lifestyle, spiritual food that builds faith, the Holy Spirit, solid doctrine, comfort, motivation.

A need for someone to listen to them and to be with them through hard times, to take an interest in their children, hear good biblical preaching, and love them in spite of

Foundational Christian themes that satisfy personal spiritual hunger, assurance and hope based on the story of redemption.

Acceptance, forgiveness, appreciation, to see Jesus as one who loves them and feels they are worth dying for.

How to have a real meaningful relationship with Jesus and how to apply biblical principles in real life situations and decision-making, what does the future hold—information about the Second Coming and the end of time.

Friendship, loneliness, acceptance.

Probably the comment I receive most frequently is that they don't feel they get strong biblical preaching of our fundamental beliefs.

Sense of, A) community of believers, B) commitment to mission, C) concern for the lost, D) conviction of the end time, E) communion with God.

2. Do you perceive congregational needs of which the members are not aware? If so, please describe.

Some of the less popular topics, i.e., stewardship, Spirit of Prophecy, health and temperance.

My perception is that the majority of SDA are not very interested in those more distinctive doctrines that make us unique. I'd love to be proven wrong, but I believe the preacher has the responsibility with the Holy Spirit's guidance to creatively present these regardless.

Loyalty and commitment.

As I preach throughout the conferences, I perceive a lack of commitment to the church and a busyness of people being caught up in life's activities.

To be well grounded in the faith, to know how to win souls.

A need for a true spiritual revival in their lives (personal devotions are crowded out by activities).

The corporate nature of the church growing out of body theology, the church as community and the interdependent relationship of church life and mission that it implies.

A spiritual walk daily with the Lord.

I think we preachers may take for granted that they have been instructed in the foundational doctrines of Adventism so there is a weakening loyalty to church organization, they don't perceive the uniqueness of the church, all [SDA preacher's] sermons could be preached in any evangelical church.

(Do you want a book?) Entertainment, dress diet, authority of scripture, Spirit of Prophecy.

Sense of, A) community of believers, B) commitment to mission, C) concern for the lost, D) conviction of the end time, E) communion with God.

3. What truths are our North American Division members neglecting to apply and/or affirm in their lifestyle?

Simplicity in dress and lifestyle, health, we are slipping or becoming the “tail instead of the head” in areas such as vegetarianism, which is now popular with the general public. Adventists are frequently drinking caffeine and even alcohol.

Sabbath observance is slipping—don’t need to be rigid but need to challenge people to make Sabbath different and a spiritual blessing, family commitment is popularized but needs help from Christian perspective, sanctuary and judgment theme strongly disliked, Spirit of Prophecy generally minimized except to make a personal point.

Health message, living the message as they share the message daily with other people.

Too many to list, if you look at what our movement started as and what it stood for in the beginning there is scarcely one area where we are still on track.

Unselfishness in stewardship of time and money, Bible study, prayer, soul winning holiness manifested in Sabbath observance, choice of entertainment, ministry and appearance.

SDA Christian standards, jewelry, movies, Sabbath observance.

Christian discipleship as foundational to the individual and corporate life of the church.

Alcohol-temperance, Sabbath keeping, marriage as sacred.

I think we are losing on dress, particularly jewelry, also dietary practice (caffeine), careful Sabbath observance (though I think there is still strong commitment to the day), weakening support for Christian education largely because of financial considerations.

Entertainment, dress, diet.

A) Righteousness by faith, B) practical godliness, C) faith that works by love.

Question 4 asked for a ranking on a 10-point scale, 1=low need, 10=high need. The numbers shown are the responses members assigned to a number.

4. Which topic or truth do you think your constituent members generally feel they need and would value hearing addressed in a sermon during the next two months?

	(High Need)									
(Low Need)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A. Christian Education	0	1	4	0	1	2	3	0	0	0
B. Witnessing	0	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	3	0
C. Forgiveness	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	2	3
D. Marriage/Family	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	1	3
E. Sabbath Observance	0	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	0	0
F. Stewardship	0	0	4	4	0	0	1	0	1	0
G. Social Issues	0	1	1	0	3	2	1	1	2	0
H. 1844/Sanctuary	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	0	0
I. Health/Temperance	0	4	2	1	2	1	0	0	1	0

J. Attire/Jewelry	3	3	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
K. How to build a relationship with Jesus	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	4
L. Spirit of Prophecy	0	1	2	3	1	1	2	0	0	1
M. Impact of TV/Movies	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	0	0	0
N. Second Advent	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	4	1

5. If you could preach only three of the above 14 topics, which three would you choose?

(Number of Respondents)

How to build a relationship with Jesus	9
Second Advent	9
Forgiveness	6
Marriage/family	2
1844/sanctuary	2
Christian Education	1
Sabbath observance	1
Spirit of Prophecy	1

6. Which do you feel are the two most neglected truths in our denomination today?

Sanctuary ministry and radical discipleship.

Sanctification: what it means to be a growing Christian, accountability as a church member to the body and inspiration and revelation: our understanding of the Word of God and what it should mean to the Adventist member today, including its application in my life, the Holy Spirit's role in this entire process.

Stewardship and the Second Coming.

Sanctuary and related truths that are unique to Adventism and the state of the dead.

1844, judgment, mark of the best, attire, entertainment, the Ten Commandments.

How obedience is tied to a relationship with Jesus, stewardship.

1844;sanctuary, Spirit of Prophecy [two responses].

Spirit of Prophecy, remnant church.

Second Advent, forgiveness.

7. Specifically, what criteria do you use to evaluate a pastor's preaching ability?

Clarity of main points, appropriateness to the occasion, research, use of illustrations to support the message.

Morale of congregation—are they excited about being a SDA? Is Jesus making a difference in their lives?

Content and delivery of the message but not to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit taking the message and touching my heart with it.

Content, smooth animated delivery, lasting single concept message, spiritual fervor.

A pastor's members feeling they've been spiritually fed and helped (they usually tell conference personnel if they are unhappy).

Integrity of the person, the message—to some extent the delivery.

Experience, content oratory skills, audience participation.

Does he emphasize expository biblical preaching? Use of scripture to under gird everything, relevance to congregations needs, sincere and genuine rather than entertaining.

Am I awake? Did he or she bring life and authority to Scripture?

Genuineness and education makes old truths shine with new luster, Spirit filled and led delivery.

This questionnaire did not solicit the respondents' ages.

19-24	1
25-35	8
36-45	4
46-60	6
60+	10

Sermon #2: Stewardship, "The Gift that Kept Returning" (September 5, 1998)

1. Rate: (5-point scale)

	(Poor)				(Excellent)
Overall quality	0	0	1	7	9
Use of Bible	0	1	2	7	17
Captured attention	0	1	0	8	18
Length	0	0	4	7	16
Clarity	0	1	0	6	20
Subject Covered Adequately	0	0	2	4	21
Relevance	0	0	1	4	22
Emotional Appeal	0	1	3	6	17

2. How would you rate the relevance and helpfulness of this sermon . . . ? (1=Not helpful, 5=Helpful)

0	0	3	6	17
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3. What spiritual need do you think this sermon was designed to fill?

I feel it was encouraging but the need it filled for me was to test God even when it seems impossible—test Him—and don't be afraid no matter what the situation because we still need to trust Him; God will supply all your needs; what would I do if the Lord asked me to do a seemingly impossible this—refuse to do it because it didn't seem possible or would I trust in Him to make it happen?; Total commitment to the Lord and His commandments should always be first; personal commitment; peace resulting from complete obedience to God.

Giving; stewardship; the need to give back to God; obedience to God's command and giving according to our means and what God is leading us to give; the spiritual blessing of tithing; we can't out give the Lord; learning to trust God completely and giving to Him our all without reservation; opening of storehouse of heaven for everyone; to give everything; the importance of giving our first and best so God's blessings can be passed out; giving God the first fruits and the faith to do it; tithe and giving God more; the spiritual need is to be generous so God can pour out blessings.

Knowledge of the Lord; wonderful sermon for everybody; one way of sharing with the Lord and others; to help people; fear; do not be afraid because God takes care of us no matter what if we serve Him first.

4. How well did this sermon fill that need? (1=Poor, 5=Very well)

0	0	0	8	19
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Males—13

Females—14

(Number of Respondents)

Ages 0-12	1
13-18	2
19-24	2
25-35	8
36-45	4
46-60	2
60+	12

Sermon #3: Worship, "Should We Talk in Church?" (September 12, 1998)

1. Rate: (5-point scale)

	(Poor)				(Excellent)
Overall quality	0	0	1	9	17
Use of Bible	0	2	2	8	16
Captured attention	0	0	4	6	18
Length	0	0	2	5	21
Clarity	0	0	2	5	20
Subject Covered Adequately	0	0	3	7	17
Relevance	0	0	2	5	21
Emotional Appeal	0	1	7	4	17

2. How would you rate the relevance and helpfulness of this sermon . . . ? (1=Not helpful, 5=Helpful)

0	0	1	8	18
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3. What spiritual need do you think this sermon was designed to fill?

Reverence; worship; and heart in service; reverence; to be reverent in worship; Learning to worship and receive a blessing; behavior during church and worship of God; reverence of God in church; the worship of God; to pay attention during church; the need to say "Amen!" We all need to hear uncomfortable things from time to time to get our bottom in gear! Great sermon!; to pay attention in church; how to worship; making people aware of the need to worship all week and be excited to worship on Sabbath; the need to worship and get a relationship with God, people worship in different ways but we are here for God; put us in touch with our attitude of worship from daily to Sabbath service; enhance and clarify our individual and corporate relationship to God and with God, unique points which I had never before heard; importance for all of us to worship God; the coming to church to worship God in sincerity and praising Him with full hearts and concentrating on Him; how we can better worship God at church and through the week and what God wants from us; worship is not about our entertainment but for the praise of God and our worship and awe of Him; what is our part in worship and what are we going to do with those who do it differently than I do; the spiritual need filled—praise and adoration to God; to help us realize the purpose for coming to church and how to give awe and glory to God.

Your spiritual needs; what we needed long ago; importance of the deepest respect in honoring God daily through sincere worship and showing our thankfulness and gratitude for all the good things he has done for us and given to us and even for the bad things that happen for He turns them into good; helped me with my relationship with the Lord and how I give to Him.

4. How well did this sermon fill that need? (1=Poor, 5=Very well)

0	0	1	7	19
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Males—15

Females—11

(Number of Respondents)

Ages 0-12	0
13-18	4
19-24	2
25-35	7
36-45	4
46-60	3
60+	9

Sermon #4: Health, "Did Jesus Make Pork Clean at the Cross?" (October 3, 1998)

1. Rate: (5-point scale)

	(Poor)				(Excellent)
Overall quality	0	0	0	6	19
Use of Bible	0	0	0	1	24

Captured attention	0	0	1	5	19
Length	0	0	0	6	18
Clarity	0	0	0	6	19
Subject Covered Adequately	0	0	0	8	17
Relevance	0	0	1	8	16
Emotional Appeal	0	0	2	11	12

2. How would you rate the relevance and helpfulness of this sermon . . . ? (1=Not helpful, 5=Helpful)

0	0	0	15	9
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3. What spiritual need do you think this sermon was designed to fill?

Helping us realize we are not our own, we were bought with a price, so in everything we do we need [not] to put ourselves before God; it is very important what we eat and how we treat our bodies, but ultimately we have been cleaned by the blood of Jesus; God gave a diet in the Old Testament for the good of man, but Jesus purified man with His sacrifice in the New [Covenant]; what we eat won't get us to heaven, having God will; we are the temple of God; keeping our bodies healthy by following the Bible diet; many people have been confused on the subject of clean versus unclean [meat]—this was a recap; clarify definition of clean and unclean [meat] ceremoniously and physically; it helped me understand the sanctuary ordinances and what was abolished at the cross; those that question the proper diet; to keep Adventists thinking about the food that they put into their bodies; to help other family members to live healthier with texts to back up our beliefs; our bodies are temples of God, do not defile them by what we eat; reconfirms importance of preserving our bodies in maximum condition for the service of God; health.

None; God saves not our keeping of the law; to always put God first in our lives and not ignore His will for us; relationships—core of Jesus; was interesting for all of us, it was interesting for me so I could also relate to others if they ask; keep total balance in our life and walk with Jesus; His sacrifice for me.

4. How well did this sermon fill that need? (1=Poor, 5=Very well)

0	0	0	5	16
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Males—13

Females—12

(Number of Respondents)

Ages 0-12	1
13-18	2
19-24	1
25-35	5
36-45	4
46-60	3
60+	7

Sermon #5: Jewelry, “Rightly Dividing the Word Regarding Jewelry” (October 10, 1998)

1. Rate: (5-point scale)

	(Poor)			(Excellent)	
Overall quality	0	0	1	6	14
Use of Bible	0	0	0	4	18
Captured attention	0	0	2	4	16
Length	0	0	1	5	16
Clarity	0	0	1	7	13
Subject Covered Adequately	0	0	1	6	14
Relevance	0	0	2	4	15
Emotional Appeal	0	1	4	4	12

2. How would you rate the relevance and helpfulness of this sermon . . . ? (1=Not helpful, 5=Helpful)

0	0	0	6	13
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3. What spiritual need do you think this sermon was designed to fill?

To help us not just go by tradition but to see for ourselves how we can best represent God and to understand the Bible passages; outward adornment; proper dress in and out of church; our influence on others; we are responsible for our choices to live a life according to God's will, not a list of "to-dos and not to-dos," our relationship with God will make us want to represent Him the right way; to not judge people by our own customs and way of dress, the most important thing is the person himself, we need to make them welcome as Jesus would; the Bible gives us guidelines but not lists, we need to remember to give glory to God in all we do; love to Jesus, not jewelry; to take some lessons in the Bible as they were meant, as lessons not necessarily literally; needs of all especially those who feel condemned; stop judgmentalism; guiding our lives by "what Jesus would do" and the principles of the Bible—looking beneath the superficial, having our eyes single to the service of God; wonderful, so we cannot judge others; people—women in particular—should express beauty from the inside.

I'm not sure; keeps me in the right path, not to judge others; to learn we are not to judge and that through God's grace we will learn how to follow Him; wonderful points that most pastors would ignore, way to go Pastor, great points!; helping us to help others.

4. How well did this sermon fill that need? (1=Poor, 5=Very well)

0 0 1 5 14

Males—10

Females—12

(Number of Respondents)

Ages 0-12	0
13-18	1
19-24	2
25-35	2
36-45	4
46-60	3
60+	8

Sermon #6: The Sanctuary Message, "Taking Your Sins to the Laundry" (October 17, 1998)

1. Rate: (5-point scale)

	(Poor)				(Excellent)
Overall quality	0	0	0	7	19
Use of Bible	0	0	1	7	20
Captured attention	0	0	1	7	18
Length	0	1	3	6	18
Clarity	0	0	2	6	20
Subject Covered Adequately	0	0	1	8	19
Relevance	0	0	1	5	22
Emotional Appeal	1	0	4	4	18

2. How would you rate the relevance and helpfulness of this sermon . . . ? (1=Not helpful, 5=Helpful)

0 1 0 5 21

3. What spiritual need do you think this sermon was designed to fill?

To ask for forgiveness of sins, not once saved always saved, also an explanation of how the temple worked; how God is working in the heavenly sanctuary, but how are our sins being taken care of in 1998 if the day began in 1844?; forgiveness; we need to take our sins and concerns to Jesus and leave them there—not keep taking them back—Jesus has made us free; the need to experience the cleansing in Jesus and to leave our sins for Him to take care of; keeping our lives cleansed through Christ; having our sins forgiven; it assures us that Jesus cleanses our sins in preparation for His soon coming; assurance; calling to be ready and prepared for our Lord's swift return; be ready for Jesus to come; forgiveness (2 times); the relevance of the sanctuary in 1998; tie sanctuary to Christ's atoning blood; to reassure that God is always there to forgive us of our sins; Jesus washes our sins away if we let Him—due to His blood we will have eternal life; sin; knowing no matter what, God will forgive you sins if you take your sins to Him; our need to be

pure, to be rid of sin; this helped me with the symbolism of the temple and the sacrifice of Christ; understand better the meaning of the sanctuary necessary to cleanse us from our sins.

?: keep close relationship with God.

4. How well did this sermon fill that need? (1=Poor, 5=Very well)

0 1 2 4 19

Males—11

Females—10

(Number of Respondents)

Ages 0-12	1
13-18	2
19-24	0
25-35	6
36-45	4
46-60	3
60+	10

Sermon #7: Movies, "Going to the Movies" (October 24, 1998)

1. Rate: (5-point scale)

	(Poor)				(Excellent)
Overall quality	0	0	0	6	20
Use of Bible	0	0	3	5	18
Captured attention	0	0	3	4	19
Length	0	4	4	7	11
Clarity	0	0	2	4	20
Subject Covered Adequately	0	0	0	6	20
Relevance	0	0	0	2	23
Emotional Appeal	0	0	1	8	17

2. How would you rate the relevance and helpfulness of this sermon . . . ? (1=Not helpful, 5=Helpful)

0 0 0 5 20

3. What spiritual need do you think this sermon was designed to fill?

What we arch goes in and doesn't always come out; to control [movies] in the home; the effect of TV; G.I.-G.O.; the need to be aware that the television can really influence our lives negatively; guard time and what you use TV for; the filling of our heart with whatever we see, hear and think about affects our attitude and the appeal that spiritual things have for us; keeping God and heavenly thoughts and not worldly evils; spend time with things that you want to fill life, God not TV; what gets our attention gets us; the basic human need, where is our focus?; need something else [besides movies] to occupy mind; help us determine how to use our time wisely; how the media infiltrates our lives; by beholding we become changed—the spiritual need to desire and have a close relationship with God; how to keep our minds filled with good things, ready for God's influence.

Whatever lesson you want to draw; focus on God, not world; focus on Jesus instead of the world; closer walk with God; to grow in becoming one in mind and heart with God; helped with a personal as well as family need; guidance for input in an overwhelming world; to help you be good Christians;

4. How well did this sermon fill that need? (1=Poor, 5=Very well)

0 0 0 4 22

Males—9

Females—16

(Number of Respondents)

Ages 0-12	1
13-18	2

19-24	1
25-35	4
36-45	5
46-60	3
60+	9

Sermon #8: Social Issue, "Are Our Kids Safe from Street Gangs?" (November 7, 1998)

1. Rate: (5-point scale)

	(Poor)				(Excellent)
Overall quality	0	0	2	10	14
Use of Bible	0	1	7	8	10
Captured attention	0	0	2	6	17
Length	0	0	5	6	15
Clarity	0	0	0	7	19
Subject Covered Adequately	0	0	0	8	18
Relevance	0	0	1	4	21
Emotional Appeal	0	1	2	10	13

2. How would you rate the relevance and helpfulness of this sermon . . . ? (1=Not helpful, 5=Helpful)

0	0	3	6	17
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3. What spiritual need do you think this sermon was designed to fill?

To minister to the whole world, to get involved with the community; the need to hang together, church members, etc., in Jesus' love—to minister because we love; to help bring our youth to Jesus; we all need to be involved in the life of our young people; considering our most valuable resources—seeing that our children are supported and raised for God; maintain family unity, keep children out of gangs; we need to keep our kids close to God; love and concern for our children and others; save our children; for parents to keep children from gangs; strengthen the family so the gospel will be revealed in the home and community; we need to mentor, support, and love all our kids in school—if they can each know that some adult other than their parents cares about them it will protect them so far; upholding family values; to prepare people of the importance of keeping our youth away from gangs; The sense of belonging to something is strong—to help our young people to feel a part of the church family and strengthen the family; protecting our kids from gangs; being conscious of the temptations our youth have; keeping our family together and protecting our children; bringing children to God; saving our youth and keeping them from harm-get our heads out of the sand; I'm not one [e.g., gang member].

Excellent; the need to open our eyes to reality and to do something to make a difference; relationship with God.

4. How well did this sermon fill that need? (1=Poor, 5=Very well)

0	0	0	8	19
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Males—19

Females—15

(Number of Respondents)

Ages 0-12	1
13-18	2
19-24	2
25-35	8
36-45	4
46-60	2
60+	12

Post Sermon Series Jam Session

Sermons Preached

1. Christian Education (August 29)
2. Stewardship—Elijah, the widow, and her son (September 5)
3. Worship and Reverence (September 12)
4. Health Reform—clean and unclean meats (October 3)
5. Jewelry (October 10)
6. Sanctuary Message (October 17)
7. Television and Movies (October 24)
8. Social Issue—gang violence a threat among our own youth (November 7)

Title of Doctoral Project: *Prophetic Preaching To Resistant Audiences: A Call For Change*

In short: How to preach about things people don't care to hear preached about.

Goal: To develop a strategy for preaching a sermon to people who are hostile, bored, or apathetic. The method created was an inductive three-pronged strategy—giving special attention to the Word (Prophetic), caringly confronting with the truth (Care-fronting), and giving careful attention to determine from whose perspective the story would be told (Design).

Project: I took a survey (November 15, 1997) asking our congregation what they would like for me to preach about. I also surveyed pastors and denominational administrators.

- I basically preached on the eight least favored topics.
- Sermons 1-4 used the strategy I developed and sermons 5-8 ignored it.

Feedback Questions for Discussion

1. Was there a sermon that sticks out in you thinking?
2. Was this series below average, helpful, or below average for Pastor Ferguson's preaching?
3. Did you find the use of the screen and slides to be helpful? Any suggestions regarding its use?
4. Do you feel the sermons in this series were generally too long, or just right in length?
5. When you marked "excellent" for "use of the Bible," were you looking for Pastor Ferguson to use the proof text method or to explain one central passage?
6. Do you have any other observations that might help Pastor Ferguson?

APPENDIX B

SERMONS

Sermons 1-4 follow the homiletical strategy and sermons 5-8 do not.

**Sermon No. 1, Christian Education
A School Fit for Jesus**

Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Several years ago the school board asked me to preach a sermon on Christian education towards the beginning of each new school year. I think that was a wise request. This church family believes in our children. Did you know that this church spends over 60% of its annual budget on children and youth ministries?

I pastored another church 12 years that likewise believed in supporting it's youth. They had a brand new school. However, it was much smaller than the public school that was located next door. Our school had a much smaller ball field than the public school's ball field. They had grass on theirs. Ours was just a sand lot. So, I was concerned when one of our student's fathers told informed me that he was taking his son out of our church school. I asked him why? He responded, “Because I want my son to be able to play baseball. I want to send my son to the public school where they have a strong athletic program.” I tried to reason with this family. Finances were not the issue. I suppose that boy, now a young man, can play baseball. But I am told he no longer attends church.

I am about to share with you another true story. (I have been told that storytellers should not say that, but this truly did happen. I will fill in the details with my imagination.) Once upon a time there was little boy named Joshua. Everybody liked Josh. He was always willing to share his toys with his playmates. He was courteous to adults—always help Mom get ready for Sabbath without complaining about chores. He could be heard singing as he dusted furniture on Friday afternoon.

Josh loved Sabbath School. The teacher's would smile and wink at each other when they heard Josh throw back his little head and sing, “Who made the beautiful rainbow, I know, I know . . .” and “The trees are gently swaying, swaying, swaying, the trees are gently swaying. Showing God is love.” Everybody loved Josh. And it was whispered more than once that someday Josh would grow up and be a preacher.

