

## ABSTRACT

### **SPEAKING WITH GOD'S WORDS: PREACHING TRAINING FOR A MULTI-SITE CHURCH**

by

Emmanuel P. Carlos

The ministry of preaching and teaching the Scriptures is a primary function for those who are called to be shepherds over the flock of God. Jesus had initially called his disciples to gather the lost as fishers of people, but after his resurrection, he appointed them to shepherd his followers by feeding and taking care of them. The great need in this hour is for churches to equip and train pastors in correctly handling God's Word, enabling them to lead people to the saving knowledge of Christ, nurture believers to grow in their faith, and commission them to make disciples.

The rapid growth of churches in nations receptive to the gospel can hinder the availability of those called to vocational ministry to receive formal theological training, which can take several years. Other avenues need to be explored, such as in-house training to prepare these pastors for the work of the ministry. The purpose of this research was to enhance the preaching capabilities of the ninety-one preaching pastors of a multi-site church in Manila, Philippines, which has been growing and expanding continually since its start thirty-five years ago.

The research findings point to the vital role of promoting both a Scripture-centered and Spirit-dependent ethos to foster a spiritually formative environment for the pastors to grow in their preaching abilities. Three other essential elements—thorough

exegetical practice, attuned contextualization, and sharpened homiletical craft—are skills that can be developed through innovative modeling and mentoring paradigms.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **NATURE OF THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The first chapter describes the background of this research project, starting with the circumstances that brought about the birthing of Victory church in the Philippines, and the growth and expansion of the ministry in the last thirty-five years. The rapid growth of the church in the last one and a half decades has brought pressure on the church leadership to provide a more comprehensive training program to enable the pastors to function effectively in their role as spiritual leaders, particularly as preachers of God's Word. Therefore, the project purpose and the research questions proposed are intended to address this need. The project rationale enumerates the benefits that will accrue to the ministry through pre-intervention research. Data collection and analysis will be undertaken in accordance with the project purpose and type of research. The project output will benefit not just the pastors of Victory Metro Manila, but also the rest of the Victory pastors in the Philippines. Moreover, the project will be written with an eye toward transferability of principles and practices to guide other multi-site churches in training new and current preachers.

#### **Personal Introduction**

Victory Metro Manila started as a church in 1984 after a team of sixty American missionaries, led by Pastors Steve Murrell and Rice Brooks, conducted a one-month evangelistic outreach at the University Belt area in the city of Manila, where over two hundred thousand college and high school students studied within a few square kilometers area. From an initial congregation of 150 young people, mostly students, the



church has grown and expanded to where Victory in the first quarter of 2019 has planted eighteen congregations in forty-nine locations within Metro Manila, conducting 182 weekend worship services of which forty-two are youth services, and averaging around ninety-one thousand in weekly attendance. Although the term “campus” is more commonly used to identify a specific location for multi-site churches in a particular city, the Victory leadership team has adopted the term “congregation” so as not to confuse it with a school campus, which identifies the universities, colleges, and high schools being reached by the campus ministry. The church leadership considers Victory Metro Manila as one church with multiple locations, and its synchronized preaching series is an outworking of this decision. Victory has also planted ninety-nine more churches in the provinces throughout the country. From the Philippines, the church has been able to send out around 185 long-term cross-cultural missionaries, mostly in Asia.

The church leadership gratefully acknowledges God as the one who has brought growth to the church; as the apostle Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 3:6, he planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God gave the growth. In hindsight, our founding pastor Steve Murrell’s missional focus on making disciples, training leaders, and planting churches has been the seed and water that God has used to bring forth the great harvest of souls into the church. As the ministry has grown, the church’s mission statement has been simplified to “Honor God and Make Disciples” in order to have a motto that can be easily communicated and be a rallying cry for succeeding generations of disciples.

I am privileged to be part of the leadership team of this church, having started one of these congregations twenty-four years ago. After turning over its leadership to another pastor twelve years later, I now serve as a bishop overseeing the leadership of the

churches and ministries along with two other bishops and five other pastors, corporately called the apostolic team. This team is in turn overseen by Steve Murrell, who is now president of Every Nation Churches and Ministries, an international ministry organization of which Victory is part. This apostolic team is responsible not only for governing the ministry but also for nurturing the healthy growth of our pastors and churches.

With this in mind, the continuous growth and expansion of the church and campus ministries of Victory Metro Manila, particularly in the last fifteen years, has brought a growing pressure on the church leadership to develop new pastors, as well as increase the leadership capabilities of our current pastors. We develop our pastors in three leadership spheres: spiritual, organizational, and relational leadership. Our ongoing training methods are geared towards equipping both emerging and experienced pastors in these three areas. In particular, the apostolic team has recognized the urgent need to further enhance the preaching capabilities of our pastors, which is a vital function of spiritual leadership. This is necessary, not only because one third of them have been in vocational ministry for less than ten years, but also because of our desire to see our members grow in their faith and become lifelong disciples of Christ through transformative preaching.

At present, Victory has 104 ordained pastors in Metro Manila and 295 campus missionaries. Of these, ninety-one are preaching pastors who preach at least once a month at the weekend worship services and youth services. Currently, the church has a three-month school for local church leadership and a three-month school of campus ministry to provide initial ministry training for those called to vocational ministry, either as pastors or campus missionaries. There is also ongoing training to continuously hone the ministry and leadership skills of these vocational ministers. It is encouraging to note that all these

pastors and campus missionaries who have been through the ministry schools have a passion for God and a clear sense of calling from him to be vocational ministers. The assessment process developed by the Victory Ministers Association, the ministry unit in Victory that is responsible for the development and well-being of all the vocational ministers of the church, validates this calling by assessing their character, leadership gifting, and fruit of disciples in their ministry, before they are admitted into the school.

However, the apostolic team realizes the urgent need to strengthen the preaching training program for vocational ministers so that they are able to correctly handle the word of truth and prepare for the greater harvest of souls that is still to be reaped in our city. Furthermore, the Victory Metro Manila pastors want to develop a better planning framework in their sermon preparation for the church's preaching series, which is synchronized for the eighteen congregations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The rapid growth of the Victory Metro Manila church, which currently conducts 182 weekend worship services in eighteen different congregations throughout the metropolitan area, has placed growing pressure on the church leadership to develop new as well as increased spiritual leadership capabilities, particularly preaching, of these pastors. This is amplified by the fact that one third of current pastors have been in vocational ministry for less than ten years. Also, the church leadership believes in the vital role of preaching in helping members grow in their faith and become lifelong disciples of Christ. Consequently, there is a need to develop a more comprehensive preaching training program that will address the gaps in the preaching abilities of the pastors, specifically the preaching pastors who speak regularly in these worship services.

In dialogue with the apostolic team, the ministry school directors, and some of the more senior pastors in Victory, we have identified three observable gaps in the preaching capabilities of these pastors. The proposed training program aims to address these gaps. The first is the need for the pastors to deepen their relationship with God through the spiritual habits of prayer and focused study of the Scriptures, as well as other disciplines, so that they preach as those who have heard a message from God. The second is the need for them to develop greater skill in the exegetical and hermeneutical tasks, so that preaching is text-driven rather than preacher-driven. The third is the need for these pastors to have a greater awareness of the different sermonic forms available for communicating the Word effectively both for the genre of the Scriptural text being preached as well as the congregation being addressed.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this research was to develop a training program in order to enhance the preaching capabilities of the ninety-one Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors in the task of making disciples, training leaders, and leading their churches.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Research Question #1**

What essential spiritual habits of pastors deepen their personal relationship with God so that they can grow in their ability to discern God's voice and preach as those who have heard a message from God?

### **Research Question #2**

What characteristics and best practices in preaching not only address current gaps in the preaching capabilities of Victory pastors, but also align with the mission, values, and culture of Victory?

### **Research Question #3**

What training modules can be developed to enhance the preaching capabilities of Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors in accordance with those characteristics and best practices?

### **Rationale for the Project**

This research project will enable the pastors to preach with greater authority and skill, trusting that it is God who anoints the preaching of His Word. The boldness to preach comes from a disciple's realization of God's call on his or her life and the Lord's promise of divine enablement through the Holy Spirit to fulfill that call. The cultivation of spiritual habits allows the disciple to hear and respond to God's call. At the same time, however, disciples are exhorted by the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:15 to do their best to present themselves to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Spiritual formation provides the foundation for spiritual leadership.

Through Paul's affirmation of Timothy's call and his mentoring, the young pastor was able to gain the skill and confidence to preach and teach God's Word. Michael Anthony Black described Paul's mentoring process as a one-to-one apprenticeship-mentoring approach which was instrumental in raising many leaders like Timothy, Luke, and Titus (34). Black believes that Paul was able to impart valuable spiritual lessons to

his mentees as they lived and worked with him and prepared them for the many challenges they would face as spiritual leaders (34). The training program is intended to equip and mentor the pastors to deepen their personal relationship with God as well as increase their ability to handle the Word accurately, and to communicate it more effectively.

The program will also provide a better planning framework for our synchronized preaching series, since the pastors will now have a common set of criteria to interact with through the best practices identified in sermon preparation, thus helping to strengthen and build up the faith of God's people. Pastors are called to feed the flock with God's Word, as Jesus asked Peter to do in John 21. Preaching that is transformative will bring about the spiritual maturing of the congregation and motivate them to live God-honoring lives and reach out to the lost. Furthermore, preaching that connects with the people through the exegesis, not only of the text but of the congregation as well, will result in God's people walking in greater wisdom and grace in their daily lives.

Finally, the project will enable the ministry organization to reproduce more leaders to cope with the growth of the church as a whole. An enhanced training program will allow the ministry to train new pastors with better tools that incorporate new and more effective ways of preaching. The current pastors will also benefit as their capabilities in sermon preparation and delivery will be improved. The church leadership believes that it is the season of harvest in our nation at this time, and the training program will prepare more workers for the harvest.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### Definition of Terms

1. Preaching pastor – a pastor in one of the eighteen congregations who preaches at least once a month in our weekend worship or youth services
2. Preaching series – a topical guide for preaching decided upon corporately by the apostolic team of Victory on an annual basis for the upcoming year. The preaching series includes the series title, theme, and exegetical and hermeneutical notes for the Scripture text to be preached. Sometimes a possible sermon outline is included.
3. Senior pastor – the pastor leading one of the eighteen congregations and concurrently a lead pastor for one or more worship services.
4. Lead pastor – the pastor who is the main preacher for one or more worship services in a congregation.
5. Discipleship pastor – the pastor overseeing the discipleship ministry of a congregation and who also preaches occasionally in the worship service.
6. Disciple – a disciple is someone who follows Jesus by cultivating spiritual habits and lives a life of faith and obedience to his Word, engages lost people for the purpose of evangelism, and fellowships with other believers for the purpose of mutual edification.
7. Congregation – Victory Metro Manila is one church with eighteen congregations at present. Each congregation conducts from four to twelve weekend worship services in each location. These services are held on Sundays, but may also

include Saturdays and weekdays. The Saturday and weekday services have the same preaching as that on Sundays.

### **Delimitations**

The main participants and recipients of the proposed preaching training program are the Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors, not including Victory provincial pastors and campus missionaries, unless these campus missionaries function concurrently as preaching pastors in the youth or weekend worship services. Preaching pastors are those who preach at least once a month in Victory Metro Manila.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

A full bibliography of all the texts that have informed the general view of preaching for this project would be unwieldy. Numerous works provide an initial framework for understanding the dynamics of preaching in its most general form. Some representative examples should suffice. Teresa L. Fry Brown defines the essential elements of preaching in her sermonic feedback loop as God, the message, the preacher, and the congregation (ch. 1). An awareness of these elements helps preachers to understand that the communication of the Word is not a one-way street, but is a dynamic process involving three parties: the preacher with the message, God, and the congregation. Part of the training could incorporate an ongoing demographic analysis as the congregations grow and become more diverse in their socio-economic and ethnic profiles.

Thomas G. Long delineates the diverse images for a preacher portrayed in homiletical literature, i.e., a herald, pastor, and storyteller/poet. He then adds another image to what a preacher is: a witness (ch. 1). These different images affect the way the



preacher sees himself or herself as God's messenger and the authority by which the Word is proclaimed. Phillips Brooks is credited with coining what is considered to be the most enduring definition of preaching as "truth through personality" (qtd. in Bugg 80-81). He encourages preachers to appreciate their own individuality and not be afraid to minister the Word expressed through their unique personhood. Preaching training can incorporate both group as well as personalized mentoring to accommodate the individuality of the pastor.

The other initial sources of literature for this project were the books authored by Steve Murrell that explain the discipleship process in Victory as well as the leadership development philosophy and practices of our ministry. A number of doctoral dissertations written on preaching and leadership development available from Asbury and other theological seminaries are also cited.

### **Research Methodology**

The research aims to enhance the preaching capabilities of the ninety-one preaching pastors of Victory Metro Manila. These pastors, especially those who have been in ministry for more than ten years, have already been functioning with a fairly good level of skill and anointing, which comes with experience and walking closely with God. Also, our congregations were not as large then. It is the younger pastors, those less than ten years in the ministry, who need accelerated training because the congregations have grown rapidly in the last decade, and their skill level has not been developed at a commensurate pace. There was a need therefore to assess where these preachers were in regard to their spiritual disciplines and sermon preparation and delivery practices. This

assessment provided the baseline in identifying what training modules to propose for sharpening their preaching capabilities.

### **Type of Research**

The type of research undertaken used the pre-intervention design, using both qualitative and quantitative lenses.

### **Participants**

1. The ninety-one preaching pastors from the eighteen congregations of Victory Metro Manila were invited to participate by filling out an online preaching pastors' survey.
2. Invitations were also sent out to the small group leaders through the discipleship pastors based on certain eligibility criteria, with the hope that at least 350 of these lay leaders would participate in the online survey.
3. The eight apostolic team members were interviewed one-on-one regarding their personal development as preachers and their perspective on preaching best practices
4. Two focus group discussions were held with the fourteen senior pastors divided into two groups, along with two additional campus missionaries per group who preach in the youth services

### **Instrumentation**

To address the research questions, the researcher employed a mixed-methods approach by formulating four instruments:

1. Self-assessment survey for preaching pastors on their spiritual habits and sermon preparation practices using a frequency scale.

2. Online survey for small group leaders to assess the quality of preaching in the worship service where they usually attend using the Likert scale.
3. One-on-one semi-structured interviews with eight apostolic team members regarding their personal development as preachers and their perspective on preaching best practices.
4. Focus group discussion with seven senior pastors per group and two campus missionaries who preach in the youth services on their personal development as preachers and their views on best practices in preaching.

In addition, a fifth research instrument was formulated to get an outsider's perspective in assessing the sermon delivery practices of selected pastors:

5. Three Outside Expert Assessments on video preaching of six sample sermons by six pre-selected Metro Manila pastors.

### **Data Collection**

The data for the project was collected over a six-month period. The first month was allotted for securing the permission of the church leadership to perform the surveys and interviews. The online preaching pastors' survey was then administered that same month. The second and third months were allotted for one-on-one interviews with the eight apostolic team members on their personal development as preachers and their perspective on preaching best practices. The small group online survey was also conducted on the third month. In the fourth month, the two focus group discussions were conducted at the national office. Finally, in the fifth and sixth months, the three outside experts observed and evaluated the sermons of six pastors, which were posted on YouTube to make them available to the general public, using certain assessment criteria.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was undertaken in accordance with the type of design and purpose of this study. For the two online surveys, the demographic profiles of the participants among the preaching pastors and small group leaders were collated and charted using tables, charts, and graphs. The answers to the questions were summarized by calculating the mean and standard deviation and tabulated. For the interviews and focus group discussions, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed for consistent themes and other pertinent comments. For the outside expert assessments, the three experts' written evaluations were also analyzed for common observations as well as relevant insights on the effectiveness of the pastors' sermons.

**Generalizability**

The training program developed will benefit not only the pastors of Victory Metro Manila but also the Victory pastors in the provinces. The churches in the provinces have also been experiencing considerable growth in the last five years, and their leaders are feeling the same pressure as their Metro Manila counterparts to raise new leaders. Coupled with the fact that these pastors share a common mission, values, and culture, the training program will very similarly apply to the provincial pastors, although perhaps mitigated by differences in culture and value that exist between massive urban centers and more suburban and rural communities.

A major difference between Metro Manila and the provincial cities is the population; Metro Manila has a population of around twelve million people, while most of our provincial churches are in cities with less than a million people. As a result, the socioeconomic status of Metro Manila residents is quite higher than the rest of the nation.

Nevertheless, the same spiritual openness that is evident among the people in both Metro Manila and the provincial cities gives some assurance toward consistency in results as the provincial pastors participate in the same training program.

The research project may also benefit multi-site churches that want to develop new preachers. The training program hopes to enhance the preaching capabilities of Victory pastors in a relatively short period of time, because the preachers can apply immediately the things they are learning inasmuch as they are already functioning as pastors. For other churches experiencing rapid growth, they can glean some helpful training methods for their preachers as well. The limitation, however, in its applicability is that the training developed for Victory is designed for a multi-site church that has decided to synchronize its preaching series as an outworking of it being one church with multiple locations.

In our desire to accelerate the development of the preaching capabilities of our pastors, a caution though is in order. Black observed that after the Renaissance, a shift in the preparation of ministers took place when the emphasis on training for character development was subsumed under a more professional approach to theological development of the clergy (35). He then proposes:

. . . ministerial training in the current context will involve a mixture of the formal classroom training accompanied by the one-on-one tutelage of the more experienced practitioner. This combination draws from the best of both methods of leadership training. The model of an apprentice being mentored by a more experienced leader to develop the practice of his or her profession is one that has deep roots in the biblical, theological, and

historical traditions of the Church at large and the Wesleyan movement in particular (Black 36).

Part of the goal of this dissertation is to create a training program that incorporates this balanced approach to leadership development.

### **Project Overview**

Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundations for the ministry of preaching and teaching the Scriptures. The chapter explores and summarizes the essential elements in preaching from dozens of relevant literature pertaining to the hermeneutical and homiletical tasks in sermon preparation and delivery. Furthermore, this chapter examines the relevant literature that guided the research methodology for this project. Chapter 3 gives a step-by-step description of the methodology that was implemented in the research proper. Chapter 4 answers the three research questions using the summarized and collated data from the research instruments. Finally, Chapter 5 analyzes and synthesizes the major findings of the research project and proposes recommendations for preaching training in the researcher's ministry as well as other training contexts.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter presents the biblical and theological foundations for the ministry of preaching and teaching the Bible. The chapter examines and summarizes the essential elements in preaching from the Scriptures as well as from dozens of relevant literature that inform the hermeneutical and homiletical tasks in sermon preparation and delivery. These essential elements provided the basis for assessing the current sermon preparation and delivery practices of the pastors and helped identify the gaps in their preaching capabilities. Furthermore, this chapter examines the relevant literature that guided the research methodology for this project.

#### **Biblical Foundations**

The ministry of preaching and teaching is a primary function for those who are called to be shepherds over the flock of God. The Lord loves and cares for his redeemed people, who are likened to sheep in need of a shepherd; therefore, it is vital that pastors accurately represent and reflect the heart and mind of God as they preach the Word to their congregations. This section looks at the Scriptural basis for the motivation and attitude of those called to a pastoral role, in order to achieve this dissertation's goal of developing a preaching training program for pastors in a multi-site church.

In John 10:1-5, Jesus refuted the Pharisees who presumptuously saw themselves as shepherds over the people of Israel, and revealed himself instead as the true Shepherd sent by the Father to gather the flock of God (John 10:16, NIV). The sheep would recognize and follow the good Shepherd because they had come to know his voice

through his preaching and teaching of the gospel of the kingdom. Thereafter, in the process of reinstating Peter after his resurrection (John 21:15-17), Jesus asked his disciple three times if he loved his Master. When Peter reaffirmed his love for the Lord in response, Jesus then commanded him to feed his lambs and sheep, and to take care of them. Previously, Jesus had called his disciples to be fishers of people to gather in the harvest. However, the Lord Jesus was now calling them to become shepherds of those who had been gathered to pasture and feed them with the Word of God.

Jesus thus delegated to Peter and the rest of the apostles this important responsibility of shepherding the flock of God. The apostle Peter still remembered this by heart as he exhorted the elders in the churches he had written to in 1 Peter 5:1-4, to be shepherds over the flock of God and exercise oversight to those under their care, and then assured them of receiving the unfading crown of glory when the Chief Shepherd appeared. To this end, our Lord promises to enable these under shepherds by the Holy Spirit to watch over the flock of God, which would include feeding His sheep with God's Word to promote their spiritual growth (Acts 20:28).

### **The God who Speaks**

The foundation of preaching and teaching is anchored on the revelation in Scripture that God has taken the initiative to speak to mankind in general, but more specifically to his people to reveal his nature and character, to make known to them the Father's thoughts, heart, will, and plans for his chosen ones, mankind, and heaven and earth. He declares this in Hebrews 1:1-3:

In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son,



whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by his powerful word ..."

God has not only spoken in the past but he continues to speak to this very day, sustaining all things through his powerful Word. The author of Hebrews asserts that it is God who wants to speak to his people, though it has primarily been through his servants, the prophets. The Scriptures abound with accounts of God speaking individually to his people from the time the first man and woman were created, but when it comes to speaking to his people corporately, the LORD has almost always used prophets to be his mouthpiece. The one time he spoke to Moses in the hearing of the Israelites at the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, they were so terrified at the thunderous voice that they begged Moses not to let God speak to them directly lest they die, but instead to have the LORD speak to Moses who will then relay to them what he said (Exodus 20:18-20).

Although Moses explained to the Israelites that the LORD's intent was to instill the fear of God to keep them from sinning, he used this encounter to reveal and affirm the LORD's prerogative to speak to his people through the prophets (Deut. 18:14-22). Thus, the prophetic office was instituted, and he or she became God's spokesperson. For the duration of the Old Testament period, most of the LORD's corporate and even individual communication to his covenant people and surrounding nations has been through many prophets at various times and in many ways, as Hebrews 1:1 has declared.