So, it was surprising on the first day of a new school year (pretty much like this past Wednesday here at our own Spokane Valley Adventist School), when all the first grade students sat with beaming faces, Josh's face could not be found—nor the next day. All the school staff had counted on Josh being in first grade this year. Perhaps Mom and Dad had held him back. Why? Josh seemed bright enough. So, the teacher decided to pay a friendly visit to Josh's house. Josh's mother graciously met the teacher at the door.

[Teacher] “We missed Josh at school. Surprised he was not there. He's such a special boy.”

Mom smiled, “Thank you. He is, isn't he?”

[Teacher] “You know the Value Genesis report shows that those students who attend our church school have a much higher rate of remaining in church as compared to those who don't attend church school.”

[Mom] “Yes, we considered sending Josh to church school. But we decided to home school Josh this year.”

The teacher took this bit of information back to the pastor. Soon the pastor decided to pay Josh's Dad a visit. The pastor had to smile as he approached the business owned by Josh's father. He heard the familiar, sweet clear sound of Josh's voice singing from within the shop, a tale-tell sign that Josh was helping Dad in his shop. (I remember growing up in the land of cotton down in the deep South of the United States. During cotton picking season many of the rural schools closed so the students could help the family gather in the cotton.) “Aha,” the preacher thought, “there is a financial problem in this home. They have fallen on hard times. They are having to keep Josh home to help with the family business.”

[Preacher] “What would it take to get Josh in school? Financial aid is available.”

[Dad] “Oh, no. Business has never been better. It’s not the money. We’ve just decided to home school Josh.”

[Preacher] “You know, we are concerned about Josh. He needs the social contact of other children. Home school is fine, certainly better than public school, but Josh needs to grow up with other children. You don’t want him to be a loner do you?”

That night Mom and Dad talked about the two visits. “Should we tell the pastor why we can’t send Josh to church school? Do we dare?”

I don’t know if they ever did tell but I do know this—Josh never did attend church school. What happened to Josh? He grew up to be the Savior of this world. Josh was none other than Jesus Christ. In the Hebrew language the names Joshua and Jesus are the same. (Compare Hebrews 4:8 in the King James Version with the New International Version.)

By now the Spokane Valley Adventist School’s Board is probably saying, “What in the world are you doing, Pastor? Why don’t you lay a guilt trip on these families who are not putting their students in our church school? Come on, hang with us.” Let me quickly say this: our school is committed to being the kind of school where Mary and Joseph would feel comfortable sending their boy, Jesus. I want to share five elements of a school that would be safe for the boy Jesus:

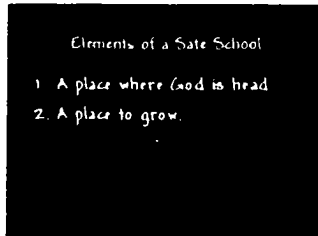
1. [Slide 1] **A place where God is head.** Ps 127:1, “Unless the Lord builds the house (this applies to home, church or school) its builders labor in vain.”



- We will teach 2+2=4, but that’s not enough. So will the public school.
- We will teach how to boot up a computer, but that’s not enough. So will they—the public school.
- We will teach God created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh, but even this is not enough because head knowledge is not enough.
- We will teach that Jesus is Lord, that love is the “basis of true education,” *Education* page 16. Our children will live the Golden

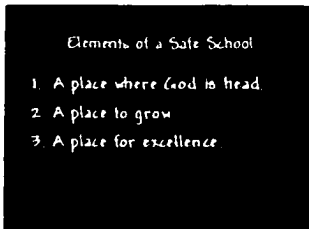
Rule (Luke 10:27) at Spokane Valley Adventist School.

2. [Slide 2] **A place for real growth.** Gen. 18:19, “For I know him (Abraham), that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment that which he hath spoken of him.”

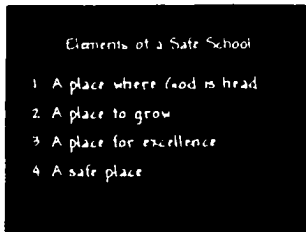


- Yes, Spokane Valley Adventist School will be a place where our children will grow in relationship with Jesus, but it will offer more.
- It will be a transmission station for values. Our children will learn the difference between right and wrong. Billy Graham says, “We are not establishing for our youth moral perimeters. We need

once again to teach them the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and tell young people right from wrong.”



- The students at SVAS will learn the Bill of Rights as well as the Ten Commandments.
3. [Slide 3] **A place where excellence is encouraged.**
- A place of discipline. Manners will be taught.
 - Not a place of under achievement.
 - However, if a student misses the mark, if they fail, they will still be loved and encouraged to get up and try again.



4. [Slide 4] A place of security.

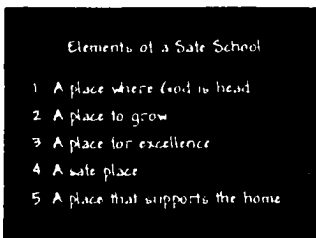
- SVAS will be a place of emotion security. Where no one is ostracized. Students are taught to show respect to all. There will be no cliques in our student body.
- It will be a place of love and acceptance. Like in a Godly family. (These elements apply to every family as well.) The Golden Rule will reign supreme.
- It will be a place of physical security. We will guard the physical well being of our children like a mother hawk guarding her chicks.
- A place where worldly influences are resisted. What goes on in your homes can help here. We cannot abdicate our responsibility of parenting to the schoolteachers.

One thing that concerned me at times when my children were growing up continues to be a concern of our teachers today. We did not take our children to the movie theater. It was difficult when my son's friends would come to school and talk about the movies that they were attending. It tended to undermine the values we were trying to instill in our home.

I'm not here today to dictate that you should not go to the movie theater. I am appealing to you that if you take your family to a movie (at \$6.50 a person) you must be willing within the first two or three minutes of that movie to get up and move out of the theater if you discover that movie does not endorse Christian values. The same applies if you rent a video. If that movie displays, sex, violence, vulgar language or anything that undermines Christian values, you must be willing to turn the TV off and say, "I'm sorry family. We're going to have to change our plans and do something else this evening." Parents have got to draw this line.

Dad's, you may think you have a slick covered magazine concealed and well hid in your house. But, believe me, your children get around. They look in every nook, corner and cranny of your house. If it is in your house, your children will find it. They will come to school and tell their classmates what they have found and seen. I beg of you guys, guard your hearts. Don't live a double standard. Set your face to the Lord like flint. By His grace the Lord Jesus Christ will give you victory. If you need it, get outside help for this obsession.

If there are inconsistencies in your lifestyle at home, don't say, "Well, they'll correct it at school." Or, "They'll correct it at the church. We must have all three working together—home, church, and school. Then our children will be secure.



I've moved into the fifth element that would make our school safe for Jesus.

5. [Slide 5] A place that provides a support system for the home.

Deut 6:4-9 instructs: talk to your children about God's ways "when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

The school supports what is supposed to be taking place in the home. Did you know that all families home school their children? Someone says, "I don't home school my child." Hey, if you have children you teach them something at home, don't you? Consider the following—

- *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 144. "From every Christian home a holy light should shine forth. Love should be revealed in action. It should flow out in all home intercourse, showing itself in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy." (If you yell at the kids at home behind closed doors then they are going to be bad tempered at school. Our teachers are committed to not yelling at your child. Are you committed to treating your child with kindness, gentleness and with restraint of your temper? We are at SVAS.)

- Continuing with *Patriarchs and Prophets*. “There are homes where God is worshipped, and truest love reigns. From these homes, morning and evening prayer ascends to God as sweet incense, and mercies and blessings descend upon the suppliants like the morning dew.” That’s what I want for every home in the Spokane Valley Church family.
- Just one more statement from *Testimonies for The Church*, volume 1, pages 397-398, “Some parents have not realized the responsibilities resting upon them and have neglected the religious education of their children. In the morning the Christian’s first thoughts should be upon God. Worldly labor and self-interest should be secondary. Children should be taught to respect and reverence the hour of prayer.”

What does the author of this statement mean by the “hour of prayer?” Listen, “Before leaving the house for labor, all the family should be called together. . . . Come in humility with a heart full of tenderness and with a sense of the temptations and dangers before yourselves and your children; by faith bind them upon the altar, entreating for them the care of the Lord.”

This happens in the home before going to school. Don’t reason, “They’ll have Bible class and worship at school this morning. We don’t have time to do it here at home. This does not need to be a 30-minute worship service. We are talking about gathering around the table, holding hands and praying. And then in the evening the family gathers around again and discusses the events of the day. Perhaps a Bible passage could be read, then prayer. David Letterman is off, the sitcom is turned off, and you are gathered around to pray for real concerns and needs of the family. I want that for every family in the Spokane Valley Church.

This is the kind of school Mary and Joseph could have supported. According to the book *Desire of Ages* they did not send Jesus to the church school in Nazareth. God had established the church school system in the school of the prophets since the day of Elijah. Evidently the one in Nazareth was not worthy of the boy Jesus. I pray that Jesus would feel comfortable today in our school of the prophets.

I am in total support of our church school. Let me add, I am also in support of those who home school your children full time. This church supports you, as well.

I have ten youth to help me illustrate the strength of the home, church and school working together for our children. The Value Genesis report is one of the most comprehensive studies conducted regarding the influence of family, church and school impacting the faith and transmission of values to our youth (*Valuegenesis:/Report 1*, North American Division Office of Education, Silver Spring, Maryland, 1990, page 24.) These youth will help me explain:

Each child here on the platform represents ten Seventh-day Adventist youth in grades 6-8.

1. If a child does not attend worship, church school, and is from a family that does not have family worship then do you know how many of these ten youth will grow up to be faithful SDA Christians?
 - Perhaps they grow up in a home that attends church for the Christmas program. Where Mom and Dad tell the children they are Adventists, but they never are involved in Pathfinders, Bible Camps, or Sabbath School.
 - **Only seven out of 100** will be an Adventist in their adult years. We’ll go ahead and move Christy out of the crowd of unsaved to represent those few. Nine are left yet to be saved. How will we reach them?
2. Suppose a child has one of the three resources working for them? What are the three? Home, school, and church. Suppose a child lives in a home that goes to church but has no family worship and they go to public school? How many of our ten youth will be grow up to be loyal Seventh-day Adventist Christians?
 - **[Answer:] Two out of ten will.** (The actual figure is 21 out of 100.)
3. Suppose two out of the three—home, school, and church—are being resourced by the family? Perhaps they attend church and have family worship. But they attend public school where they do not get Bible classes and where there are activities on the Sabbath. How many of our youth will remain Adventists as adults?

- **Four out of 100.** Is that good enough? No, we have lost six of our youth!
 - You see before you two groups of youth. Four on one side and six on the other. Is this good enough? No.
4. Now, if all three are working together studies show **six out of ten** will grow up to be faithful Adventists Christians.
- I was disappointed in this. I don't want to lose any youth. This is better than most denominations but still not good enough.
5. We've got to do better. I shared this concern with Darrell Janke, regional Pathfinders Director. He showed me a study that says if we get them coming to Pathfinders then **nine out of ten** will remain Adventists as adults.
- But that leaves Zack standing over here all by himself. We don't want to lose Zack do we? Perhaps if every church member would make it a point to talk to Zack every Sabbath and tell Zack how much we appreciate him, we will save Zack.
 - Will you make that commitment let's save Zack? Zack you can come over here, too.

We don't want to lose a child from this church family. The more "cylinders" that are firing the better the chances will have of remaining in the church.

Please look inside your bulletin and find the insert for Christian education. Each year you are given an opportunity to make a financial commitment for Christian education. Twelve students this year are in need of financial assistance. I want to give you an opportunity to make a commitment at this moment. The deacons will collect these forms at the doors as you leave today.

(An appeal was made for financial support of the church school's scholarship program that assists students who otherwise cannot afford tuition. Worship concluded with a dedicatory prayer for the operating board of Spokane Valley Adventist School.)

**Sermon No. 2, Stewardship
The Gift That Kept Returning**

1 Kings 17:8-9

How would you have responded to God's command?

[Slide 1] 1 Kings 17:8-9, "Then the word of the Lord came to [Elijah]: 'Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon [that's like saying going to Veradale, Washington] and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.'"

"I have commanded a widow." We will see that this was a single mom—a single parent. "I have commanded a widow to supply you with food."

There is a famine raging. How would you feel if you were that single mom and God came to you and commanded that you take a strange man into your home? How would you have responded to God's command? Her reaction could have been, "Oh know! Another mouth to feed!" Or, "Why me, God. Why pick on a single mom like me? Why not lay this burden on a family of means?" again, "Lord, do you know what church I belong to? Do you realize that I am a worshipper of Baal? Doesn't Elijah go to church on a different day than I do? You want me to turn my home into a "bed and breakfast" for the prophet? Well, will Elijah eat my pork chops?" How would you have responded to God's command had you been that widow?

Do you think this lady said something like that? I as much until I read what Jesus had to say about this single mom in Luke 4:25, 26. Jesus makes it clear that God sent Elijah to this pagan mother because she was more receptive than all the widows of Israel. She may not have known all the truth but she was closer to the kingdom than many who did.

I don't know how God told her to turn her home into a "bed and breakfast" for the prophet. Perhaps it was through a dream. Perhaps a vision or maybe God told her she was to open her home to the prophet the same way he tells you to do acts of kindness—have you ever felt an urge to do something nice for someone? God impresses you. Do you believe the Holy Spirit guides you at times to lend a helping hand? I don't know how God did it for her but this I do know—she knew God had commanded her to open her home to the prophet Elijah.

Put yourself in her shoes. She waits for the prophet. I don't know how long she waits—perhaps day after day. But this I do know—she worries. She has reason to worry. All the trees around her little house are dead and stand like skeletons. Vultures hunch on dead limbs. Gone are the flowers in Mom's flowerbeds around her little house—all are withered. Sun-baked cracked earth lies where there used to be a beautiful green lawn. And now she will have another mouth to feed.

I wonder what her girl friends said to her? Certainly she had friends. How do you think they reacted when she said, "God has told me I should open up my home and take in a strange man?" Imagine her skeptical friends sarcastically retorting, "Sure, God has told you to do that." I can hear her friends even now say, "You mean God has told you to take food out of your boys' mouth and give it to a stranger? You really think that was God talking to you last night or did you have a serious case of indigestion? God wouldn't ask you to do that."

Is there anyone who has ever been advised by your accountant that you give too much money to the church? Perhaps as she prepares your income tax return you are counseled that giving 10 percent to the church in tithe is unreasonable. That there are better ways to get that tax-break. In my 26 years of pastoring I have had one member after another share with me, "Can you believe it? My accountant says I'm giving too much in charitable contributions."

As anyone ever told you that you are crazy for going to church on the seventh day of the week when the rest of our community goes to church on the first day of the week? Why do you do it? Because you are responding to God's command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." I looked it up this morning and it hasn't changed. It still reads that way. And Luke 4:16 tells me that Jesus left us an example that we should

worship on the Sabbath day just as He went to the synagogue and worshiped. This was his habit on the Sabbath. We worship in the seventh day because we are following the Word of the Lord.

That's why this woman did a ridiculous, socially incorrect thing. She followed what God told her to do. So, she waited. Elijah did not arrive.

Imagine this single mom going to the cupboard and taking an empty basket out. She also checks to see how much flour is left. Just a hand full of flour and a dab of cooking oil—that's all. She realizes that they are in trouble. So, she takes the empty basket in one hand and her boys hand in the other and she walks through the neighborhood. You know what she's doing, don't you? She's done this before. It hasn't rained for two years. When her garden withered she started walking through the neighborhood with this empty basket. And one neighbor would toss in a potato or zucchini (you can always find an extra zucchini). But today no one drops anything in her basket today. In fact, no one makes eye contact. They turn their heads so as not to be responsible. Now it's every man for himself. Every single mom for herself. Every boy for himself. Every girl for herself. This is famine.

As she wanders along she hears long mourning wails drifting through open doors and windows. Wails of grieving mothers like herself. *Prophets and Kings*, page 127, Moms and dads "powerless to relieve the sufferings of their children [are] forced to see them die." Dry thick air suffocates all. A breeze tries to muster up strength to give relief only to make matters worse by creating a dust storm. Mom pulls her shawl over her nose and mouth to sift the air. Her eyes blur with dust particles. She cannot tell if they tear up from the dust or from her heartache for her little boy.

She looks down at her son whose bony hand clasps hers. He shows signs of malnutrition. You've seen the picture from some place like Somalia—a hollow face pestered with flies and a distended belly. That was her precious little boy. She bends down and looks into his eyes. "Would you like some fried flour cakes?" He shakes his head vigorously, "Yes!" Yum-yum flour cakes, Mommy!" Mother says, "Then quickly now, help Mommy pick up some sticks for the oven. Let's go home and enjoy ourselves." Mom holds back the tears. This will be his last supper. He will eat and then die.

And at that very moment, as they pick up the sticks for the last meal, they hear a voice of one who has positioned himself at the city gate. 1 Kings 17:10, "So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?"

1 Kings 17:10
Was Elijah socially disabled?

[Slide 2] Where has this guy been? Doesn't he know that all the wells are dried up? The sun has choked off all the creeks. The gall of this man. I hate pushy people. (Excuse me. I need to rephrase that. We need to love pushy people.) Was Elijah socially handicapped?

As she dutifully turns to fetch the water he calls out after her, verse 11, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." He *does* use the magic word, "please." This is the end: not only does he say, "Bring me a cup of water," but he also imposes, "And throw in a piece of bread." This is rude! What's wrong with this guy?

In my ministry on occasion someone has asked me a difficult question, "Pastor, I'm just going to live with this guy because if we get married it will be to our disadvantage financially. The important thing is that we love each other. If we live together God will understand. After all, a piece of paper doesn't make a happy marriage. Don't you think that's all right pastor?"

It matters not what I think. What does the Bible say? What is the command of the Lord? We don't like that word, "command." Elijah was commanded by God to go to this woman. This woman was commanded to open her home. God has commands for you and me.

Occasionally someone says to me, "I know the seventh-day is the Sabbath. But if I keep the Sabbath I'll lose my job. I'll lose my retirement benefits. At my age I can't get another job." As a pastor the

temptation is to say, “Well, you just may be the exception.” But to say that would make me a false prophet. I can say nothing more or less than what the Word of God says.

Malachi 3:10 “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”

Someone once said to me, “What would you do if you were in my shoes, Pastor? I live on a shoestring. I have a strict budget. Ends barely meet. If I pay tithe I’ll be evicted! My children won’t have the bare necessities. Do you think God really expects me to give 10% of my income?” I felt the temptation to say to God, “God, this person is the exception. God, you really don’t expect this family to tithe do you?”

[Slide 3] Then the words of Malachi 3:10 came rolling across by mind, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. ‘Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.’” That is one power-packed verse. It says to bring the whole tithe. Not 1%. Not 5%. But the whole 10%. It also says, don’t bring your tithe to the preacher but to the storehouse.

Lord Almighty

[Slide 4] Notice who is talking—“The Lord Almighty.” Is he “all mighty?” Is he big enough to take care of every Mom and Dad, every boy and girl here? Is God sovereign in your life? Is He the Almighty one? He says, “Test me.” Test him for what? To see if he is “all mighty.” To see if he indeed will take care of you. Tithe is God’s chosen method. When you faithfully return your tithe you are saying to God, “You are Almighty.” God will come through for you if you will be faithful. He will open the

floodgates of heaven for you.

The temptation was for the Mom in this story to say, “I know what God said, but I’m down to nothing!” And it was a temptation for Elijah to size up the situation and say, “God? Don’t make me do this. Don’t make me take the food out of their mouths.”

1 Kings 17:12

[Slide 5] Maybe he didn’t know better, someone says. Oh, she made sure he knew what reality was. 1 Kings 17:12, “As surely as the Lord your God lives . . . I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

Notice, she said to Elijah, “the Lord *your* God.” Elijah was sent to lead her to say, “The Lord my God.” She says, “I don’t have any bread.” Well, that’s not exactly the truth. So, she corrects herself, “I do have some flour and oil.” “But I’m going home to prepare my son’s last meal. He will eat it and die. And you are taking his last meal away from him?” You have to empathize with this mother.

As 15: “Don’t be Afraid”

[Slide 6] What do you say to that Elijah? I like his response in 1 King 17:13, “Elijah said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid.’” Is there anyone here today overwhelmed with life, who longs to hear those words, “Don’t be afraid”? Do you long for peace? I need to hear that today. One month ago I had an accident. My broken shoulder remains in pain. It’s held together by nuts and bolts. I may still be facing surgery. These words of the prophet are for me, “Don’t be afraid.” Perhaps you are sitting here in fear. You do not have a job. You’ve been looking for one. You feel like you’ve been put on a shelf and forgotten. God says to you, “Don’t be afraid.”

As 15: “Don’t be Afraid”
Mk 5:36 “Don’t be afraid, only believe.”
Lk 12:4 “Don’t be afraid of those that kill the body.”
Mtt 14:27 “It is I. Be not afraid.”

[Slide 7] Jesus words in Luke 12:4 are, “Don’t be afraid of those that kill the body but of those who kill the soul.” Mark 5:36, “Be not afraid, only believe.” One time the disciples were caught in a storm on high sea. They saw a ghost coming towards them walking on the water. They were scared spitless until they realized it was Jesus on the water. Matthew 14:27, Jesus

said, "It is I: Be not afraid." Sometimes when we seem so alone. Things seem so helpless Jesus has never been nearer. Do you hear him say today, "It is I. Be not afraid"? Have you noticed the times in our lives when we seemed so desperate, when we seemed so down and out, when the darkness was so thick you could cut it with a knife, at that time you listened and heard Jesus say, "I am with you in this darkness. Don't be afraid." The Word of the Lord is comforting for me today.

1 Kings 17:13 (last part)
First fruits - God's

[Slide 8] Notice the conditions for receiving this peace: 1 Kings 17:13b, "Go home and do as you have said, but first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me." The message? Don't give leftovers to God. No crumbs off the table for Jesus. Throughout the Bible God's portion is the first-fruit. Tithe is called the first-fruit. It is to be the first check written each month. The first item on the budget is tithe. Otherwise, Satan will always see to it that nothing is left over for God.

1 Kings 17:13 (last part)
Don't give God the
left-overs.

[Slide 9] When Jesus came to this earth to save us we did not get heaven's leftovers. We got heaven's best. Jesus is the bread of life. Not a crumb. How can we give God leftovers? I'll tell you a certainty. If we give God leftovers, Satan will see to it that God never has any left over. Jesus gave all for us. The least we can do is give all for Jesus.

Imagine the single Mom's feelings as she stepped out in faith and used up all the flour and oil in bread for a stranger in need. Imagine how she felt as she left her house returning to the gate where he waited. Imagine how she felt as she watched him eat the bread that earlier that day she thought her son would eat. Imagine her feelings returning home to jars that had been left empty on the kitchen counter with the promise ringing in her ear, 1 Kings 17:14, This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land."

Imagine her excitement as she looks in those containers and gasps! She calls for her friends, the ones who had told her she was crazy. She calls for her son. Don't you think he loved to pull up a stool and watch Mom use up all the flour and oil? And then he peeks into the jug and jar a watches it rise again. She couldn't explain it to her son. "Mommy," he'd asks, "How does it come back?" Mom replies, "I don't know, Son, God just makes it come back. Maybe there is an angel in our kitchen today." Don't you think that little fellow never forgot the oil and flour that returned? Just like I have never forgotten my own Dad sitting at the kitchen table with checkbook open writing out the check for his tithe, placing it in a tithe envelope, licking it shut. Later as I sat next to him at church he let me place it in the offering collection. I remember that. That's a tradition that passed on from generation to generation. Do you want your children to have that? Then you must pass it on.

She calls for her girl friends. "Look at this!" She giggles. "What did I tell you?" She rubs it in their faces. God asked the widow to give all she had. I had planned on saying, God asks us to give only 10% of what we have. But that's not right. God asks us to give all we have—and are. God asks us to give all of our time and talent. All of our heart and soul. He owns it all. All the cattle. All the silver and gold.

Jesus gave all for you.
What will you give
to Him?

[Slide 10] Jesus came down and purchased it all with His blood. How can we give Him anything other than the very best? Will you give God everything? Will you give him your heart? Will you totally submit your life to Jesus? After all he gave all for you.

Sermon No. 3, Worship Should We Talk in the Church?

Rev 14:7

Fear God and
give glory to Him...

Worship Him.

[Slide 1] Revelation 14:7 is the first of three angel's messages that are going to the world today: "Fear God and give glory to Him. Worship Him" "Worship Him." That's what we are doing today. You come to church to worship God. But as you sit there, I don't know what it is, I don't know why it happens—you know what I'm talking about—maybe it was that sugar-glazed do-nut you had for breakfast. That sugar has gone to your brain and you sit there and say to yourself, "My goodness is this preacher ever going to hurry up and shut-up! This sermon is lasting longer than the Roman siege of

Carthage in the second Punic war!" You look at your watch and it looks like it's going backwards. You take it off. I see you do it. [Take off watch.] And you do this. [Shake wristwatch.] No one has done this yet. [Wave watch in the air.]

You say to yourself, "I've got to keep awake." Your eyes sag. You want to do this. [Hold eyes wide open with thumb and index finger.] You say to yourself, "Maybe I could just rest one eye. That will give some relief. Before long both are resting and suddenly your chin hits your knees! You look around and think, "Did anybody see me?" You're wide-awake now. (You know what I'm talking about.) You think, "Did anybody see my head bob down and hit the floor?" You look around and observe that everyone else seems to be coping. "That guy over there is keeping awake by counting all the red dresses in the sanctuary. You start counting all the baldheads. "There's a baby," you say. "Maybe I can keep myself awake by making faces at the baby."

"Worship Him," the Bible says. "Pastor," someone says, "get real. This is the Spokane Valley Church. I'm so glad that we don't have those kinds of problems here." [Laughter. Pregnant pause.] I see you.

The Bible says, "Fear God and give glory to Him. Worship Him." The Bible talks about worship in the previous chapter, Revelation 13. It warns about worship of the beast. Now, in Revelation 14, positive worship is presented. God's last day people, you who are waiting for Jesus to return, are told to worship God.

A delegation of deacons met me in my study after church a couple of months ago and said, "Pastor, we need a sermon on reverence during worship." And so today, after praying about it, here is the sermon on how to worship.

I thought about how to approach the subject. I could project a few statements from inspired sources on the screen that tell you we ought to be quiet in the church—a few Bible passages that tell us we should be silent. Then we could have the benediction, go home, and next week when you come to church you would be quiet. But you might not come back. And besides that you probably would go to sleep while I'm reading all those quotations about what you should be doing or not doing.

Why is it that we think being quiet is worship? If reverence was a matter of being quiet then we could have our head greeter, Stan Smick, issue to all greeters who standing at the front door of the church sleeping pills to give to worshippers. You'd be quiet. "But," you say, "you have to be both quiet and awake or it doesn't count." And so we go through these mental gymnastics trying to keep awake and quiet.

S-h-h-h!

Do Not Disturb.

[Slide 2] Why is this necessary for worship? Is God like a persnickety professor where everyone has to tiptoe around His office because he's in deep thought and contemplation and if you disrupt Him He's going to get mad? He might even give you a bad grade! So, be very careful. Better tiptoe around God. Or is God like a very ill patient with a "Do Not Disturb" sign posted on His door? You know, God works really hard. He needs all the rest he can get. It says in the Bible he has to rest on the Sabbath day so do not disturb God. Don't want

to rile Him up. Don't want to get on His bad side. Is that what Habakkuk meant when he said, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple. Let all the earth keep silent"?

For who's sake is
worship?
For your sake?
Or, for God's sake?

[Slide 3] For who's sake is worship? Is it for your sake? If it is for the worshippers sake then go out there and find the most entertaining church in town. I'd find the church with the best dog and pony show, the one that has the best clown, perhaps one where the pastor is a stand-up comedian. And then I could leave saying, "I get a blessing every week. He keeps me awake."

There are books out about how this is the day of the market driven church. Is this how we learn to worship—by going to Wall Street and advertising agencies? We could put the balloons out. In fact we could offer free ice cream treats every weeks for all attendees. Advertise in the paper, "Free banana splits for all worshippers." I recall seeing in the newspaper about one church that offered the longest subway sandwich. They displayed it for the photographers and then ate it. We could come up with all sorts of gimmicks. Is that what it takes? Is that pleasing to God.

Who is the spectator
in worship?

Who is the
performer?

[Slide 4] Is worship for our sake? Or is it for God's sake? Am I, as your pastor, performing for you today? Are you here to be entertained by me? Is that what worship is all about? I ask you, who is the performer today? You and I are performing for God. He is the spectator. He is the one who enjoys our

songs, enjoys our praise, and enjoys the giving of ourselves in worship to Him.

Rev 14:7

Worship Him who
made the heavens,
the earth, the sea and
the springs of water.

You are not an audience. This is not some kind of concert we have every week here. You are called a congregation—God's people gathered together to praise God. That's why it says in Revelation 14:7, "Fear God." This does not mean you are afraid of God. It means that God is awesome. We are in awe of Him. We are to give glory to Him.

[Slide 5] Look again at Revelation 14:7. We are to worship *Him*. He is the only one worthy of worship. Think about this verse. We are to "worship Him who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, the springs of water." How many Christians today truly believe that God created all things? We have a message to give at the end of earth's history where we stand up and say, "My God created it all." Our heritage is not that of coming from the tail of a tadpole. We came from the hand of God!

You have an
audience today
with the Creator.

[Slide 6] When we are worshipping here we have an audience with our Creator. Think about that: The great God of the universe is here today and we have an audience with Him. That's greater than having an audience with any worldly king or ruler.

Isaiah 6:1

I saw the Lord!

[Slide 7] Isaiah had the veil before our eyes pulled back and he saw God as recorded in Isaiah 6:1. The king had just died. In those days when the king died things were left up in the air. The Assyrians could invade and take over. Isaiah was afraid things might fall apart. Just as we today may feel things are falling apart. As you look at the declining stock market and are afraid that our world is falling apart. As we sit here with our care and concerns we have fears. One young lady sitting here today was robbed last night of all her belongings. We know your heart—the fear.

Isaiah had fears. At this very time when the king died the veil was pulled back in Isaiah 6:1 and the prophet was shown that *the* King of the universe was still alive. God is still in charge. He was dressed in a regal robe and His train filled the temple. Isaiah said in Isaiah 6:1, "I saw the LORD."

That is why we are here worshipping. We want to praise God. But, we want to see God, too. With the eye of faith we can come boldly before the throne of grace and receive mercy and help in time of need. We can do that now, today. We can do that every time we worship. We are here to see God.

Yes, worship is for God. But it is also for you and me. It's not only for God but it is for our benefit as well because as we come here and see God it does something to us. What would that be?

Isaiah 6:5

Woe is me!

[Slide 8] Continue with Isaiah 6:5. When Isaiah saw God Isaiah also saw himself. Dr. Benjamin Reeves says that when I see God I see myself. That does not mean that I am God. That means that when I see God a mirror comes up and I see that in comparison with God I am nothing. "Woe is me!" Isaiah says. I see myself as I truly am. This at times is a painful experience. Church is not necessarily a place where I come to feel good. Sometimes I need to come here and I need to be made to feel bad. The Bible tells us that at times those who are uncomfortable need to be comforted. But sometimes those who are too comfortable need to be discomfited. There is nothing wrong with being made just a little uncomfortable at times.

Isaiah looked at God and saw his own sinfulness. There is an occasion when we need to weep between the porch and the altar the Bible says. What I am sharing with you is not popular today. In our society what I have shared with you is politically incorrect. But it's what the Bible says. We need to learn to take inventory.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I need to find myself"? I feel like saying, "Well, I've found you. You're standing right there. There you are." But I know what they mean, so do you. They are saying, I need to find my niche in life, who they really are. The problem is that many who are trying to find themselves are searching apart from God. Shakespeare said, "Know thyself." If you are one who is trying to know yourself, I am here to tell you the only way you will ever find yourself is to seek God.

When you truly come into His presence—when you truly come to know God you will become aware of something many have never discovered. Here it is in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." Everything in this universe was made by the Word. John 1:14 says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

This gives deeper understanding into the person we are worshipping today. Not only do we have an appointment today with God the Creator but also we understand that we have an audience with Jesus Christ our Savior. And when we come into His presence realizing He as given me a new heart, I want to worship Him. If I have not been connected with Him through the week, then when I come here on Sabbath morning this will be the most boring place in the world to me. My mind is going to be out on the golf course. My mind is going to be on that football game this evening. My mind is going to be down at the state fair. It's going to be everywhere else but here. But if I truly have been in the Word throughout the week, if I've been truly connected with the Lord throughout the week, then when I come here on Sabbath morning I'll truly have something to say to Him. I bow before Him and worship Him. I want to literally kiss the feet of Jesus because they're nail-scared for me! That's what I want for you, my Church.

Today you have an audience with the Savior. He died for you. Think about the significance of that. All those angels who worship around His throne sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy." That's not repetitious. I believe they say that in various keys of music. They say it in different tones. They sing it in harmony, unison, and antiphonally back and forth. Beautifully back and forth they answer each other, "Holy, Holy, Holy." And think about this, they have not been saved. How much more we have to praise God for!

Isaiah 6:8

Here I am.
Send me!

[Slide 9] In Isaiah 6:7 notice what else we have to say when this is our experience. After Isaiah truly saw himself, an angel took coals from the altar and placed those live coals on His lips. Fire cleanses. The Holy Spirit comes

into our lives and cleanses us. We are given a new life, a new spirit. Isaiah heard someone ask in heaven, verse 8, “Who’s going to go share with people about this truth about how awesome God is?” Isaiah said, “Here am I, send me.” Now Isaiah had something to say. When Jesus changes your life you can’t keep quiet. You are compelled to share the love of Jesus in your heart.

In Revelation 14, the 144,000 stand on Mount Zion. In that passage we are pictured in heaven. Verse 2 says that harps play. Verse 3 says, “And they sang a new song before the throne, and before the four creatures and before the elders. And no one could learn the song except the 144,000.” Can the angels sing this song? No! They have not been saved. Has God put a new song in your heart? Things used to be this way for you now they are that way. Has God created a new heart in you? If so then He has also put a new heart in you.

Now you may not be able to sing worth a flip. Everyone else sings like a canary and you sing like a crow. Well, God made both canaries and crows and He loves to hear the crows sing as well. When you come to church and you sound like a crow, throw back your head and let everyone else hear what crows sound like. God made you that way. The Bible says, “Make a joyful noise. Some of us make a noise better than others.” If He has given you a new song then you want care if it is off key a little.

Worship is an experiential thing. We are too often afraid of emotion. We should not be. (I’m not talking about emotionalism.) There is nothing wrong with expressing emotion in worship. If you feel like raising your hand then raise your hands. Most of us here do not feel comfortable doing that but that’s okay if you do. If you feel like kneeling when you come into the auditorium you go ahead and do so. You stay on your knees and pray as long as you want to.

The Bible does not tell us a certain order of worship we should adopt. The Bible does not tell us what posture we must assume in worship. That is left open to the culture of the worshipper. But the Bible does tell us to do this—“Worship.” Worship together in God’s house, on God’s day, with God’s people.

Eph 5:18-20
 Speak to one another
 with songs,
 Speak to God with
 songs.

We talk about the right day of worship. I think we should talk more about the right spirit of worship. In John 4 the woman at the well wanted to talk about the right place of worship. Jesus said, “Let me tell you woman, God wants you to worship in Spirit and in truth.”

[Slide 10] We talk a lot about “the truth.” We need also to capture the Spirit of worship—vibrant worship—to express our emotion and experience, to express that unique song that God has given to each one. No other person can sing that song but you because that is your story. When you come here sing that song. God hears it. No one else knows what is going on in your life—what He has brought you through. God knows. Look in Ephesians 5:18-20, “Be filled with the Spirit.” (Filled with the true Spirit and not the false spirit, e.g., booze or alcoholic beverages.)

Verse 19 says, “Speak to one another.”

- Have you ever noticed that we are instructed here to “speak to one another” when we worship?
- I can hear the deacons saying right now, “Wait a minute, Pastor! We told you to tell the people to quit talking in church. Here you go telling them speak to one another.”
- No, the Bible says we are to speak to one another. But how are we to speak to one another

“Speak to one another in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Give thanks always to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- So, we sing songs to each other and we sing songs to God. Worship is for God in the first place. But it is for all of us, too. Worship builds up the saints as they come together to worship. There is a social dimension to worship. You cannot get away from it.
- However, as we speak to one another let us remember in who’s presence we are.

[Slide 11] I'd like to share three things that might help you in enjoying and understanding worship. This is my plan for marketing worship here in the Spokane Valley.

1. Open your Bible
2. Brain in gear
3. Mouth in park

1. **Open your Bible.** I don't want to belong to your Sabbath school class if everyone in your class comes without their Bible and they sit there throughout the class and say, "I think this and I think that." And, "It seems to me." I want to know what the Word of the Lord says. Bring your Bible when you come to Sabbath School. Bring the Bible you have had open all through the previous week. For if you are not opening it in the week then you will not be opening it on Sabbath morning. Take note. I did not say, Open your Bible in church. I simply said, Open your Bible! On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday open it! Read it. And then bring it to church and open it again. Follow along. You might notice I refer to a selection of passages when I preach so, open you Bible. If you have to turn to the Concordance to find a book of the Bible, that's okay.

2. **Put your brain in gear.** Don't watch me like you watch TV. (I understand when you watch TV the waves in your brain are all zoned out.) Before worship think about what lies ahead. Think about the offering. Did you know this is more than collecting money? Giving of the offering is symbolic of the giving of yourself to the Lord. Today we have the offering at the end of the service. Today we end by giving ourselves to the Lord. Then we will sing a song and as we leave we go out into the world to share what God has given to us. Think about what you are saying while you sing a hymn or praise song. Put your brain in gear. What's being said? Are these songs making a liar out of me, I should ask?

Put your antennas out and your brain in gear. If you see a guest sit down near you, wake up! Come on, there's nothing wrong with bending over and whispering, "I'm Charles Ferguson. So good to have you here today." (Of course you will want to use your name and not mine.) There's nothing wrong in the church at the proper time extending your hand or even giving a hug if that is appropriate. Nothing wrong with say, "Say, do you have a place to eat dinner today? I'm not the best cook but we'll throw another potato in the pot. I'll talk to you later. Meet me after church outside." This is part of worship. I think it is an abomination to God for us to sit here as dead zombies with eyes forward, in total silence and out of connection with those worshipping with us. Because there is that social dimension in worship.

1. Open your Bible
2. Brain in gear
3. Proper Response

3. [Slide 12] **Mouth in park.** Brain in gear. Mouth in park. (I thought about putting "Breaks on mouth.") But then I thought more about this and said to myself, "That's not right." There is a passage that tells us we need to put a bridle on the tongue. I think this is the way it ought to read: "Proper response." The Bible says, "Let all the people say, Amen." There's nothing wrong with saying Amen. That is the proper verbal expression.

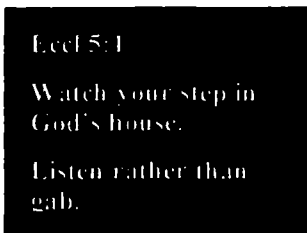
Bill May, a very conservative minister whom I greatly respected, a year ago in the June '97 issue of *Amazing Facts* magazine said that Amen means three things:

1. So be it. (This is the most common understanding of Amen.)
2. I got a blessing from that, i.e., from what was just said or done.
3. Thank you. Pastor May says Amen can also mean thank you. There is nothing wrong with using it in this manner. Amen is a good Biblical word. Use it.

I'm going to get myself out on a limb. Bill may goes on to say the clapping of the hands, however, should not be used in worship because it is saying, Thank you. When I read this I said to myself, "Wait! You just said that one of the reasons for saying Amen is because it says 'Thank you'. Now you, pastor May, are saying we should never clap in church. Yet the Bible says that we are to clap." Read the Psalms.

I don't think our congregation should clap if it makes us feel comfortable. But some have wondered if we should ever clap here in the worship service. I think there is an occasion for this congregation to clap and I

think when we do so it brings joy to God. (There, I'm out on the limb and you feel free to agree or disagree.)



[Slide 13] Come with me now to Ecclesiastes 5:1, “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. (That means watch your step. Watch how you walk.) Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.”

What does it say? “Go near to listen rather than to”—it doesn't say “to talk” but talking is implied for what is the “Sacrifice of fools?” The “sacrifice of fools” is the opposite of listening. The opposite of listening is talking. Again, let's use good judgment. This is not speaking against proper use of the tongue in worship. Not speaking against saying Amen

or other expressions. I was in a church once where the congregation carried a dialogue with the preacher. Someone next to me spoke out, “Uh-h!” Someone else spoke up concerning the sermon, “Gone to meddling, now. Gone to meddling!” They yelled it right out in church. I liked that. When I got back to my church we had a guest speaker and I yelled out in his sermon. My wife poked me with her elbow in my ribs. So I learned to use good judgment and related within the context of my culture. But I think we need more of that sort of thing.

When you see someone worshipping with a tear in his or her eye, put your arm around him or her and whisper a word of encouragement. That's appropriate talking in worship. But there is something wrong with the talking that goes on while someone is up front here trying to say something. (I'm not just talking about the sermon.) When someone is pouring out their heart and soliciting your attention and you're talking . . . I understand if you did that in a theater there are ushers who would ask you to be quiet or leave. Am I correct or not. I understand if you are at a concert and the orchestra is playing and you are talking that you will be tapped on the shoulder and asked to be quiet. Jesus said that the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. It is just good manners to be quiet when someone is up front talking.

We are speaking about appropriate talk. With that comes the appropriate time to speak out and the appropriate time to be quiet. So, could we have an understanding that we stop all the talking when someone is up here trying to say something? If you must speak at that time could we have a little more whispering? If something is so important that it just can't wait then could we move outside the church auditorium?

Right now if you were to leave this place and go to Virginia to a cemetery called Arlington to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier you would find a place of quiet reverence. No one would need to tell you to be quiet. You'd catch on very quickly that people don't cut up at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Because that place represents a sacred place honoring all the men who have died for this country; who have died for our freedom and our lives. Having lived in that area at one time I've been there time and again. Every time it's the same atmosphere. As they stand there you realize that this is a place of quietness and reverence because of what that tomb represents.

You will find there a soldier standing at attention. And down to the second without audible command he goes through his exercise with precision. He marches back and forth. About every half hour another soldier comes and takes his place at the changing of the guard. And there they stand at that tomb day and night. It's happening right now. Why? Why all the trouble? Because of what our men and women did for us on the battlefield.

So when we come here to worship and we realize what Jesus did for us on the battlefield called Calvary we want to show Him awe. We want to show Him reverence. Not because He hates it when there is noise but because we are in awe of Him. We give glory to Him. We worship Him.

**Sermon No. 4, Clean and Unclean Foods
Did Jesus Make Pork Clean at the Cross?**

I grew up in a very loving family with oodles of aunts, uncles and cousins. However, the only other Seventh-day Adventists in our family besides my Mom, Dad, two sisters, and me was an aunt who had introduced my parents to this Church. Everybody thought we were a little off mentally for breaking the family tradition. But, for the most part it did not pose a problem—except for one area. Would you like to guess what that area was? What Bible-based belief that we hold as Adventists do you think really got under the skin of my relatives? The Sabbath issue? Was this an irritant to my uncles and aunts? No. They seemed to work around the Sabbath. Nature of the soul? What happens to a person when she dies? No. They seemed to tolerate this one okay. Sanctuary doctrine? This is a unique doctrine of the Adventists. My family tree didn't have many theologians hanging in it. We never even discussed the sanctuary. I wonder if they even knew there was a sanctuary.

No, there was another area that really got their dander up. Whenever we would have a family reunion (and we had them regularly at every holiday, funeral, wedding, and summer picnics) I would get my plate and head through the food line with my cousins, then I'd stop and ask an aunt, "Do these beans have pork in them?" Or, "Is this rabbit or chicken?" And that would set it off. They say, "Charlie, if you don't stop being so picky you're going to dry up and blow away." It may be hard for you to imagine that this 200 lb. frame at one time was barely skin and bones. When I turned sideways I'd have to stick my tongue out in order to be seen.

Then someone would pipe in, "Those ceremonial laws were nailed to the cross." Have you ever heard that? I ask you, congregation, what Bible doctrine was it that my family had a hard time accepting? It was the health message.

We had family members frequently visit in our homes—almost daily. Sometimes when they'd light up a cigarette, Dad would go over to the large sliding glass door in our house and open it wide for ventilation—with winter chill out side. My relatives would defend cigarette smoking! It's hard to believe today that any one would go to bat for tobacco. I remember Aunt Dot and Uncle "CW" glibly ending their argument, "Well, you got to die with something. Might as well be cigarettes." This reasoning really frustrated me when I was only a kid. Why? Because, I loved my aunt and uncle. (Aunt Dot died two years ago of lung cancer. Uncle "CW" was buried this past week of complications directly related to cigarette smoking. Both had quit smoking before their deaths.)

1 Cor 3:16,17

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.

[Slide 1] One benefit this debate regarding the health issue had on me is that it drove me to study out the matter for myself. I hate to loose an argument. I preached my first sermon when I was 16 year old. My opening text? 1 Corinthians 3:16, "If any man destroy his body him shall God destroy." It was probably a little legalistic. I'm sure I vented 16 years of frustration. That sermon went something like this, "Don't smoke, drink, or eat pork or you'll burn."

Someone said once, God has no grandchildren. Meaning, each generation must make faith his or her own. You cannot inherit faith. This challenge from my relatives drove me to investigating these issues.

1 Cor 6:19,20

**•You are not your own
•You are bought with a price
•Glorify God with your body**

[Slide 2] I have since found that a better passage to use than 1 Corinthians 3:16 is 1 Corinthians 6:19,20, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with you body."

The context applies primarily to warning against abusing our bodies with sexual sins (verse 18). However the principle applies to abusing the body in any way. Whether it is with cocaine, nicotine, alcohol, or eating rats and pork.

“It’s my body and I’ll do what I want to with it” is the popular sound bite for our world. It also goes like this, “What ever happens between two consenting adults is all right as long as it does not hurt anybody else.” Ever heard that before? Can a Christian buy into that philosophy? Do you believe this Word [the Bible]? Then what you do does matter. “You are not your own.” You were bought with the precious blood of Jesus. And now His Spirit dwells in you. Your body is his sanctuary on earth. This church building is not God’s sanctuary. God’s temple is made of flesh and blood—your body. That’s why it matters to Him what you put in it. God has a say regarding what you eat and drink.