Moses had learned previously about the serious role of a prophet as God's spokesperson through his own struggle when confronting Pharaoh in Exodus 7:1-2. He

tried giving the excuse that he did not know how to speak, so the LORD instructed Moses to have his brother Aaron speak on his behalf. Hence, Moses would be like God to Pharaoh and Aaron would be his prophet. The authority and power of the words spoken would be from the LORD, but the voice and articulation would be through the prophet. The ten plagues that fell upon Egypt are a testimony to the power in Aaron's and eventually Moses' pronouncements.

There were dire consequences therefore to those who presumed to speak for God though not chosen by him, but God gave great authority and affirmation to those who were true prophets (Deut. 18:18-20). James likewise warns in James 3:1 that not many should presume to be teachers, for those who teach will be judged more strictly. These warnings help those called to preaching respond to God's summons with both a sense of confidence and the fear of the Lord at the same time. Peter adds in 1 Peter 4:11 that if anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. In preaching, we are representing not ourselves but God Almighty, therefore our words ought to reflect the heart and character of the One we are speaking for.

These prophetic declarations were written down and preserved by the prophets and priests over the course of Israel's history, including the teachings of other leaders such as Solomon, Ezra and Nehemiah, to form the Old Testament Scriptures. The apostle Paul affirmed in 2 Timothy 3:15-17 the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and its great value both for mankind's salvation, as well as in teaching and training the believer for righteous living in order to do God's work. Through the preaching of the Scriptures by his servants under the anointing of the Spirit, the Lord continues to speak to his people today.

The coming of Jesus the Messiah, however, brought a whole new way by which God would speak to his people. He would not only be a prophet, but the Prophet, for as the Son of God and the exact representation of his being, Jesus was able to fully articulate the heart and mind of the Father to his people and to the rest of the world. As the incarnate God, Jesus not only spoke for the Father but embodied his compassionate heart for people as depicted in Matthew 4:23-25, where Jesus not only preached and taught the gospel of the kingdom, but demonstrated his authority and power by healing the sick and delivering those who were demonized. Ultimately, as Romans 5:8-11 reveals, the full extent of God's love and justice was demonstrated through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that those who believed in him might be forgiven of their sins and reconciled to the Father in covenant relationship.

The apostle Peter in Acts 3:19-23 confirmed the ongoing ministry of the risen Lord as the Prophet of God by interpreting Deuteronomy 18:18 as being fulfilled in Christ Jesus. He and John had gotten the attention of many people who had witnessed the miraculous healing of the lame beggar at the Jerusalem temple. Peter then preached to them that their demand for the crucifixion of Jesus was God's ordained way of fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would suffer, but in his suffering and death their sins would be wiped out. As the promised seed of Abraham, Jesus's work of redemption would be the means by which all peoples on earth will be blessed, first by turning the Jews from their wicked ways, and eventually the Gentiles (Acts 3:24-26). Jesus had now become the mediator of the new covenant that the Jews had inherited from their forefathers, and therefore they needed to listen to and obey Him as Lord and Christ.

## **The Elements of Preaching**

In order to equip pastors for the preaching and teaching ministry, principles and patterns from Scripture employed by God's servants in proclaiming the Word to his people must be drawn out. Jesus himself inaugurated his preaching and teaching ministry in Galilee after his baptism and testing while fasting for forty days in the wilderness. In Luke 4:14-21, he read to them from the scroll of Isaiah at the synagogue in Nazareth:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

He then boldly proclaimed that this Scripture was now fulfilled in him. The text he read and the context of the account reveal, not only Jesus' self-disclosure of his assignment from God, but also a pattern for preaching consisting of five elements that Christ modeled and his disciples would eventually imitate.

The first element in this pattern was that Jesus preached from the Scriptures, in this case from Isaiah 61:1-2. The primary way by which God has spoken to people individually and corporately from the time the canon of Scripture had been established in church history until today is through the written Word of God spoken by his servants. Although the Bible also narrates many instances when God spoke by other supernatural means such as prophetic revelation, dreams and visions, angels and even through theophanies, the Scriptures provide the boundaries by which present day believers who experience these supernatural encounters can evaluate their revelations as to whether they are of divine origin or not. Previously, 2 Timothy 3:15-17 established that the Scriptures

themselves are supernatural communication from God since they are given by divine inspiration and able to make us wise unto salvation. This truth is reinforced by the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:20-21, where he averred no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation, because prophets spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' preaching from the Isaiah prophecy also highlights the summative content of the Scriptures, i.e., the good news of who the Lord is and what he will accomplish for his people in the anointing of the Spirit. The gospel and its proclamation will uplift the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, bring freedom for the captives and release from darkness the prisoners, comfort all who mourn, provide for those who grieve in Zion, and usher in the year of the Lord's favor, among many other blessings. The complete revelation of God for man is found in the Scriptures, which would not just include the Old Testament but the New Testament as well, containing the gospel writers' accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus and the apostles' pastoral letters to churches and individuals. Paul's admonition to the Ephesian elders to shepherd God's flock will therefore be fulfilled to the extent that they faithfully preached the whole counsel of God's word in the Bible (Acts 20:27-28).

The second element in this pattern was the sovereign calling and choosing by God on Jesus to be his preacher; this divine choice was certified by the anointing and sending of Christ in Luke 4:18. The anointing implies God's appointment of Jesus Christ and commensurate empowerment for service, which Hebrew 5:1-6 also explains. In the Old Testament, the three ministries of prophet, priest, and king were all commissioned by the anointing with oil, which is a representation of the empowering by the Holy Spirit for

service to God. This anointing was performed on Aaron and his sons to consecrate them as priests (Exod. 29:1-9), on David to anoint him as king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:13), and on Elisha to succeed Elijah as prophet in Israel (2 Kings 19:16). Additionally, the calling of God upon Jesus was consummated by his being sent by the Father to do his will and works (John 4:34, 5:23, 8:16).

The third element in this pattern was the hermeneutical process that Jesus exercised in the selecting and preaching of the Isaiah 61:1-2 text. By stating, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,” Jesus was exegeting the passage as a prophetic promise of restoration for the Jewish people at the time when they were soon to be exiled, and its present fulfillment in him was the hermeneutical interpretation of that prophecy. Jesus further interpreted the text for the present hearers by eliminating the phrase “. . . and the day of vengeance of our God . . .” in the Isaiah passage, implying perhaps that his focus in preaching the text was to highlight the saving work of the Lord rather than his righteous judgment on his enemies. This interpretive process can be considered then as a fresh hearing of the text originally written for the audience of Isaiah’s prophecy, but preached to Jesus’ present listeners. We can conclude from Luke’s reference to the Holy Spirit in empowering Jesus for ministry (Luke 4:14) that God intended to speak to the Galilean audience through a fresh hearing and preaching of the Isaiah text, and this was accomplished as a work of the Spirit, the same Person who initially inspired the writing of the Scriptures.

The fourth element in this pattern was the way Jesus preached to those who were in attendance at the Nazarene synagogue, as described in Luke 4:16-27. After reading from the scroll of Isaiah, he apparently got everyone’s attention as their eyes were

fastened on him. Though not expounded in the text, he spoke with such gracious words that the congregants were amazed at him, considering the fact that he was just from their hometown. His preaching was not only Scripture-based, it also had illustrations from the Old Testament. Overall, his preaching and teaching style initially followed the synagogue practice of reading from the scrolls, yet his sermon content and delivery were both grace-filled and authoritative at the same time, amazing his audience.

The fifth element in this pattern was the congregation whom Jesus preached to. He had started to gain a following in Galilee, but decided to go home to Nazareth and preach in the synagogue there as well. Even if his teaching was anointed and amazed the congregants, Jesus discerned that they were unable to receive the word because they could not fathom one of their own speaking with such graciousness. He concluded that a prophet is without honor only in one's hometown. An essential consideration in preaching is not only crafting your sermon but also knowing the congregation you are addressing.

Acts 15 provides a foundational Scriptural guide for the preacher to discern the needs of the congregation; it highlights the dynamic interaction of the Spirit, Word, and community in addressing spiritual needs and issues in the church. The apostles had met in council at Jerusalem to decide what the Gentiles' responsibilities were toward the Mosaic Law. After much debate and discussion on the testimonies of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas regarding the miraculous signs and outpouring of the Spirit as overwhelming evidence of God's acceptance of the Gentiles, James summed it up by citing Amos's prophecy as a confirmation of God's saving work among the Gentiles. In their ensuing pastoral letter to the churches, the apostles justified their directive of not burdening them beyond the

minimum requirements of abstaining from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality, by stating, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us not to burden you . . .” (Acts 15:28). The course of church history changed and a wide door to Gentile ministry opened through a fresh interpretation and application of the Amos 9:11-12 text by the apostles under the leading and illumination of the Holy Spirit.

As previously stated, the Father sent Jesus as the good shepherd to gather his flock. To accomplish this, he began his preaching and teaching ministry in Galilee. Knowing, however, that he would eventually return to the Father after his substitutionary death on the cross to redeem mankind from sin, he chose twelve disciples to prepare and train them to continue the great work that he had started. Mark 3:14 and Luke 6:14-16 state that after praying the whole night, Jesus appointed twelve men that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These passages also show us a pattern for how Jesus chooses and appoints certain people for service in his kingdom.

The first component of this appointment for his service was the sovereign choosing of our Lord. After much prayer the night before, Jesus chose twelve men from among the disciples and designated them as apostles. His priority for the next three years was for these twelve to be with him wherever he went, to know his heart, ways, teachings, how he related with people, both those who wanted to follow and those who were hostile to him. The second component was sending them out to preach the gospel. To be sent was not only about understanding and proclaiming the message, but going in the authority of the sending party as his designated representatives. The third component



was the authority granted to the disciples to demonstrate the authenticity and reality of the proclaimed message—in this case the driving out of demons from people.

Subsequently, after Jesus' death and resurrection, he instructed these men, before they were finally commissioned to preach, to stay in the city and wait for the Father's promise to be clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:46-49). Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, they continued to be guided and empowered by the Lord in preaching the gospel to all the nations.

After the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the first sermon Peter preached in Acts 2:14-36 demonstrated the pattern that Jesus had modeled to them previously. The preaching was Scripture-based and a fresh interpretation of the prophecy in Joel 2:28-32; it was delivered with authority, and addressed the Jews in their bewilderment with the Galilean believers speaking in their own native languages. Peter's subsequent preaching in Acts 3:22-25, and even prayers by the believers in Acts 4:24-26, were all Scripture-based. Likewise, Paul's preaching in Antioch in Pisidia was based on 1 Samuel 16 and Psalm 2. The Scriptures were always the reference point for their preaching and teaching, often confirmed by miracles and signs and wonders, bringing a fresh hearing of the text to the contemporary audience.

### **Theological Foundations**

This literature review attempts to amplify and expound on the Scriptural purpose and function of the preaching and teaching ministry entrusted by God to those he has called for the sake of his church and kingdom purposes. The Protestant Reformers have in many ways revitalized the traditional Church and birthed countless new congregations through the power of the proclaimed Word to bring forth the knowledge of salvation and

a reawakening to her Great Commission. Since then, many theologians, preachers, and pastors have endeavored to describe, refine, instruct, and train the succeeding generations of preachers in this vital ministry of homiletics. Given the plethora of books, journals, articles, and dissertations authored by these ministers on this subject in the last few hundred years, I will only refer to a limited but substantial enough number of them, particularly those written in the last forty years, to provide the theological and practical basis for this dissertation's goal of developing a preaching training program for pastors in a multi-site church.

As demonstrated by Hebrews 1:1-2, God has taken the initiative to speak to his people in particular and mankind in general through the instrumentality of his servants the prophets, and ultimately in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Karl Barth, considered to be one of the greatest and most influential Protestant theologians of the twentieth century, described preaching as one of the three forms by which God has spoken his Word. Barth defines the threefold form of God's Word—the Word of God preached, the Word of God written, and the Word of God revealed—and proclaims unity in the three forms in that “it is one and the same whether we understand it as revelation, Bible, or proclamation. There is no distinction of degree or value between the three forms” (8).

The revelation that our Lord speaks accentuates the relational and communicative nature of the Triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, towards humanity. As Stephen Seamands propounds, God invites people into this circle of divine relationship through faith in Christ and baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to experience the abundant life of the Trinity and become participants in his kingdom purposes (ch. 1). He further defines ministry, including the preaching and teaching of God's Word, as “the

ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son, to the Father, through the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world” (ch. 1). Referring to Jesus’s reinstatement of Peter, Seamands points out that the Lord’s questions about whether Peter loved him, and then commanding him to feed God’s sheep, show the priority that Jesus placed first on Peter’s relationship with him before Peter pursued his work for Christ (ch. 1). Preaching therefore is about a called servant speaking for God, emanating from participation in the abundant life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that enables him or her to communicate God’s heart and mind to the church and the world.

In studying Barth’s lecture on the theme “The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching,” Frank Rees reinforces the view of preaching as a communicational interaction between God and humanity through other humans:

The purpose of preaching is communication of a particular form: it is communication between human beings about human being, yet it purports and hopes also to be communication about God and even by God . . .

Preaching takes place within the relationships of the preacher and hearers and of the community of faith and the God they seek to worship.

Preaching, then, is not just about a people who hear and a preacher who speaks. It is fundamentally based on the idea of a God who speaks and a people who relate with God (Rees 29).

An important implication from Rees’ reflection is that the ministry of preaching, though it may seem insignificant and incidental, can bring about change and transformation in the lives of the hearers by creating a new dynamic in their relationship with God:

The God who speaks, who reveals, who relates to us is a God who is able to hear us, able to respond to us, wants to relate to us and act with us.

Some such conception of God is at the very heart of Barth's idea of preaching, and is, I suggest, essential to the ministry of preaching (Rees 108-109).

Having established preaching as the primary means by which God communicates and relates to the church and the world, it is also essential to examine from the Scriptures the divine mandate behind the proclamation of God's Word. Silas Krueger posits that the challenge of developing a preaching style that can speak to a post-literate generation is addressed by going back to Jesus's command after his resurrection in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Kruger 87). He asserts that preaching is the Lord's idea, not ours (87). The Greek word for preach, *kyrusso*, carries with it the notion that those who are called into the pastoral ministry in the church are to "serve as heralds, announcing publicly the message of love and forgiveness their King has entrusted to them." *Kyrusso* points to the public and authoritative role given to those who are called to preach, and that in proclaiming the message there should be no addition or subtraction to it, that the word should be passed on applied to its hearers as they have received it (87).

Besides the compelling mandate given by our Lord, Krueger proposes another equally valid reason for preaching the gospel. It is found in the apostle Paul's motivation to preach in 1 Corinthians 1:21, that ". . . God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe." Krueger asserts that the seemingly innocuous action of having a man stand up and talk about Christ's death on the cross was

God's ordained way of calling people out from the unbelieving world and into salvation and life in his Son. Because we are proclaiming the very words of our Lord in the heralding of the good news, that Word brings forth miraculous changes:

. . . through the weak and stammering proclamation of the gospel, the Holy Spirit plants His inspired Word in the hearts of our hearers, and by that Word He creates new life. Our hearers are 'born again,' rising by faith with Christ from the death of sin and unbelief and being made alive spiritually. The Holy Spirit calls people to faith by the Gospel we proclaim in our sermons (2 Thesalonians 2:14) and then he empowers them to live their lives as followers of the Lord (1 Thesalonians 1:5-7) . . . Therefore, it is absolutely essential that we preach, for it is through the preaching of the Gospel that the Spirit gathers and builds the church of Christ. (Krueger 88)

Furthermore, in his study of the preaching practices of Martin Luther, Patrick Ferry notes Luther's conviction that preaching is the essential means by which the Holy Spirit reaches the lost with the gospel. He quotes from *Luther's Works*, "The preacher's mouth and the words that I hear are not his; they are the words and the message of the Holy Spirit (through which) He works within me and thus makes me holy" (qtd. in Ferry 271). Regarding the value of the oral word in the life of the church, Luther said, "The church is not a pen-house but a mouth-house . . . the Gospel should not be written but screamed" (qtd. in Ferry 271). Though he believed in the use of the print medium as a tool for communicating his message, his opinion was that it was through the medium of the human voice by which people would be most effectively reached:

. . . The more it (the Word) is preached, the more it is firmly retained.

Reading it is not as profitable as hearing it, for the live voice teaches, exhorts, defends, and resists the spirit of error. Satan does not care a hoot for the written Word of God, but he flees at the speaking of the Word.

(qtd. in Ferry 271)

Luther's conviction about the power of the live voice to carry a greater retentive ability in the hearers of God's Word points to the importance therefore of the preacher's role in the delivery of the message. Long adeptly addresses this by first establishing the foundation that preaching is not so much about Christ being present as we preach, it is about us preaching because Christ is present (ch. 1). Just as Seamands elucidated concerning the ministry of Christ, preaching according to Long is joining in on what God is already doing, and our boldness to preach is premised on the belief that Jesus Christ is already speaking to the church and the world. He then asks several questions on what the preacher's voice ought to be towards the congregation, i.e., as a counselor, teacher, prophet, a trusted friend. He asks further, what the relationship of the sermon should be to the congregation, and where its words should come from. Long answers all these questions by proposing four biblical metaphors for what preachers are like as they deliver the Word of the Lord: a herald, a pastor, a storyteller/poet, and a witness (ch. 1).

The preacher as a herald implies that just as a king employs a messenger to announce his decrees and pronouncements, so God uses proclamation in human language through which he himself speaks. Preaching in this case is not so much about giving moral advice, opinions, or principles for living, but God's living Word being heard through the hearing of the preacher's voice. Long asserts that if preaching involves an

interplay between the divine and human, the herald plays up the divine role so strongly that the human role is minimized considerably. Thus, the herald preacher does not possess the word, but instead he possesses the command to preach Scripture, and as the preacher faithfully does this, God promises to speak through Scripture and the sermon. The herald image emphasizes the importance of the message over the personality of the messenger, and it provides a strong basis for prophetic preaching, a declaration that God rules and reigns over the principalities and powers that hinder the gospel's advance in a culture. The herald image, therefore, highlights the transcendent dimension of preaching (Long ch. 1).

The second metaphor that Long employs to describe the preacher's voice is that of the pastor, and in this image the preacher is one who is concerned for the people's personal needs and concerns. The focus of this type of preacher is the listener, and the message is intended to bring beneficial change to their lives as they are fed with God's word and nourished so that their spiritual hunger is not only satisfied, but they are built up in the faith as well. Whereas the herald is concerned about being faithful to the message, the pastor needs to consider what parts of the gospel the congregation can receive in the midst of the clutter and pain in their lives. In summary, Long reiterates that the pastor must know more than just a series of messages to preach. He must also know the "condition of the flock" and how they are able to hear the sermon (ch. 1).

The third metaphor that Long uses to describe the preacher is that of a storyteller/poet, based on the fact that the majority of the language forms of the Bible and the Christian faith are in narrative form. The gospel message is essentially a story, often narrated in poetic language and vivid word pictures, such as Jesus using parables to teach

about the reality of the kingdom of God, and our response to the question about what the Christian faith inevitably leads us to tell the story of the Bible as well as our own story. He adds that sermons are most powerful when designed to move like stories in the way they are narrated, having plots instead of points, and flowing according to the logic of a narrative instead of the linear logic of a philosophical argument. Therefore, the image of the storyteller/poet as preacher has many strengths. The first is the ability to balance the concern for the objective truth of the gospel while maintaining a passion for religious experience. The second is an attentiveness to the rhetorical aspect of preaching without force fitting the gospel message into a rhetorical mold that is alien to the flow of the sermon. The narrative approach to preaching incorporates all the essential elements of a sermon, such as exegesis, language, metaphor, development and delivery, and orchestrates it to come out as a living and beautifully crafted message (Long ch. 1).

The first three metaphors for preachers that have been identified from Scripture are attested to by many homiletical scholars, but according to Long, there is a fourth equally valid image of a preacher that should also be considered, and that is of a witness (ch. 1). For this, he cites clear biblical basis, such as Acts 20:24 where Paul summed up his life in the desire to testify to the good news of God's grace, and Isaiah 43:8-13 when the Lord spoke through Isaiah to call his people to be witnesses as he exercised divine prerogatives as Lord of the nations. Using the analogy of a courtroom case, a witness is someone called to testify to what one has seen and heard, and through this testimony, not the judge's or the police officer's, the veracity of the accusations is either validated or refuted. Hence, the witness has authority to the degree that one upholds the truth to what one has seen and heard. Long concludes that the authority of the preacher then is the



authority of ordination, the recognition that the community has identified him as someone who has been set apart for this ministry, to be “sworn in” as a witness. The preacher thus is one sent by the congregation to listen for God’s truth in the Bible with the expectation that he knows how to listen and testify to what God is saying, and conversely the preacher must also know how to listen to the congregation that he may testify to what God wants to speak to them (ch. 1).

Having understood that preaching is about God wanting to speak to his people through the voice of the preacher, that the preacher is not simply a mouthpiece but someone who is closely related both to the Lord and the church in such a way that he or she knows the heart and mind of God as well as the concerns and needs of his people, we will now examine in more detail the elements that contribute to the development of the preacher and the preaching event that takes place weekly in the church. These five elements, derived from the biblical study of Jesus’s preaching expounded earlier from the Luke 4:14-27 passage, are as follows:

1. Preaching as God speaking through the Scriptures;
2. Preaching as a calling from God;
3. Preaching as hearing from God;
4. Preaching as speaking for God, and
5. Preaching as God speaking to his people.

### **Preaching as God Speaking through the Scriptures**

The Lord Jesus, as the mediator of the new covenant, established the Scriptures as the foundation not only for his teachings but also the basis for the redemptive work he would accomplish for fallen humanity when he went to Calvary. The apostles Paul

and Peter also attested to the divine origin of the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit's inspiration on their writers to bring forth the knowledge of salvation and its usefulness in training for righteousness, as well the prophetic revelation concerning the Christ in confirming apostolic testimony regarding the Lord (2 Tim. 3:15-17, 2 Pet. 2:19-21). The scriptural authors themselves often bore witness to divine inspiration in the composition of their writings. The following section examines what theologians have written to validate the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures as the underlying principle for our faith and practice, particularly the ministry of preaching and teaching.

The first validation for the divine origin of Scripture was the canonical process that took place in the determination of what constituted the Old and New Testament books. William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert I. Hubbard, Jr., describe the historical development of the Old and New Testament canon, derived from the Greek *kanon*, which means "list," "rule," or "standard" (103). According to them, Protestants since the Reformation have accepted the thirty-nine books from Genesis to Malachi as the divinely inspired writings that make up the Old Testament canon (103). Though the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches considered the apocryphal or deuterocanonical writings as part of the canon for the first 1,500 years of Christianity, the Protestant Reformers during the sixteenth century insisted on the shorter list because these thirty-nine books were the only ones that Jesus, the apostles, and Jews accepted as canonical (104). The three authors explored the possibility that in the debate among modern scholars, whether Protestant or Catholic, the Jews during Jesus's time did not have a fixed collection of books, though there was general

consensus that the Pentateuch had already been accepted as canonical by 500-400 B.C. (106).

On the other hand, the development of the New Testament canon saw the church fathers attaining to a high level of unanimity in deciding which books were authoritative much quicker as compared to the Old Testament, notwithstanding the disagreements that still cropped up in the process. Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, Jr., surmise that, since the first-generation Christians had already inherited a “complete” Bible, it would be unlikely for them to add any new writings to it. However, because they saw in Jesus the fulfillment and the authoritative interpreter of the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17-48), they began to recognize the value of his teachings and stories about him:

If the older covenant with Moses led to a collection of written Scriptures, it would be natural to expect God to guide Christian writers to inscribe a newer collection of Scriptures. This kind of reasoning seems to be implied in the discussion near the end of the second century in Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 4:1) and Clement of Alexandria (1:9; 3:11; 4:21; 5:13). (Klein et al. 108, 109).

Rabbinic tradition determined which biblical writings were included in the Old Testament canon based on their divine inspiration as manifested in prophetic utterances, as well as relatedness to the concept of covenant, though the most reliable basis was still that Jesus and the apostles referred to them. For the New Testament, the three authors identify three criteria for evaluating whether a book should be canonical or not: apostolicity, orthodoxy, and catholicity. First, they saw that every New Testament writing had apostolic connection, whether authored by the apostles themselves, i.e., Matthew,

Peter, and John, or by those associated with the apostles, such as Paul and Mark, or Jesus himself like James and Jude. Second, these writings had a shared orthodoxy in their theology and ethics. Third, these books were preserved and found great usefulness among the churches in early Christianity (Klein et al. 115, 116).

Similarly, J.I. Packer upholds the veracity of how the early church arrived at the juncture of delimiting the New Testament writings by making five observations on this process, the first being that Christianity recognized the idea and reality of canonical Scripture from the start by Jesus demonstrating to his disciples that he treated and submitted to the Old Testament as his Father's very words. The second is the expectation that new canonical Scripture would arise from Jesus through his teaching and in his fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies. The third is the emergence of the New Testament writings as a collection of occasional letters by authors who derived their authority to reveal Christ and his work from their relationship with him. The fourth is the observation that other writings considered spurious but attributed to the apostolic authors were of much lower caliber in intellectual, moral, and spiritual insight. The fifth is the corporate witness of the early church that the New Testament is the Word of God because no other literature carried the same spiritual authority apart the Old Testament itself (111, 112).

In summary, F. F. Bruce concludes that the canon of Scripture provides "the foundation documents of Christianity, the charter of the church, the title deeds of faith" (Bruce 448). He posits that the Holy Spirit's inner witness assures the readers that God himself is speaking through the Scriptures, though it is also prudent to consider the canonical process as a providential work rather than solely the Spirit's witness (446).

Nevertheless, through the written word, the Holy Spirit is still able to speak today. Bruce adds that, time and time again, new spiritual movements have been birthed when God's people were awakened to the liberating and renewing power of the canon of Scripture as it is proclaimed (448).

The second validation for the divine origin of Scripture is its authority for Christian faith and practice. According to Grant Osborne, the Bible has an inherent sense of authority, citing the oft-repeated declaration in the Old Testament, "The Lord says . . .," as well as the apostolic authority entrusted to the New Testament writers. Also, given their divine origin, Osborne affirms the inerrancy of the Scriptures as such, taking into consideration that there was wide debate in the parameters for inclusion (25). He disagrees with Achtemeier's thesis that "not only are the original events inspired but also the meanings added by later communities are likewise inspired" (Osborne 25). Osborne affirms, however, that we ourselves are inspired as we read Scripture today, but in the hermeneutical task, an authority gap is created the further the reader removes himself from the intended meaning of the Word (25).

Packer likewise asserts the authority of Scripture by first defining authority as God's right to rule by virtue of his being Creator of heaven and earth, and therefore his written word, which is his self-revelation, is authoritative for our faith and life (95). He refutes the Liberal Protestants in their presupposition that since the Bible is merely the fallible human witness to the revelatory process and not God's actual utterances, their concept of biblical authority is anchored on the necessity of the Bible as the only source of knowledge of God's acts, the importance of the Bible as a testimony of deep religious

experiences, and the capacity of the Bible to bring moral and spiritual upliftment to people in their diverse problems over the centuries (95). Packer counters:

[T]he authority of Scripture is the divine authority of God Himself speaking. The Bible is not only man's word, but God's also; not merely a record of revelation, but a written revelation in its own right, God's own witness to Himself in the form human witness to Him. Accordingly, the authority of Scripture rests, not simply on their worth as a historical source, a testament of religion, and a means of uplift, real though this is, but primarily and essentially on the fact that they come to us from the mouth of God. Therefore, the real task for reason in this connection is not to try to censure and correct the Scriptures, but rather, with God's help, to try to understand and apply them, so that God may effectively censure and correct us. (95, 96)

Furthermore, N.T. Wright claims that the phrase "authority of Scripture" only makes sense when considered a summative term for "the authority of the triune God, exercised somehow *through* scripture" (23). He explains that the Bible's concept of authority hinges on God's exercising his sovereignty expressed in the word "kingdom" through the saving rule of Jesus Christ. Jesus's authority was demonstrated through his teaching, preaching, healing, and delivering ministry, manifesting the in-breaking of the kingdom of God (28). The Scriptures' role then is "not simply as being to provide *true information about*, or even an accurate running commentary upon, the work of God in salvation and new creation, but as taking an active part *within* that ongoing purpose" (30). In other words, God's speaking through Scripture is not just speech but more of "speech-

acts,” deeds performed in and through what God speaks, saving, healing, and judging, putting sin to death and giving birth to the new creation, all done in the power of the Holy Spirit (33).

The knowledge of Scripture as the inerrant Word God through the canonical process and its consequent authority for the belief and practice of the Christian faith was what emboldened the Protestant Reformers to not only stand against the Roman Catholic hierarchy’s entrenched non-biblical teachings, but also to proclaim the gospel as the only means for salvation. Richard L. Mayhue narrates how when Martin Luther was facing intense pressure to recant his statements against the sale of indulgences and the truth of justification by faith at the Diet of Worms in April, 1521, he replied to Meister Eck in the following manner:

Since then your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captured to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to do against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen. (227)

According to Ferry, the Protestant Reformation could not have happened without the sermon, for it was through the preaching of the Word that the theological insights were heard directly by the people in the vernacular to minister to their spiritual and practical needs (268). He notes Luther’s observation that the low state of preaching was largely responsible for the decline of the church, but more specifically, it was the ignorance of Scripture that was responsible for this condition. He was greatly angered by the fact that

much of what passed as preaching was not reflective of the written Word of God.

Consequently, Luther translated the Bible into German, and devoted most of his ministry as a theologian to the exposition of Scripture (272, 273).

In his article on the life and preaching of John Calvin, John Piper identified the foundation of Calvin's faith and passion for the glory of God as his sudden encounter in Scripture with the majesty of God (Piper 6). In that moment, "both God and the Word of God were so powerfully and unquestionably authenticated in his soul, that he became a loving servant of God and His Word for the rest of his life." Piper enumerates three reasons for Calvin's commitment to the centrality of expository preaching: the first is that Calvin believed that the Word of God was a lamp that had been taken away from the churches, and the continuous exposition of the Scriptures would overcome the abandonment of God's Word. Second, Calvin was horrified at those who preached their own ideas in the pulpit, and the expounding of the Scriptures would force the preacher to deal with all that God wanted to say, not just what he wanted to say. Third, Calvin saw the majesty of God in His Word, and the greatest way to manifest His glory was through expository preaching in the context of pastoral ministry (6, 13, 14).

Beyond the Protestant Reformation, another important spiritual leader whose preaching ministry made an impact not only on England and continental Europe but America as well was John Wesley. In his brief commentary on Wesley's place in the Protestant Reformation, Larry Wood describes him as not so much shaped by the continental Protestant Reformation as by the English Reformation, though Wesley was also influenced by Lutheran Pietism and Puritanism. His doctrines on the Trinity, sanctification, and human freedom were likewise shaped by the early Greek Church



Fathers (Wood 3:17-3:40). Wesley's early ministry, according to Richard P. Heitzenrater, was characterized by preaching outside the confines of the parishes into homes, barns, fields, and marketplaces, which became the catalyst for the Methodist revival (91). He noted that Wesley's text was always taken from the Bible, out of which a pattern of Scripture usage emerged. Heitzenrater added that Wesley's general approach to preaching was summed up in one of his most often quoted phrases, "Let me be *homo unius libri*" (a person of one book) (103).

As much as can be ascertained, however, of Scripture's divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority for Christian faith and practice—as faithfully proclaimed by preachers throughout church history until modern times—the challenge before church leaders today is how to continue to preach the gospel in the twenty-first century to a world that has dramatically changed just in the last few decades, even within the Christian community itself. D.A. Carson cites Robert Yarbrough's insightful essay, in interaction with the books of three other current scholars, on how German biblical criticism in the last two hundred fifty years has significantly contributed to the notion that the Bible is "a text to be mastered and deployed to various social and academic ends, making it more and more difficult for the church to see it as the revelation of God, God's Word to sinners to bring about their redemption" (qtd. In Carson 15). Carson points out that Klaus Berger, one of the three scholars, concludes that historical criticism in Germany has promoted atheism, divided churches, and has brought no one to faith in Christ. Nevertheless, Carson insists that so many still believe in the importance of the doctrine of Scripture, and that the well-being and health of the church will be upheld as the gospel is faithfully proclaimed (17). Craig D. Allert, on the other hand, proposes that

in order for evangelicals to maintain their high view of Scripture, and hence its authority amidst questions about New Testament canonicity, they need to embrace the fact that the Bible was formed and grew within the community of faith. “The Bible did not drop from heaven but was the result of historical and theological development” (9).

Furthermore, Christine McSpadden highlights the challenge of faithfully preaching the Scriptures to the mainline church in a post-Christendom era and post-modern world (125). While this could be alarming to the established Christian religion, McSpadden counters that, historically, similar times have seen Christian influence lose ground in society, particularly during the times of St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas (125). Her contention, however, is that when

Christianity becomes disentangled from its host culture, it is ‘thrust back on its rudimentary confessional basis’. Released from its cultural baggage, the faith tradition that claims Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has the opportunity to be heard anew, in a new age. In many ways, Christianity sits poised to recapture the force of its apostolic witness, its original urgency, and to recapture the sense of ‘goodness’ and ‘newness’ of the good news. (McSpadden 126)

She then proposes several strategies for preaching in our times, such as preaching the basics, and conceiving the sermon as an “environment” for wondering, rumination, and imagination (128, 131).

### **Preaching as a Calling from God**

The Scriptures reveal that God has spoken not only in times past but to this very day through chosen human instruments, and this realization brings forth the question

about whom the Lord chooses and appoints to this service, and the manner by which he prepares and enables them to continue to speak on his behalf. Moses delineated in

Deuteronomy 18:14-22 the awesome power and authority that God has invested in his prophets, and the dire consequences for those who presumed to speak in his Name.

Jeremiah likewise warned the people concerning the proliferation of prophets who spoke their own minds instead of God's mouth, and contrasted them with true prophets as those who stood in the council of God, who heard and spoke his words to turn the people from their evil ways (Jer. 23:16-22). In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus himself and the apostles Paul and Peter warned against false apostles, prophets, and teachers who would try to deceive even his elect (Matt. 7:15, Acts 13:6, 2 Cor. 11:13, 2 Pet. 2:1). The author of Hebrews admonished God's people to remember their leaders who spoke the Word of God to them, to consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith (Heb. 13:7). James also warned the believers that not many of them should presume to be teachers, because those who teach would incur a stricter judgment (Jas. 3:1).

Those whom God has chosen to speak for him in Scripture and throughout church history have invariably testified to a sense of calling, manifested by hearing, seeing, or perceiving his summons. Leonard Sweet challenges the prevailing view of leadership propagated by Warren Bennis, "the capacity to create a compelling vision and translate it into action and sustain it," which the business community and the rest of the world have run with, particularly in the twentieth century, as the hallmark of true leadership (qtd. In Sweet 11-12). He counters that "leaders are neither born nor made. Leaders are summoned. They are called into existence by circumstances. Those who rise to the occasion are leaders. Everyone is called by God for some kind of mission. But sometimes

the ‘called’ are ‘called out’ for leadership” (12-13). The achievements of leaders in history and modern times who have conceived of and articulated a compelling vision to improve the lot of humanity are much appreciated. Nonetheless, those who have been called by God to His purpose, whether as His messengers or instruments of His kingdom love, compassion and wisdom, are ultimately the ones who have transformed the nations and the lives of people for eternity.

This dissertation is focused on the calling of those who are called by God to preach the gospel; therefore, it examines the nature of and criteria for the Lord’s choice, preparation, and enablement of his servants to be his mouthpiece. The Scriptures portray both in the Old Testament, but more concretely in the New Testament, that the prophetic and preaching ministry functions in the larger call to be spiritual leaders, i.e., to be shepherds of God’s people. Robert Clinton describes how God fashions and prepares leaders; this understanding not only encourages and comforts them when they see his providential hand in their past, leaders also learn to cooperate with and anticipate God’s future working in their life as he continues to mold them in their current ministry and use them to develop other leaders as well (15). Clinton posits that God develops a leader over a whole lifetime (25), and has identified six phases in this pattern: sovereign foundations, inner-life growth, ministry maturing, life maturing, convergence, and afterglow (44-47). This meticulous but often painful and confusing process that God works in the lives of his servants only accentuates the Father’s heart to discipline those whom he loves and treats as legitimate sons and daughters, that they might share in his holiness and produce a harvest of righteousness and peace in their ministry (Heb. 12:7-11).

J. Oswald Sanders emphasizes the sovereignty of God in the selection of his

leaders. He avers that as important as theological and seminary training are in the preparation of the minister, Jesus's declaration to his disciples—"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you so that might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last . . ." (John 15:16)—is what gives confidence to those who have responded to his summons (24, 25). He adds that with this revelation, we can say with certainty that our appointment to God's service is not the leaders' selection but his choosing alone (25). Along with this election is God's hand in shaping and qualifying his servants; Sanders describes the kind of leaders that the Lord molds, whom the world will listen to, as authoritative, spiritual, and sacrificial. Authoritative in that these leaders have a clear sense from God of where they are going and are confident of getting there; spiritual in that they cultivate a strong relationship with God; and sacrificial in that these leaders model the life of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (18-19). While clear that God takes the initiative in choosing individuals for leadership in his kingdom, those called do have a choice in their response to his summons. Dan Allender criticizes much of the training process for leaders that is currently in place, whether religious or secular, because while these training institutions have focused on the growth of a leader's knowledge and skill, little attention has been given to his or her character, ethical and relational development (17). He argues that these institutions have assumed that character and ethical issues have already been ingrained in many aspiring leaders by their parents while growing up, or in the religious communities that they have attended, and so the failure of academia has been to address the narcissism that drives many of these leaders (18, 19). Allender then challenges leaders to decide how they will define their calling, whether or not they are willing to be identified with Paul, who called himself the chief of

sinner, and go through the same process that he and all of God's servants have gone through (138). He comforts the reader at the outset, however, with the revelation that it was in his call to leadership that Allender learned to cultivate a deep, personal, and abiding relationship with Jesus (2).

The discussion on preaching as a calling from God has thus far revolved around God's prerogative in setting apart certain individuals for spiritual leadership roles, including preaching and teaching, but Joseph Liddick propounds the idea that the church has historically viewed this divine call as a threefold process: the inner or personal call that comes to persons directly from God, the call of the church to set oneself apart for ministry, and the providential call of an opportunity for ministry (19). While not directly opposing Sanders' view that the call on someone to lead is not man's selection but God's choosing alone, Liddick asserts that the church's role in the call is to recognize the spiritual gifts in God's chosen servants and to ordain them for ministry (21). The third component of God's calling, the call of opportunity, comes as the Lord opens and closes doors for ministry, giving the leader the chance to seize that opportunity that he has providentially prepared (23).

While Liddick extensively delineated the various reasons why ministers abandon God's call in their lives—such as burnout, discouragement and conflicts with the congregation or with denominational leaders—he emphasized that the focus of his study was on ministerial health and the sense of God's calling as key determinants in the leaders' longevity in ministry (48). He recounts how Paul was able to persevere in the midst of the many trials in his apostolic work by remembering his call, and cited David Willis' similar thoughts on the matter:

I believe the most powerful thing for the effectiveness and longevity in ministry is a clearly developed and understood sense of one's call from the Lord. Based upon a passionate desire to faithfully serve Christ, the call is the means whereby our faith becomes supernaturally activated by the power of the Almighty and we respond to the higher calling we have been entrusted with. Not only does our response matter, it solidifies the selection process and allows us to enter the ministry and fulfill the destiny God reveals to us (Liddick 31).

Coupled with the grace to persevere in ministry coming from the knowledge of God's call, Liddick reminds us at the same time of the need to cultivate one's spiritual well-being. He warns that a passionate love for God can easily be replaced by a love for the work of the church and success, so pastors need to intentionally sustain their devotional life with God (49).

We have understood thus far that the call to spiritual leadership and to preach the gospel is sovereignly initiated by God accompanied by the empowering of the Holy Spirit for service (Luke 4:18-19, Acts 1:8), but our response and ability to persevere in this call hinges on our cultivating an ongoing personal relationship with Christ through the spiritual disciplines. Paul reminded the Corinthian church that when he proclaimed the gospel to them, he resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified, that his preaching was not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power (1 Cor.2:1-5). It was Paul's personal knowledge of Christ and his work on the cross, revealed through ongoing communion with him, that enabled the apostle to preach in the power of the Spirit and see the lost saved. His deep burden was not only for his own personal renewal but that through his ministry, Christ would be formed in the

believers (Gal. 4:19). There is extensive literature on spiritual formation through the practice of spiritual disciplines that the church community can glean from, and we will look into a number of them for this review.

According to M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., spiritual formation has emerged as one of the major movements in the late twentieth century because the materialistic, hedonistic and consumerist pull of modern society has left a void in human hearts, who long for wholeness and meaning in life through a deeper relationship with God (11). He defines spiritual formation as a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others, the experience of being shaped by God toward wholeness (15-16). Similarly, with regard to Romans 8:29, Kenneth Boa posits:

. . . gives us the most concise revelation of God's ultimate intention for those he foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. His purpose is nothing less than we become 'conformed to the image of His Son.' This process of growing conformity to Christ was conceived before the foundation of the world, it is being realized as a divine-human process in the present, and it will be fulfilled when we stand in the presence of his glory, 'blameless and with great joy (17).

While both Mulholland and Boa believe that God takes the initiative in the process of molding his people into his likeness, they also acknowledge that this renewing work is accomplished through the saints' engagement in the spiritual disciplines (Mulholland 75; Boa 21).

Richard Foster, in his book *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, believes that God has provided the disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of



receiving his grace, putting ourselves in a place where he can transform us (7). Using Paul's exhortation to sow to the Spirit rather than the flesh in Galatians 6:8 as a foundation, Foster explains that spiritual practices are a way of sowing in the Spirit, getting us into the ground so he can work in us and transform us. He proposes the phrase "the path of disciplined grace" as a way of describing this divine-human process (7). Furthermore, Dallas Willard posits that the key to appropriating the apostle John's promise, that God's commands are not burdensome, and Jesus's invitation to take his easy yoke and his light burden is by living in the totality of how Christ lived on earth (1, 5). This life was characterized by a spiritually disciplined life under God's rule that positioned Jesus to continually receive his Father's love and support as he did the Father's will. We are to enter into these disciplines as well in order to receive that same grace (9).

In another book on spiritual disciplines, *Streams of Living Water*, Foster identified six spiritual practices from the six major traditions of the Christian faith that the Lord is sovereignly bringing to convergence, like streams to a mighty river, into the church in this hour that it might bring them into closer communion with him and release the wide river of God's love for all people (7). These traditions, all based on Scripture, include the following: the contemplative tradition, or prayer-filled life; the holiness tradition, or the virtuous life; the charismatic tradition, or Spirit-empowered life; social justice tradition, or the compassionate life; the evangelical tradition, or Word-centered life; and the incarnational tradition, or the sacramental life. He adds that Jesus Christ modeled all these spiritual practices perfectly, and by following Christ, we will be able to embrace these spiritual practices as well (7).

It is evident from Foster's list of spiritual practices that there are several ways in which God's people, and especially those called to spiritual leadership, are spiritually formed as they engage in the spiritual disciplines. However, he identifies four in particular, i.e., meditation, prayer, fasting, and study, that form the core of the inward disciplines, which other authors also promote as essential disciplines. Henri Nouwen for instance describes prayer as our first obligation and at the same time our highest calling. He describes prayer as a paradox in that we have to learn how to pray, but at the same time we can only receive it as a gift (87). Boa adds that in order to know God, we need to appropriate consistent time for disciplines such as solitude, silence, prayer, and the reading of the Scripture, that we might draw closer to him (32).