**Gen 1:29 Fruits+nuts+
Tree of Life= Eden diet**

Gen 3:18 Vegetables

**Gen 7:2,8-9, 8:20
Clean meat diet**

[Slide 3] This matter weighed on me so much that not only did I preach about it, I became radically involved—a crusader. In high school I was the president of the American Temperance association. I received a scholarship in college with my involvement in the Temperance club. Here’s what I discovered as I made the faith of my parents my own faith:

- Genesis 1:29. The original diet was composed of fruits and nuts plus the fruit of the tree of life. The original diet was *not* vegetarian. It was fruits and nuts.
- Genesis 3:18. After sin God took away the tree of life and added vegetables to our diet. The God’s diet became a vegetarian diet, i.e., meatless to be sure up until the flood.
- Genesis 7:2, 8,9; 8:20. Clean meat was added to the diet. How did the animals go into the ark? Two by two and seven by seven, i.e., seven clean, two unclean. How do we know that Noah did not eat pork chops on the ark? Because if he had eaten a pig then how many would be around today? It takes two to tango, i.e., to procreate.

**Lev. 11:1-8
Split hoof+chews cud=
clean meat (cow & lamb)
Unclean= pig & armadillo**

**Lev. 11:9-12
Fins+scales= clean fish
Unclean fish= catfish,
clams, shrimp, oysters**

- This was before there was ever a Jew. Long before the ceremonial laws were given, God showed a difference between clean and unclean animals.

[Slide 4] As I continued my investigation I found:

- Leviticus 11:1-8. Animals with split hoof + chews cud=clean meat, e.g., beef, venison, sheep, etc. Unclean meat, e.g., pork, rabbit, snake, frogs, rats, and armadillo.
- Leviticus 11:9-12. Fish with fins + scales=clean food, e.g., trout, bass, red snapper, tuna, etc. Unclean fish, e.g., scavengers, i.e., catfish, lobsters, shrimp, crabs, clams and oysters, etc.
- The scientific fact is that even catfish have scales under a microscope. However, before you run out and order a catfish supper what was God’s intent. He knew the people of the Bible did not have microscopes. God’s intent here is that which is evident to the naked eye. The scavengers are unclean. They are nature’s garbage cans.

**Lev. 11:13
Clean birds= chicken &
turkey
Unclean birds= buzzard,
owl, bats, eagle**

- [Slide 5] Leviticus 11:13. Clean birds, i.e., chicken, turkey, game birds, etc. Unclean birds, i.e., eagle, owl, buzzards, and bats, etc.

I grew up hearing from my relatives that at the cross Jesus died and made all these animals clean. I heard, “If I feel like eating baby mice dipped in honey that’s my business.” And then I heard Adventist scholars saying the same thing. I’ll give one theologian credit for stating that we should not eat unclean foods for dietary reasons. But this theologian said he agreed that when Jesus died on the cross, these distinctions between clean and unclean animals no longer were applicable for the Christian. This fired up my quest all over again. Here’s what I discovered:

Why Lev. 11 still stands:

**-Distinction made before Sinai
-No provision ever given to
make unclean meat clean.**

[Slide 6] The distinction between clean and unclean animals predates the ceremonial laws. That which predates the ceremonial laws given at Sinai is meant for all time, i.e., Sabbath and tithing.

1. No provision has ever been made in the Old Testament for making unclean food clean. The Old Testament ceremonial code offered no sacrifice to make pork edible. Therefore, there is no type to be fulfilled by antitype.

**Lev. 4:32-34
Sinner made clean by
sacrificing a lamb.**

[Slide 7] In the Old Testament times if you sinned you were considered unclean. The same is true today. But 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." How are we cleansed and made clean? By confessing our sin. Jesus died for our sin. His blood paid for our forgiveness. So, it was in the Old Testament days. Leviticus 4:32 says that if a man sinned he was to bring a lamb as his sin offering. In verse 33 he is pictured laying his hand on the head of the lamb thus transferring his sin. Who does this lamb represent? John the Baptist said of Jesus, "Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

The sinner slaughters the lamb. Leviticus 4:34, the priest displays the blood on the altar. The last part of verse 35 says that in this way "atonement" is made for the sin and "he will be forgiven." The unclean sinner is made clean by the sacrifice of the lamb.

**Lev. 13:45; 14:9
Unclean Leper made
clean by sacrificing a
bird.**

However, I challenge you to look long and hard throughout Leviticus 11 (or Duet. 14) for a sacrifice that will cleanse unclean food and make it clean. You will not find it. Throughout Leviticus provision is made time and again to make unclean things clean. But never is unclean food made clean.

[Slide 8] One more example: In Leviticus 13:45 a person infected with leprosy was to cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" But sometimes that person would be healed of his disease. Leviticus 14 instructed the healed leper to present herself before the priest for inspection. Then a sacrifice was offered. Two birds were taken and one was sacrificed over a part of fresh water. The blood dripped and mingled in the water just as blood and water flowed from the side of Christ when he was pierced through on the cross. The second bird was dipped in the water seven times and then released. Verse 9, and of the leper it says, "He will be clean." That second bird was set free. That bird is like Jesus and His people who escape the jaws of death. Because Jesus arose from the grave, we too will arise. Some day we will all flee like a bird to the mountain—Mt. Zion!

**We are made clean by
the sacrifice of Jesus on
the cross.**

[Slide 9] Do you see what provision is made to make that which is unclean clean? Yet, nowhere in the Old Testament ceremonial code was provision made to change unclean meat into clean meat. Therefore, Christ could not die to make it clean, for there was never any type for antitype to meet. For those who know better it is just as much a sin today to eat pork, shrimp, and armadillo as it was in Noah's day.

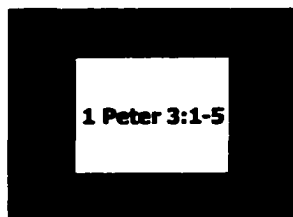
Now, if I walk into a restaurant one of these days and you are eating a pork hot dog don't dive under the table. I'll love you just like I loved my Aunt Dot and Uncle CW. So, you go on and eat your hot dog and I'll sit down and talk with you without passing judgment. That's between you and God. But don't be like that little girl who prayed at bedtime, "And dear Jesus, please make Toledo the capital of New Hampshire." Her mother asked her at the end of the prayer, "Dear, why in the world would you want Jesus to make Toledo the capital for the state of New Hampshire." The little darling replied, "Because on my geography test today I put down that Toledo is the capital of New Hampshire."

Sometime we ask too much of God. God cannot defy his own laws. If I abuse my body with unclean food and drink that which God has clearly forbidden, I will reap ill health. Then when I cry out to God to heal me am I any different than that little girl. That's like saying, "God please make a bad diet healthy."

Our bodies are the temple of God here on earth. This temple may be scarred, diseased, and broken down. But because Jesus purchased us with His blood on the cross, someday this mortal will put on immortality, this corruptible will put on incorruptible. And we will all go home together—to eat the fruit from the tree of life. Considering what Jesus has done for us, considering the place He has prepared for us, it is a privilege to rid our bodies of all defiling things.

Sermon No. 5, Jewelry
Rightly Dividing the Word Regarding Jewelry

I ask for you to pray for me today. What I will share with you touches on a subject that many ministers do not want to touch. If I were honest I'd have to admit that I don't want to either. I'm going to tell you today why I believe the Bible discourages the use of jewelry. Before you run away please give me a hearing. I ask you to be open minded—especially if don't say exactly what you have always heard as Seventh-day Adventists. I'm going to share with you what the Bible says on this subject because I think we should rightly divide The Word of truth.



[Slide 1] Open your Bible to 1 Peter 3:1-5, “Wives in the same way he submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty or a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in

God used to make themselves beautiful.”

The early church was full of women. I pastored a church where there were no men in the entire congregation. I remember one foot washing ordinance in that little church when I washed my own feet because there was not another male I could serve. So it was in the early Christian church. It was full of women. Many of these women had non-Christian husbands. That caused a problem more in Bible times than it does today in our culture. It was a man’s world in that culture. In Bible times a woman typically belonged to the religion of her husband. It appeared that these women converts to Christianity were being insubordinate to their husbands. It appeared that way to her husband and his friends. Christian women were bucking the system! They had joined up what appeared to be a cult—the Christian church.

Robert Johnston wrote a Bible commentary on 1 Peter published by the Pacific Press Publishing Association, a good Adventist institution. Dr. Johnston says that the purpose of 1 Peter 3 3-5 is not to give a list of things to wear and not wear. Peter is telling the women, “If you want to win your husband to Jesus, don’t do it with a fancy hairdo, expensive clothing or by accessorizing.” He is saying, “If you want to win your husband, let Jesus be in your heart. Win him with the interior and not the exterior stuff.

Peter discourages the use jewelry, ornaments and expensive clothing. But he is not giving us a comprehensive list of forbidden ornaments. We read passages like this and say, “Neckties are nor mentioned by Peter so I guess a neck tie is not an ornament in God’s eyes.” (By the way, of what practical use is this necktie I am wearing today? I’ve heard it said that jewelry is permissible to wear if it serves a function. [Take tie off and hold it up.] But what practical purpose does this thing serve?)

It was 103-degree one Sabbath this past summer and wore a coat to church. Why? What function did this coat serve in blistering hot weather? Do we have blind spots? To most Adventists this dress code seems sensible but to the world it just doesn’t make sense! New members to our church family say to me, “Explain these traditions. Why can we wear a piece of clothe around our necks as an ornament but we can not wear a piece metal for the same purpose?” It is hard to explain our inconsistencies.

It’s much easier to deal with a list of things to do to be saved than to think. If someone will just give me a list of what I must do to be saved that I can put my shoulder to the grindstone live by that list. Then I will be assured a place in heaven. Perhaps the Adventist Review could come out each month with a list of acceptable videos to rent, food to eat and clothes to wear. Would pickles be on that list? How about cheese or sugar? Perhaps we could open the floor for discussion right now on what should be included on our list. And the Kingdom of heaven could boil down to pickles and cheese and jewelry. Some of us would recommended long list, others a shorter version.

If someone would just tell me how to dress then I wouldn't have to think about it. (If someone would just tell me that I don't have to wear a tie, I'd rise up and call them blessed!) It would be so much easier if someone would do my thinking for me. "Awe," someone says, "here in 1 Peter 3 is a passage that does just that. It says, 'Thou shalt not wear jewelry.'" Or does it?

John 17:19

[Slide 2] I believe we ought to be concerned with the way we dress. Jesus said in John 17:19 "I sanctify myself for their sake." We should sanctify ourselves for others sake. This is what Peter was trying to tell the women. He is saying in 1 Peter 3:1-5, "Although you have Christian freedom to wear anything you want to wear, you are not going to win your husband over to Jesus with that fancy hairdo that took so much time and money." The

principle pertains to ones witness. Following this principle leads to dressing so that your appearance does not become a barrier to those whom you are trying to reach for Jesus. That's why I wore a coat this past summer in 103-degree weather. That's why I have a necktie on today. (It's certainly not because I love wearing a tie. Applying this principle this requires common sense. It touches on modesty as well.

"It is important to note that Peter is not laying down a distinct Christian standard."

Robert Johnston

[Slide 3] There is nothing in this passage designed to give a comprehensive list of forbidden ornaments. Robert Johnston says, "It is important to note that Peter is not laying down a distinct Christian standard." This statement is

not from a Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian book. It's from a Seventh-day Adventist commentary. Johnston goes on and says that women were to use their common sense in how they dressed. Were not to dress lavishly and ostentatiously.

1 Timothy 2:9

[Slide 4] 1 Timothy 2:9 is another New Testament passage we have frequently use to show that the Bible discourages the use of jewelry. I think these passages are actually showing that we need to be concerned with the way our dress will affect our witness. Let me give you the context of 1 Timothy 2:9. There were troublemakers in the church of Ephesus. In 1 Timothy 1:6,7 Paul says that these trouble makers were causing dissension and were aspiring to be "teachers of the law." "Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the

law, but they do not know what they so confidently affirm."

In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul tells the men of the church, "When you worship raise your hands in prayer and stop bickering." Evidently they were arguing right there in the church. "Worship," he says, "Without anger or disputing." Can you imagine their gathering for Sabbath School class and ending up in a brawl? Fighting over what the Bible says. Paul says to them, "Rather than hitting each other raise those hands in worship to God."

These women not only were dispensers of the erroneous teachings learned from these men, but their power and authority to teach was symbolized by their dress and ornamentation.

In the next verse Paul turns to the women. He says, "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." Again, the issue is over witnessing for God. Paul says to the women. "You ladies are to let your witness show from the inside rather than the outside." He is saying to women, "Exhibit good deeds rather than extravagant clothing."

[Slide 5] Madelyn Jones-Hademan, an Adventist College professor, says of this passage, "These women not only were dispensers of the erroneous teachings learned from these men, but their power and authority to teach was symbolized by their dress and ornamentation.

Thus, in exhorting the women to dress modestly and discreetly, the author is really removing their power base.

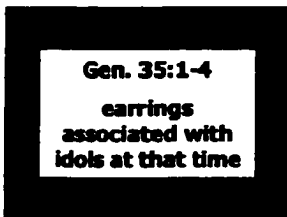
[Slide 6] "Thus, in exhorting the women to dress modestly and discreetly,

the author is really removing their power base” (Madelyn Jones-Hademan).

This may be hard for us to understand. Or, is it? Have you ever heard of power dressing? Dress for success? The man with the uniform on has authority. You don't question a police officer's if he is wearing a uniform. Recently I attended an event at the County Fair Ground. We were directed by ROTC students to stand behind the barriers. They had their uniforms on—boots and all. Some were young ladies—ROTC girls in their uniforms. When they told me to get behind the rope, I jumped! Why? Because they had on the uniform. Likewise the dress of these women Paul addresses. Their clothes were designed to demand respect and authority—for intimidation—to win the argument. What is the issue here? When people see you do they see you in you or do they see Jesus in you?

Is this passage in 1 Timothy 2:8 a list of forbidden articles of dress? Can I wear this necktie [display necktie around neck] because it does not have pearls, gold and silver sewn into it? However, what about my metal tie clasp? “Oh,” some saint says, “that keeps your tie from flopping into your soup. It has a practical use.” Is that really why it's all right?

I'd be the last person to argue for jewelry. But I believe we have done a disservice at times by taking passages and making them say more than they were intended to say. Then when people continue to grow in understanding the Bibles they say, I been mislead! We need to let the Bible speak for itself and take the Bible and the Bible only as our rule of faith and practice as Christians.



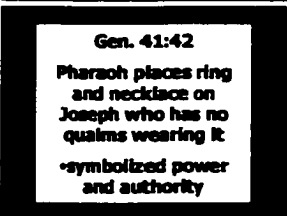
[Slide 7] Now I want to go through the Bible and see some of the other passages regarding jewelry. In Genesis 35:1-4 Jacob commanded his family to remove their earrings and idols. Some look at this passage and say, “Here is a list of forbidden ornaments. We should not wear earrings.” Again- this passage is not giving a list of forbidden ornaments. The passage is telling the people that idols are forbidden. Scholars tell us that those in Jacob's family earrings were associated with idol worship.



[Slide 8] Genesis 38:18-25 gives us the first record of a man wearing jewelry—Judah's signet ring. It was like credit card in that day. It served a function. Likewise, do you think that the wedding band serves a purpose?



[Slide 9] In 1972 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists made an official statement clarifying that we were not to deny church membership to anyone wearing wedding band. In my early days of pastoring I would not baptize a family who refused to take off their wedding band. I was wrong. A few years later I remember going to a teacher in one of our children's Sabbath School classes and tell her she could no longer teach because she wore a wedding band. We were wrong. And both of those incidences occurred after 1972. I was wrong.



Upon further study in the Bible I came under conviction that the time has now come in America where the wearing of the wedding band is a good idea considering what it represents. This is an individual choice. I think the General Conference was wise in their decision in 1972 allowing the wedding band.

[Slide 10] In Genesis 41:42 Pharaoh places a ring and a necklace on Joseph who did not seem to have a problem wearing it. That ring and that necklace symbolized the power and authority of his political office. Likewise, the wedding band today symbolizes marriage.

[Slide 11] Exodus 33:4 is a passage used frequently against jewelry. Some say in this passage God is refusing to go over to into Canaan with the children of Israel because they are wearing jewelry. That is not

the whole truth. In the previous chapter you will find an incident had just occurred. What happened? They had turned their back on God and worshipped the golden calf. Now God was upset with them. He said, "I can't go over into the promised land with you because your hearts are not right. You've been worshipping false gods and idols." So, they took off their accessories as a sign of fasting, prayer and mourning.

Ex. 33:4
A sign of mourning

Day of atonement

- No jewelry
- No work
- No food
- No baths
- No sex

[Slide 12] I have seen it said that on the Day of Atonement they did not wear any jewelry, therefore we should not wear jewelry during the great final Day of Atonement that started in 1844. Be careful in making that application. The Israelites also did not work on that day. Does that mean that we cannot work on this final Day of Atonement? They fasted that day. Are we to fast now for these 150 years since 1844? Also, they did not bathe on that day. And they refrained from intimate relationships on that day.

I'm not arguing for jewelry. But I am saying that we need to rightly divide the Word of truth. This is my burden.

[Slide 13] Isaiah 3:18-23 I have heard used as a comprehensive list of what we should not wear. It says, "In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, the earrings and bracelets, and veils, the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings and nose rings, the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls. Instead of fragrance there will be a stench."

Is. 3:18-23

List of forbidden ornaments?

"snatch away" = divorce

Is this a comprehensive list of what is not to be worn today? What is going on here in Isaiah 3? Take another look at this list. Verse 22 refers to "fine robes," "capes," and "purses"? (We usually don't read down that far in the passage.) We stop with verse 20, i.e., "bracelets," "earrings," and "necklaces," but what about the purses and mirrors of verse 23? Is there something wrong with "fragrances," i.e., perfume? When I was in the seminary there were a number of Europeans. They thought it was horrible that my wife wore perfume.

They wore the wedding band. They had their list and we had ours. They used this passage to show that we should not wear perfume. We used this passage to show that we should not wear rings. Who was right and who was wrong?

Look at the passage again. Israel was like the unfaithful bride of God. Old Testament brides wore jewelry as a sign that they were married. When John the Revelator looked in vision and saw the Holy City coming down out of heaven decked out in gems and jewels. He said, "It was like . . . like . . . like the bride of Christ." Perhaps his bride looked like that at their marriage. (I have a picture in my library of an ancient Jewish decked out in jewels. It was their custom.)

These articles of clothing in Isaiah 3 are a sign indicating that Israel is married to their husband, God. God is saying, "I'm going to snatch these signs of our marriage away." In verse 26 God says, "The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground." God's bride would be stripped of the signs of her marriage. This was God's way of telling His bride that He was divorcing her.

I think we would agree that the purpose of dressing up is to make yourself look "all right,"—to fit in, to look okay so that people will converse with you. I could wear black horn rimmed glasses but I picked a pair of new eyeglasses that would not be distracting. I was accessorizing when I bought this set of eyeglasses and no one has said a thing to me about them. I hope that when you see me you see Jesus in me and not me in me. There would be a problem if I told you what kind of glasses you should wear.

Today I combed my hair. I was accessorizing when I combed my hair. Aren't you glad I didn't just wake up rub my hands through it, and take off? We try to look our best in the culture in which we live. This issue

of jewelry and dress is a hard issue because it requires us to think. And just maybe because we want others to conform to our own standard—to do just as we do.

1 Peter 1:19
purchased with
the blood of Jesus

[Slide 14] The remainder of the time I want to look at the principles offering help in determining what to put on and what to take off. Look in I Peter 1:19. (We are back where we started.) I love this passage. He has just said that we have been redeemed. We were lost and now we are found—redeemed “with the precious blood Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” Isn’t that wonderful? Do you realize the significance of that? I am not my own. It is not my prerogative to dress in any hideous way I choose to dress because I am taking the name of Jesus with me everywhere I go. He bought me with His blood. When I dress I should ask, “How will Jesus come across to those with whom I communicate?”

I’m not going to tell you that it is wrong to wear a ring, bracelet, or necklace. And if you are here today with earrings on, we’re glad to have you. If you are here today with a necklace on, come back again because this is where you belong. This is not something we make a big fuss over.

I would, however, certainly hate for us to start practicing “one-upmanship” with the way we dress. That can come in many ways besides wearing jewelry. There are people who do that with cars, houses, and all sorts of grown up toys. The principle applies there as well. That’s why we Adventists look so ridiculous at times. We would not put any metal on our bodies but we will get behind the wheel of an exorbitantly expensive car, one that costs more than we truly need. I’m not going to make list of cars that are acceptable either. I’m just going to say this the old adage—if you are pointing your finger at someone there are three fingers pointing back at you. So, what’s the solution? The solution is to get as close to Jesus as possible and let Jesus tell us how to dress. Jesus will do a much better job of it than any preacher or the General Conference.

1 Peter 2:9
Peculiar

[Slide 15] Now there are some guidelines given. In I Peter 2:9, for example, we are told to be a “peculiar people.” Do you like that to be an “odd ball?” I don’t. I looked up “peculiar” in the dictionary and it means:

1. “Eccentric.” (Do you like to be around such a person?)
2. “Standing apart from others.” (I’ll do so if the Bible clearly tells me too, but I’m not going to wear a fried egg on my head just because someone told me to do so.)
3. “Exclusive or unique.” (Is the church to be exclusive?)

1 Peter 2:9
Owned by God

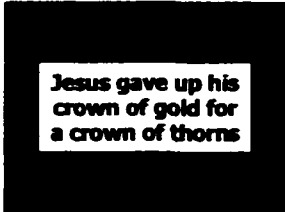
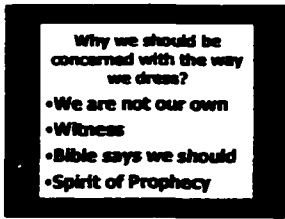
[Slide 16] I continued to look at this word “peculiar” and I found out something about it. The King James Version of the Bible was translated in 1611. “Peculiar” meant something to them that it does not mean to you and me today. In medieval times Latin word for “peculiar” meant to “own your cattle.” The New International Version translates “peculiar” as “A people belonging to God.” The NIV translates I Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”

Is. 43:21
formed for myself

I’m making a lot out of this because I hear people say, “Pastor, we just are not the church we use to be. We used to be a peculiar people.” Maybe we were peculiar in ways God never intended for us to be peculiar. Maybe some adjustments need to be made. When I dress I need to consider, “How does what I’m wearing make God look?”

[Slide 17] The Greek version of Isaiah 43:21 uses the same word translated in I Peter as “peculiar.” “The people I *formed for myself* that they may proclaim

my praise.” Some believe that I Peter 2:9 alluding to Isaiah 43:21.



[Slide 18] I'd like to share with you five reasons for being concerned with how we dress—

1. **We are not our own.** “We are bought with a price. We looked at that last week when dealing with “health” in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.
2. **We have a witness.** If I dress shabbily or out of step with society, who will listen to me? Even the apostle Paul said that he was “all things to all people.” That does not mean he violated what the Bible clearly told him to do. But Paul related to the culture in which he lived. So should we.
3. **The Bible says so.** The Bible says that we should not dress in a distracting manner. Remember how those non-Christian husbands were distracted by the in Christian wives dress in Saint Peter’s day?
4. **The Spirit of Prophecy says so.** There are a number of statements in the Spirit of Prophecy, which I will not read for you. I encourage you to read them regarding dress. Those statements, however, need to be read in light of the their context just as we did with the statements in the Bible.

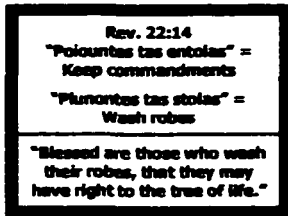
Always rightly divide the Word of truth—whether it is the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy.

[Slide 19] **Jesus gave us an example.** Jesus gave up His crown of gold for a crown of thorns. Jesus gave up everything for me. I want to give my best for Him. When He convicts me that I need to sacrifice and deny myself for Him I will gladly follow.

Sermon No. 6, The Sanctuary Taking Your Sins to the Laundry

[Enter stage with laundry basket heaping full of dirty clothes.] Do you ever have a laundry day? We have laundry day around our house.

Open your Bibles to Revelation 22:14. Occasionally I have individuals come to me upset because this passage reads differently in modern translations than it does in the King James Version of the Bible. The King James Version indicates that those who keep the commandments will have right to the tree of life. Modern translations read "those who wash their robes" will have "right to the tree of life." It depends on your bias as to which you feel is right.

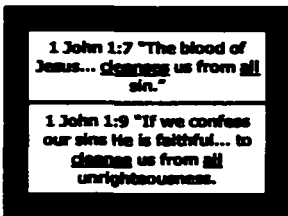


[Slide 1] I want to share with you the facts. Oh no, you say, he's going to lay the "Greek" on us. You don't really need to know the Greek. I simply want you to see how similar these two phrases are. You see the KJV reads "Poiountes tas entolas," translated, "Keep the commandments." That is the way the manuscript read in 1611 when they were translating the King James Version. Since then they have found older Greek manuscripts with similar words, "Plunontes tas stolas." We get the English word "stole" meaning a robe from "stolas." The older and more credible manuscripts do read,

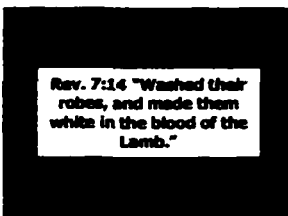
"Washed their robes."

Before some of you prepare to haul me out, I do believe that the point can be made from other places in the Bible that those who enter into the Kingdom of God will have a relationship with Jesus Christ that will lead to keeping His commandments.

"Blessed are they who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life" has a beautiful message, too. Why do we need to wash our robes? [Picking up dirty denim overalls out of laundry basket.] Why do you need to wash dirty overalls? (You guys remember me wearing these when we built the school. Thought you'd never see them again.) We throw dirty towels in a laundry basket. Here's a shirt with "ring around the collar." I'm going to get rid of all that.



[Slide 2] The Bible tells us in 1 John 1:7, "That the blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin." It is the blood of Jesus that is able to take the soil out of our garments. The soil on our robe is sin. The Bible tells us that even our righteousness is as filthy rags. Our righteousness dirties up that beautiful robe God gives to us. When we come to Him He gives us a beautiful robe. It's free. But there's not a person here who can say that since your baptismal day you have not fallen. It is the fact of life that all have sinned. It is also the fact of life that sanctification is the work of a lifetime. We are always growing in grace. Along the way we stumble and fall. We get irritable. We procrastinate. The wrong type of thoughts goes through our minds and we say, "Where in the world did that come from." At times we may act upon those thoughts. That's called sin.

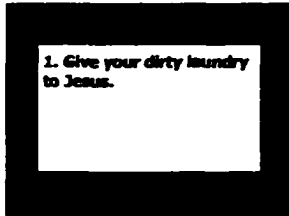


[Slide 3] Of those who stand on the sea of glass it is said that they "Washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us of all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse." Have you notice the number of times the Bible talks about purifying and cleansing sins? How do we cleanse ourselves? How do we clean up our act? Someone says, "You need to clean up your act." How do we do that? By promising to do better? Someone said once, "Our promises are like ropes of sand."

The Bible says the only way to clean our robes is in the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. If we sin and confess that sin, He cleanses us from *all* unrighteousness. Notice (on the screen) I have the words "cleanses" and "all" underlined. Why? Is there some spoil on our garment that the blood of Christ can't

take care of? Some stain He just can't handle? I found there are some stains detergent can't get rid of. But, the blood of Jesus Christ can take care of any stain. I don't care what you did last night, what you did this past week, what you did years ago, the blood of Jesus Christ is strong enough to lift that stain out and remove it—to make your robe totally pure again.

You say, "I don't feel that way." I don't feel I have done enough. I don't feel that I have earned it. You're right. We don't deserve it. It's only for those who are undeserving. That's all of us. This is where faith comes in. The promise of God is that "If confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive that sin and to cleanse us." Not based on how we feel. Not based on the warm feelings in our tummy. Base on His word. And we know that God cannot lie. That's good news, isn't it? That is the best news.

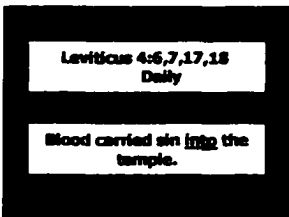


[Slide 4] It reminds me of doing the laundry. This illustration is one the Bible uses. Have you taken your sins to the laundry lately? When you confessed your sins you take them to the laundry. Around our house there is a laundry basket. I tell my son, "Carson, if you take off your dirty socks and leave them in the floor they will remain there on the floor and pile up." They have to get to the laundry basket. If they don't get to the laundry basket they want get to the Maytag. "It's not my job to go around and pick up clothes left on the floor, Son." Sometimes he comes to me and says, "Dad, I'm doing my laundry tomorrow. I'd like to help you out. But, it's not my job to get your clothes and put them in the laundry basket, Dad."

Have you taken your laundry to Jesus lately? The first thing I want you to take home today is that you must give your dirty laundry to Jesus. It is a simple truth of the Bible. Jesus will not clean what we do not give Him.

This past summer my son worked with Greg Johnson (a member of the Valley church family). One day he came home with his time card in his shirt pocket. My mother who was visiting is not like me. She takes you clothes right off your back and throws them in the washing machine. She grabbed Carson's shirt and threw it in the machine. I remember him trying to piece together the time card. God understands that we have a will and He will not clean that which we will not let Him clean. We must bring it to Him. So, again I ask, Have you give your dirty laundry to Jesus?

[Slide 5] The Old Testament sanctuary service illustrated this process of cleansing. Open your Bibles to Leviticus 4. So much of the Bible is about the sanctuary service, yet we do not study it because we feel it was for them way back there. There is a passage in the KJV, Psalm 37:13, "Thy ways, Oh Lord, are in the sanctuary." I think the sanctuary service is worthy of our study although we live in the time of the New Testament.



"But," someone says, "there is so much detail." Don't get bogged down with the sprockets and moving furniture around in the sanctuary. Look at the over-all picture. By the way, why is there detail in the book of Leviticus?

Imagine you were to write down today for the benefit of people 4,000 years from now how we brush our teeth. What would you say? You would say, "First of all, get a brush." You would have to describe the brush. "A brush six inches long, with a handle containing half inch long bristles on one end." (Remember, you must make it clear for them 4,000 years from now.) Then talk about the toothpaste tube. You would say, "There are two ways you can open the tube—either the screw on cap or the flip top cap." Then you would talk about how to squeeze the tube. How would you instruct? Squeeze from the middle or from the end? Any one who says from the middle can leave right now. You would describe how you squeeze from the end and place a dab on the bristles, not on the handle. Some of our dentists would instruct to purchase toothpaste enhanced with fluoride. Finally you get to the brushing part and you talk about brushing up and down rather than just brushing back and forth. You'd talk about reaching those teeth in the back of your mouth. And then you could go into flossing. This could go on page after page. You could talk about water

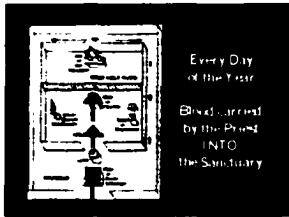
picks, etc. You see how something as simple as brushing your teeth can get very intricate when trying to describe for those in the future millenniums?

The plan of salvation is a lot more important than brushing our teeth. That's why you find the detail in the book of Leviticus. Let's not get bogged down in the detail and miss the point. It's a very simple service when you understand the basic point. That basic point is that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all unrighteousness. That's the point of the sanctuary service. Several types of animals were slain. We normally refer to the lamb. But all the sacrificial animals—the ram, the goat, the bull, represented Jesus.

Did you know the sanctuary does not save anyone? Jesus saves. But, the blood of Jesus was applied in the sanctuary and that helps us understand the cleansing process of our old dirty garments of sin. Let's look in Leviticus 4:4. It talks about the sin offering. "He is to present the bull at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the Lord." "He" refers to the sinner—in this case the priest—who is to lay his hand on the head of the bull. If the sinner is a layperson the priest does not lay his hand on the sacrificial animal. The sinner always places his hand on the animal. Why? Admitting, "I am the one responsible for the death of this animal." I am the one responsible for the death of Jesus.

As we read this passage in Leviticus 4 notice where the blood was sprinkled. It's very important to notice where the blood is sprinkled. Leviticus 4:4, "He is to present the bull at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the Lord. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it before the Lord. Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and carry it into the Tent of Meeting. He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the Lord, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary."

[Slide 6] A curtain divided the sanctuary into two rooms. The priest was to sprinkle the blood before the curtain. Where else does he sprinkle the blood? Leviticus 4:7, "The priest shall then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting."



Did you get that? The blood is carried from the altar on the outside of the tent to the inside of the tent towards the very presence of God—yet the priest did not go beyond the curtain into the visible presence of God. He remains in the holy place.

You see the sanctuary on the screen. The altar of burnt offering on the bottom of the screen is where the animal was brought. You would lay your hand on that animal's head. That is where you would slaughter that animal. The priest would take some blood and walk into the holy place. To the priest's right would be the table of showbread. To his left would be the lamp stand. Straight ahead would be the altar of incense. Before the altar of incense he would sprinkle the blood seven times. Then he would place blood on the four corners of the altar of incense. What had happened? I'll tell you what had happened.

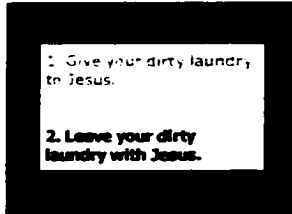
Remember earlier today in our children's lesson how we talked about the sponge. How the blood of Jesus is like a sponge that soaks up the messes we make. Like the sponge the blood of Jesus absorbs the sin and when the priest entered into the sanctuary he was symbolically taking the sin and placing it before the presence of God. God's presence was on the other side of the veil over the Ark of the Covenant. The priest would never go inside the most holy place. That happened only one day out of the year on the Day of Atonement. (Many of you are acquainted with this.) We will get to that day in a moment.

Every day of the year the blood was taken into the holy place. This was called the "daily." Hundred's and even thousands of times as Israel grew in size the priests would carry the blood into the holy place. Remember, the blood was taken *into* the sanctuary? (If you don't get this you won't understand the rest of what I have to say today.)

Follow very close with me on the screen. First, the blood was taken at the altar. This would be like putting your laundry in the basket. The priest would take the basket and transport it inside the tabernacle (you would remain outside while he went in for you). The priest sprinkles the blood in the holy place before the

altar of incense. Then he would apply it right on the altar of incense itself. And there your sin would remain until laundry day.

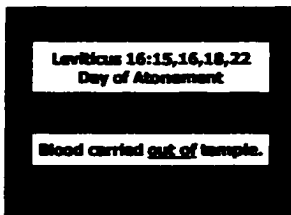
[Slide 7] I have a question for you. Have you ever taken your laundry, put it in the basket, and then later said to yourself, “For this outfit I really need that shirt in the dirty clothes basket.” No one has ever done this, right? [Pick up several garments from the basket.] You scrounge around in the laundry basket and say, “That ring-around-the-collar doesn’t look that bad.” (You’ve never done that have you?) You get the iron out and touch up the front of the shirt after all, you’ll have a coat on hiding the back part of the shirt. Off to work you go and hopefully you will not have to take your coat off. Does anyone ever do that?



While you are away from home someone does the laundry. You are caught with that dirty shirt on while the laundry is back at home being cleaned in the Maytag. You come home and discover you’ve missed laundry day.

The point? Leave your dirty laundry in the laundry basket! Because laundry day it won’t get washed if you have it on. The Bible does not teach “once saved always saved.” It is possible for us to backslide. It is possible for one to pick up old dirty garments and start wearing them again. The sanctuary service helps us understand that having given our dirty laundry to Jesus, we need to leave it with Jesus.

Do you have a dirty laundry day at your house? A day designated as *the* day everyone is to have their dirty clothes in the basket? You even warn everyone, “I’m doing laundry tomorrow!” Don’t you appreciate it when you are warned that laundry day is coming?



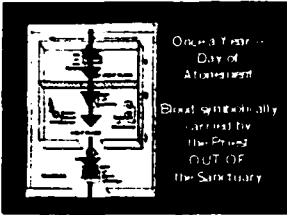
[Slide 8] Don’t you think God would give us that courtesy? He has given us that courtesy. Leviticus 16:15, 16 refers to the Day of Atonement: “[The priest] shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull’s blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it.”

Notice again where the blood is sprinkled. In the daily service the blood was sprinkled going *into* the sanctuary. But notice which direction it goes on the Day of Atonement. Where does he take the blood first of all? Leviticus 16:15 says he goes all the way into the most holy place, right before the visible glory of God. He sprinkles the blood on the atonement covering. Then he sprinkles it in front of the Ark of the Covenant. Leviticus 16:16, 17, “In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. (Vs. 17) He is to do the same for the tent of meeting.”

What he has just done in the most holy place he is to repeat in the holy place—the Tent of Meeting. Leviticus 16:18, “Then shall he come out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull’s blood and some of the goat’s blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat.”

Did you see which direction the blood was applied? On the Day of Atonement it went out of the temple! What again is happening? The blood of the animal representing the blood of Jesus acts as a spiritual sponge. As the blood comes through the sanctuary starting in the Most Holy Place, then the Holy Place, on outside to the altar it is as if that blood has soaked up all the recorded sin the sanctuary. It is taken and placed on the head of the live goat – the scapegoat. That live goat is taken out into the wilderness and let go where it perishes. The live goat represents Satan who is responsible for sin. He is the author of sin. The live goat does not shed it’s blood for sin. It is simply designated as the one responsible for sin.

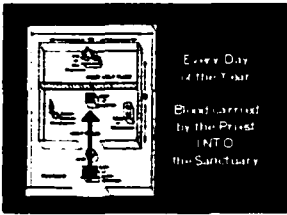
[Slide 9] Let us take a look again at the sanctuary again. This is what happened once a year on the Day of Atonement. Look where the blood went. First, it was sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant. Then



blood moves out of the sanctuary. It is put on the side of the alter and then on the four corners of the alter and then the hand of the priest that has handled that blood is placed on the head of the scapegoat and the goat is led out into the wilderness where it is let go and it finally perishes.

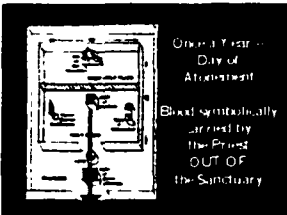
sprinkled before the Ark of the Covenant. Then, it is sprinkled on the alter of incense. Then, it is sprinkled before the alter of incense. (Do you see which way the blood is going?) Is it moving inside or outside? It's going out.

Dr. Roy Gane, Old Testament scholar at Andrews University Theological Seminary, made this the basis of his doctoral study. This is recent light regarding the sanctuary truth. I heard him share this and said to myself, "Our people need to know this." This is astounding. On the Day of Atonement the



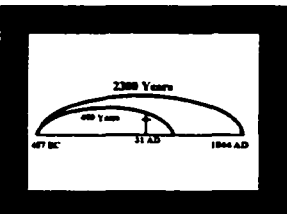
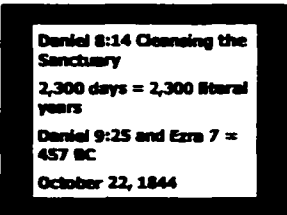
This is God's laundry day. This is when God cleanses His sanctuary. When God cleanses our sins from His sanctuary. When our sins are cast to the depth of the sea. But one day the washing machine will stop. That's why God has pulled back the curtain and given us this warning. He lets us see what Jesus is doing today in heaven.

[Slide 10] What we have seen is that every day the blood goes into the sanctuary.



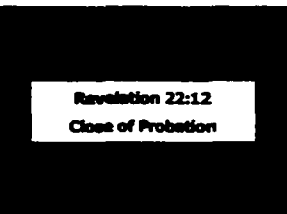
[Slide 11] But once a year on the Day of Atonement the blood went out of the sanctuary. That's simple isn't it? We can understand that.

[Slide 12] There is a passage in Daniel 8:14 that actually identifies this final process of cleansing our sins forever. It says: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." In Bible prophecy one day symbolizes one year. (There is a book written by Dr. William Shea nailing down the year-day principle.) Daniel 9:25 tells us when this time prophecy begins. Comparing Daniel 9:25 with Ezra 7 we see that the starting date of Daniel 8:14 is 457 BC. Starting in 457 BC and letting a day stand for a year would us 2,300 years down to October 22, 1844. [Slide 13] It's right there. If you look more in-depth at Daniel 9 you will see that it actually predicted the very day of Jesus death on the cross!



[Slide 13] What happened in 1844? That was when Jesus started the process of removing once and for all time the dirty laundry from the heavenly sanctuary. Come with me to Revelation 22:11,12. This talks about the day when the washday will be completed. Jesus says, "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

[Slide 14] This is when heavens washing machine stops. Jesus says at that time (Revelation 22:12), "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."



In Revelation 22:11 Jesus pronounces the close of probation. Immediately in Revelation 22:12 He comes back to this earth for His people. Do you think this could happen in our lifetime? I believe it is possible. I do not fear that day. I want to go home so bad! I can't wait to eat the fruit of the tree of life. How about you? Boys and girls, I can't wait to swim in the River of Life. I

can't wait to lay back against the trunk of the Tree of Life and run my hands through the grass of the beautiful lawn of heaven; to take fruit from the Tree of Life and eat it letting the juice run down my arm and dripping off my elbow. I want to go home. I want this laundry day to end.

Revelation 22:14

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life."

"Sin shall not rise up a second time." There will be no unkind words spoken in heaven. Our hearts will not be fickle. We will not be predisposed to our body chemistry making us feel certain ways. Heaven is a place where all wrongs will be made right. And this mortal body will be made mortal. I look forward to that day.

[Slide 15] So, when I read [Pull white robe out of basket and put on],

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life" I am encouraged. God has a robe much whiter than the one I have on.

We may stain it throughout the course of our lives. But the blood of Jesus cleanses of all unrighteousness. Let us sing about it. Let's us sing *There Is Power in the Blood*.

Would you be free from your burden of sin? There's power in the blood, power in the blood.

Would you or evil the victory win? There's wonderful power in the blood.

There is power, power, wonder working power—in the blood of the Lamb.

There is power, power wonder working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.

Sermon No. 7, Movies
Going to the Movies

Proverbs 4:23

"Above all things guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

[Slide 1] Proverbs 4:23 (KJV) says, Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." The NIV translates, "Above all things guard your heart for it is the well spring of life." Whatever you say, think, or do is determined by what you put inside your mind. So, guard it. The root of everything you think and do is inside you. No one can make you do or say something. No one makes you feel a certain way. You determine how you're going to feel. Your feelings and behavior is greatly influenced by what you have programmed into your heart.

By beholding we become changed.

[Slide 2] The Bible says, "By beholding we are changed." Have you found this to be true?

Psalms 101:3

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes."

[Slide 3] Psalm 101:13 said, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." One who learned this the hard way spoke these words. King David stood out on his veranda and flipped through the channels of the countryside. Before his eyes were the mountains, trees, and streams. His eyes followed the stream to its source—a pond. A bathing pond with a nude woman. David quickly shifts his eyes surrounding scenery. But he keeps coming back to that nude woman. Because he dwelt on the wrong scenery, two homes were wrecked. After the Lord restored him, King David vowed, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes."

97% own TV

- Americans watch TV 7 hrs. each day
- By age 6 children spend more time with TV than a lifetime with their Dad.
- Crime occurs 10 times more often than real life
- Love scenes occur 5 times more often between unmarried than married couples

[Slide 4] What are you viewing from your verandah or porch? Today I want to identify that porch. It is in 97 percent of American homes. Did you know that more homes in America have a television than those that have indoor plumbing? Did you know that American homes have their television on an average of seven hours a day? By the age of six, a child has spent more time with the television than they will spend with their Dad in a lifetime? Did you know that crime occurs ten times more on prime time TV than in real life? Love scenes occur five times more often between unmarried couples on prime time TV than they do in real life.

I am not telling you to put a sledgehammer through your television or, for you to get rid of your TV. We will look at the media today, i.e., television programming, videos and movies. What re the viewing habits of our country and what does it do to us?

Genesis 6:5

"Every imagination ... only evil."

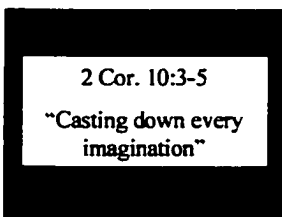
[Slide 5] Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah that's the way it will be at the end of the World." Genesis 6:5 describes how it was in Noah's day before the flood. "Their every imagination was only on evil." Imagine such a society where every waking moment of the citizens' imagination is only on evil. Are we reaching that saturation point in our nation? Don't you think that Jesus had the television viewing habits of our country in mind when he made this prophecy? Will anyone deny that television impacts the

imagination of Americans in a major way?

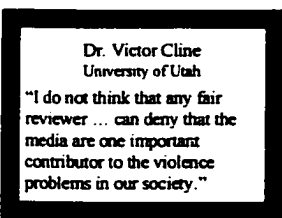
Is there anyone here today who was delivered from the jaws of the Devil? If you were the Devil is how would you strategize to get your soul back? Would it be a frontal attack? Or, would it be subtler? If I were the Devil I'd be looking for a Trojan horse to get inside the home. And what better horse does he have than the TV? If I were the Devil I wouldn't throw on the screen XXX rated stuff at first. I'd throw on your screen something to capture the imagination and entice the family to gradually move along with me until finally they could care less about reading the Word of God. Care less about spending time together as a family. Morris Vendon says the TV turns the family circle into a semi-circle. Look at how the furniture is arranged in homes. Where are the chairs in your home? Where is the sofa facing?

Not everything coming over the airwaves is bad. TV is not sinful in and of itself. But no one can deny the influence of television. Clark Gable took off his shirt in a 1934 movie revealing that he was not wearing a T-shirt. Sales on T-shirts immediately dropped. Bill Clinton played his saxophone on TV. The following week more saxophones were sold than in any other week on record. Remember the sitcom, Happy Days? On one episode "the Fonz" got a library card. There was a rush on the library of youth applying for library cards the following week. The media was quick to point this out and take credit for getting kids back to reading. Remember the movie, Pretty Woman? An Academy Awards movie that glamorized prostitution. A story of a prostitute who was saved by her knight in shining armor. Stories have been repeatedly told of young bright ladies who thought that they would take up that lifestyle because of the movie. Remember the movie, A Man Called Peter, depicting the life of Peter Marshall, a wonderful Pastor? As a boy I saw that movie and it had a lasting impact on me being in this pulpit today.