Eugene Peterson promotes the spiritual reading of the Scriptures as a means of communion with God, and he refers to the Hebrew word for meditate, *hagah*, rendered in Psalm 1:2 and Isaiah 31:4 as a lion growling over his prey as it chews upon it, as descriptive of what it means to meditate, or to muse and imagine (11-12). He introduces the ancient method of Scripture reading called *lectio divina* or spiritual reading of God's Word, as a "reading that enters our souls as food enters our stomachs, spreads through our blood, and becomes holiness and love and wisdom" (13). This spiritual reading of the Scriptures provides for us a disciplined approach to understanding the context and the interrelationships within the biblical writings, which is sometimes obscured in the process of writing them. The elements of *lectio divina* are the following: *lectio* or the reading of the text; *meditatio* or meditating on the text; *oratio* or praying the text; and *contemplatio* or living the text (69). The practice of this spiritual reading entails the interplay of each of these elements rather than applying them in isolation.

Marjorie Thompson advocated for the engagement of various spiritual practices, mostly gleaned from the Jewish faith and which Jesus modeled and taught to his disciples, as a means of living out the Christian faith (Prologue). Thompson wrote out of a concern for increasing fear brought by violence, suffering, and tragedy in a world separated from God; the redemptive result, however, is that there has arisen a greater spiritual hunger not only among the lost, but more so with God's people, laypeople as well as spiritual leaders (Prologue). She enumerates nine spiritual practices which promote spiritual formation, i.e., to strengthen the faith of God's people, not just spiritual information. These nine practices include: spiritual or meditative reading, prayer, public worship, fasting, self-examination, confession, consulting with other Christians, hospitality, and devising a "rule of life" (Introduction).

The practice of spiritual disciplines as a means of grace not only sustains leaders in facing the challenges of ministry, it also enables them to fulfill the call of God to preach his word to the church and the world. Marva Dawn asserts that the lack of understanding of God's call by both the church community and her pastors is one of the major reasons for the church's low morale in the task of preaching the good news of salvation (ch. 1). However, through her exegesis of 2 Timothy 4:1-4, Dawn proposes that Paul's charge to Timothy provides a three-fold motivation not just for his protégé but also for us to fulfill our calling—Christ's judging of the living and the dead, his second coming, and the coming of his kingdom (ch. 1). She emphasizes particularly the gift of preaching as the vehicle for the equipping of the saints in their work for God's kingdom purposes, because the heralding that takes place in the sermons imparts kingdom joy for a Sabbath way of life among God's people (ch. 10).

Thus far, we have gleaned from the above-mentioned authors that spiritual disciplines position the servants of God to receive God's grace that sustain them in their calling to spiritual leadership, which includes preaching, and spiritually forms them in the process. However, it is also vital to consider that preaching itself is a spiritually formative practice. Leonard R. Luchetti observes that Paul's ability to preach flowed out of his spirituality, and hence the preachers' power in preaching is amplified by their spiritual identification and close communion with Christ through the spiritual disciplines (38). Andre Resner, Jr. adds it was the hardships that Paul went through in his service to Christ among the Corinthians that gave him credibility in his preaching, not like the Sophists and professional rhetoricians whom he was being compared to (121, 125). "For Paul the ethos of the preacher is derivative of and organically related to the nature of the logos of the cross" (125).

David B. Ward believes that preaching as a spiritually formative practice is best taught by molding preachers in contextual virtues essential to this ministry, instead of focusing primarily on developing them in rhetorical techniques (1). He presents a Wesleyan theology of formation that recognizes the sovereign grace of God freely working through human participation in the practices (135). Combining Wesleyan teachings on spiritual formation with the Reformed perspective of Craig Dykstra, Ward enumerates "five mutual claims: God promises to be graciously active through formative Christian practices, God's promise to be active includes the promise to be present in formative Christian practices, Christian practices are then not primarily doings but dwellings where we live in anticipation of God's presence, formative Christian practices are interconnected and interdependent, and Christians' faithful participation in formative

Christian practices is characterized by receptivity and responsiveness to God's active presence" (136). Ward emphasizes that for preaching to be a formative practice, the virtues of centered humility, compassionate empathy, and participatory wisdom need to be developed through the practices of devotion and compassion, and thus preaching cannot be taught as one practice in isolation from the other practices (175, 176).

### **Preaching as Hearing from God**

The thrust of the literature review thus far has been focused on the truth that God has taken the initiative to speak to his people and mankind primarily through the voice of chosen servants to reveal his heart, mind, will, and plan for them, and the Scriptures, which is the Holy Spirit-breathed written recording of his communication in times past, continue to be the primary means by which he still speaks to us today. Although the Bible's availability today to every follower and seeker of Christ provides them the opportunity to read, believe, and apply it for themselves, the preaching and teaching ministry ordained by God through the church carries the unique power and authority to proclaim the gospel under the anointing of the Spirit to transform people's lives as they hear, believe, and obey his Word. Our interest in this part of the study is to understand the process by which preachers determine the portion of the Scripture they are to study, and what they are to speak to the congregation from the chosen text week in and week out. Because the Bible, though it is eternal and will never pass away, is an ancient document written for a specific audience at a specific time for a specific purpose, there is a need for the pastor in sermon preparation to first understand what the chosen text meant to the original recipients of the word, in order to "hear" an interpretation and give meaning and application for the present-day audience. This review will look into the three main

components of this interpretative or spiritual hearing process, which includes exegesis, contextualization, and the role of the Holy Spirit in this whole process.

Prior to this, however, it is important to take note of the Lord's warning through Moses against those prophets who presumed to speak in his Name (Deut. 18:17-20). Likewise, Jeremiah's exposure of the lying prophets who prophesied from their own minds rather than standing in the council of God to see or hear his Word (Jer. 23:16-18), puts the fear of God upon those who are called to preach the gospel to ascertain that they have first heard from the Lord "a word from His Word" before they speak for him. At the same time, the apostles Peter and John, when they were being forbidden by the Sanhedrin from speaking and teaching in the Name of Jesus, replied to them, "As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:18-20). Paul likewise felt compelled to persuade others because of Christ's love (2 Cor. 5:11-14), saying elsewhere, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). It is therefore essential for those who are called to proclaim God's Word to exercise diligence and care in the exegetical and interpretive task in order to accurately discern God's voice for the church before preaching the Word.

The above-mentioned Scriptures help us realize that the hearing of the Word must precede the preaching of the Word, which means that we need to trust that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Word to the original hearers will speak a fresh word to the present-day congregation from the text that the pastor has studied. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. cites Kenton Anderson's definition of preaching as "helping people to hear from God" (qtd. in J.A. Smith). Referring also to Isaiah 50:4, "The Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by

morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed,” Smith then concludes that in order for a preacher to have a well-instructed tongue, he or she must develop a listening ear (J.A. Smith). He adds that “daily disciplined listening calls for a *lectio divina* that allows for scripture to speak to the most intimate depths of the heart to gift and challenge and change us, and to promote genuine spiritual growth and maturity” (J.A. Smith).

### Exegesis

The starting point of the exegetical process is selection of the biblical text for study and subsequent sermon delivery. Pastors have a variety of means by which they decide on which portion of Scripture to preach from, from a week to week selection depending on the leading they get from God, which becomes stressful over time because of the pressure to always have a message ready by Saturday night, to a sermon series running from a few weeks to a few months on either specific books or topics/themes from the Bible, often decided upon within a denominational group, or a lectionary which is a list of logically pre-determined Scriptural readings created by certain groups for the benefit of the larger Christian community. Charles Bugg suggests that other bases for text selection can be the recurring seasons in the church year, such as Christmas and Easter, or human and societal issues, whatever is related to the things that people face in their daily lives (Bugg 68). Once the text is selected, Bugg then advocates an initial reading of the passage with “prayerful listening,” which is the preacher endeavoring to open their spiritual ears and eyes to the voice of God in his word, asking “what does this say to me?” and, “What can it say through me to others?” (68-69).

An important consideration in the selection of the text along with the direction given by the Spirit to the church leadership and the recurring seasons of the year is the

genre of the book from which the text was culled. Bryan Carter avers that the reason many pastors struggle with having variety in their preaching is because they default to their preferred genre of Scripture instead of allowing the literary type of Scripture as inspired by the Spirit to determine how they would communicate God's word (*Preaching 360*). Steven Smith adds that the exegetical and theological nuances of a text are more accurately derived from an understanding of the text's genre, for it brings out the tone or intended emotive design of the biblical author. Smith continues that there is meaning in the emotion of the text, and when it is identified, it is vital that the pastor preaches the sermon in a tone consistent with the tone of the text (S. Smith, *Why Genre Matters*). Carter and Smith both identify the different genres of Old Testament Scripture to include historical narrative, the law, wisdom, poetry/psalms, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature, while Smith includes Gospels/Acts, Parables, and Epistles for the New Testament (*Preaching 360*; S. Smith, *Why Genre Matters*).

After the initial reading and prayerful listening of the text, which Roy Zuck refers to as the observation of the passage, the next step he prescribes is the interpretation of the text, which he and other authors also refer to as exegesis, i.e., the determination of the meaning of the biblical text in its historical and literary contexts (20). Zuck explains that exegesis is necessary since the Bible is an ancient document that produces gaps in the readers' ability to understand the passage they are reading, which would include the following: a time or chronological gap, a space or geographical gap, a customs or cultural gap, a language or linguistic gap, a writing or literary gap, and a spiritual or supernatural gap (16-18). Although Zuck includes exegesis as part of the hermeneutical task since interpretation is still involved in the exegetical process, we will concentrate first on the



exegetical task before tackling the work of contextualizing the text to contemporary hearers.

In order to appreciate the current interpretive practices of the larger Christian community, Zuck encourages the study of the history of biblical interpretation to realize the errors of the past and the consequences of these errors in order to avoid repeating them. He quotes what A. Berkeley Mickelsen has written, “History shows that erroneous principles have often spoiled the exegetical work of fine men, some of whom are great saints. This should be a warning to us against careless interpretation. There is less excuse for us because we can profit by the lessons of the past” (qtd. in Zuck 27). Some of the methods that students of the Bible have employed over the centuries are the literal, allegorical, traditional, rationalistic, and subjective approaches (27), but our priority as previously stated are contemporary interpretive practices.

The fundamental exegetical approach that Zuck teaches consists of the study of the passage in its original context, particularly a historical, grammatical, and rhetorical (or literary) study. A historical study looks into the setting in which the Bible books were written and the circumstances in the writing as well as the cultural environment. A grammatical study entails drawing out the meaning of the Scripture by studying the words and sentences of the text in their normal, plain sense. A rhetorical or literary study examines how the literary quality of a passage of the Bible affects its interpretation (77).

Derek Newton similarly espouses a contextual study of the passage by considering its historical, sociocultural and religious, literary contexts, as well as a content analysis involving a so-called column, grammatical analysis, exegetical analysis, and biblical/theological reflection (89-124). In the historical analysis, Newton proposes a

four-point checklist to gain an understanding of the historical context of the passage: the first is to look for details in the text that reveal its historical background, including knowing the time when and place where the author wrote the book; the second is to draw out from the passage information on the author's purpose for writing, particularly as it relates to current events at the time of writing, such as wars, royal reigns, crises, doctrinal issues, heresies, and others; the third is to gain information in the text or in reference books regarding the recipients of the biblical writing; and, the fourth is to try to capture the nature of the historical context by writing a preliminary one to two paragraph summary (93-94). In addition, the sociocultural and religious contexts are interwoven into the historical context, and a study of these issues will aid in the preacher's development of the themes of the biblical passage (96-97).

The literary context study on the other hand involves the appraisal of the passage not only in relation to its immediate context but the wider context of the whole book (Newton 100). The starting point is the study of the passage itself and answering some questions, such as who the author and recipients are, what the central and sub-themes are, and what these themes are communicating. The determination of the wider context hinges on how the biblical writer organized his thoughts, purpose, and themes, and the exegete can decide on the range of his study depending on the text to be preached (102). Newton gives additional guidelines for looking into the immediate context and content in context, but he qualifies that there is flexibility on how this process is to be undertaken. His main goal is to equip leaders with the ability to use literary study to gain an understanding of the biblical author's purpose and point in writing the book (103).

Content analysis, according to Newton, takes off from the historical and literary

studies previously done, and though it can become tedious and time-consuming, it will bear fruit in the clear exposition of God's Word (106-107). He calls the first stage of the content analysis a column analysis, where the passage is handwritten or typed on the left-hand side of a piece of paper, verse by verse, and, after a time of prayer and reflection on the text, he exegete uses the right side to write one's own observations and insights on the verses being studied (108-109). In the second stage, the grammatical analysis, the goal is to discern the meaning and significance of the individual words, leading to a greater understanding of the relationships between the specific words and word groupings of the sentences in the text (113). The third stage, the exegetical analysis, entails the four steps of examining each verse to know what the author is saying, evaluating how each verse helps to fulfill the biblical writer's intent, explaining the meaning of the text, and extracting the meaning of the text for the original hearers as a prelude for its exposition to the contemporary audience (130-131). The fourth stage, a biblical/theological reflection, is aimed at using the meaning and insights derived from the exegetical study to verify and test it against its broader biblical and theological contexts (140).

### Contextualization

While exegesis dwells on understanding what the text meant to the original hearers of the biblical writing, contextualization endeavors to hear a fresh word from God using the same text for the contemporary audience. Hermeneutics, which encompasses both exegesis and contextualization, is derived from the Greek verb *hermēneuō* and noun *hermēneia*, which point to the wing-footed messenger-god Hermes in Greek mythology. Zuck defines hermeneutics as the science and art of interpreting the Bible in order to determine the meaning of specific texts. To say hermeneutics is a science implies that it

contains principles, laws of thought and language, and classification of facts and results, in the interpretive process. As an art, it teaches the application of these principles in the explanation of Scriptures, upholding a sound exegetical process (19).

Wollom A. Jensen cites the important contribution of Hans-Georg Gadamer in developing a system of philosophical hermeneutics that enables preachers not only to listen and understand the sacred text according to their tradition, but to make it applicable to the lives of the congregation (4). Gadamer asserts that every text comes with its own historical or traditional context, and yet has something relevant to say to its contemporary hearers (Jensen 3). The goal in hermeneutics is for preachers to first listen and have an experience with the text, meaning they learn and gain wisdom from the encounter, and as a result, both the preacher and the congregation come to a common understanding of the text in the delivery of the sermon (3). Gadamer further claims that words, i.e., talk, conversation, dialogue and others, create new worlds, in contrast with the Aristotelian viewpoint of spoken language as representing mental images and written words as symbols for speech (Jensen 3-4). A sermon then from Gadamer's definition is essentially a conversation, where the preacher is not an expert but a conversation partner with the congregation and whose preaching involves both interpretation and application.

We will look into two methodological approaches in hermeneutical practice, one from Osborne, and the other from Fred Craddock. Osborne enumerates a five-stage process that explains the contextualization task as it shifts from the biblical text to the contemporary context. The goal of this approach, combining theory with practice, is to enable the church in its different cultural contexts to embrace and live out their faith with the same divine power that was available to the early church.

The first stage is to determine the surface message, or the original intended message of the passage, in the manner that the author intended for the particular recipients in their particular situation. The second stage is to determine the deep structural principle behind the message, that is, the bigger biblical-theological truth used by the biblical author in writing to his hearers to address a particular problem among them (Osborne 431). The third stage is to note the original situation, which the author used as a backdrop for his surface message, though this is most difficult to determine in comparison to the first two stages (Osborne 432). The fourth stage is to discover the parallel situation in the modern context, by attempting to apply the text in the current setting in the same way it was used in the original context. The fifth stage is to decide whether to contextualize at the general or the specific level, which is determined by the extent to which the exegete wants to remain true to Scripture yet allow for the expression of a relevant and vibrant faith in the multi-cultural settings they find across the earth (Osborne 433).

Craddock explains interpretation as the process of navigating through the distance, or more specifically the different degrees and types of distance, between the text and the current listeners of the sermon. Interpretation is not only a matter of understanding the meaning of the text to the original audience and attempting to contemporize it to the modern audience, but Craddock's question is, was the sermon preached appropriate for the congregation in their particular situation? In essence, "we do not interpret Scripture; we interpret Scripture *for someone somewhere*" (136). Craddock presents a six-point checklist that describes the different methods used by preachers to go from the text to the audience. These methods may seem similar and can have variations

but are nonetheless distinct and are thus identified as such (137).

The first is the direct and uncritical transfer of the text to the listener, which is simply a reading of a Scriptural text and applying it in the sermon as if it was written for the contemporary audience (Craddock 137-8). The second is an allegorical interpretation of the text, which derives a message different from the generally understood meaning of the original words and phrases, generating a timeless, spiritual meaning (138-9). The third is a typological interpretation of the text, which draws out from the original text events or conditions that clearly correspond to the contemporary hearers, providing them encouragement and guidance from the experiences of the original community (141).

The fourth is the interpretation of the intent of a text, which can be extracted from the text itself, as the basis for the preaching rather than the content of the passage (Craddock 142-3). The fifth is the thematic interpretation of the text, which directs the interpretation of the passage in light of the major themes of Scripture. The sixth is the interpretation by translation of the text, which allows the text to speak to the reader or hearer by removing the barriers produced by the translation of the text into other languages (147).

### The Role of the Holy Spirit

The Scriptures have clearly been established as God's eternal Word recorded by chosen human authors revealing his nature and being, plans, purposes, laws, decrees, and acts done through his Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, and this understanding of the Holy Spirit's role is what makes the Bible a divine and human book at the same time. The translation of the Greek word *theópneustos* in 2 Timothy 3:16 into the English word "inspiration," which implies "breathing in," has somehow induced many interpreters into

thinking that the Scriptures came about by the authors' creativity or insight as they were influenced by the Holy Spirit, much like an artist is captivated by a breathtaking scenery and is subsequently inspired to paint the scene on canvas. However, inasmuch as *theópnustos* means God-breathed, a more accurate rendering of "inspiration" is God "breathing out" his words into the hearts and minds of the biblical writers. It is the Holy Spirit, the *Pneumatós* or breath of God, who was the "Creative Genius" behind the revelation of God's words, and the human authors wrote as they were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit, like a boat being driven by the wind at sea (2 Pet. 1:19).

This understanding of the Holy Spirit's role as the Ultimate Author of the Scriptures implies that the same Author must "carry along" pastors as well in the exegetical and hermeneutical work involved in sermon preparation, that they might preach messages that are of divine origin and not just the eloquent words of humans (1 Cor. 2:4-5). In this section, we will learn from a number of scholars how they view the Holy Spirit's work in and through the preacher as they undertake the exegetical and hermeneutical task. Prior to this study, however, it is important to note, as a corollary to the Holy Spirit's role in the interpretive work, the observation of James Joseph Mindling, Jr., and reiterated by the forthcoming scholars, that much of the literature concerning hermeneutics has scant reference to the role of prayer in sermon preparation, but is instead focused on the interpretive work as an academic discipline (5-6).

Mindling cites the important function of prayer within the hermeneutical process, beyond preparing the heart of the pastor prior to preaching, in enabling the preacher to penetrate to the heart of the passage being studied and receive revelation from God (6). Using Psalm 119:18 as an example where the psalmist prays, "Open my eyes that I might

see wonderful things in your law,” Mindling describes this prayer as a continuing petition for illumination in his meditation upon the Word, which the Lord responds to by giving the pastor greater understanding of his wonderful law (27, 28).

Greg Heisler asserts that though both inspiration and illumination are works of the same Holy Spirit, this does not imply that the two terms are interchangeable (41). Heisler explains:

The key difference between the doctrine of inspiration and the doctrine of illumination is this: inspiration is a completed process that guaranteed the truthfulness of the Bible by the Spirit's superintending of the revelation we have recorded in Scripture, whereas illumination is a continuing work of the Spirit that guides us into all truth (John 16:13). This means that the Spirit's illumination is the guide to his inspiration, and we desperately need his guidance into truth because we are sinful, fallen, and fallible human beings. (41)

Hence, Heisler concludes that the Spirit's illumination cannot be considered as infallible, but only the revelation of Scripture. This is a safeguard for Spirit-led preaching, for “whatever the Spirit illumines in our hearts should emanate from objective revelation, not mystical visions that take us outside the revelation God has given us in his Word” (41).

In exploring the relationship between the Word of God and the Spirit of God through a dialogue with the writings of Stanley Grenz, A.T.B. McGowan makes four affirmations in order to develop a pneumatological doctrine of Scripture. The first is that the Holy Spirit brought the Scriptures into existence (395). McGowan cites Peter's



declaration in 2 Peter 1:20-21 that the prophecy of Scripture came about as the Holy Spirit carried men along as they spoke from God, and Paul's revelation in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is God-breathed; both acknowledge the Holy Spirit's work in bringing about the Scriptures (396). He avers that "the writers of Scripture were not just putting down their thoughts for posterity, they were under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit and could do no other" (396-97). McGowan adds, however, that the emphasis on the Spirit's role in originating the Scriptures does not diminish the human author's part in the revelatory process, that is, the Holy Spirit did not merely dictate to the biblical writers but worked with the creative ability and humanity of the author (397).

The second affirmation is that the Holy Spirit enabled the church to recognize what was Scripture and what was not (McGowan 398). McGowan asserts that the Holy Spirit was guiding the church in determining the canon of Scripture, and initially with the Old Testament, it was relatively easy since Jesus and the apostles made profuse reference to them in their teachings (398). In the selection of the New Testament writings, however, the process was more difficult because there were many "gospels" and other books that were written, and there needed to be a process of discernment. While the Roman Catholic Church insisted that since the church possessed the ability to recognize which books were deemed Scriptural, therefore the authority of the writings could not be separated from the authority of the church, other theologians asserted that it was durability of the writings over time that determined which were truly canonical (399). Many evangelical theologians settle the issue by supporting the view espoused by Bruce that "the church was enabled by the Holy Spirit to recognize those books that were truly 'God breathed' Scripture" (369).

The third affirmation is that the Holy Spirit helps us to understand the meaning and interpretation of Scripture (McGowan 395). McGowan points out in Luke 24:44-45 the need for Jesus to open the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures despite the fact that they had been with him for over three years, accentuating the noetic effects of sin on the human mind's inability to comprehend spiritual things without the Spirit's working (401). Likewise, he concludes from Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 2:11-14 that true understanding of the meaning of Scripture comes only to those who have the Spirit of God living in them (402). These accounts point to the need for the Holy Spirit's work of illumination, not so much that the Scriptures need to be illumined, but that the human mind needs to be acted upon by the Holy Spirit because of the noetic consequences of sin, in order for the believer to recognize Scripture as the revealed truth of God (403). McGowan adds that the perspicuity of Scripture is not only based on the Reformers' insistence that the biblical writings be translated into the common languages so that they could be read without the priest's interpretation, but it is the Holy Spirit's work to enable the disciples to comprehend the Word of God (403).