Media and movies have an impact on our lives. The question is, are we going to let Beevis and Butthead determine what that impact is on our kids or are we going to pro-act and determine what is viewed on the verandah of our homes? When a movie, Natural Born Killers, was running, there was a stew of copycat murders. The Airline Pilots Association recognizes that after every depiction of a hijacking on TV, a spate of attempted hijackings is expected. Pilots protested in 1966 when Rod Serling's Doomsday Flight was shown on TV. They were ignored. In that film a terrorist placed a bomb on the airplane set to go off if the plane dipped below a certain altitude. Before the TV film was over a bomb threat was phoned in to an airline. Within twenty-four hours, four more threats were made, and by the end of the week eight more similar calls were received. Five years later the same film was shown in Australia. Quanta Airlines had to for, out half a million dollars ransom money to save 116 passengers following that movie being show on television.



[Slide 6] Can anyone deny the impact movies, television, and the media have on our lives? Does anyone think your home is exempt? 2 Corinthians 10:3,4 says, "for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God for the pulling down of strong hold." We battle and the weapons we use are not physical weapons. They are spiritual. Where is the battlefield on which the battle is fought? Verse 5 tells us where, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought." This is our goal in the war—to bring "into captivity every thought through the power of Jesus. The Devil's goal is the opposite—to arrest our thoughts so that every imagination is on evil.



[Slide 7] I'm not referring to a system of salvation by works. You can throw your television out of your house and still be lost. However, if TV is uncontrolled the Devil has an inroad into the hearts and minds of your children and family. Dr. Victor Cline, a psychologist at the University of Utah, said, "I do not think that any fair viewer can deny that the media are one important contributor to the violent problems of our society."

Psychologists Harold Voth and Karl Menninger say, "Pornography stunts sexual maturity. Men become dissatisfied with their wives after viewing sexually explicit movies." What is the Devil up too? In saturating us with sex and violence on TV, he is trying to desensitize us so that the extraordinary become commonplace to us. What is it doing to us? Destroying out marriages and relationships. Making it so that our children are growing up in this miasma cannot have a normal relationship in adulthood.

There is nothing more violent than cartoons. Have you ever seen the Road Runner? Adults look and laugh. But studies show that children view such violent humor differently. Studies observe that while children view violent cartoons they will start hitting each other. It's up to the parent to remove the filth from the home.

When my sons were infants I remember digging foreign matter out of their mouths. A baby will put anything in their mouth. It is the job of the parent to stick their fingers in the baby's mouth and digging it out to see what your child is gnawing on. And that which is harmful is taken away from the baby and throw away. Is that legalism?

[Slide 8] Consider this: Television was introduced into the home in Canada and the US in 1945. Between 1945-1975 homicides among Caucasians increased 93 percent in the US and 92 percent in Canada. South Africa did not have Television during this period. Its homicide rate went down 7 percent. In 1975-1992 South African homes had TV. Its homicide rate increased 130 percent. Authorities believe TV impacted this growth in violence. During this period the homicide rate in Canada and US remained the same because we were already saturated with violence.

Country	Birth of TV	Homicide
USA	1945 - 74	+93%
Canada	1945 - 74	+92%
S. Africa	No TV	-7%
S. Africa	1975 - 92	+130%

[Slide 9] Dr. Centerwall's study concludes, "Without Television in the United States there would be 10,000 fewer homicides each year, 70,000 fewer rapes and 700,000 fewer assaults." As a church we are concerned about many health issues. Don't you think this is a health issue about which we should speak up? Perhaps we have assumed an attitude of, "Well, our people don't go to movies, anyhow. And since our people are Christians they are not watching those sort of things." Do you believe that? It is time we get our head out of the sand. Studies show that our kids are going to movies at not lesser rate than those out of the church. And they are going to the same movies as those outside the church.

Dr. Centerwall's studies concluded:
Without television in the United States today, there would be 10,000 fewer homicides each year, 70,000 fewer rapes, and 700,000 fewer assaults.

Our young people are reasonable people. I think if we share the facts with them they will listen. However, it may be too late to start educating them when they are old enough to drive themselves to the theater. We need to start training when they are in diapers.

Proverbs 22:6
"Bring up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it."

[Slide 10] TV has become the Babysitter of American households. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Bring up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." Someone is going to teach the children. They will be educated one way or the other.

Matthew 18:6
Cause a child to sin =
Throw 'em in the ocean.

[Slide 11] In Matthew 18:6 Jesus said, "Anyone that causes anyone of our children to sin ought to have a millstone tied around his neck and he ought to be tossed into the ocean." That is pretty strong language.

- [Slide 12] What is the purpose of TV?
1. **Entertainment.** Hollywood says this is what they are in the business of doing.
 2. **Make Money.** Hollywood does not deny that this is another motive behind the movie industry.
 3. **Educational.** You will hear them say that this is not the purpose of Hollywood.

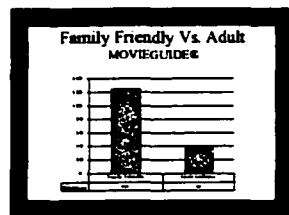
Purpose of TV?
•Entertain
•Make Money
•Educate

Which makes more \$\$\$?
A. R-rated movies
b. Family films
1996 = FM 300%
1995 = G-rated 250%
PG 165%
PG-13 213%

[Slide 13] Consider, which makes more money?
a) R-rated movies.
b) Family movies.

In 1986 family movies made 300 percent more than R-rated movies. In 1995 G-rated movies made 250 percent more than R-rated movies.

PG movies made 165 percent than R-rated movies. PG-13 made 213 percent more. Then why so much hype and emphasis in the adult rated movies? There must be another reason the movie producers are making adult movies besides making money and entertaining.



[Slide 14] This graph shows how family-friendly movies make \$124,000,000 in comparison to \$38,000,000 for R-rated movies. Why does Hollywood push adult movies?

Lonnie Melashenko &
Tom Crosby
The Television Time Bomb
"Are studio executives incompetent? No. It's just that there is one thing that is more important to them than money."

[Slide 15] In their book, *Television Time Bomb*, Lonnie Meleshenko and Tim Crosby ask, "Are Studio Executives incompetent? No. It's just that there is on thing that is more important to them than money."

Converting the American public to their way of thinking."

[Slide 16] Converting the American public to their way of thinking."

Media Elite
1982
50% No church
86% Seldom attend
90% Pro-abortion
54% Adultery not wrong
76% Homosexuality not wrong

[Slide 17] A 1982 survey of the media elite—those considered to be thought makers, CEO's of the industry, and journalist—revealed that 50 percent had no church, 86 percent seldom attended church, 90 percent were pro-abortion, 54 percent believe adultery is not wrong, and 76 percent believe homosexuality is not wrong.

James 4:4
"Friendship with the world" = Hatred toward God

[Slide 18] Someone might say, "Pastor this is a conspiracy charge." I won't argue that, but this I do know, James 4:4 says, "If we make friends with the world that is enmity and hatred with God." On the other had, the Bible says, "Resist the Devil and he will flee." So, will we resist him or embrace him?

[Slide 19] 1 John 2:15,16 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Do you think that this has anything to say about movies and television? What is the "lust of the eyes" if not this? Desires of the world"—could this be talking about what is rampant in Hollywood?

1 John 2:15, 16
"Cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes"
"Worldly desires"

US News & World Report
April 1995
•50% = Sexual content
•Reference to sex every 4 minutes in prime time

[Slide 20] The April 1995 issue of *US News and World Report*, looked at 50 prime time TV shows. 50percent had sexual content. Sex was referred to every four minutes in either innuendo or acting out. It is impossible to sit and watch this night after night without it influencing our walk with the Lord.

[Slide 21] The Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography financed a study on the effects of pornography on the population. That study analyzed the relationship between exposure to pornography and moral character, deviance in the home and neighborhood. It concluded: "Exposure to pornography is the strongest predictor of sexual deviance among the early age of exposure subject." Furthermore, this "applies to all ages of exposure levels." Someone says, but I don't watch hard-core porn. This doesn't apply to me." Then you don't understand the nature of sexual addiction.

The Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography:
Exposure to pornography is the strongest predictor of sexual deviance among the early age of exposure subjects.

Dr. Victor Clive's Universal Sexual Addiction Syndrome:
1. Addiction effect
2. Escalation effect
3. Desensitization
4. Acting out

[Slide22] Dr. Victor Cline has found that there is a universal sexual addiction syndrome he calls the "four-factor syndrome."

1. There is the "addiction." This does not start by out of the blue saying, "Today I'm going to rent an X-rated video." He says this starts just watching the wrong thing on network TV. Cline says we come back looking for more and more. Yesterday's fix is not enough.
2. That takes one to "escalation" where more explicit subjects are craved.
3. "Desensitization" is next. You feel what you see is not really that bad.

4. Finally, there is the "acting out" of what you have been viewing. And it can all start back with prime time network TV.

[Slide23] The Badgley Report says, "Child molesters confirm that without pornography the molestation would not have occurred or been possible to accomplish." They say that no one inherits these tendencies. It is learned.

Badgley Report
p. 1198
Child molesters confirm that "without pornography, the molestation would not have occurred or been possible to accomplish."

Job 31:1
"I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully upon a girl."

[Slide 24] Job 31:1 says, "I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully upon a girl." This is not just a guy problem. Most of the X-rated videos are rented to women over 35 years of age. Men and women both should make a covenant with their eyes not to look lustfully on anything. Jesus said if you lustfully look, it is as if you have done the act.

1 Peter 2:11
"Abstain from sinful desires"

[Slide 25] 1 Peter 2:11 says, "Abstain from sinful desires." This is how it has worked in my life. I don't have the movie channels on cable TV. I have just the basic network programs. When my wife left me I found it difficult to sleep at night. You didn't want me calling you at 3:00 a.m., did you? After I had read all I could read, listened to my stereo and even gone out for a walk after midnight—I turned the TV on and surfed the channels. Do you know what is on TV at 3:00 a.m.? Inframercials and reruns of *Matlock*. I began to enjoy the stuff. I now admit that it was an escape. My son, Adam, was living at home at the time. He said, "Dad, I don't appreciate you watching *Matlock* all night". I had to face the reality that I was hooked.

[Slide 26] Dr. Arnold Kurtz, one of my seminary teachers, taught me how to cope with problems. First,

How to control the media:
1. Identify your need
2. Decide you're going to do something about it
3. Ask God to change you
4. Determine what needs to be done
5. Just do it.

1. *Identify you need.* Own up to it. I did.
2. *I decided I was going to do something about it.* But the next night or two I was right back at it.
3. *So, I asked God to help me.* I made it a real point of prayer. Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing."

not even turn the TV on. I stopped eating in front of the TV. I started determining ahead of time what I would watch before turning it on. This meant securing a TV guide. Some here might move the TV out of the bedroom. (Did you know that 40 percent of the US children have a TV in their bedroom?) It may mean rearranging the furniture.

Matthew 12:33-35
"Out of the overflow of the heart ..."

4. *Then I determined what needed to be done.* I don't know what that means in you house but for me that meant I started writing pages on my doctoral project at two and three in the morning. I determined that I would

5. As the Nike shoe commercial says, "*Just do it!*"

Any computer geek will tell you, "Junk it, junk out." Whatever you program into the computer is what you will get out.

[Slide 28] Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you." What are we hiding in our hearts? How about studying and memorizing scripture in place of TV time?

Psalms 119:11
"Thy word have I hid in my heart"

Phil. 4:8
"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -

[Slide 29] Philippians 4:8 says, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable,

[Slide 30] if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things."

If anything is excellent or praise worthy - think about such things."

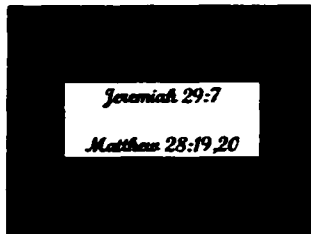
Phil. 4:13

"I can do all
things through
Christ."

[Slide 31] Can we do this on our own? No. That's why Paul continues in verse 13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This is the ultimate answer for the remote control.

There is a type of jellyfish in the Bay of Naples, Italy. It is called the Medusa. There are also small snails in the same bay. Sometimes the jellyfish swallows one of these tiny snails. The snail fastens itself to the inside wall of the jellyfish and slowly begins to eat it alive. By the time the snail grows to maturity, it has consumed the entire jellyfish from inside out. It does make a difference what we are gnawing on or, I should say, what we are allowing to gnaw on us.

**Sermon No. 8, Social Issue
Are Our Kids Safe from Street Gangs**



[Slide 1] Open your Bible to Jeremiah 29:7, “Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper (NIV).”

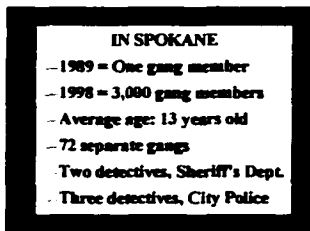
Is the Word clear? What does the inspired Word tell us to pray for? What is the “it” in the phrase, “Pray for it”? Yes, the city. Just as the exiled Jews were to pray for Babylon so we are to pray for Spokane today. We are to “seek the peace prosperity” for Spokane. It is our Christian duty.

Jeremiah says, “Don’t forget that when the City prospers, you too will prosper.” If for no other reason this should motivate us. But is this self-serving reason the ultimate motivation for praying for the peace and prosperity of our community?

Another Bible verse helps us understand the real motivating factor. Look in Matthew 28:19, 20, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel.”

Is Spokane a part of “all”? To what part of our neighborhood are we to go? Are we to go to the drunks? The poor? The homeless? The homosexuals? What about the street gangs? Are any of these souls excluded from the gospel commission? We are to pray for the peace and prosperity of our community in order that the gospel may be heard and received! The prosperity is not for our own comfort.

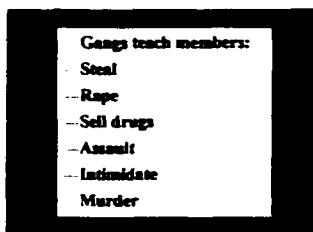
When the city is not prospering, when peace is taken from the city, what should be our position? Do we hibernate behind these church walls as soldiers huddled in a bomb shelter? Or, is the church duty bound to “Go into all the world” during the heat of battle? I will focus today on just one of the community concerns taking peace from our city—gangs, street gangs. “What!” someone says, “Pastor, that has nothing to do with me and my family.” We have our own church school, Sabbath school, Pathfinders and family worship. We are protected from the gangs. We don’t even live in *that* part of the city. Listen to me! Jesus says, “Go! —Go to the streets gangs and preach the gospel.”



[Slide 2] Let me share with you some facts regarding this growing concern in our city. In 1989, two years before I moved to Spokane and began pasturing, there was one gang member of record in Spokane. Our city was proud to be free of this nemesis. In that year a police officer pulled over a vehicle and discovered the driver was wanted fro gang activity in California and had come to Spokane to sell drugs. In 1998 there are 3,000 gang members, 650 on record in Spokane. This growing social disease is an issue infecting the children of America. Did you know that the average age of a gang member is 13? There are 72 separate gangs in our city. Today there are two detectives in the Sheriff’s department and three in the City Police office who’s full-time job is to tracking and dealing with gang violence and influence. Where is the church? Pray for the peace and prosperity of our city!

Here are a few of the gang’s names you may see written in graffiti on city walls:

Rollin 60’s, West side Crip, Valley Hell’s Patrol, BGD (Gangster Nation Disciples, Playboy Sur 13, Playboy Gangsters, Rollin 20’s Long Beach, 80 Ball, Lincoln Park Gang, Minorities, Native Pride, School Boyz, TRG (Tiny Rascals Gang), and Aryan Nations.



Are these God’s children? Does God love these kids? Do we? Matthew 18:19, “Go ye into *all* the world.”

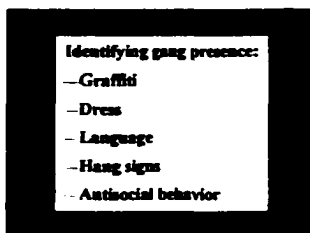
[Slide 3] What’s the big deal? Someone says, “This is just a fad, isn’t it? What harm can these kids do?” Gangs are antisocial. They teach theirs

members to:

- Steal.
- Rape
- Sell drugs
- Murder
- Assault
- Intimidate
- Murder

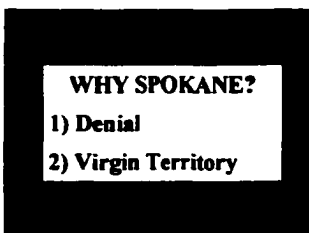
It's time we get our heads out of the sand. We think, "This is not an issue that touches me or my kids. We go to church. We have our own school. It will never touch me." Wake up. It's a problem. If we as a church do not realize its threat, our children will be at risk. Gangs cut across social economic barriers. They're not just for the poor, not just for the underachievers. Some are bright youth from upper class Church going families.

This past week Pastor Cooper and I attended the Spokane Ministerial Association meeting. The burden? The growing concern of gangs in our community. Southern Baptists have devised a Gang Ministry Manual. I secured a copy. This manual says that the first line of defense against gang influence is: Recognize there is a problem in the community. Furthermore, the manual says, it must start with senior pastor who brings this to the churches attention. That's what your senior pastor is doing this Sabbath morning.



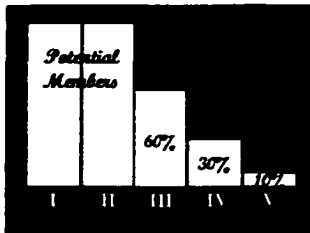
[Slide 4] Here is what you should look for in your neighborhood and home should you desire to guard your family against gang influence:

- Look for graffiti. Not on city walls alone. What about the note schoolbook. What appears to be doodling may be a gang code. This is not to say you child or her friend is a gang member but perhaps display of graffiti is an early sign of fascination with the gang culture.
- Look for dress. The baggy pants hung so low on the hips that the crouch is touching the ankles (you've probably seen it). The boxer short underwear displayed high above the low hanging pants. Baseball cap worn backwards. And beware of the gang signs on the sweatshirts. It all looks so innocent but dress may be another sign of our children's fascination with gang mentality.
- Gangs have their own language. This language is passed on through music—especially rap music.
- Hand signs as well are frequently displayed by rap artist (I use that word artist liberally). These handshakes and signals are unique to each gang and identify gang members.
- One of the most evident signs of gang mentality is an antisocial behavior—grades dropping, noncommunicative, sultry, and disrespectful. Drugs, alcohol, and promiscuity are the MO of gangs.



[Slide5] Do you know why gangs have so rapidly found inroads into Spokane? Denial that there really is a problem with gangs is what many authority feel is our greatest culprit. Karl Ota, a Spokane Junior High School Administrator, says some educators still won't admit there is a problem. It's time we stop thinking that if our kids act like the gangs they see in the movies and on TV, if they listen to the rap music of the gangs, it's just child's play.

Another reason gang activity has been so readily accepted in Spokane is because it was virgin territory. There was no competition here. That one gang member arrested in 1989 was here to sell drugs. He could fly up here from California and sell drugs for three times more than at home. There was little resistance here. The mayor at that time did not want to alarm the community so he kept the incident out of the news.



[Slide 6] Are we in denial? Is our church virgin territory as Spokane was 10 years ago? Are our youth at risk? Is this an issue in the Adventist community?

It will help us to understand the journey one takes to becoming a gang member. The process is rather organized and sophisticated. Notice in the chart there are five levels of familiarity with gangs (moving from left to right):

Level I, Fantasy Stage. The youth watches a movie glorifying gang activity. Listens to the music. There is a fascination with gang behavior. Dresses like the gang members—baggy pants, huge over sized pants (Dad's old dress clothes) cut off above the knees, high socks, white shoes with black shoe strings, billfold chain, tattoos, hand signs. Perhaps this is where most of our at-risk kids are.

Level II, At-Risk Stage. Contact is made with a gang member. First-hand familiarity. Truancy—skip classes to hang out with others who share their declining value system. A negative self image and world-view is exhibited. Does the gospel have anything to say about low self-esteem issues? Does the gospel offer any hope of a future for these children at-risk?

Level III, Wanna-be's (Associates) Stage. 60% of those in the gang culture are at this level. One at this stage hangs out with gang members. The mentality of this gang member is they are now prepared to join. Many start committing misdemeanors to prove their worthiness for gang membership. Writes graffiti.

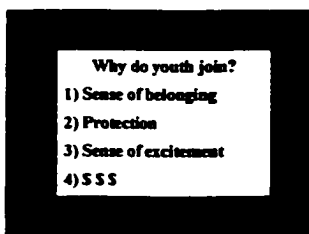
Level IV, Gang Member in Training Stage. 30% are in the gang culture are here. They own and will use a firearm. At this stage they openly reject values of family, church and the law. Gang members, however, do not consider he or him hard-core yet. How much worse could one become, you say.

Level V, Hard Core Stage. 10% in the gang culture are here. They are now totally committed to crime and the gang lifestyle—totally reject any authority other than the gang. Usually is a convicted felon by this stage. Lives for the collective goals of the gang.

Does this sound hopeless? If we obeyed the gospel commission, would any listen? Here is good news. 60% in the gang culture are at the "Wanna-be Stage." Authorities say that 70% in this stage want out of gang culture and 80% are definitely reachable.

[Slide 7] In reaching these youth at risk it would greatly help us to understand why they became interested in the first place with gang mentality, culture and life-style. Why do youth join gangs?

- Sense of belonging.** 80% say they join for this reason. They were not getting recognition from significant people in their lives. Felt rejected or ignored by peers or family. Their lives lacked good role models. Girls see their Mom work over-time and never seem to get ahead. They see no future. The gang becomes the surrogate family. Someone who understands.
- Protection.** One 7th grade girl told her teacher she was being followed and beaten up to and from school. She joined the gang to stop the harassment. Bullying should never be tolerated by adult caregivers. There will be zero tolerance at Spokane Valley Adventist School. We will love the child who is a bully but will never say, "Boys will be boys," or "Let the girls solve their own problems" when violence is involved. As a parent I heard that in one church school in which my sons were newly enrolled. Both were being picked on severely from their first day at school. When they told the teachers the physical violence escalated. We did not have backing from the church or school until other children came forward—children of church leaders who were naïveté of the suffering of their children. That history will not repeat itself here. Bullying pushes children towards gangs.
- Sense of excitement.** Perhaps there is a low work ethic at home. Too much time on their hands. No place to go. Future looks boring and hopeless. Gangs look adventurous.



4. **Money.** Gangs are not created for this reason but this becomes a major factor. Gangs are involved are in illegal activity, e.g., selling drugs, stolen cars, etc. It becomes big business that rivals organized crime today.

"The family is the most influential system in the lives of individuals. It is responsible for the development of characteristics and personality traits that determine one's self-esteem, drive, hope, self-control..., and sense of belonging and significance."
Gang Ministry Manual
Southern Baptist Convention

[Slide 8] **What is the answer: Strengthen our family. This is the first line of defense. The Southern Baptist Convention Gang Ministry Manual says,**

"The family is the most influential system in the lives of individuals. It is responsible for the development of characteristics and personality traits that determine one's self-esteem, drive, hope, self-control, will power, direction, purpose, competence, devotion, acceptance, and sense of belonging and significance.