The fourth affirmation is that the Holy Spirit empowers the preaching of Scripture (McGowan 395). McGowan again makes reference to different biblical texts to highlight the need for the Holy Spirit's enablement not only to illuminate the Word but to preach it as well. Starting in Isaiah 61:1, the prophet declares that it was the Spirit of the Lord that came upon him to preach the good news to the poor, and Jesus claimed this prophecy as well in Luke 4:18-21 as being fulfilled in himself (404). Likewise, Acts 4:31 shows how the apostles spoke the word of God boldly after they had been filled with the Spirit, and Paul clarifies in Romans 15:19 that everything he accomplished in ministry, including the

proclamation of the gospel, was done in the power of the Spirit (404-05). McGowan sums up this affirmation by citing the *First Helvetic Confession* which states, “The Preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God” (405).

Gordon Fee examines the relationship between exegesis and spirituality, between drawing out the historically intended meaning of the text and the present, experiential hearing of the text towards a presupposed and intentional spirituality (4). He posits that the ultimate goal of true exegesis is spirituality, meaning that one is able to walk and live by the Spirit (5). According to Fee, “the point that needs to be made is that the word *pneumatikos*, a distinctively Pauline word in the New Testament, has the Holy Spirit as its primary referent. Paul never uses it as an adjective referring to the human spirit; and whatever else, it is not an adjective that sets some *unseen* reality in contrast, for example, to something material, secular, ritual, or tangible” (5). The definition then of spirituality in the New Testament pertains to the Person of the Holy Spirit, that is, people are spiritual to the extent that they live and walk by the Spirit (5). To reiterate, the aim of exegesis is to reproduce in the life of the disciples a life of true spirituality, meaning that people live a life of fellowship with the Lord and are participating in his purposes (6).

Fee assumes that the Bible student is familiar with the normative exegetical method that asks essentially two kinds of questions—one about context, which includes historical and literary contexts, and the other about content, involving the determination of the original text, the meaning of words, the implications of grammar, and the historical-cultural background (7-8). He recognizes, though, that there is an ongoing conflict between exegetical methodology and spirituality, with one side insisting that the historical-critical method gives them mastery over the interpretation of the text, while the

other side asserts that a more devotional reading of the text is a better means of receiving a word from God (8). Fee reconciles these seemingly polarized views, however, by saying that even though the first task of the exegete is the historical one, it is not the final step (11). The ultimate task in the exegetical method is spiritual, that is, to hear the text in such a way that it produces worship in the heart of the disciple and conformity with God's image and his ways. Determining the spiritual intent of the text is part of the historical exegetical task at first, but the end goal is to engage in the author's spirituality, not just his words (11).

Similarly, Craig Keener promotes a dynamic, experiential reading of Scripture by espousing a hermeneutical approach that starts with responsible exegesis. He then teaches the reader to learn to hear the Spirit's voice in Scripture, to discern how the Holy Spirit brings application of the text to the believers' lives and communities (1-3).

Acknowledging his Pentecostal background and being a biblical scholar and seminary professor at the same time, Keener submits that what he can contribute to the wide array of literature on hermeneutics is a Spirit-led hermeneutical approach that is complimentary to current exegetical practice but emphasizes a dependence on the Holy Spirit in the interpretive work of Scriptural study (1-2). His interest in the biblical texts is not only in what they taught the original hearers in their historical contexts, but in how current readers can share in the same spiritual experiences and interaction with God that the original audience received from the Lord in the Scriptural account (5). For example, the resurrection of Christ is not only a historical fact, but the gospels declare that Jesus is now the exalted Lord, who has poured out his Spirit upon all flesh so that we may continually experience his presence and power in our lives today (5).

Keener also, along with other evangelical scholars, recognize that another important work of the Spirit is to illuminate Scripture, which is not so much about enabling the historical and grammatical exegetical task which we can already do by ourselves, but enabling us to realize what the text is expecting from us to do and to believe (12). Since the Holy Spirit already inspired the biblical authors to understand the meaning of what they wrote in their specific language and setting, his illuminating work is not intended to redo or undo what he has already spoken in inspiration. Instead, the Holy Spirit's role in illumination is to reveal how he expects God's people to respond to what he is saying (12).

Keener expounds, "The Spirit's role of illumination thus focuses on the text's perlocution, i.e., 'the successful conclusion of the speech act': normally understanding and response. 'Perlocution is what identifies the expected response to the speech act. If the illocution is a command, perlocution would be obedience . . . The Holy Spirit is largely involved at the perlocutionary level as we are enabled to understand the truthfulness of the text, recognize what it requires from us and then actually take the appropriate steps to actualize the intentions that the Holy Spirit initially delivered to the human instrument.'" Keener quotes a Pentecostal scholar who suggests that, "Illumination occurs in conjunction with, not in isolation from, normal application of hermeneutical principles" (qtd. in Keener 12). Furthermore, the promise of our Lord in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit will teach us and remind us of all that Jesus said assures us of the Holy Spirit's help in enlightening us regarding his Word (12).

Beyond the empowering and illuminating work of the Spirit in the exegetical study of Scripture, another way the Holy Spirit is at work is in imparting faith to the

hearers of God's spoken Word, as Romans 10:17 declares, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ."

Keener commends the contribution of the Pentecostal exegete French Arrington in understanding the important role that the Holy Spirit plays in interpretation, which includes the impartation of faith in the hermeneutical process (12). Arrington enumerates the Spirit's activity as the following: "1.) submission of the mind to God so that the critical and analytical abilities are exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; 2.) a genuine openness to the witness of the Spirit as the text is examined; 3.) the personal experience of faith as part of the interpretative process; and 4.) response to the transforming call of God's Word" (qtd. in Keener 12-3).

### **Preaching as Speaking for God**

The end goal of the exegetical and contextual study of a Scripture passage under the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit is to preach the Word of God to the congregation, to let the written word become the spoken word, so we will now examine the homiletical tasks of sermon preparation and sermon delivery. The Bible repeatedly testifies to the efficacious power of God's Word as it is proclaimed under the unction of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah declares that "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:6-12). In chapter 2 of his book, Jared Alcantara differentiates the written sermon from the preached word by noting that the former has primarily a locutionary function, while the latter brings forth locutionary, illocutionary,

and perlocutionary impact upon the hearers (91, 92). He cites Charles Bartow's claim that "the oral reading of Scripture can evoke God's divine presence in a way that writing alone cannot," implying that sermons can have this effect as well (qtd. in Alcantara 92).

When tempted by the devil to turn stone into bread while fasting, Jesus answered that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God, implying that the Word of God provides spiritual nourishment to our inner being just as bread provides physical sustenance to our bodies (Matt. 4:4). As mentioned earlier, Paul stated in Romans 10:17 that faith comes from hearing the word, and hearing through the Word of Christ. Peter also declared in 1 Peter 1:23-25 that the believers' experience of the new birth came about through the imperishable seed of the word that was preached to them. In these three passages, the word "word" in the Greek is *rhema*, which means the spoken word, emphasizing the verbal proclamation of the Word of God as being performative as it is spoken.

Furthermore, Jesus reiterated to his disciples who had a difficult time accepting his teaching in John 6:63 that the words he had spoken were full of the Spirit and life, and likewise the Hebrews author said in Hebrews 4:12 that the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. In other words, God's Word is efficacious and life-giving as it is proclaimed. This conviction is very important at a time when the validity of preaching as the primary means of communicating the Word of God is being minimized in the face of secular humanism and the onslaught of media and entertainment. John R.W. Stott avers that even in an age that is saturated with the most elaborate media of communication, preaching remains *sui generis*, in a class by itself. Though it is essential to learn effective rhetorical

methods in preaching, what is unique about this ministry is the presence of the living God in accordance with his covenant pledge among his worshiping people, and his promise to reveal himself through his Word and sacrament (Stott 82).

There is again a wide array of literature available on homiletics, but for the purpose of creating a foundational preaching training program for pastors, we will examine only some of the literature that captures the essential elements in sermon preparation and delivery. There will certainly be more opportunity in the future to equip these pastors with more comprehensive homiletical skills. In this section, we will look into a general classification of homiletical structures with a focus on one particular form, then a more detailed process of sermon preparation, and the dynamics of sermon delivery.

### Types of Homiletical Structure

According to David Buttrick, spoken language is invariably linear, for just as walking entails taking one step after another, talking is speaking one word after another (ch. 2). Sermons are thus a “movement of language from one idea to another, each idea being shaped in a bundle of words. Thus, when we preach we speak in formed modules of language arranged in some patterned sequence. These modules of language we call ‘moves’” (ch. 2). Jeffrey Arthurs, who likens sermon preparation to a blacksmith repeatedly hammering horseshoes on an anvil in fashioning them, also argues that a clear sermon structure depends on a thorough understanding of the flow of thought in the passage (Five Hammer Strokes).

Seeing sermons as a series of sequential, logical rhetorical units or moves will greatly aid in the arrangement and the design of these messages (Buttrick ch. 2). These



sermon designs generate a structure, while sermon forms, which take into account the experience of the listeners, will be examined later in this section. A number of these sermon structures will now be identified and elaborated on.

John Broadus delineates four different types of sermon structures: the textual, topical, textual-topical, and expository sermons (53-60). According to Broadus, these structures are meant to give the preacher a design or pattern by which to build the sermon on, but they often overlap and can cause confusion when the preacher tries to study the sermons of great preachers, for there are really no perfect examples of a specific sermon type. He adds that designs are only secondary to the main purpose of communicating God's truth, and they are mainly tools to enable the pastor to prepare the message with clarity (53). Steve Mathewson reinforces this by pointing out that Broadus identified these types not just as distinctions but as a gradation from topical to textual to expository sermons (Mathewson *What Makes Textual Preaching Unique*).

The first type of structure is the textual sermon. In this structure, the text determines the subject and the major divisions of the sermon, and the main subject is derived from the text which is thereafter discussed from the divisions of the text. An example Broadus provides is from 2 Corinthians 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich." The text provides a logical order from which to outline the division of the passage: 1) He was rich; 2) He became poor; and 3) He did this that you (plural) might be made rich (54). This can be considered the easiest type of format because the main divisions are in the text, while giving a measure of freedom in the development of the structure (55).

The second type of structure is the topical sermon, in which the divisions are drawn from the subject matter, even if the topic is derived from the text. The subject is correspondingly divided and handled according to its own nature (Broadus 55). The advantage of this type of sermon is that it ensures unity as the preacher lays out the message in a logical manner, making it convincing and pleasing particularly to an educated audience. The pastor is able to present a comprehensive view on some topic or doctrine to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation in a teaching mode, not just bits and pieces of a given subject (56). The downside is that the preacher can become enamored with certain types of topics which he is personally interested in or familiar with, and only preach from those, thus the need to widen his or her horizon with other scriptural topics as well as use other sermon types in the preaching ministry (57).

The third type of structure is the textual-topical sermon, which in a sense is a combination of the two above-mentioned structures. Whereas the textual sermon gets its divisions from the text and the topical sermon from its topical divisions, the topical-textual sermon derives its divisions from both the topic and the text. The advantage of this method is that it has a strong biblical basis while allowing freedom of development at the same time, coupled with the advantage of oratorical preaching in topical sermons (Broadus 57-58).

The fourth type of structure is the expository sermon, which is a sermon that derives its divisions and the exploration of those divisions directly from the text. More specifically, the main points as well as the subdivisions of the sermon usually come from the text, meaning that the whole thought content comes from the Scripture (Broadus 58). One can include explanation, illustration, and application from other sources, but the

basic ideas are determined from the text. An expository sermon is often developed from a longer passage, however, a short passage, verse or even one word can serve as the text for expository preaching. Even a chapter or book, an episode, drama or narrative within the Bible can be used as the text, meaning the expository method is limited only by the kinds of literature used in Scripture. The main requisites for an effective expository sermon, according to Broadus, are unity in the sermon and an orderly structure, to bring forth instruction, conviction, and persuasion in the preaching of the Word (59-60).

All of these sermon structures have their place and use in the pastor's arsenal in preaching God's Word, but many voices in the last few decades have claimed that expository preaching is a much more effective way of communicating the gospel, while the authority of Scripture is increasingly being questioned and preaching itself is being minimized. Some of these voices include Steven Lawson, who observes that many pastors are consumed with marketing-oriented church growth strategies. They say that biblical preaching is outdated and irrelevant, and therefore employ other means of communicating the gospel such as drama, dialogue and film clips (57). Though these modes of communication have their place, Lawson asserts that biblical expository preaching to this day remains as the supreme means by which God has ordained for the proclamation of his Word (58).

Another voice is Tim Keller, who defines expository preaching:

. . . grounds the message in the text so that all the sermon's points are points in the text, and it majors in the text's major ideas. It aligns the interpretation of the text with doctrinal truths of the rest of the Bible (being sensitive to systematic theology). And it always situates the

passage within the Bible's narrative, showing how Christ is the final fulfillment of the text's theme (being sensitive to biblical theology) (Keller 32).

He believes that expository preaching is the best means for demonstrating to people that the whole Bible is true, and that it helps them recognize that the authority to proclaim does not rest on the speaker's opinion or reasoning, but on God himself through his self-revelation in the text (32). Additionally, through expository preaching, God is able to work in and set the course for the church by the Holy Spirit as the Word is preached, as well as shape what the pastor is to preach on a weekly basis, rather than what he or she thinks is relevant for the people (Keller 32-39).

Haddon Robinson likewise laments the pressing temptation on pastors to speak on topics such as political, economic, and psychological theories to solve society's ills, rather than the Bible. He believes that the type of preaching that best conveys the divine authority of Scripture is expository preaching, though he concedes that not everyone would agree with his statement (20). He realizes that some pastors' claim to employ expository preaching is not really expository or preaching, and gives his own definition of expository preaching in response: "Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers" (21).

### Sermon Preparation

Robinson's definition encompasses the initial exegetical and contextualization tasks earlier discussed in this literature review once the passage has been selected. He then enumerates the remaining stages of a ten-step process in the development of expository messages which, though basic to trained preachers, is still a useful reference for a preaching training program. These ten stages are the following:

1. Selecting the passage
2. Studying the passage
3. Discovering the exegetical idea
4. Analyzing the exegetical idea
5. Formulating the homiletical idea
6. Determining the sermon's purpose
7. Deciding how to accomplish this purpose
8. Outlining the sermon
9. Filling in the sermon outline
10. Preparing the Introduction and Conclusion

After the initial selection and studying of a passage, an exegetical idea is discovered from the hermeneutical work on the passage, expressed in a subject and complement (Robinson 61). The exegetical idea is then analyzed by submitting it to three development questions: what does it mean, is it true, and what difference does it make? (75-89). The homiletical idea is formulated by stating the exegetical idea in the most precise and memorable sentence possible, which in essence is a biblical truth applied to

life (103-05). The purpose statement is a determination of what you believe will happen in the lives of the congregation as they hear the sermon (107).

As you reflect on the homiletical idea, the next step is to decide how to accomplish the sermon's purpose (Robinson 116). An outline of the sermon is then created to provide it with a structure having a sense of unity, order, and purpose (132). Just as an outline is like a skeleton, flesh needs to be added to the frame by providing support materials that explain, validate, apply, or magnify the points of the sermon (140). The last stage in developing an expository sermon is to prepare an introduction that gets the attention of the listeners, and a conclusion to summarize and bring the sermon to a "burning focus" (176).

Similarly, Stott proposes a five-step process for sermon preparation outlined as follows:

1. Choose your text.
2. Meditate on it.
3. Isolate the dominant thought.
4. Arrange your material to serve the dominant thought.
5. Add the introduction and Conclusion.
6. Write down and pray over your message. (Stott 213-258)

Selection of a text, as Stott and others have propounded, are usually based on liturgical, external, pastoral, or personal factors (213-20). Once the text has been chosen, meditation allows for the "subconscious incubation" of the text, with the end goal of asking two questions about the passage: "what does it mean?" which is exegesis, and,

“what does it say?” which is hermeneutics (220-21). The third step is to identify the dominant thought, because each passage has a main theme and therefore conveys one major message (224-25). The arrangement of materials to support the dominant thought by eliminating gathered notes that are irrelevant, while highlighting those that will illuminate, will result in the strengthening of the main theme’s impact (228). The inclusion of an introduction and conclusion to the body of the sermon is like supplying a head and tail to a body, which the preacher then writes down and commits to prayer prior to sermon delivery (243-58).

### Sermon Delivery

As stated previously, the end goal of the exegetical and hermeneutical study of a Scriptural text under the illuminating work of the Spirit is to preach the Word in the same power of the Spirit, that it might not return empty but accomplish the purpose for which it was sent to God’s people. The crafting of the sermon along the lines of the pattern that Robinson and Stott have taught brings the pastor to the next task, and that is how to deliver the sermon. For Bryan Chapell, it is essential that all expository sermons have F-O-R-M, meaning that it is “Faithful to the text, Obvious from the text, Related to the Fallen Condition Focus, and Moving toward a climax” (162). He adds that much of the preaching innovation, that has been propounded in the last few decades, has been gleaned from speech theorists on how we receive and process communication (162).

As stated earlier, the sermon form takes into account the listeners’ experience, so the sermon structure is not fully developed until the manner in which the message will be heard is incorporated in sermon delivery. It is vital to the meaning and impact of a sermon even if this form may not be obvious to the hearers. According to David Ward in

his 2017 Biblical Preaching Seminar delivered at Every Nation Philippines in Manila, “the sermon form grows out of building the sermon organically. The text gives birth to something in your heart and life, figure out where it is trying to take your people.” He then describes a number of variations to sermon delivery by combining the topical or textual structures with deductive or inductive approaches to preaching, which can all be considered expository preaching.

Donald Sunukjian, when asked about when it is appropriate to preach inductively or deductively, believes that the choice is premised on the goal of maintaining a balance between clarity of the message and keeping the interest of the hearers. He distinguishes between the two approaches to preaching:

Inductive preaching essentially asks a question and arrives at the answer toward the latter part of the sermon. Deductive is the opposite of that. In deductive preaching you give the declarative statement up front and then support it. So the styles differ by whether the listener hears the point you're going to make up front, or they hear the question and then arrive at the answer through a progression (Sunukjian)

He explains that the advantage of the deductive sermon is clarity in that the idea is given up front and therefore gets the attention of the listener, while the downside is that it removes the suspense or climax. In contrast, the advantage of the inductive approach is that the listener's interest is sustained since you have not revealed the central theme yet, but the risk is that unless you are really clear, they may not have been able follow you when getting to that point (Sunukjian).



Beyond the value of an effective approach to sermon delivery is the form of the sermon that best fits the message and addresses the spiritual needs of the congregation. Eugene Lowry advocates for a narrative form of preaching, which is essentially telling a story that begins with a basic discrepancy or tension and ends with a resolution (12). A sermon is conceived when a Scriptural theme interacts with a human need or problem, and a plot is generated from the tension that the interaction produces. Just as an itch needs to be scratched, so a sermon is born when a particular human predicament is solved by the particularity of the gospel (18-9) The essential stages in this “homiletical plot” are: 1) upsetting the equilibrium, 2) analyzing the discrepancy, 3) disclosing the clue to resolution, 4) experiencing the gospel, and 5) anticipating the consequences (26).

Jeffrey Frymire also promotes narrative preaching to counteract the decline in preaching as an effective means of proclaiming the gospel. He observes that modern day culture has been influenced by story more than technology in that television has raised up several generations not with too much violence but more enamored with story (7). Along with Aaron Earls, Frymire describes Jesus as a master storyteller who connected with the people as he taught in parables, in contrast with the Pharisees who were more didactic and propositional in their teaching (Frymire 13; Earls). Consequently, the crowds were amazed and recognized Jesus as one who taught with authority, and according to Frymire, his authority came from the power and impact of storytelling (13). The power of story is when you are able to enter into the world of the story, because in the words of Lucille and Bren Breneman, “‘story’ is a mystery that has the power to reach within each of us, to command emotion, to compel involvement, and to transport us into timelessness” (qtd. in Frymire 17).

After much preparation and prayer, the pastor finally delivers the sermon, and even in this the pastor is dependent on the Holy Spirit, but the good news is Jesus assures his servants that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8). Craddock enumerates some concerns that pastors often have as they walk towards the pulpit, such as what preaching aids to bring, e.g., manuscripts, notes, or nothing (214). He asserts that adequacy of preparation is not ultimately dependent on the quantity and quality of one's notes:

. . . [the] certainty of the theme and purpose and clear movement towards one's goal with serious delight. The listeners desire a sense that the message is important for them and for the preacher but not an impression from the pulpit of a super seriousness which is messianic in its manner and judgmental in its demands. The minister thoroughly prepared is free to preach with grace. (216)

The other dynamics of sermon delivery such as voice, gestures, and eye contact, will flow naturally when the preacher is able to "re-experience" the message as it is being spoken (218).

Teresa Fry Brown explains that though the exegesis, context, and sermon content may all be excellent, a weak delivery will undermine all the labor put into the sermon preparation (2). Using the classic definition of rhetoric as the study of using language effectively and persuasively, Brown proposes that sermons are basically an arrangement of sounds, words, movements, including silence, employed to preach and teach God's Word, and the preacher's ability to communicate truth clearly and effectively will greatly help the listener process the message (2). She calls for the preacher to learn the rationale

and methods for effective use of voice (verbal) and body (nonverbal) in animating the word in the preaching event (3). Brown believes that the sermon's effectiveness ultimately hinges on one's ability to communicate with the hearers on a personal basis, that is, using the minister's distinct voice and physical movement to speak one-on-one with the congregation regardless of its size (85).

### **Preaching as God Speaking to His People**

This dissertation study is premised on the understanding that one of the primary roles of pastors is to preach and teach God's people the Scriptures, to the end that they might "not only be informed but transformed." The Word of God has power to change the lives of people as they hear, believe, and obey his Word. Wayne McDill believes:

. . . the overarching aim of preaching is to call faith in the hearer . . . Since biblical faith is objective, the focus of preaching must be the object of faith, the person of God. The preacher enhances faith by pointing his hearers to God, his character, his capabilities, his intentions, and his record. (616, 617)

David Murray proposes that the unchanging principles of God's Word bring life-changing impact upon people in an ever-changing world as they apply it in their lives (170). As with McDill, Murray appeals for a more Christ-centered application, otherwise our preaching will tend to be "mere moralizing and latent legalism" (187).

Stephen F. Olford insists on the responsibility of the preacher not only to exegete the text but to bring application to the hearers (597). He explains that there are three applications that every sermon should make: a call to biblical repentance, turning back to God, and doing works of repentance; biblical renewal, which includes regeneration for

the sinner and being filled with the Spirit for the saint; and biblical reality, living authentically for God (607-09). For preaching to be effective then, there must be movement in the application of truth from the mind to the heart then the will (612).

Olford concludes that the end goal of all preaching and teaching is conformity to Christ (615).

Thus far, we have established the elements of preaching to include the Scriptures as the inspired and authoritative Word of God and therefore the foundation for Christian faith and practice, and the sovereign choosing and empowering of God for those called to the ministry of preaching and teaching. The other elements are the need to hear from the Holy Spirit a fresh word from the exegetical and contextualization study of a Scripture passage in order that the preacher might deliver the sermon that will not return empty but accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. The fifth element of preaching is the church as the recipient of God's Word, and how preaching is informed by an understanding of the congregation's needs and expectations.

The one constant in the first four elements of preaching has been the ministry of the Holy Spirit, from the inspiration of the Scriptures, to the calling and empowering of the preacher, to the illumination of the text and sermon delivery. Not surprisingly, we also see the Holy Spirit's role in the birthing and growth of the church, as Luke narrates in Acts 2 when the church was birthed by the outpouring of the Spirit on the feast of Pentecost. Likewise, Paul reveals in 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Holy Spirit's baptizing work upon both Jews and Gentiles to form them into one body, the church. As Craig van Gelder states in his book:

The Holy Spirit creates the church, enlivens the Word, enriches persons, and participates in the world. As is often said today, without the Spirit, *communitas* is an empty humanitarianism; Scripture becomes empty *paideia*, or a bullet to kill; ministry becomes the empty execution of skills; and the world becomes a dark place of suspicion” (ch. 2).

The voice of the Holy Spirit is what makes preaching Spirit and life to the people of God (John 6:63).

Preaching, as defined by Brown using communicating theory, is an oral medium for sharing faith-centered messages that originate from the preacher (sender) with the message (sermon) to the congregation (receiver) (6). Brown adds that in preaching, God and the (hopefully) God-inspired message are central to the feedback loop between the preacher and the congregation (10), resulting in a new dimension of relationship between God and his people (Rees 109). Similarly, Long asserts:

. . . faithful preaching requires sensitivity to human need, a discerning eye for the connections between faith and life, an ear attuned to hearing the voice of Scripture, compassion, a growing personal faith, and the courage to tell the truth. These are gifts of the Spirit, and although gifts of the Spirit cannot be taught in the classroom, they can be named, developed, encouraged, shaped, and given direction and focus. (ch. 1)

The role of the Holy Spirit is therefore essential not only in the enabling of the preacher to communicate the truth of God’s Word to the congregation, but in discerning the spiritual needs of the church in the first place and guiding the pastor in his or her exegetical and hermeneutical study of the text.

Several theologians, particularly those of the Pentecostal persuasion, are now emphasizing the dynamic interaction of the Spirit, Word, and community in the hermeneutical task, which is an essential prerequisite to preaching, to address the spiritual needs and issues of the church. John Thomas, a contributor to the book edited by Spawn and Wright, references Acts 15 as his basis for developing a Pentecostal hermeneutic, which looks to the Pentecostal community as the place of formation for those who would hear the biblical text with Pentecostal ears (qtd. in Spawn 116). Thomas propounds that the theological foundation of Pentecostalism, which proclaims the “full gospel” of Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Holy Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and coming King, is not so much a catechism to be memorized, but a narrative way of life to be experienced (qtd. in Spawn 116). This narrative experiential journey brings about a transformative work in the affections and dispositions of the believer, along with an appreciation for how experience significantly helps in the interpretive task (Spawn 116).

Mark Cartledge, another contributor to Spawn and Wright’s book, proposes a theological method that seeks to correlate the Scriptural text with the experience of the church community and the continuing inspiration and witness of the Holy Spirit (qtd. in Spawn 140). He cites Terry Cross’ similar insight from Acts 15 that Pentecostals not only believe that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, but that the community has a role in the interpretive process, while the Holy Spirit works through the church by leading it to make divinely inspired decisions (qtd. in Spawn 133). Cross believes that this coincides with Karl Barth’s emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling the preaching of God’s Word to be heard as revelation, as well as Calvin’s conviction concerning the “inward testimony of the Spirit” in the preaching of Scripture, thus making the proclamation of

the gospel become the occasion for the continuing event of revelation as the church receives the Word of God by faith (qtd. in Spawn 133). Cartledge adds that through this triadic hermeneutic, the Bible does not just describe our experiences with God, rather it enables us to have experiences of God; the Scriptures are therefore the primary means for communion with God, a template for understanding the world, and a connection with the presence of God in his people throughout history (qtd. in Spawn 135).

Amos Yong proposes to develop a Trinitarian theological hermeneutic and methodology which starts with the Spirit but is always informed to a certain extent by Word and Community (220). Yong explains that this trialectic sustains the activity of interpretation by a movement, not necessarily in sequential order, from the Word to either Spirit or Community, or from Community to either Spirit and Word (220). This hermeneutical triad—of interpretive acts (Spirit), interpretive objects (Word), and interpretive contexts (Community)—is relational, perichoretic and Trinitarian all at the same time (220).

These theological perspectives reinforce the need for the preacher to not only exegete the Scriptures but the congregation as well. Long posits that the preacher is in every way a part of the congregation, implying that he or she is in a position to understand and discern the spiritual needs of God's flock, but then rises up in front of the congregation to speak in the name of Christ a Scriptural text interpreted by the Spirit (ch. 1). The Lord wants to speak to his people through the pastor to minister to their spiritual needs, and the triad of Spirit, Word, and Community allows for a hermeneutical process that adheres to the generally accepted grammatical, historical, and literary approaches to

biblical interpretation, and at the same time acknowledges the Spirit's illuminating work to build up the faith and bring transformation in the lives of the saints.

The exegesis of the congregation can further be facilitated by understanding that the diverse cultural backgrounds of people in many respects influence the way they hear the same sermon. James Nieman and Thomas Rogers define culture as "the way we mark off who we are and give shape to the spaces we inhabit. Culture is a human construct that includes both our patterns of meaning and our strategies for action" (ch. 1). They describe four cultural frames that would inform the way the preacher ought to communicate the Word: ethnicity, class, displacement, and beliefs (ch. 1). These four frames are not exhaustive but were identified by the authors based on their extensive research as the most powerful and pervasive themes culled from the multicultural history of the United States, as well as posing the greater challenges in the cross-cultural and global context of preaching today (ch. 1).

### **The Importance of Preaching in the Life of the Church**

The theological foundations for the ministry of preaching and teaching summarized in this literature review are intended to equip pastors to be more effective in shepherding the flock of God through a Spirit-empowered hermeneutical and homiletical process in sermon preparation and delivery. Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God by preaching the gospel and demonstrating its reality through healing of the sick and delivering of people from demonic bondage. From those who would respond he would build his *ekklesia*, the called-out ones, becoming the instrument of his kingdom authority and power (Matt. 16:18-19). The ministry of preaching and teaching plays a vital role in the building up of the church, declaring the *sophia* of God to the saints so



that their faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power, as Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) summarizes the priorities of the church which the preaching ministry must address: making disciples, developing leaders, and pioneering churches into new cities and nations.

Connecting the Great Commission with church growth, Christian Schwarz challenges the skepticism of many Christians towards the church growth movement, who believe that the numerical growth of the church cannot be achieved in man's strength (6). While Schwarz does not negate human effort towards church growth, he contends that these methods are insufficient because they are inconsistent with God's plan for growth, which he has set in motion through "biotic" or natural growth automatisms that Jesus described in Mark 4:26-29 (7, 12). He enumerates eight essential qualities of healthy churches: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships (22-37). David White, in implementing Schwarz's biotic principles for a country-specific case study, describes life-transforming preaching—which should be biblical, easy to understand but not shallow, and applicable to daily life—as a key ingredient to inspiring worship services and hence, healthy churches. Likewise, David L. Lorenz cites Thom Rainer's research that pastors in healthy, growing churches spend five times longer on sermon preparation than pastors of non-growing churches (qtd. in Lorenz 34).

Also, Brad J. Waggoner proposes, through his Spiritual Formation Inventory, seven domains that identify what a disciple of Christ is: 1) learning truth, 2) obeying God and denying self, 3) serving God and others, 4) sharing Christ, 5) exercising faith, 6)

seeking God, and 7) building relationships (16). In his research, Waggoner discovered a strong correlation between spiritual formation and the belief systems of the respondents. In essence, a person's understanding of basic Christian doctrine—that is, the way a person views God, the Scriptures, and the church, and others—significantly affects how the believer lives out the faith (31). Since the essence of being a disciple is about being a learner, the preaching ministry provides the pastor with a continuing opportunity to equip the saints with God's Word that they may apply the truth and experience spiritual renewal.

Furthermore, Van Gelder observes that theological education, which is an essential component of the formation of church leaders, over the years has tended to follow the development of new congregations (Van Gelder, 161). This is in consonance with the burden of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 9:37-38, that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, and therefore we are to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. Kyle Small, a contributor to the book edited by Van Gelder, in attempting to answer the question, "What is theological about a theological school?," suggests that the modern missions movement and the thrust of ecclesiology have given rise to missional ecclesiology or missional church theology, which "seeks to integrate these two disciplines, where the work of God in the world calls forth the church as a sign, instrument, and foretaste to participate more fully in the redemptive reign of God" (611). In applying the Matthew 16 revelation that Peter received concerning the Messiah, Leslie Newbigin posits that the Holy Spirit empowers God's people in new situations and cultural contexts to make the confession of faith that Jesus is Lord in the language of their specific culture (ch. 3). He therefore defines the mission of the church

as “the church’s obedient participation in that action of the Spirit by which the confession of Jesus as Lord becomes the authentic confession of every new people, each in its own tongue” (ch. 3).

### **Developing a Preaching Training Program**

This literature review has endeavored to identify, from both biblical and theological perspectives, the essential elements in sermon preparation and delivery that God would continue to speak to his people through the preaching and teaching of the Word, for his words are Spirit and life to us. This last section explores some key considerations in the development of a training program for preachers applying the concepts derived from the literature review. While there are already many existing seminaries that provide excellent formal theological training for aspiring preachers, this dissertation will focus on non-formal preaching training that can be initiated by denominational organizations that oversee multiple churches and pastors.

Ronald Allen, in interviewing both lay people and ministers in a study conducted by Christian Theological Seminary, discovered five major ways by which clergy learned to preach. The first way these ministers learned to preach was by listening to other preachers. They learned the importance and purpose of preaching by observing how these homileticians put together their sermons, and how they picked up things from their observations (138). The second way the ministers learned to preach was through the seminary. Most of the interviewed clergy explained:

. . . their work in seminary did not so much introduce them to the preaching task as it gave them a deeper theological understanding of preaching, ways to understand what they wanted to do when they preach,

broadened their awareness of ways to put sermons together, and provided analytical tools for thinking about preaching and preparing and embodying sermons. (140)

The modeling of preaching apparently helps facilitate the formal theological training of ministers.

The third major way these clergy learned to preach was through ministerial training from denominational programs or from personal mentors. These ministers did not typically attend a graduate school of theology but learned by both observing other preachers and in classroom or workshop settings (Allen 141). The fourth way several of the interviewed ministers learned to preach was through receiving feedback from both colleagues and parishioners. Some of these ministers met regularly in groups for both sermon preparation and giving and receiving feedback from among themselves (142). The fifth way the ministers learned to preach was through various other means, such as taking public speaking courses and teaching in educational institutions as adjunct faculty (144).

Nomeriano C. Bernardino's dissertation entailed the formulation of a training program in biblical preaching for pastors in his denomination (v). The improvement in the preaching abilities of the pastors as a result of the training led him to conclude that biblical preaching is more than just learning about methods and techniques but about growing in relationship with God, a prayerful ability to exegete and apply the Scriptures, a credible testimony before their congregations, and full dependence on the Holy Spirit (v). Similarly, Fernando Lua in his dissertation developed an alternative pastoral training program in collaboration with a theological seminary for a pastoral group with no formal

theological training in a particular city (i). His findings showed that these pastors wanted to improve their preaching, biblical interpretation, leadership and administration skills, while maintaining a passion for God (ii).

In surveying the current trends in pastoral training, Lua notes that there are many pastors who neither have the time nor finances to devote three to four years to formal seminary training, nor qualified for seminary education (60). In this case, non-formal training is a viable alternative for people called to pastoral ministry. Lua enumerates the advantages of non-formal training to include lower cost but not necessarily lower quality instruction, a flexible time schedule for the students, subject matters that are based on the participants' interests rather than the fixed curriculum in formal training, and more experience-based than academic programs (60, 61).

Andragogy is a field of study that applies methods and principles of education for adults, and it is worth considering these principles in the development of a preaching training program for pastors. Jack Mezirow posits that reflective learning entails an evaluation or reevaluation of one's assumptions in problem solving (6). He explains, "Reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, inauthentic, or otherwise invalid. Transformative learning results in new or transformed meaning schemes or, when reflection focuses on premises, transformed meaning perspectives. To the extent that adult education strives to foster reflective learning, its goal becomes one of either confirmation or transformation of ways to interpret experience (6).

On the other hand, Raymond J. Wlodkowski proposes that motivation is an essential component in facilitating learning, for it is not only a causative factor but the

consequence of learning as well (4). A person who is motivated to learn is able to communicate freely, has less anxiety, and is released to be more creative and learns more in the process (4). Though it is difficult scientifically to assess how motivation contributes to learning and achievement, what can be measured is the effort resulting from it, i.e., people end up working harder with greater energy and intensity (5). In brief, Mezirow's fostering reflective learning and Wlodkowski's promoting motivation in learning can complement the principles already drawn out from the biblical and theological foundations of preaching as we design a training program for preachers, to which we will now turn to in the research proper.

### **Research Design Literature**

The overall research methodology employed for this project was a mixed methods approach using two quantitative and two qualitative instruments. According to John W. Creswell, mixed methods research, which combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches, strengthens the research findings versus simply employing one or the other method (22). The first quantitative instrument, the preaching pastors' online survey using a frequency scale, was designed to draw out the devotional habits and sermon preparation practices of the Metro Manila pastors.

The second quantitative instrument, the small group leaders' online survey using a Likert scale, was designed to assess the quality of the preaching that these leaders, as a representation of the congregations scattered across the metropolitan area, are hearing on a weekly basis. The first qualitative instrument, the semi-structured one-on-one interview with the eight members of the apostolic team, was designed to not only draw out their experiences in their development as preachers, but to glean their perspectives in best

practices in preaching that will fulfill the church's mission, values, and culture. The second qualitative instrument, the focused group discussion with two groups of senior pastors and two campus missionaries who preach in the youth services, was designed to draw out their personal experiences in their development as preachers, and to assess the quality of preaching that the pastors under their supervision are delivering.

Tim Sensing recommends the use of data triangulation in order to ascertain the validity of the data gathered in the research. There are three angles of vision which provide the triangulated perspectives: the insider, outsider, and researcher angles (90). While it was the researcher's initial assumption that the apostolic team and the small group leaders would provide the outsiders' perspective because they were either the most mature and experienced preachers and stewards of the church's mission, or recipients of the weekly sermons, it became apparent after some time that they were still insiders. There was therefore a need to develop a fifth instrument, an outside expert assessment tool, to observe and evaluate some of the actual sermons preached in the congregations using certain criteria for effective preaching. The researcher invited three doctoral professors who were familiar with Victory church to provide an assessment of six sample sermons delivered by six different pastors in recent months in different congregations.

Judith Bell recommended the use of surveys to determine pertinent information about a certain group of people, such as their demographic profiles, their opinions and attitudes, and others. Surveys can determine facts about certain groups of people and their activities, but not causal relationships (11, 12). The two quantitative instruments' survey results were administered using SurveyMonkey and the results summarized to generate a

mean and standard deviation for each question. These statistical data were used to determine the frequency and effectiveness of the pastors' current practices.

### **Summary of Literature**

The foundation of preaching and teaching is anchored on the revelation in Scripture that God has taken the initiative to speak to mankind in general and to his people in particular through the prophets in the Old Testament, but ultimately by his Son. Jesus as the Living Word is the complete revelation of all that God wanted to speak to humanity, and through the Old Testament Scriptures and the apostolic writings of the New Testament. Everything that the Father spoke was preserved through the Holy Spirit's work of inspiring the biblical authors. Preaching then is the proclamation of all that the Lord has revealed in the Scriptures concerning himself and his will for humanity, the written Word becoming the spoken Word, that all who hear might believe and obey and receive eternal life.

The pattern of Jesus and the apostles' ministry of the Word identifies five essential elements in preaching. The first is that preaching is God speaking through the Scriptures. As has been described, the written Word is the revelation of God and his will for mankind, and it is inerrant and authoritative for the faith and practice of all who would follow him. Heaven and earth will pass away but God's Word will never pass away, therefore it is the eternal word by which the whole world will be held accountable to God. The preaching of the Scriptures is foolishness to those who are perishing but the power of God for those who are being saved as it imparts faith to the hearers.

The second essential element in preaching is that this ministry is a calling from God. Those called to preach are sovereignly chosen by the Lord, and along with the



calling is the promise of the empowering of the Spirit to be his witnesses. The apostle Paul confessed that in his calling as an apostle, he was what he was by the grace of God, but that grace was not without effect—he worked harder than most. The grace to persevere in the calling to preach is released through the cultivation of spiritual habits. Spiritual disciplines are a means of grace, a way of sowing in the Spirit that the servant of God might be spiritually transformed.

The third essential element in preaching is hearing from God. Though the Scriptures are an ancient text, preachers can discern what the Lord wants to say to the church today as they engage in the hermeneutical tasks of exegesis and contextualization. The Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture text as the pastor studies and asks for revelation concerning what the Spirit spoke to the original recipients of the book, and to bring a contemporary application to the congregation.

The fourth element in preaching is God speaking through the preacher. The delivery of the sermon is the culmination of the sermon preparation process. Isaiah declared the performative power of the preached Word, for just as the rain and snow fall down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so is his word that goes out from his mouth; it will not return to him empty, but will accomplish the purpose for which he sent it. It is through the spoken Word that faith comes to God's people.

The fifth essential element in preaching is God speaking to the congregation. The preached Word is intended to minister to spiritual needs of the people of God. The preacher's effectiveness is not just contingent on his or her ability to exegete the text but to exegete the congregation. These five elements enabled the researcher to evaluate the

current practices of the preaching pastors and the basis for the interventions that were proposed.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The rapid growth of Victory Metro Manila has put growing pressure on the church leadership to accelerate the leadership development of the pastors particularly in their preaching capabilities. The preaching and teaching of God's Word is a primary responsibility for those called to be shepherds of God's flock. Because the majority of the pastors have been in vocational ministry for less than 10 years, the apostolic leadership has identified a number of observable gaps in their preaching abilities.

This chapter describes the research methodology used to assess the current spiritual habits and sermon preparation and delivery practices of the preaching pastors. After a brief review of the nature and purpose of the project, the project's research questions are presented along with the instrumentation used to address each question. The ministry context of Victory Metro Manila is then presented, followed by specifics on the participants in the study, the instrumentation employed and the process of data gathering and analysis.

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this research was to develop a training program to enhance the preaching capabilities of the ninety-one Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors in the task of making disciples, training leaders, and leading their churches. Victory Metro Manila is a multi-site church with eighteen congregations and currently meets in forty-nine locations across Metro Manila, Philippines. A preaching pastor is someone who preaches at least once a month in one of the Victory church's 182 weekly worship

services. The continuous growth and expansion of the church and campus ministries of Victory Metro Manila, particularly in the last fifteen years, has brought growing pressure on the church leadership to develop new pastors as well as increase the leadership capacities of the current pastors, particularly their preaching capabilities, which is a vital function of spiritual leadership.

### **Research Questions**

This pre-intervention project sought to address some observable gaps in these pastors' preaching abilities as initially identified by the apostolic leadership and validated by the literature review. Three research questions were generated to more specifically identify and address these gaps:

#### **Research Question #1**

**What essential spiritual habits of pastors deepen their personal relationship with God so that they can grow in their ability to discern God's voice and preach as those who have heard a message from God?**

The purpose of this question was to establish from the literature review and the research instruments important devotional habits and practices of those called to be spiritual leaders in the church, particularly those who preach and teach God's Word. Four mixed-methods research instruments were used to answer this question. The first instrument developed in order to reinforce the literature review's findings was the apostolic team member interview with the eight apostolic team members. Their spiritual maturity, calling, gifting, and extensive experience in ministry give the apostolic team members the credibility to substantiate these essential spiritual habits. Questions 2, 3, and 4 of the apostolic team member interview found in Appendix A, specifically addressed

this question. The second instrument, the preaching pastors' self-assessment survey found in Appendix B, was designed to evaluate the current spiritual habits and sermon preparation practices of the Metro Manila preaching pastors. Questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 43, 45, and 47 addressed the devotional habits of the pastors and God's working as they practiced these habits. This instrument used a frequency scale to determine the extent to which the pastors practiced these habits and experienced God's working in their lives.

As pointed out in the literature review, those called to preach are sovereignly chosen by the Lord, and along with the calling is the promise of the empowering of the Spirit. Yet the apostle Paul confessed that in his calling to be an apostle, he attained it by the grace of God, but that grace was not without effect—he worked harder than most. The grace to persevere in the calling to preach was released through the cultivation of devotional habits. Spiritual disciplines are a means of grace, a way of sowing in the Spirit that the servant of God might be spiritually transformed and do the works of God.