Breakdown of family:
1) Economics
2) Divorce
3) No absolutes
4) No role models
5) Dysfunctional

[Slide 9] Studies show that the following factors break down the family:

1. **Economics.** Too much money and too little time as well as too little money. It works both ways.
 2. **Divorce.** Obviously so. But what about the process of the home breaking apart. What effect do these years have on our children? What can the church do to support children in homes going through divorce?
3. **No absolutes taught at home.** Kids don't know right from wrong. Where are your children getting their value system? From Jerry Springer? Or, Oprah? Or do you take time to daily connect with them? I'm talking to both Mom and Dad!
4. **No role models.** Robert Bly in his book, *Iron John*, quotes a Detroit police chief who claims that the young men he arrests not only do not have a responsible older man at home; they have never met any!
5. **Dysfunctional family.** A disjointed—unable to get along—unable to solve problems. Let me ask you a simple question: where does your family eat supper? Around the table or around the television? I praise God that I grew up in a family where the children were required to sit down nightly at 6 p.m. with Mom and Dad and eat. And if we didn't feel like eating we still had to be there. TV off! Mom and Dad talking to us while we ate. Listening to us. Praying before we ate. Let's bring back old fashion supper to our dinner tables.

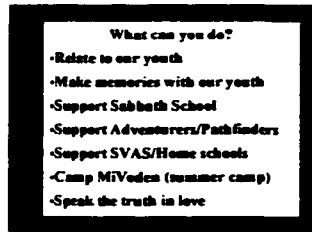
Does the church have anything to say about these issues? Does the gospel offer any hope? We have the Elijah message of Malachi 4, that message that promises to turn the hearts of the children back to the parents and the hearts of the parents to the children.

Luke 4:18
•Preach Good News of Jesus
•Heal broken hearts
•Deliver those held captive
•Restore sight
•Give liberty
•Offer a new beginning

[Slide 10] Luke 4:18 defined Jesus' mission. Is it ours?

- Preach the Good News of Jesus.
 - Heal the broken hearts (homes and live).
 - Deliver those held captive. 70% of those in gangs want out. It is better, yet, to prevent them from involvement in gangs. (I shared with Karl Oaf, a public school principal, that we let youth from our community use our parking lot after school to play roller-blade hockey. He replied, "Your church will not be vandalized." Remember that when you're tempted to feel that you wish they would go elsewhere.)
- Restore sight. The word of God opens the eyes. A loving friend shows the way. Will we be that friend to the youth of our community?
 - Give liberty. We should not give the impression that we not lord over people. We should not give the community the feeling that we are condescending, should not point our bony finger in their direction every time a mistake is made and shame them into submission.
 - Declare Day of the Lord. (Isaiah. 61 refers to the year of Jubilee. Jesus is quoting from this Isaiah 61. In that year rights are made wrong. Forgiveness is given. Is it time to start over again in your family or neighborhood? Can you offer a new beginning to a youth just as Jesus has for you? Is there a young person you need to go to and heal a relationship? I've had to do that with my own son.

[Slide 11] Here's what you can do to save our children:



- **Strengthen families.** We can strengthen the family by supporting the Family Life Counsel that is planning an array of helpful activities in our church. Things like help with in parenting. I know you're busy but—show up! How about supporting men's ministry, women's ministry, and the Divorce Care seminar.
- **Relate to our youth.** Start connecting with them at home. Validate them here at church. Talk to them when you see them. Form eye contact. Call them by name. Conrad Thomas reaches out to my son,

Carson, not only by making it a point to speak to him here at church but Conrad help him with his car. Bob Renck is tenacious at inviting him to the basketball night every week. May all of our children in our church be so blessed.

- **Make memories with our youth.** We are blessed with an active snow ski program here in our school and church for two months every winter. Take advantage of it with our children. We need chaperones. How about the church's recent ice hockey night? Did that give opportunity to bond with our youth? And what about the annual barn party in October? And, don't forget Kirk and Jana Brandt offering their river home and boat this past summer for water skiing. There's some good stuff going on here. Are you kids receiving that advantage? What about the resources the Upper Columbia Conference offers, e.g., family camp at MiVoden. What can we do to get our new ball field completed? That's a ministry that we miss since moving into our new facility. You know what kept me out of trouble as a youth? Music lessons! That takes a commitment from Mom and Dad as well as the student. You have to ferry them back and forth to lessons, pay for the lessons and then listen to that practice time. Ugh! Is it worth it? And we have the advantage of the Ludicker family here who have volunteered to teach our kids the fiddle at no cost on the condition that they practice 30 minutes a day. \$5.00 a lesson if they don't practice. Don't forget the resent Rebecca St. James and Josh McDowell concert sponsored by the youth department. You saw to it that your youth was there, didn't you?
- **Support Sabbath School.** Study your child's lesson with her or him. If you don't start them young doing it with them then chances are they will never develop the habit. I remember my mother teaching me my memory verse. I stood in front of the church and recited all 13 weeks my memory more than once. Make sure your children are at Sabbath School on time. Encourage the Sabbath school leaders and offer to assist in the various children's divisions.
- **Support Adventurers/Pathfinders.** We have a wonderful support for our youth in the Adventurers and Pathfinder Clubs. All of our young members should enjoy this ministry. Recently the youth went into the community and gathered can good and food. This will be used by our Community Service Center for Thanksgiving food baskets for those in need. Our youth did this in place of gathering candy at Halloween. Do you think such an activity will guard them from gang interest?
- **Support SVAS/Home school/UCA.** Every child should have an opportunity to receive a Christian education. If your children are grown and away from home then support our school by attending their programs and activities. Pray for our faculty. And, give regularly to the Worthy Student Fund.
- **Camp MiVoden.** Some of my happiest childhood memories go back to summer camp. I went to summer camp until they told me I was too old to register. So, I talked them into letting me be an assistant counselor at 16 years of age. Every Valley child should go to summer camp. And if the family cannot handle the expense the church should assist—and does.
- **Speak the truth in love.** Don't be afraid to say, "No." I know we all want to be liked by our children. But there is nothing wrong with establishing boundaries; to setting some guidelines and direction in our child's dress, behavior, music and attitudes. We should know who our children's friends are. Do you agree?

Such a plan will restore peace and prosperity to our city starting right here in our church family.

Walt Whitman penned in *Leaves of Grass*, "There was a child went forth every day . . . and the first object he looked upon, that object he became . . . And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day . . . or for many years of stretching cycles of years."

SERMONS BY OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

**A Sermon by Samuel to Israel
Preaching Unpopular Truth**

1 Samuel 12:1-25

Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

(And they said, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.")

The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand.

(And they answered, "He is witness.")

It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.

When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the LORD, and said, "We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee." And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.

And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, "Nay; but a king shall reign over us," when the LORD your God was your king. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God: But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

(Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, "Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.")

Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should

sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

**A Sermon by Haggai to Judah
Preaching to Unperceived Needs**

Haggai 1:4-14

Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled [paneled] houses, and this house lie waste?

Now therefore, thus saith the LORD of hosts; "Consider your ways." Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; "Consider your ways."

"Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified," saith the LORD.

Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. "Why?" saith the LORD of hosts. "Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house."

Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon [that] which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

(Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.)

(Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying,) "I am with you," saith the LORD.

(And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.)

SERMONS DELIVERED BY ELLEN G. WHITE

A Sermon by Ellen G. White in Copenhagen, Denmark, July 24, 1886

Having Our Conversation In Heaven

Text: 1 Peter 1:13-16 quoted.

The apostle Peter here gives instruction for believers to gird up the loins of their minds. We are to have special care over the thoughts of the mind. We are not to allow our minds to be diverted and allured by different things, because there is something more important for us. If we would allow the mind to take its natural turn, it might dwell upon unimportant things and we receive no benefit thereby

Here is presented before us the one great event—the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when the graves are to be opened and the dead be raised, and we are to be changed. This event should fill our mind and crowd out everything else. We want to make the most of the privileges and opportunities we have to prepare for the future immortal life.

The truth of God has taken us out of the quarry of the world to fit us up for the heavenly temple of God. We may look upon one another and think, "There is a great work to be done for that brother and for that sister," but we may not take into consideration the work that is to be done for ourselves. And if Satan can get in among the people [and produce] a spirit of criticism, then he is satisfied, for a root of bitterness springs up in these [members] wherewith he will be satisfied. We are not all of the same character, but we are brought together in church capacity and we count ourselves as children of God, and we talk of having a home in the city of God.

Our faith is that if we perfect a Christian character we shall be numbered as the family of God in the mansions that He has gone to prepare for us. Now, our heavenly father brings us together in church capacity that we may gain in knowledge and be fitting up for the community of heaven. "Well," some may say, "All I want is that everyone should see eye to eye. But there are those who want everyone to see just as they do. They do not consider that they have traits of character that must be changed. Then, what is the work before us in order to be ready to be among those who are waiting for their Lord to come in the clouds of heaven? It is for us to be in a position of humility before God. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The Lord has not placed before one individual the trade of becoming a church tinker, but we want individually to feel that we have a responsibility before God to be a blessing to everyone with whom we associate. And we are to consider that every brother and sister is the purchase of the blood of Christ. Here we are, living stones out of the quarry, and we are to be chiseled and fitted for the new Jerusalem. Do not let any of us think that we are all right. As soon as we are taken out of the quarry, we have a work to do for ourselves. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," and we want to be considering those things that will give us solidity of character. We do not want to have a high estimate of ourselves, but we want to esteem others better than ourselves. We want that our souls shall be uplifted to God every moment for help, for fear we shall fall. And while some are so diligent to look after others, they will forget the work there is for their own soul.

We are to heed the exhortation of the apostle, that we are to be holy in all manner of conversation. And as we separate those things from us which will be a hindrance to our advancement, the Holy Spirit will come in. We want to be filled with the spirit of Jesus, and if you are not closely connected with Christ, then the thoughts of your mind will be upon unimportant things; but if you are connected with Jesus, you will just as surely be a channel of light as Jesus is light, for Jesus has said to His followers, "Ye are the light of the world."

Now, we are by living faith to keep our eyes fixed upon the Author and Finisher of our faith. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

Before we become acquainted with Jesus, the conversation is upon the dress, and what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and what shall we wear? And we find fault with one another. But as soon as we become acquainted with Christ, our conversation changes.

Here we are, objects of His love. Has the change taken place in us? Namely, have we passed from death unto life? Have we died indeed to self? Have we fastened our hearts and affections upon the great God? He is all light and power.

Every provision has been made for us that can be made by our precious Saviour, that we may have that abundant grace so that we may overcome every defect in our character. And we cannot afford to satisfy ourselves in this life, but we want the fullness that is in Jesus, and we must train ourselves to talk of those things which will bring to us peace and light. As we have our conversation upon heaven and heavenly things, the angels of God are all around us; and when we are, in our thoughts and with our hearts, drawing near to God, then He is drawing nigh to us. His love is in our hearts, and then we speak it from our lips.

It is not only our duty to train our minds upon heavenly things, but we are to talk of these things, for it is our duty to bind about our mind, to gird up the loins of our mind, and say, "I will not think of these things." Then it is our duty to guard our conversation.

We would think, from the shadow that many walk in, that they had no Saviour. But I want to speak to those, and say "Christ is risen! He is not in Joseph's new tomb, but He has arisen and has ascended up on high to make intercession for us!" We have a risen Saviour interceding for us, and we must walk in harmony with God. He is seeking to "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." If we seek with all our hearts to be obedient children, conforming our will to the will of God, then the work can go forward in us without interruption. Let us not forget for one moment that we are living for the future immortal life, and let us put away from us everything like complaint and faultfinding. Let our words, our conversation, reveal to the world that we have a hope that is big with immortality.

We want that His will shall be our will. We do not want that our will shall be such that it will control all that around us. One brother said to me, "Sister White, we must see eye to eye. Now, I view matters in this light and my brethren in another light, and I cannot make them see everything as I do. Their habits and ways are altogether different from mine."

"Thank God, Brother," said I, "that there is only one like you in the world, for if we were all like you we could not live in the world long, for there would be no harmony. Your brother's ways are just as precious to him as yours are to you."

God wants us to go through the mill. Here this man's sharp character must be burnished off, and here is one who has taken hold of the truth who has always been coarse in his conversation, and he must overcome that. This is the very thing the apostle means when he says, "You must overcome in order to have a home in heaven." Jesus must be in my whole work to transform my character. We must accept the truth as it is in Jesus, and then how kind will we be to one another, how courteous, for this was the work of my Master. We shall see the precious mold of Jesus upon the character, and when we learn the precious lessons He has for us to learn, we will be like Jesus. "Come unto Me," says He, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Here you are with your variances and differences. Now, "Come to Me," says He, "and learn of Me." Nineteenths of all our trouble comes from our esteeming ourselves too highly. But just as soon as we begin to look and see how many virtues we can find in others with whom we associate, then we will not be so ready to see their defects, and we will dwell upon the good in their character in place of their faults. In doing this, we bind them closer to our hearts by the firm cords of love.

The question was asked me, "Sister White, why is it you have such control over your children and those you bring up?" The answer was given, "Gain their confidence and love, and you can have perfect control." Let every member in the church be working in such a manner that he can gain the confidence of his

brethren and sisters, then the precious light that emanates from Jesus will be reflected upon his life and character. There is something meant in this expression, "Building up yourselves in the most holy faith." And whenever you shall have the consolation of the Spirit of God, you should feel an earnest desire to give that consolation to others.

If you have the precious light from heaven, talk about it. And have we not everything from Jesus to talk about? I could give you subjects that would put to the stretch your thoughts and mind, and yet there is a great deal more. The great plan of redemption is not half comprehended. If we could only understand the plan of salvation, we would be the happiest people upon the face of the earth. The truth that God has given us would so fill our minds that we could not talk of earthly things. And then it is almost impossible for you to explain to others the greatness of salvation that you feel in your own heart. Jesus wants you to dwell upon this salvation.

Our precious Saviour has died to bring us to God. He has suffered as our Sacrifice, and all this was that we could stand freed from sin, cleansed from all iniquities. The cleansing blood of Christ is enough for us to talk about from morning until night, if you will only let your minds run in this direction. We want an intelligent faith. We want to understand how much of the blessing of God we can claim. Hear the word of God on this point. And if He has given us His Son, "How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

It is through the Son of God that we claim the promises that He has left on record for us. Here we have come out, and are keeping His commandments, because we see it is His requirement. We make ourselves peculiar from the world in this respect; and as we follow the best light we have in keeping His commandments, it is our privilege to claim His blessing, and then lay your whole burden upon Jesus Christ and claim by faith His rich salvation. While Satan will press upon your soul his darkness and tell you [that] you cannot be saved, tell him, "Jesus died for me; it was a whole sacrifice that was made in my behalf, and I claim a whole salvation. The Master would have me joyful, for He has said it (John 15). The Word of God declares plainly and positively, 'Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples. . . . These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.'"

Not that they should feel that they were under bondage to the law. "This is My commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you." We want to believe the words of Christ, for they are spirit, they are life. We want to take Him at His word. We want to walk right out upon the narrow plank of faith. We want to serve God with all the heart, might, mind, and strength, and then it is our privilege to claim to be children of God.

God wants to pour into your souls the light and glory of His presence. He wants that His joy shall remain in you and that your joy may be full, that when you meet with your brethren and sisters you can say, "Hear what the Lord has done for me. He has given me a rich experience, and if I seek Him for His blessing it will come." Then you begin to talk of Christ's coming, and the end of all things at hand, and how we are getting ready for His appearing. Then you talk of that heavenly city; you talk of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, and you talk of the King in His beauty, with His kingly crown, and of the riches that are to be given to the children of God; you talk of that stream that goeth out from the throne of God; and then you say "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me give Him glory."

Why, if we were such a people today, what impressions would we make upon the world! They would say that we have something that they have not, and they would begin to inquire, "What can I do to be as happy as that man?" My brethren and sisters, God is your strength, and He does not want you to go crippling along in this life. And when you enter the gate of the New Jerusalem you will read over the gate, "Blessed are they that do His commandments."

Jesus will welcome you, and with His own hand place the crown upon the brow of all those who enter there. Then they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb in the kingdom of glory. Well, now, is there not inducement enough that God has set before us so that we should think upon heavenly things? And the best of it is, we do not enter the city as convicts, but as sons and daughters of the Most High God. The Father

stands at the gate and welcomes everyone to His bosom. There we shall show forth the matchless charms of our Redeemer. And the song will echo and re-echo through the courts of heaven, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

I ask you, is not this enough to talk about? Shall we go mourning, just as though God's wrath was about to break upon us, or shall we talk of that infinite love that has been brought to us by the infinite sacrifice of the Son of God? When you think of these things, and of the love of Jesus, you will love one another, and you cannot help it.

Christ has manifested His interest in humanity. He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." We are dealing with Jesus in the person of His saints. Then be very careful how you wound the hearts of your brethren and sisters. We are almost home, pilgrims and strangers only a little longer. All heaven is interested in the salvation of men, and, in harmony with them, we should be interested for those around us. We should be getting ready for the heavenly city.

Oh, I praise God with all my soul, because Jesus has died for us, and He has wrought out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that we shall have in that day! Then, brethren and sisters, be getting ready to move. Keep your mind upon the better country, even the heavenly. Learn to sing the song here upon this earth. The best song you can learn is to speak kindly to one another, for in heaven the business of the inhabitants is to please one another. Bring all of heaven that you can into this life. We have a living Jesus, and let us triumph in a living Saviour. He saves us with an everlasting salvation.—Ms 9, 1886. (MS 900.54)

**A Sermon by Ellen G. White in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,
Des Moines, Iowa, December 1, 1888**

The Minister's Relationship to God's Word

Text: 2 Timothy 4:1-11 quoted.

Here we have presented before us the work of him who shall open the Scriptures to others. It is a most solemn work, and all who engage in it should be men of prayer. It is not enough for the minister to stand up in the desk and give an exposition of the Scriptures. His work has but just begun. There is pastoral work to do, and this means to reprove and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine; that is, he should present the Word of God, to show wherein there is a deficiency. If there is anything in the character of the professed followers of Christ, the burden should certainly be felt by the minister, and not that he should lord it over God's heritage. To deal with human minds is the nicest job that was ever committed to mortal man.

There will be human prejudices and many other things that will bar his way. He will have to meet hearts that have never been subdued in their childhood. They have never been brought into order and into line; they have never been brought under control. Therefore, in dealing with these minds, where reproof is necessary, to rebuke with all longsuffering, to be successful in this work, the servant of God will have to arm himself with the same mind that was in Christ Jesus; and if he walks humbly with his God, he will recognize in every soul for whom he has labored that they are the purchase of the blood of Christ; that our precious Saviour considered them of such value that He did not withhold Himself, but gave up His life in order that they might have a provision, a trial, a time when they should consider the things of eternal interest, and that they should weigh them carefully, attentively, and see if they do not consider whether or not it is to their advantage and profit to build into eternal life.

Here the apostle presents a solemn charge to every minister of the Gospel. He arrays them before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, to preach the Word, and they are not to show a partiality for merely the prophecies and the argumentative portions of the Scriptures, but the greatest and most important lessons that are given us are those given us by Jesus Christ Himself. If we become thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines of Jesus Christ, then we shall be able to win souls to Christ. We shall have the love of Christ in our hearts, for we will see that we can do nothing without it. Why, Christ says, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" [John 15:7].

It is not enough that we merely give an exposition of the Scriptures, but we must have the Word of God abiding in us; and Christ has said that unless "ye eat of My flesh and drink of My blood, ye shall have no part with Me. None but those who eat of My flesh and drink of my blood shall have eternal life." [See John 6:53-56.] Then He goes on to explain what it means. Why, he says, "the flesh profiteth nothing; it is the spirit that quickeneth" [see verse 63], and He says that His flesh is meat indeed and drink indeed. Therefore, we are not to merely open the Bible and read something to the people and then go away out of the desk and carry no burden of souls with us.

God designs that every minister of the gospel shall increase in efficiency. He designs that they shall have more power in prayer, that they shall become more intelligent in handling the Word of God, continually growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and the more that they think and talk of Christ, the more they will meditate upon the blessed Saviour and the Word He has given them to obey, the more they will reflect the image of Jesus Christ; and by so doing they will become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Remember this point—"having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." If we are in that position where we shall speak the truth in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, we shall be men and women of prayer. We shall seek God earnestly, and as ministers of God preaching the gospel, we should carry these great truths into our daily lives, and show that we are living examples of what we preach—that we are carrying into our everyday life practical godliness—then wherever we go we will be a power.

There are some who have power just while they are in the desk, and it goes no further, therefore their influence is like the morning dew which the sun shines upon and drinks up; there is nothing to it; but if he carries the Word into his life, if he is eating and drinking of the blood and flesh of the Son of God, then he is a party with Christ, he is a partaker of the divine nature. Like the branch connected with the living vine, he has been drinking sap and nourishment from the True Vine, and it will be seen wherever he is.

Let us see what [the Word says] further: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" [2 Tim. 4:6-8].

Well, there is an incentive before us constantly to be faithful. As to those [to] whom God has committed sacred trusts, we are to be faithful, and if we are faithful, then the God of heaven will pronounce us worthy of eternal life, and [will bestow] that crown of righteousness that is laid up for the faithful who shall be overcomers at last.

Now, there are some that may think they are fully capable with their finite judgment to take the Word of God, and to state what are the words of inspiration and what are not the words of inspiration. I want to warn you off that ground, my brethren in the ministry. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." There is no finite man that lives, I care not who he is or whatever is his position, that God has authorized to pick and choose in His Word.

It is true that the apostle has said that there are some things hard to be understood in the Scriptures. So there are. And if it were not that there are subjects that are difficult and hard to be understood, well might the skeptic who now pleads that God has given a revelation that cannot be understood--well might he, I say--have something else to plead. God's infinity is so much higher than we are, that it is impossible for man to comprehend the mystery of godliness.

Angels of God looked with amazement upon Christ, who took upon Himself the form of man and humbly united His divinity with humanity in order that He might minister to fallen man. It is a marvel among the heavenly angels. God has told us that He did do it, and we are to accept the Word of God just as it reads.

And although we may try to reason in regard to our Creator, how long He has had existence, where evil first entered into our world, and all these things, we may reason about them until we fall down faint and exhausted with the research when there is yet an infinity beyond. We cannot grasp it, so what man is there that dares to take that Bible and say this part is inspired and that part is not inspired? I would have both my arms taken off at my shoulders before I would ever make the statement or set my judgment upon the Word of God as to what is inspired and what is not inspired.

How would finite man know anything about that matter? He is to take the Word of God as it reads, and then to appreciate it as it is, and to bring it into the life and to weave it into the character. There is everything plainly revealed in God's Word which concerns the salvation of men, and if we will take that Word and comprehend it to the very best of our ability, God will help us in its comprehension.

Human minds without the special assistance of the Spirit of God will see many things in the Bible very difficult to be understood, because they lack a divine enlightenment. It is not that men should come to the Word of God by setting up their own way, or their own will or their own ideas, but it is to come with a meek and humble and holy spirit.

Never attempt to search the Scriptures unless you are ready to listen, unless you are ready to be a learner, unless you are ready to listen to the Word of God as though His voice were speaking directly to you from the living oracles. Never let mortal man sit in judgment upon the Word of God or pass sentence as to how much of this is inspired and how much is not inspired, and that this is more inspired than some other sources. God warns him off that ground. God has not given him any such work to do. {1SAT 66.2}

We want to keep close to the truth that is for our times—present truth. We want to know what is the truth now. We claim to believe the third angel's message; we claim that the angel was flying through the midst of heaven proclaiming the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This was the proclamation. Did you hear his voice? Did he speak so you could hear that message? Did the world hear it? Did the world hear any note? Did they want to hear? Will anyone hear it? Yes, those who have been walking out step by step as Jesus leads the way, and when the position of Christ changed from the holy to the most holy place in the Sanctuary, it is by faith to enter with Him, understand His work, and then to present to the world the last message of mercy that is to be given to the world. And what is it? It is a message to prepare a people for the second coming of the Son of Man. It is God's great day of preparation, and therefore every minister of Jesus Christ should have in his course of action, in the burden of his labor, a zeal and living interest, and intensity in his efforts which is appropriate to the truth that is for this time, which is claimed to be the last message of mercy to our world. Well, then, we cannot sleep, we cannot be indifferent; we must labor for the precious souls around us, of men and women; we must work with all our might, for the Lord is coming.