The third instrument designed was the small group leaders' preaching observation survey for selected Victory group leaders in each of the eighteen congregations. This instrument, found in Appendix C, used a Likert scale to determine the extent to which the Victory group leaders agreed or disagreed with the effectiveness of the preaching taking place in their respective congregations on a weekly basis. The results of questions 15, 16, 17, 22, 24, and 32 of this survey were used to answer the research question.

The fourth instrument designed was the senior pastors' focused group discussion with senior pastors and selected campus missionaries who regularly preach in the youth services of each of the eighteen congregations. This discussion was intended to draw out

the pastors' observations and evaluation of the quality of preaching taking place in each of their congregations by the preaching pastors under their oversight. The senior pastors were divided into two groups and were joined in each group by seasoned campus missionaries who preached in the youth services. The results of questions 1, 2, and 4 from this semi-structured interview, found in Appendix D, were used to answer this research question.

### **Research Question #2**

**What characteristics and best practices in preaching not only address current gaps in the preaching capabilities of the Victory pastors, but also align with the mission, values, and culture of Victory?**

The purpose of this question was to identify, from both the literature review and the data collected, the best practices in preaching that will enable the Victory Metro Manila pastors to fulfill their mission. To accomplish this goal, four mixed-methods research instruments were used. The preaching pastors' self-assessment survey identified their current practices and experiences in preaching, particularly questions 11, 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46 and 48. The second instrument designed was the small group leaders' preaching observation survey for selected Victory group leaders in each of the eighteen congregations. This instrument used the findings from questions 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32 to answer the research question.

The third instrument developed was the apostolic team member interview with the eight members of the apostolic team. Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 in the interview helped to answer this research question. The fourth instrument designed was the senior pastors'

focused group discussion with the senior pastors and selected campus missionaries who regularly preach in the youth services of each of the eighteen congregations. The findings for question numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 were used to answer the research question.

The fifth instrument designed was the outside experts' assessment tool to evaluate six sample sermons of six preaching pastors delivered sometime in 2018 by three doctoral professors according to certain criteria derived from the literature review. This instrument is found in Appendix E. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 were crafted to elicit the professors' observations regarding the hermeneutical and homiletical work undertaken by these six pastors in their sermons. This tool was intended to provide an outsider's viewpoint to complete the data triangulation lenses of researcher, insider, and outsider perspectives.

### **Research Question #3**

**What training modules can be developed to enhance the preaching capabilities of the ninety-one Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors in accordance with those characteristics and best practices?**

The modules to be proposed for the preaching training program were developed from the literature review and recommendations from the apostolic team members, the senior pastors, and the three outside experts. In the apostolic team interviews, questions 2, 7, and 8 were used to elicit their recommendations. For the senior pastors' focused group discussion, questions 1 and 5 were used to obtain their suggestions, while for the outside experts' assessment, question 7 was used. The findings from all the five research instruments were synthesized to validate the strengths and identify the gaps in the

preaching capabilities of the pastors, and the training modules were designed thereafter to address these gaps.

### **Ministry Context**

Victory Metro Manila was birthed as a church in 1984 after a team of sixty American missionaries led by Pastors Steve Murrell and Rice Brooks conducted a one-month evangelistic outreach at the University Belt area in the city of Manila, Philippines, where over two hundred thousand students are studying within a few square kilometers area. From an initial congregation of 150 young people, mostly students, the church has grown and expanded to where Victory today has established eighteen congregations in forty-nine locations within Metro Manila conducting 182 weekend worship services, of which forty-two are youth services, and averaging around 91,000 in weekly attendance. The church leadership considers Victory Metro Manila as one church with multiple locations, and its synchronized preaching series is an outworking of this decision. Victory has also planted over one hundred more churches in the provinces throughout the country and sent out from the Philippines around two hundred long-term cross-cultural missionaries, mostly in Asia. Victory is a founding member of Every Nation Ministries established in 1994 with headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

I believe the major reason for this continued growth in the Victory churches as well as in other ministries across the nation is the spiritual openness of our people to the gospel. Catholic Christianity was first introduced in 1521 when Magellan discovered the islands, planted the cross, and claimed them for Spain. Thereafter in 1898, American missionaries brought Protestant Christianity on the heels of the American colonization of the Philippines. Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches were planted in the



next 100 years, and all of the mission work, coupled with the economic hardship of many Filipinos forcing millions to work overseas to send home money to their families, has created a spiritual hunger for the hope offered in the gospel. In addition to these factors, the discipleship and leadership development culture inculcated by Victory's founding pastor allowed the church to grow consistently and rapidly in the last thirty-five years.

With the continuous growth and expansion of the church and campus ministries of Victory Metro Manila, particularly in the last fifteen years, there is the constant need for the church leadership to raise new pastors as well as increase the leadership capabilities of current pastors. In particular, the apostolic team has observed the urgent need to further enhance the preaching capabilities of these pastors, which is a vital function of spiritual leadership. The apostolic team is responsible for both governing the ministry and nurturing the healthy growth of the pastors and churches; the researcher is privileged to be a member of this team. The pastors' development as preachers is essential, not only because around one third of them have been in vocational ministry for less than the last ten years, but also because of the apostolic team's desire to see the church members grow in their faith and become lifelong disciples of Christ through transformative preaching.

The apostolic team, along with the ministry school directors and some of the senior pastors in Victory, have identified three observable gaps in the preaching capabilities of these pastors which the proposed training program aims to address. The first is the need for the pastors to deepen their relationship with God through the spiritual habits of prayer, the Word, and other disciplines, so that they will preach as those who have heard a message from God. The second is the need for them to develop greater skill in the exegetical and hermeneutical tasks, in order to make preaching more text-driven

rather than preacher-driven. The third is the need for these pastors to have a greater awareness of the different sermonic forms available, in order to communicate the Word that is effective both for the genre of the Scriptural text being preached as well as the congregation being addressed.

### **Participants**

The first group of participants in this project were the 91 preaching pastors in Victory Metro Manila. The church at the time had a total of 105 pastors and 159 campus missionaries in Metro Manila, and 91 of these pastors or campus missionaries preached in the weekend worship or youth services at least once a month. These were included in the online survey for their spiritual habits and current sermon preparation practices.

Around one third of these preaching pastors had been in vocational ministry for less than ten years. Almost all of them had no formal theological education from a seminary. However, they had been trained in the church's in-house 3- or 4-month leadership schools which they attended prior to their ministry assignment. The consent letter which the pastors were asked to sign if they agreed to participate in the survey is shown in Appendix F.

The second group of participants were the eight members of the Philippine apostolic team. These pastors were some of the most seasoned of the pastors either from Metro Manila or leaders in the larger Victory or Every Nation movement. Apostolic team member is appointed on the basis of calling, spiritual maturity, gifting, and leadership capacity to oversee the Victory churches and ministries beyond their own ministry sphere of responsibility. A one-on-one interview with each member was conducted to draw out their own sermon preparation practices as well as their perspective on preaching best

practices that align with Victory's mission, values, and culture. They were asked to sign the consent letter found in Appendix G, if they were willing to participate in the interview.

The third group of participants were the senior pastors of each congregation and selected campus missionaries who preached in the youth services. Senior pastors are appointed on the basis of their calling, spiritual maturity, gifting, and leadership capacity to oversee a whole congregation. Senior pastors preach regularly in at least two of their services and oversee the pastoral team composed of several lead pastors in their respective congregations, who in turn preach in one or more weekend worship services. Two of the fourteen senior pastors oversaw three congregations each instead of the usual one congregation because the potential senior pastors for those congregations were still in training, for a total of fourteen senior pastors overseeing eighteen congregations.

The campus missionaries invited to participate in the focused group discussion were selected on the basis of their spiritual maturity and effectiveness in preaching in the youth services, which were geared for high school and college students aged 13-25. These selected campus missionaries were included since forty-two of 182 or around 23 percent of the total worship services of the churches were youth services, so there was a need to understand the spiritual needs particularly of the younger generation along with the rest of the church. Several of the campus missionaries also preach regularly in the weekend worship services taking place in each congregation. The senior pastors and selected campus missionaries were asked to sign a consent letter found in Appendix H, if they agreed to participate in the discussion.

Two focused group discussions with eight participants per group were conducted with a combination of these senior pastors and selected campus missionaries. Since two of the senior pastors were already members of the apostolic team, only the remaining twelve were included in the focused group discussion along with four of the more effective campus missionaries, two men and two women. They were interviewed on their personal sermon preparation practices, their perspectives on sermon preparation best practices, and their observations on the quality of their pastoral team's preaching in their respective congregations.

The fourth group of participants were 450 Victory group (VG) leaders out of over 8,800 volunteers currently serving as small group leaders in Victory Metro Manila. The senior pastor of each congregation was asked to recommend thirty-five of these VG leaders—who had completed the Leadership 113 (L113), a ten-month training course administered by Every Nation Leadership Institute (ENLI)—for inclusion in the online survey. The training course included topics on basic exegesis and hermeneutics, which enabled them to have a greater appreciation and ability to evaluate the weekly preaching taking place in their respective congregations.

The hope was that twenty-five out of the thirty-five invited leaders would agree to participate in the survey, totaling 450 participants for the eighteen congregations. The online survey was designed for the participants to share their experiences and observations regarding the weekly preaching in their respective congregations. The consent form which the lay leaders were asked to sign if they agreed to participate is found in Appendix I.

### **Instrumentation**

Permission to conduct the research was first sought from the following: the CEO of Every Nation Philippines (ENPH), the Victory Metro Manila Director, and the ENLI Director. Once the research was approved, the preaching pastors were invited to a meeting to brief them on the purpose and benefits of the preaching pastors' self-assessment survey. The researcher asked for their participation but it would be on a purely voluntary basis, and they were handed a consent form to sign at the end of the meeting to signify their intention to join the survey.

The preaching pastors' self-assessment survey was accomplished through a survey questionnaire using SurveyMonkey which was sent to the individual email addresses of those who consented to participate. The email asked the participants to fill out the survey within a two-week period. The SSL security function was enabled through the SurveyMonkey website. The survey assessed the current spiritual habits and sermon preparation practices of the pastors. They filled out the survey in the privacy of their home or office, and on average probably took no more than thirty minutes. In the online survey, the pastors were informed at the outset that their participation was voluntary, and they can opt to either to participate or not. While doing the survey, they were also given the option not to answer any of the survey questions if they preferred not to. Even after filling out the survey, they were still provided the option to not submit it if they chose not to. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the questionnaire did not elicit information that will personally identify them. The results of the survey were collated and stored in the researcher's password-protected laptop in his house. Only the researcher and his

Executive Assistant know the password. Any data printed in hard copies were secured in the researcher's locked office cabinet.

The one-on-one interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis with the eight members of the apostolic team. The researcher personally talked to or called each of the members and explained the purpose of the research. Those who agreed were handed a consent form for them to sign. The researcher then scheduled and conducted a one-hour face-to-face interview with each apostolic team member within one month's time with a semi-structured set of seven questions on their own sermon preparation practices as well as their perspective on preaching best practices that align with Victory's mission, values, and culture.

During the interview, each member was given the option not to answer any of the questions if so preferred. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the questionnaire did not contain information that would personally identify them. The interviews were audio-recorded on the researcher's iPhone using the voice memo app, then transcribed by the researcher's executive assistant, and preserved in a password-protected laptop belonging to the researcher and kept in his house. The executive assistant was informed with her concurrence prior to the research that the interview notes were strictly confidential.

The focused group discussion was likewise conducted on a voluntary basis with the 12 senior pastors and four campus missionaries who preached in the youth services. The researcher personally talked to or called each of the ministers and explained to them the purpose of the research. If they agreed to participate, they were handed a consent form for them to sign. The researcher then organized them into two groups of eight pastors each. The two-hour semi-structured interview included questions on their sermon

preparation practices, their perspectives on sermon preparation best practices, and their observations on the quality of their pastoral team's preaching in their respective congregations. The whole session was recorded using microphones, which were turned off once the interview was over. The researcher's executive assistant transcribed the interview recordings and was instructed to keep the notes strictly confidential. The recordings were preserved in the researcher's password-protected laptop and kept in the researcher's house.

The researcher apprised the senior pastor of each of the eighteen congregations of the plan and purpose of doing an online survey, and then asked for permission to do so. The survey involved some of their small group leaders—referred to as Victory Group (VG) leaders, who have completed the ten-month Leadership 113 (L113) training course—and enabled them to share their experiences and observations regarding the weekly preaching in their respective congregations. ENLI had the record of the VG leaders who had completed the Leadership 113 course per congregation. The researcher then asked the senior pastor to recommend thirty-five names from the roster of the Leadership 113 graduates of their congregation for possible inclusion in the survey. Thereafter, the senior pastor individually emailed the thirty-five VG leaders in their respective congregations to explain the purpose of the survey, that they are being invited to participate, and that it is purely voluntary. The goal was to have at least twenty-five VG leaders from each congregation as participants. Each of the invited lay leaders did not know who else among the other small group leaders were invited as well.

Once they consented to do so, the senior pastor informed the researcher of those who have signified a willingness to participate, and the researcher then sent them the

online survey link using SurveyMonkey for them to respond to. The SSL security function was enabled through the SurveyMonkey website. They filled out the survey in the privacy of their home or any other private place, and probably took no more than 30 minutes. In the online survey, the VG leader was informed at the outset that their participation was voluntary, and they can opt to either participate or not. While doing the survey, they were also given the option not to answer any of the survey questions if they preferred not to. Even after filling out the survey, if they chose not to submit it, they were provided that option as well. Furthermore, the researcher ensure that the questionnaire did not elicit information that would personally identify them. The results of the survey were collated and stored in the researcher's password-protected laptop in his house. Any hard copy data was secured in the researcher's locked office cabinet.

### **Expert Review**

For the outside expert assessment, three doctoral professors were invited to assess six sample video sermons uploaded on YouTube delivered by six preaching pastors from Victory Metro Manila sometime in 2018. The first professor invited was Dr. Nomer Bernardino, a D.Min. in Leadership graduate from Regent University and currently an Adjunct Professor at Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines. The second was Dr. Tim Gener, a Ph.D. in Theology graduate from Fuller Theological Seminary and currently Chancellor and Professor of Theology at Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines. The third professor invited was Dr. Dave Ward, a Ph.D. in Homiletics, Practical Theology graduate from Princeton Theological Seminary and currently Associate Professor of Homiletics and Practical Theology at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana, USA.



Both Drs. Bernardino and Gener are Filipinos while Dr. Ward is from the US. All three professors are personally known to the researcher and have either spoken to or trained our pastors in preaching. They were invited because of their theological expertise either in theology or homiletics and their familiarity with Victory and its mission, values, and culture. All three professors consented to do the assessment for the six preaching pastors' sermons. The outsider experts' assessment invitation letter is found in Appendix E.

### **Reliability and Validity of the Project Design**

Since the research employs both quantitative and qualitative instruments as well as data triangulation, the hope is that these findings will provide a thick description of the current state of preaching taking place in Victory Metro Manila. The multi-congregational set-up and large population of the church spread out across the metropolitan area created the need for quantitative data to supplement and validate the interviews and focused group discussions along with the outside experts' assessments on the quality of the sermons delivered on a weekly basis. The research instruments were vetted with other ministers who are experienced in social research as well as statistical methods to increase the validity and reliability of the research design and results.

### **Data Collection**

According to Sensing, "Data collection begins with setting the boundaries for the study; it continues by collecting information through observations, interviews, documents, and visual materials, etc., and concludes by establishing the protocol for recording the information" (90). The project was designed as a pre-intervention research employing a mixed-methods approach to assess the current practices of the preaching

pastors of Victory Metro Manila and design a training program to address the gaps in their preaching. Creswell explains that mixed methods research, which combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches, strengthens the overall findings rather than simply employing one or the other method (22).

Sensing also proposes the benefit of using data triangulation in formulating the instruments in order to ascertain the results of the data gathered (90). The project's intervention can be derived from three angles of vision: the participants as insiders, the outsiders, and the researcher (90). The participants' angle of vision will be drawn out using two instruments: the pastors' self-assessment survey of the current spiritual habits and sermon preparation practices of the pastors, and the two focused group discussions with the senior pastors and selected campus missionaries.

At first, I considered the apostolic team members and small group leaders as outsiders. The apostolic team members had the bigger responsibility of leading the church movement as a whole compared to each preaching pastor who was only concerned about their own worship service and congregation, so they have a higher perspective of what constitutes preaching that will accomplish the ministry's goals. Also, most of the small group leaders did not have a personal relationship with the preaching pastor given the thousands of attendees in each congregation, so they can receive the ministry of the Word and still be somewhat objective in assessing the quality of the preaching. However, since all the apostolic team members and lay leaders were members of the same ministry organization, some bias was still likely in their responses. For this reason, the results of the apostolic team interviews and the small group leaders' survey

were still ultimately insider angles, and the outside experts' assessment findings were needed to accomplish data triangulation.

### **Data Analysis**

Bell asserts that “surveys are concerned with the demographic characteristics, the social environment, the activities, or the opinions and attitudes of some group of people . . . Surveys can provide answers to the questions ‘What?’, ‘Where?’, ‘When?’ and ‘How?’, but it is not so easy to find out ‘Why?’. Causal relationships can rarely, if ever, be proved by survey method. The main emphasis is on fact-finding, and if a survey is well structured and piloted, it can be a relatively cheap and quick way of obtaining information” (11, 12).

The preaching pastors' self-assessment survey using SurveyMonkey was intended to assess the devotional habits of the preaching pastors as well as their sermon preparation practices. Also, the small group leaders' preaching observation survey was intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the pastors' sermons that were delivered on a weekly basis. Bell reiterates the value of a survey in that it allows researchers to gather answers to the same questions from a large population and enables them to describe, compare, and relate one characteristic to another, classifying their observations into categories (12).

On the other hand, the one-on-one interviews are helpful in eliciting ideas, responses, motives, and feelings from the respondents as the questions are presented, which surveys are not able to do (Bell 161). The apostolic team members' interviews were designed to assess the current preaching practices of the pastors as they related to accomplishing the church's mission and promoting its values and culture. The focused

group discussions were likewise intended to further understand the sermon preparation practices not only of the senior pastors but the other pastors under their spiritual oversight in every congregation. Focused groups facilitate interaction that generate insights and information that would otherwise not have been generated from individual interviews (Sensing 120).

Sensing explains that, “One person’s response may prompt or modify another person’s memory of an event and its details. Because not everyone will have the same views and experience, participants influence one another. Differences in age, gender, education, access to resources, and other factors will prompt a variety of responses that may not emerge in a homogeneous group setting or from the individual interview” (120). The semi-structured interview aimed to elicit the senior pastors’ perspectives on the quality of preaching among the pastors in their respective teams as well as their opinions on sermon preparation best practices.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

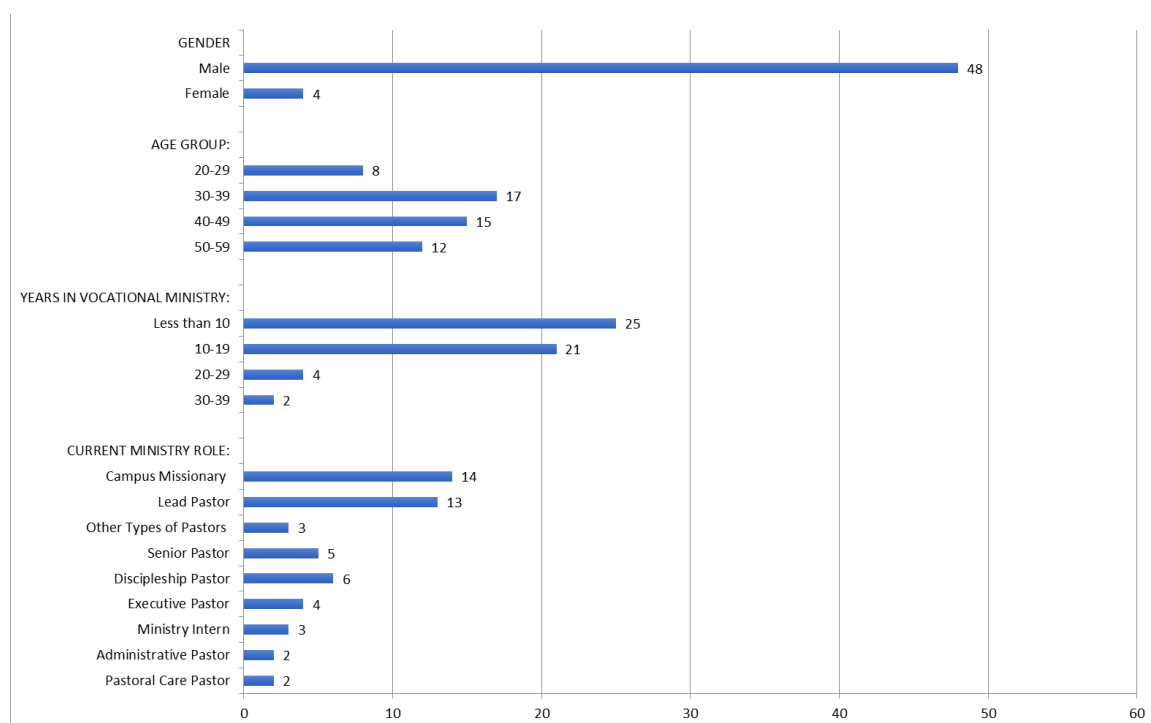
#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The purpose of this research was to develop a training program to enhance the preaching capabilities of the 91 Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors in the task of making disciples, training leaders, and leading their churches. Victory Metro Manila is a multi-site church with 18 congregations and currently meets in 49 locations across the metropolitan area. A preaching pastor is someone who preaches at least once a month in one of Victory's 182 weekly worship services. The continuous growth and expansion of the church and campus ministries of Victory Metro Manila, particularly in the last 15 years, has brought growing pressure on the church leadership to develop new pastors as well as increase the leadership capacities of the current pastors through the preaching ministry. The church leadership believes in the vital role of preaching in helping the members grow in their faith and become lifelong disciples of Christ, thus the need to develop more comprehensive training modules to address the gaps in the preaching abilities of the pastors.