The real laborers will be careworn, oppressed in spirit, and they will feel as did Christ when He wept over Jerusalem. When they see crookedness and impenitence, and when they see people who will not listen to the Word of the Lord, why they will feel as He felt when He exclaimed, "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" [Matt. 23:37]. Here are precious invitations of mercy, and while we carry them and try to let the light be reflected upon the world in darkness, we cannot see, perhaps, that the rays of light are penetrating everywhere. We may not see this, but it is so, if we carry the light and have the right spirit—and we want the right spirit—and we want to labor in Christ and have Christ with us constantly.

Here in Second Timothy, the second chapter, beginning with the eleventh verse, we read: "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers" [verses 11-14].

What does that mean? It means that there may be contentions over words and over ideas, but they should be to some purpose, they should be to break down the stubbornness and the opposition that is in human hearts in order that their spirits may be softened and subdued, so that when the seeds of truth are dropped into the soil of the heart, they may take root there. We do not know which shall prosper, this or that; it is God alone that giveth the increase. Therefore we must labor in discouragements, but we want to labor in Christ. The life must be hid with Christ in God, and as the minister's labor is to watch over the flock of God as overseers, there are cautions that they are to heed: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word" [verse 15]. This is a great labor; it is a great burden. It is not to obtain the praise of men, it is not to look to any living mortal on the earth, but to God we are to look, with an eye single to His glory.

If we look to Him, He will certainly help us. He will give us His grace to help to labor on; He will give us strength to go forth weeping, if need be, bearing precious seed, and doubtless we shall come again with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us. That is what we want. We want to bring sheaves to the Master. We want to consider that we are missionaries, wherever we are, in the highest sense of the word, and there is a great work before us. We want a sharpened intellect, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, growing up to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

What then? Why, we are to present every man approved in Christ Jesus. That is our work; and when men and women accept the truth, we are not to go away and leave them, and have no further burden for them. They are to be looked after. They are to be carried as a burden upon the soul, and we must watch over them as stewards who must render an account. Then as you speak to the people, give to every man his portion of meat in due season, but you want to be in that position where you can give this food.

The Word of God is rich. Here are the precious mines of truth, and we can dig for the truth as for precious treasures hidden away. We buy a field. After we buy it, we hear that there is buried in it a vast amount of

wealth; so we begin to plow and turn over every portion of that field carefully, till we have found the precious jewels.

Here is the garden of God. Here is the precious Word, and we should take that Word and study it carefully; study its pages thoroughly and be in a position where we can gather the divine rays of light from glory, and reflect them on those around us. God wants us to be fruitful in the Scriptures. And when you may go forth to your fields of labor, you may indeed feel that you are weak men, but you are not handling weak subjects. You are handling subjects of eternal moment, and you are to study and search the Scriptures for yourselves. You are to dig in this mine all the time, and the "entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" [Ps 119:130].

Whereas [people merely with] human nature might search the Bible, study its pages, be able to see its beauty, yet the searching would profit them nothing, but when they come with a humble heart, with a prayerful spirit, when they take hold of that Word with reverence, and open its pages with a prayerful heart, why the enterings of that Word—the Word must enter into the heart. It is not enough to read it merely, but it must enter, it must take right hold of the soul, and bring your spirits into subjection to the Spirit of God.

And when this transforming process has been accomplished—and we know that you are men mighty in the Scriptures when you can stand up before the people and can present Christ to them crucified—we know you have been to the Living Fountain; we know that you have been drinking of that Fountain, which is Christ in you springing up into everlasting life, so the words that you shall utter will be right words. They will not be vain words, coming together with a jingling sound, just to please the people. No, all this is to be shunned. You are to shun everything of that character. You want to be in a position where the blessed truth of heavenly origin shall have a transforming influence upon the life and upon the character.

Now let us see what it saith in Philippians, second chapter, commencing at the twelfth verse: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

There is no carelessness allowed here; there is no indolence; there is no indifference; but we are to work out, each of us, our own salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Let us see: "Wherefore, my beloved, . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Well, then, you say, am I to go around fearing and trembling all the way? Yes, in one sense, but not in another sense.

You have the fear of God before you, and you will have a trembling lest you will depart from the counsels of God. There will be that trembling. You will be working out your own salvation all the time with fear and trembling. Does it rest here? No, let us hear how the divine power comes in: "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" [verse 13]. Here are man's works, and here are God's works. They both cooperate. Man cannot accomplish this work without the help of the divine power.

God does not take man with his own natural feelings and deficiencies and place him right in the light of the countenance of God. No, man must do his part; and while man works out his own salvation, with fear and trembling, it is God that worketh in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure. With these two combined powers, many will be victorious and receive a crown of life at last. He stands in view of the haven of bliss and the eternal weight of glory before him, and he fears lest he will lose it, lest a promise being left, he shall come short of it. He cannot afford to lose it. He wants that haven of bliss, and strains every energy of his being to secure it. He taxes his abilities to the utmost. He puts to the stretch every spiritual nerve and muscle that he may be a successful overcomer in his work, and that he may obtain the precious boon of eternal life.

What will I do? When the world sees that we have an intensity of desire, some object that is out of sight, which by faith is to us a living reality, then it puts an incentive to investigate, and they see that there is certainly something worth having, for they see that this faith has made a wonderful change in our life and character.

A transformation has taken place, and you are a different man. You are not the same passionate man that you used to be. You are not the same worldly man that you were. You are not the man that was giving way to lust and evil passions, evil surmisings and evil speakings. You are not this man at all, because a transformation has taken place. What is it? The image of Christ reflected in you. Then you are bearing in view that there is a company to stand by and by on Mount Zion, and you want to be one of that company, and you are determined that you will form a part of that company. Let me read: [Rev. 14:1-3, quoted.]

Why were they [the 144,000] so specially singled out? Because they had to stand with a wonderful truth right before the whole world, and receive their opposition, and while receiving this opposition they were to remember that they were sons and daughters of God, that they must have Christ formed within them the hope of glory. They were ever keeping in view the great and blessed hope that is before them. What is it? It is an eternal weight of glory. Nothing could surpass it.

Paul had a view of heaven, and in discoursing on the glories there, the very best thing he could do was to not try to describe them. He tells us that eye had not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him. So you may put your imagination to the stretch, you may try to the very best of your abilities to take in and consider the eternal weight of glory, and yet your finite senses, faint and weary with the effort, cannot grasp it, for there is an infinity beyond. It takes all of eternity to unfold the glories and bring out the precious treasures of the Word of God.

Do not let any living man come to you and begin to dissect God's Word, telling what is revelation, what is inspiration and what is not, without a rebuke. Tell all such they simply do not know. They simply are not able to comprehend the things of the mystery of God. What we want is to inspire faith. We want no one to say, "This I will reject, and this will I receive," but we want to have implicit faith in the Bible as a whole and as it is.

We call on you to take your Bible, but do not put a sacrilegious hand upon it, and say, "That is not inspired," simply because somebody else has said so. Not a jot or tittle is ever to be taken from that Word. Hands off, brethren! Do not touch the ark. Do not lay your hand upon it, but let God move. It is with His own power, and He will work in such a manner that He will compass our salvation. We want God to have some room to work. We do not want man's ideas to bind Him about.

I know something of the glory of the future life. Once a sister wrote to me and asked if I would not tell her something about the city of our God, further than we have in the Word. She asked me if I could not draw something of its plans. I wrote her that I would have to say to her, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." "No," said I, "you cannot paint, you cannot picture, and the martyr tongue cannot begin to give any description of the glory of the future life; but I will tell you what you can do: You can 'press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' You can die to self; you can seek to grow up to the perfection of Christian character in Christ Jesus." That is our work, but when men begin to meddle with God's Word, I want to tell them to take their hands off, for they do not know what they are doing.

But here is the company. John sees it and wonders what means the scene. The account goes back in the chapter previous. I will not read it, but it shows where Heaven sends a message to the children of men, and they begin to embrace it, and follow the Lamb step by step until they enter into the sanctuary, and on till they are redeemed and stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion. And then it is explained why their song was so different from any other song. It was a new song. And he goes on to state that "in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God."

Now, brethren, we see just what is before us. If we have unruly tongues, and they will talk, we want to have them cured. How shall we get them cured? Follow the Lamb. Follow the footsteps of Christ. We want our conversation to be sanctified. We want no impurities on our lips; we want none in our hearts; we want nothing that will defile. We want clean hands and pure hearts, and we want to keep our minds constantly awake.

We are altogether too well satisfied. Many of our ministers are as weak as babes. They understand the theory of the truth—can present that well enough—but when it comes to working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, if they meet with a little obstacle, they begin to talk doubt and discouragement, and in a despairing tone, and you will find they will stumble over little mites of obstacles that they should not notice at all. That is terrible.

What we want is to be armed with the same mind that was in Christ Jesus our Lord. And when we are armed with His mind, we can say with the apostle, that we are not to look at the things that are seen, but we are to look away from these things. These things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal, therefore we are to keep our minds fixed upon heavenly things, the eternal weight of glory. That is what we are to think about and what we are to talk about.

If we would only consider like rational beings that there is a heaven before us to gain and a hell to shun; if we should keep that in mind, do you think that we would let the things of this earth sap away all our religious fervor? We shall not handle these things long. We are passing through this world as pilgrims and strangers, and in a little while we shall lay off our armor at the feet of our Redeemer, and we must be getting ready for that event. We want our actions, and our words and our thoughts to be right, for we all have an influence for good or for evil.

Here is my family that will be sanctified because of my right course of action. If I have spoken defiling words, if guile has passed my lips, if I have been peevish and cross, then I shall lie against the truth which I claim to believe. Therefore I will not be on that side of the question at all. I will have my mouth clean and my tongue sanctified. I will have my heart sanctified that I shall not take up a rumor against my brother, because I am told in the Word of God that he that taketh up a reproach against his neighbor shall not dwell in the hill of the Lord. [Ps. 15:3] Therefore, I must have clean hands and a pure heart, for it is they that shall stand in the hill of the Lord. Now, I want to be of that number that shall stand in the hill of the Lord. It does not make one whit of difference with my character whether anyone shall think ill of me or think good of me. It does not affect me, but it will affect them. May God help us that we may come up to that very place where we can appreciate these things.

We want to see the family altar established, and we want there to bring our children right before God with earnest prayer, just as the minister labors for his congregation when he is before them. Every father should feel that he is placed at the head of his household to offer up a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God and of praise to Him, and to present these children to God and seek His blessing to rest upon them, and never rest until he knows that they are accepted of God—until he knows that they are children of the Most High. Here is a work for the mother. What a responsibility rests upon her! Do we consider and realize that the greatest influence to recommend Christianity to our world is a well-ordered and well-disciplined Christian family? The world sees that they believe God's Word.—Manuscript 13, 1888. (A sermon preached in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Des Moines, Iowa, December 1, 1888. Reported by W. E. Cornell. Portions of this manuscript appear in *Evangelism*, 7BC, *This Day With God, Faith and Works, Our High Calling*, and *Manuscript Releases* 347 and 749.) (MR 900)

A Sermon by Ellen G. White Delivered in 1904

The Foundation of Our Faith

At this time—the last days of this earth's history—we are to make the book of Revelation a special study. Why? Because it depicts the scenes that we are to meet. We need to understand what we are to meet, and how we are to meet it. We must know what efforts we are to make, so that, in this perilous time, we shall not be taken by the enemy's devices. We know that the last great conflict will be Satan's most determined effort to accomplish his purposes. He will come, not only as a roaring lion, but as a seducer, clothing sin with beautiful garments of light, that he may take human beings in his snare.

The Lord desires us to realize that it is of great importance that we stand in these last days upon the platform of eternal truth. Those who think that the church militant is the church triumphant make a great mistake. The church militant will gain great triumphs, but it will also have fierce conflicts with evil, that it may be firmly established upon the platform of eternal truth. And every one of us should be determined to stand with the church upon this platform.

Text: Rev. 1:1-3, 9-13, 17-20 quoted.

Thus Christ instructed John. It is the word of God that you will find in the book of Revelation. There are those today who call the Revelation a sealed book. But it is a mystery unfolded. We need to understand what it tells us in regard to the scenes that are to take place in the last days of this earth's history. The enemy will bring in everything that he possibly can to carry out his deceptive designs. Are they not lacking in wisdom who have no desire to understand in regard to the things that are to take place on this earth?

I am so sorry that Living Temple came out as it did, and was circulated, and the worst of it—that which struck right to my heart—was the assertion made regarding the book: "It contains the very sentiments that Sister White has been teaching." When I heard this, I felt so heartbroken that it seemed as if I could not say anything. Had I said anything, I would have been obliged to speak the truth as it was.

Representations had been shown me that some danger was approaching, and that I must prepare for it. I must write out the things God had given me in order to prepare for it.

I did not read Living Temple, though I had it in my library. At last my son said to me, "Mother, you ought to read at least some parts of the book, that you may see whether they are in harmony with the light that God has given you." He sat down beside me, and we read the paragraphs to which he referred. When we had finished I turned to him and said, "These are the very sentiments against which I was bidden to speak in warning at the very beginning of my public work. When I first left the State of Maine, it was to go through Vermont and Massachusetts, to bear a testimony against these sentiments. Living Temple contains the Alpha of these theories. The Omega would follow in a little while. I tremble for our people. These beautiful representations are similar to the temptation that the enemy brought to Adam and Eve in Eden.

When but a girl I went to New Hampshire to bear warning against these same doctrines. There was a man by the name of Billings and another by the name of Bennet who were preaching a higher spirituality. I was asked to meet these men, and I did so, giving them the light that God had given me. In the meeting a great distress came upon me. I was taken off in vision. The men began to triumph, thinking that things were going their way. When I got up to bear my testimony, they began to shout. I stopped and did not say a word until they had finished. Then I went on and told them plainly where the doctrines they were advocating would lead to.

I met these same doctrines in Dorchester, Mass., where for a time I made my home. In one meeting held there a man arose and after making a confession, said, "I have listened today to the testimony of Ellen Harmon, and I feel as if I had been partaking of the richest feast ever set before me." In the past this man had been a model of piety, but these seductive theories came before him—theories teaching that men and women could live above all sin—and he accepted them. What was the result? He left his wife and children and went to live with another woman.

I was at this time nothing but a girl, and I said, "Why am I left to bear this testimony?" Said the one in whose house I was staying, "God knows why. The men advocating these doctrines have a strong influence as being very pious men, and if we were to say anything against them, they would put us in prison. But you are a minor, and they cannot touch you."

We met these theories again in Topsham, Maine. A brother there, who had accepted them, was very sick, and he wanted me to pray for him. I said, "I cannot pray for you so long as you and these sisters are so free with one another." He sent for Elder James White, who, when he came, asked him, "What are you going to do?" "Do!" he said, "Do you ask what I am going to do? I am going to cut loose from all these evils. I am going to take my stand in harmony with what Sister Ellen Harmon has been presenting to me. I accept what she has said as the word of the Lord." Thus the company with which he was connected was broken up. And many more such companies were broken up by the light that God gave me.

Thus I worked and suffered in my girlhood. And all through my life I have had the same errors to meet, though not always in the same form. In Living Temple the assertion is made that God is in the flower, in the leaf, in the sinner. But God does not live in the sinner. The Word declares that He abides only in the hearts of those who love Him and do righteousness. God does not abide in the heart of the sinner; it is the enemy who abides there.

There are some things upon which we must reason, and there are other things that we must not discuss. In regard to God--what He is and where He is--silence is eloquence. When you are tempted to speak of what God is, keep silence, because as surely as you begin to speak of this, you will disparage Him.

Our ministers must be very careful not to enter into controversy in regard to the personality of God. This is a subject that they are not to touch. It is a mystery, and the enemy will surely lead astray those who enter into it. We know that Christ came in person to reveal God to the world. God is a person and Christ is a person. Christ is spoken of in the Word as "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person."

I was forbidden to talk with Dr. Kellogg on this subject, because it is not a subject to be talked about. And I was instructed that certain sentiments in Living Temple were the Alpha of a long list of deceptive theories.

These sentiments have had an effect on our people everywhere. Some think it strange that I write, "Do not send your children to Battle Creek." I was instructed in regard to the danger of the worldly influence in Battle Creek. I have written hundreds of pages regarding the danger of having so large a sanitarium, and of calling so many young people together in one place. The young people in Battle Creek are in danger. They will come in contact with error. Years ago I did not think that they would meet these errors right in the Sanitarium; but when Living Temple came out, and some of our ministers told me that there was in it nothing but what I had been teaching all my life, I saw how great the danger was. I saw that blindness had fallen upon some who had long known the truth. I pray that the Lord will open the eyes of these ministers, that they may see the differences between light and darkness, and between truth and error.

In a representation which passed before me, I saw a certain work being done by medical missionary workers. Our ministering brethren were looking on, watching what was being done, but they did not seem to understand. The foundation of our faith, which was established by so much prayer, such earnest searching of the Scriptures, was being taken down, pillar by pillar. Our faith was to have nothing to rest upon--the sanctuary was gone, the atonement was gone. I realized that something must be done.

The battle nearly killed me. I saw what was coming in, and I saw that our brethren were blind. They did not realize the danger. Our young people, especially, were in danger. They delighted in the beautiful representation--God in the flower, God in the leaf, God in the tree. But if God be in these things, why not worship them?

The reason I have published anything in regard to the medical missionary work, was that the errors that were coming in must be met. I did not design to meet them, but in the visions of the night I saw a large ship

far out at sea. Suddenly the man on the lookout cried, "Iceberg ahead!" Without hesitation the command rang out, "Meet it." The engines were put on at full force, and the vessel crashed into the iceberg. There was a tremendous shock, and the ship quivered from stem to stern; but she rebounded from the shock unhurt, and went safely on her way. After seeing this representation. I knew what work I must do. I knew that I must meet the errors that were coming in among us.

I have been hoping that there would be a thorough reformation, that the principles for which we fought in my girlhood, and which were brought out in the power of the Holy Spirit, would be maintained. Night after night in our early experience our brethren studied out the truths which we now hold. When they came to something that they could not understand, they would get down on their knees, and would remain there for hours sometimes. Sometimes the sun would rise before they would give up the struggle. At times, when they said, "We can do nothing more," the power of God would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and instruction would be given me. Then I could explain what they could not understand. I would read the Scriptures to them, never looking at the printed page. Thus light was given in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood, and the great points of our faith were firmly established.

But during this period of our experience, my mind was locked to an understanding of the Scriptures. It was one of the greatest sorrows of my life. Thus it was every point of our faith was established in harmony with the Word of God.

At this time I was living in the house of Father Andrews. He was helpless with rheumatism, and was constantly in great suffering. I knelt by his side and, laying my hands on his head, asked Jesus to make him whole. The power of God came upon him and he walked back and forth across the room, praising the Lord.

Soon after this I was instructed by the Lord that I should no longer mourn in regard to my inability to understand the Scriptures. God unlocked my mind and ever since, whenever I read His Word, a flood of light comes into my mind.

Thus the work went on and we were shown where we must stand. Do you wonder that I have something to say when I see the pillars of our faith beginning to be moved? Seductive theories are being taught in such a way that we shall not recognize them unless we have clear spiritual discernment. I will stand firmly with everyone who will stand for the truth. But I do not want our young people to flock into Battle Creek. They would better not go there. Anyone who can be so utterly deceived as to place the misleading sentiments contained in Living Temple before our people, cannot be trusted as a teacher of the youth until he is converted.

I have the tenderest sympathy for the physicians associated with Dr. Kellogg. But I have no sympathy for their failure to pass over the mistakes that they see made by Dr. Kellogg, saying nothing about them. God will hold them accountable for letting matters go without saying, "Doctor, you did not do right that time." The poor man has loaded himself down until the enemy finds him a very easy prey. Unless he changes his course, and takes an entirely different course, he will be lost to the cause of God. And his associate physicians will be guilty before God unless they take their position and stand free from every error.

I have lain awake night after night, studying how I could help Dr. Kellogg. His father and mother, before they died, begged me not to give him up, but to stand by him till the last. I said, "I will try, if he will listen to me." I have spent nearly whole nights in prayer for him. Week after week I have not slept till twelve o'clock, and then for weeks I have not been able to sleep past twelve o'clock. I wrote constantly, until my left eye gave out. And at last my brain became so weary that I could not use it. My son would come up to my room and ask if he might read some letters that had come. "No, Willie," I would say, "not a word." I was in this condition for several weeks. Just before Willie left home last winter for Washington, I saw that his eyes were troubling him, and I offered to read some manuscripts to him. This brought on the old trouble. After Willie had gone, I had to give up entirely for a time. I felt that I was worn out. My brain had ceased to work. My mental suffering was intense. I had a great deal of pain at the base of the brain. I knew that for a time my mind was at a standstill.

Willie expected me to go to Washington in the spring, but it seemed to me that I could not go. I got up one morning and it seemed to me as if I had come to the place where I could not go another step. I said, "Lord, if it is Thy will for me to go into the grave, take away my life, but do not take away my life and allow me still to live." Over and over again I offered this prayer, and all at once I seemed to be shut in by a canopy of light. Every particle of pain had left my head, and the next day I wrote twenty pages before dinner.

I feared that when I started for Washington, the difficulty would come on again, but it did not. I wrote something every day during my stay in Washington, and spoke three times. Every time I entered the pulpit it was in fear and trembling, but the Lord sustained me and helped me.

My brethren, the Lord calls for unity, for oneness. We are to be one in the faith. I want to tell you that when the gospel ministers and the medical missionary workers are not united, there is placed on our churches the worst evil that can be placed there. Our medical missionaries ought to be interested in the work of our conferences, and our conference workers ought to be as much interested in the work of our medical missionaries.

It is time that we stood upon a united platform. But we cannot unite with Dr. Kellogg until he stands where he can be a safe leader of the flock of God. Until he stands in this position, we have no right to sustain him.

I have taken my position, brethren. I am not going to enter into controversy over anything that may be presented. Last night I woke at ten o'clock and remained awake for several hours. During that time the whole matter was laid open before me, and I was instructed that I must bear the testimony given me and then leave matters with the Lord. It is not my work to try to make people believe the message given me. When the assertion is made, "Someone has told her," I am to make no response. On that point the conflict is over for me. I shall tell you the truth as it is in Jesus. And when anyone comes to me to know about this thing or that thing, I shall point them to the One who has said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).-- Ms. 46, 1904. (MR 900.1) [See *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 201-208, for a similar, though not identical, presentation.]

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Employment:

Pastored churches

Gulf States Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1972-1979

Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1979-1981

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981-1985

Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1985-1991

Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1991-2000

Carolina Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000-

Served on the following Conference Executive Committees

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981-1985

Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988-1990

Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995-2000

Other Conference Committees

Idaho Conference Kindergarten-12 Educational Operating Committee, 1990-1991

Idaho Conference Sabbath School Council, 1988-1991

Upper Columbia Evangelism Council, 1991-1994

General Conference Executive Committee, 1991-1995

Directed a major building project and capital fund raising program

Spokane Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1991-2000