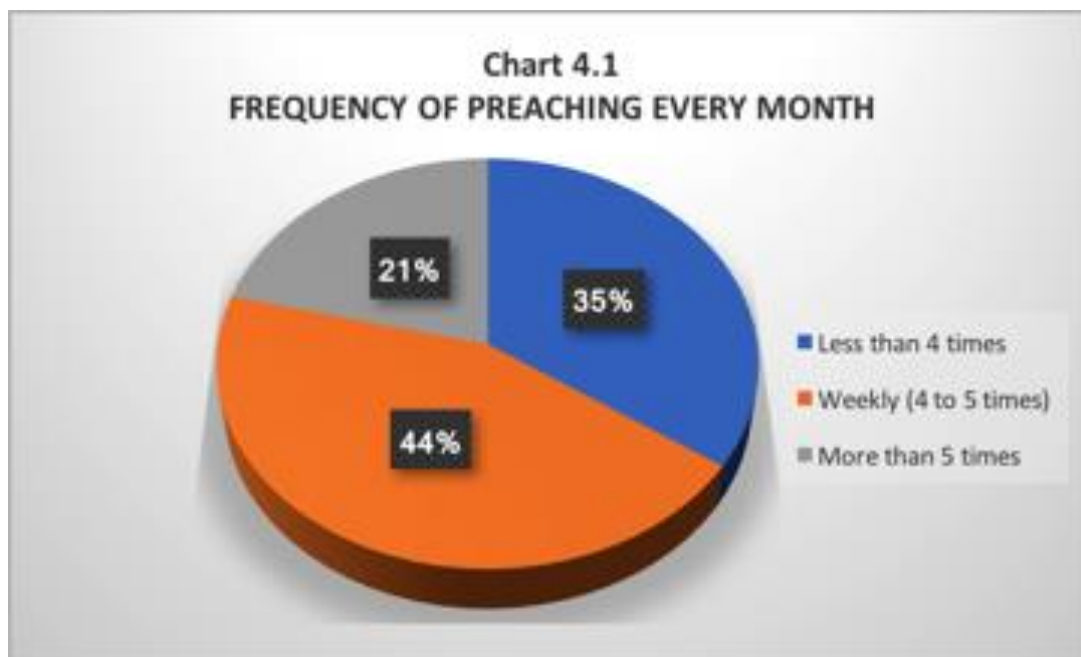
This chapter presents the results of the five research instruments in identifying the gaps in the preaching abilities of the pastors based on the five essential elements of preaching derived from the literature review. The actual number of participants are first indicated along with their demographic data. Thereafter, the project's research questions are presented along with the instrumentation used to answer each question. The findings for each question were then collated, classified, and analyzed in order to answer the three research questions. A summary of the major findings is given at the end of the chapter.

## Participants

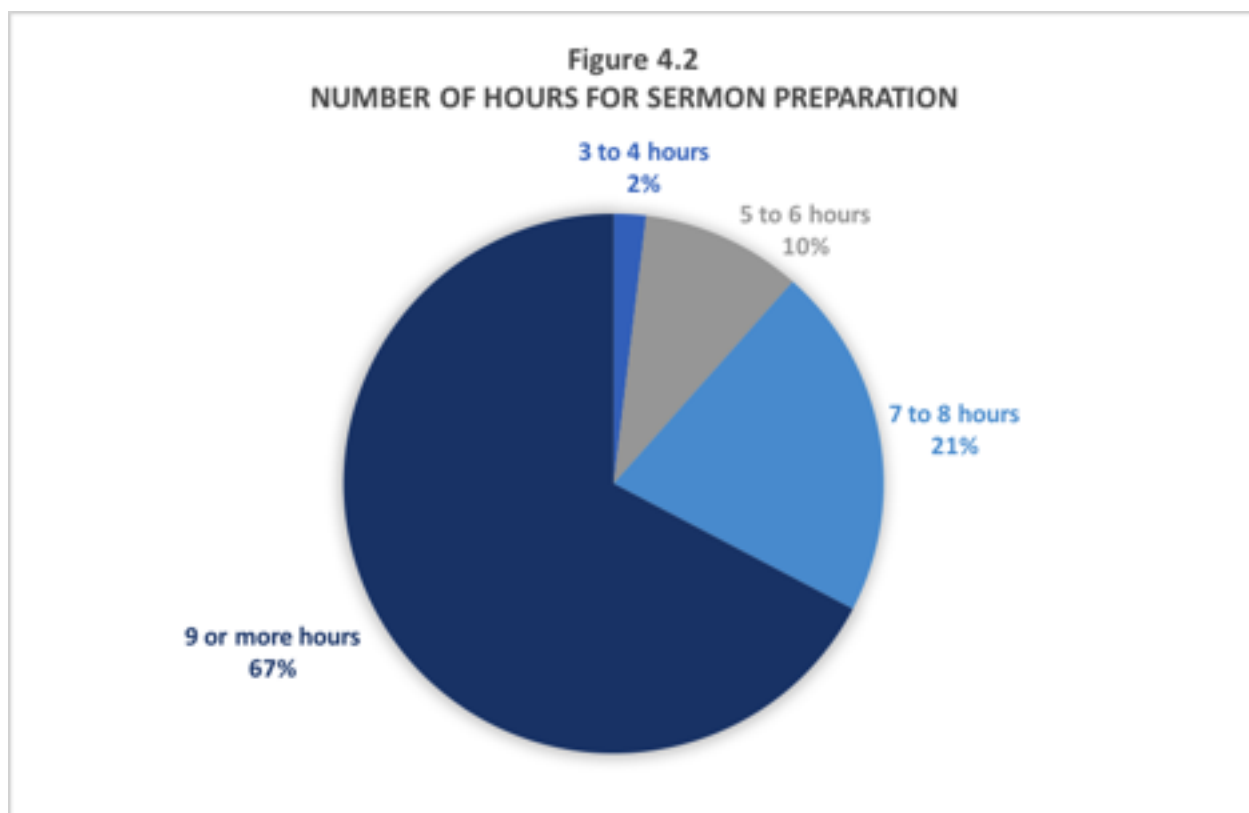
All the 91 preaching pastors of Victory Metro Manila who preached at least once a month were invited to participate in the self-assessment survey, and fifty-one of them proceeded to fill out the instrument. The following figures and graphs describe the demographic profile of the participants:



**Figure 4.1.** Demographic data for Preaching Pastors' survey.



**Figure 4.1.** Frequency of preaching every month.



**Figure 4.2.** Number of hours for sermon preparation.

The demographic profile of the participating pastors revealed that around half of the pastors, 25 out of 51, have less than 10 years of ministry experience, and were also below 40 years of age. This indicates a generally younger age range and shorter ministry experience for the pastors who preached in all the Metro Manila congregations numbering thousands. Chart 4.1 depicts the frequency of the pastors' preaching in their respective congregations, indicating that 65 percent of them preached on a weekly basis. Figure 4.2 shows the number of hours that the pastors spent in study for sermon preparation, with 67% preparing for nine or more hours per week.

For the small group leaders, the goal was to invite at least 450 of them to participate in the preaching observation survey; a total of 607 filled out the instrument. Their demographic profiles are shown in the following graphs:



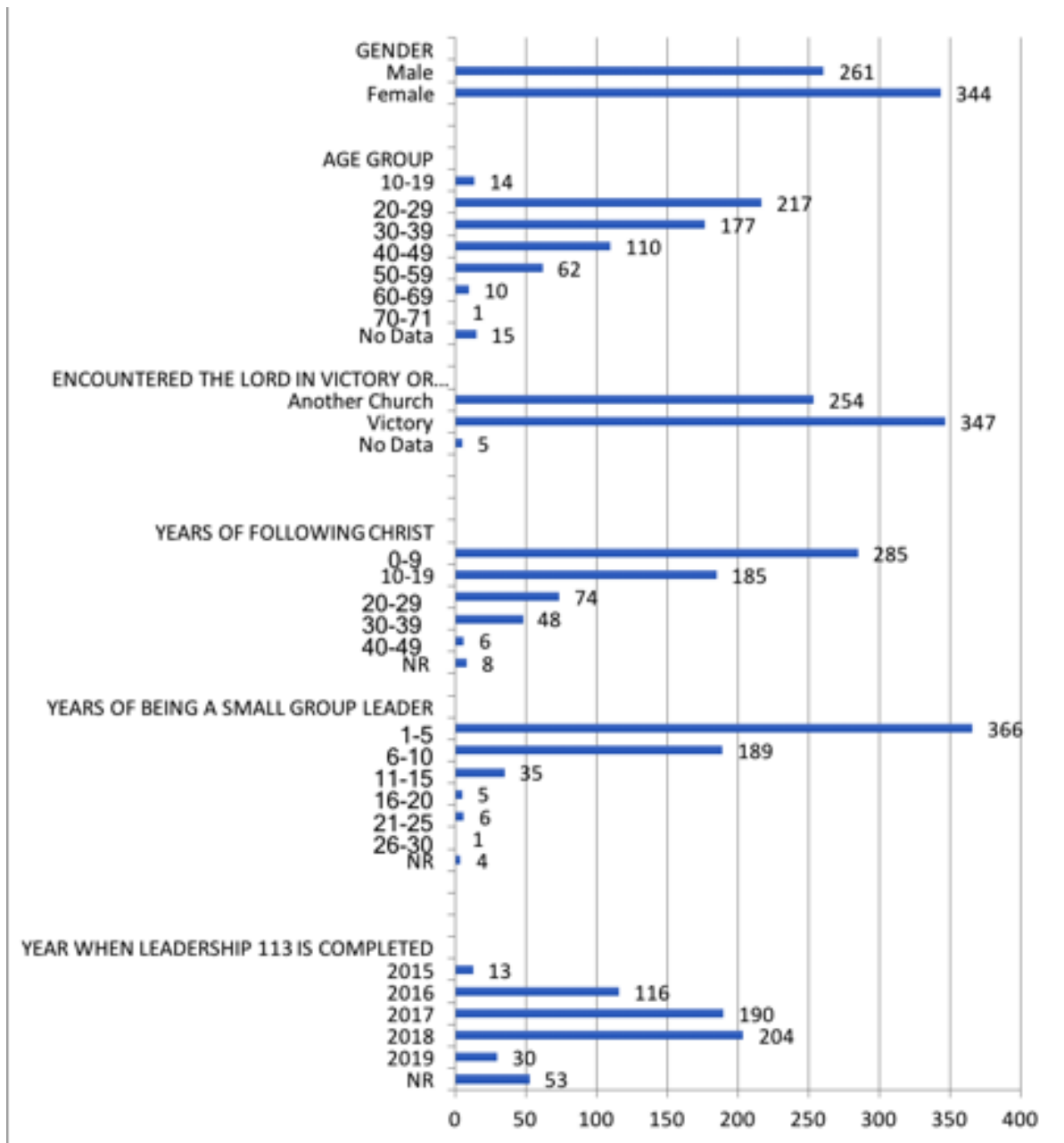


Figure 4.3. Demographic data for Small Group Leaders' survey.

The profiles revealed that 43 percent of the participants were male and 47 percent female, indicating a relatively equal percentage based on gender. Also, around 47 percent of the small group leaders had been followers of Christ for less than 10 years, demonstrating a

willingness to serve in lay leadership even if they had only known Christ in recent years. Furthermore, around 59% of the participants had been serving as small group leaders for 5 years or less, showing a willingness to respond to Jesus's mandate to make disciples. The church accomplishes in small group ministry the discipleship mandate by equipping small group leaders to engage lost people and establish new believers in the faith.

For the apostolic team member interviews, all the six pastors and two bishops consented to be interviewed. In the case of the 12 senior pastors and selected campus missionaries invited to participate in the two focused group discussions, six senior pastors participated in the first group, but the two campus missionaries did not show up. For the second group, three senior pastors participated, one lead pastor attended in place of another senior pastor, and two campus missionaries joined as well. In total, there were six participants in the first group and six in the second.

### **Research Questions**

This pre-intervention project seeks to address some observable gaps in the pastors' preaching abilities by answering the following three research questions:

#### **Research Question #1**

**What essential spiritual habits of pastors deepen their personal relationship with God so that they can grow in their ability to discern God's voice and preach as those who have heard a message from God?**

The purpose of this question was to establish from the literature review and the research instruments the important devotional habits and practices of those called to preach and teach God's Word. The first research instrument developed in order to

reinforce the literature review's findings was the preaching pastors' self-assessment survey, which was designed to assess the current spiritual habits and sermon preparation practices of the Metro Manila preaching pastors and their impact on their calling and preaching. The complete survey results summary for this instrument are found in Appendix J. More specifically, questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 43, 45, and 47 addressed the devotional habits of the pastors and God's working as they practiced these habits. This instrument uses a frequency scale to determine the extent to which the pastors practiced these habits and experienced God's working in their lives.

The second instrument designed was the small group leaders' preaching observation survey for selected Victory group leaders in each of the eighteen congregations. This instrument used a Likert scale to determine the extent to which the small group leaders agreed or disagreed with the effectiveness of the preaching taking place in their respective congregations on a weekly basis. The complete survey results summary for this instrument are found in Appendix K. More specifically, questions 15, 16, 17, 24, and 32 drew out the impact of the pastors' spiritual habits on the congregants. The third instrument was the apostolic team member interview of the eight members of the apostolic team. Their spiritual maturity, calling, gifting, and extensive experience in ministry gave the apostolic team members the credibility to substantiate these essential spiritual habits. Questions 2, 3, and 4 specifically addressed this question.

The fourth research instrument was the two focused-group discussions with the fourteen senior pastors of each of the eighteen congregations joined by two seasoned campus missionaries in each group who preached in the youth services. This discussion

was intended to draw out the pastors' observations and evaluation of the quality of preaching taking place in each of their congregations by the preaching pastors under their oversight. Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 elicit these essential spiritual habits.

### **Description of Evidence for Research Question #1**

The Scriptures and literature review for this project have established that the call to preach the gospel is sovereignly initiated by God accompanied by the empowering of the Spirit, but the preacher's response and ability to persevere in this call hinges on his or her cultivating an ongoing personal relationship with Christ through spiritual disciplines or habits. The consistent practice of these habits allows the Spirit to spiritually form the leader and equips them for the work of the ministry. The research findings identified four essential spiritual habits that promote the deepening of the minister's relationship with God and enable them to grow in their ability to discern God's voice: devotion to Scripture, study of Scripture, prayer, and listening to preaching.

#### **Devotion to Scripture**

Devotion to Scripture is more of an attitude towards God's Word expressed in several ways in the research findings, such as love for the Word, hunger for the Word, and passion for the Word, translated into practices such as consistent reading, meditation, and memorization of the Scriptures. These phrases were repeatedly stated in the different research instruments employed. In the preaching pastors' online survey, questions 14 and 28 revealed the following data:

**Table 4.1.**

Results for Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 14 and 28

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
14. Devotional Scripture Meditation	51	0	3.0	0.86
28. Sermon text meditation	51	0	3.51	0.61

Both questions indicated a mean of at least 3 which corresponded to an “often” response and a standard deviation of less than 1, pointing to the pastors’ significantly high consistency in practicing these habits.

In the apostolic team members’ interviews, two of the members emphasized the consistent devotional reading of the Word, two others mentioned passion for the Word, while two others answered love for the Word, and one a desire to know more of the Word, as motivations for a devotion to the Word. Additionally, in the two focused-group discussions, the first group answered the questions on the elements that are essential for effective preaching by citing devotional time in the Word as essential for the personal application of the Word in the pastor’s life and as a foundation for preaching. In the meta-cards exercise, where the participants in the first group were asked to write in one word or a short phrase five to seven elements that are essential for preaching, the words or phrases pertaining to devotion to the Word theme written on the cards included: Scripture memorization, devotions, hunger for the Word, and the Word of God.

In the discipleship culture propagated since the earlier days of the church, memorization of Bible verses was instilled among new believers as a way of hiding

God's Word in their hearts according to Psalm 119:9-11. It seems that as some of these disciples have responded to the call of God to go into vocational ministry, they have retained these habits. Scripture memorization indicates the continuing commitment of these pastors to prioritize the feeding of their souls with God's Word.

The second group mentioned the need for the preacher to be ministered to first before they can minister to others, as well as spending time with God so the Word can speak to you. They also believed that the Word is living and active and fresh as they devoted themselves to it. The meta-card words or phrases that were written by the second group included: Bible verses, the Word as real and alive in their hearts, reverence for God's Word, and trust, love, and confidence in the Scriptures.

### **Study of Scripture**

Two of the members of the apostolic team indicated that the devotional reading and meditation of the Scriptures was a jumping point for the study of Scriptures, particularly for the purpose of preaching and teaching God's Word to his people. The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to do his best to present himself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of truth. The ability to correctly handle God's Word comes by the diligent and careful study of the Scriptures. This second essential habit that helped to deepen the preacher's relationship with God was likewise emphasized in the research findings.

In the preaching pastors' self-assessment survey, the following results were recorded for questions s 22, 27, 37, and 38:

**Table 4.2.**

Results for Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 22, 27, 37 and 38

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
22. Growing in knowledge of God through Scripture study	51	0	3.86	0.34
27. Relies on the Spirit's guidance in sermon preparation	51	0	3.73	0.45
37. Spiritual formation in sermon preparation	51	0	3.53	0.54
38. Takes time to hear from the Spirit the spiritual needs of people	51	0	3.45	0.60

The study of Scripture is intended for the purpose of ministering the Word to God's people, but this discipline significantly contributes to the preacher's growing in the knowledge of God and being spiritually formed in the process of sermon preparation. The very high mean of 3.86 and 3.53 for questions 22 and 37, respectively, and the corresponding low standard deviations of 0.34 and 0.54, bear out this consequence. In addition, the important role of the Holy Spirit in enabling the preacher to be guided in the study of the Scriptures and discern the spiritual needs of the congregation are highlighted as well through the high means and low standard deviations of 3.73 and 0.43 for Question 27 and 3.45 and 0.60 for Question 38, respectively.

The pastors' diligent study of Scriptures benefits the congregations greatly in that the hearers are able to receive illumination of the Word through the pastor's preaching and that God speaks to them in the process. The survey results for questions 22 and 24

are:

**Table 4.3.**

Results for Small Group Leaders' Preaching Observation Survey – Questions 22 and 24

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
22. Illumination of Scripture	615	14	3.66	0.52
24. God speaks through pastor's preaching	616	3	3.69	0.50

The very high means and low standard deviations of 3.69 and 0.55 for question 22, and 3.70 and 0.50 for Question 24, respectively, validates this benefit.

The eight apostolic team members' interviews emphasized the priority of Scriptural study in the pastors' responsibility to feed the flock. Two of them included the reading and studying of books on preaching and other literature on the Bible itself as helpful in sermon preparation. Three others reiterated that scriptural study entails much hard work, that one needs to be disciplined in self-study and be willing to invest time and money, and the fourth summed it up by saying that the goal is mastery of the Word. The two others added that the regular input of God's Word through the study of Scriptures will equip the pastor to expand the application of God's Word from personal to corporate.

The two focused group discussions likewise produced very similar conclusions on the importance of scriptural study as an essential spiritual habit. The continual study of the Bible enables the preacher to hear what God is speaking to him or her and its application to the congregation. One of the pastors in the first group commented, "[T]here are times when you study the Word and it seems like it's God speaking to you.



So, how can I preach this if this is still at work in my life. I have to stand in the authority of God's Word. And at the same time tell the people that I am also preaching to myself."

In the second group, another pastor claimed that the text itself, even before sermon preparation, was already good meat for preaching. Also, the reading and study of Scripture triggers one's mind to receive thoughts for preaching, rather than just rely on and parrot other preachers' sermons. The meta-cards exercise for the first group generated the following words or phrases as essential elements in scriptural study: exegete (the) Word and word study. For the second group, the key words or phrases included: sufficient Bible study and exegete Scripture.

### **Prayer**

Prayer is essentially communion with God, and we have been given access into his holy presence through the finished work of Christ on the cross. There are various expressions of prayer in the Bible, such as praise and worship, confession, petition and intercession. Cultivating a life of prayer not only promotes the spiritual growth of leaders but also positions them to receive power for ministry. The research findings revealed the importance of this spiritual discipline. In the preaching pastors' online survey, questions 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 34, 43, 45, and 47 determined how the pastors viewed prayer and its impact on their ministry. The results showed that the spiritual habit of personal prayer produced in the pastors both a confidence in their calling and in their preaching:

Prayer Habit**Table 4.4.**

Results for Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 16, 23, 26, and 43

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
16. Priority of devotional time	51	0	3.18	0.68
23. Time in prayer	51	1	2.68	0.88
26. Fasting discipline	51	0	2.29	0.94
43. Consistent praying for congregation	51	1	3.20	0.72

The pastors prioritize their devotional time with God in the midst of the busyness of ministry as attested to by the high mean of 3.18 and standard deviation of 0.68. However, their time in prayer has a lower mean 2.68 and higher standard deviation 0.88, implying that there is a wider variation and dispersion in how much time the pastors spend in prayer. Similarly, the discipline of fasting, which is a biblical spiritual discipline practiced by God's people to humble themselves and intensify their prayers, had a low mean of 2.29 and standard deviation of 0.94. All the pastors prayed and fasted on a regular basis, but the time and frequency by which they did so varied considerably across the spectrum. Moreover, they consistently prayed for their congregations out of love for God's people and to discern their spiritual needs, as evidenced by a high mean of 3.2 and relatively low 0.57 standard deviation.

Confidence in Calling**Table 4.5.**

Results for Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 15, 17, 18 and 24

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
15. God is for me in trials and difficulties	51	0	3.96	0.19
17. Doubts about God's call to preach	51	0	1.59	0.66
18. Lifetime calling to ministry	51	1	3.72	0.57
24. Affirmation of calling during prayer	51	0	3.10	0.87

The pastors strongly believed that God is for them in the midst of trials and difficulties in their lives, as shown in the extremely high mean of 3.96 and standard deviation of 0.19. This conviction can only be developed by someone walking closely with God, manifested in a devotional life of prayer and the Word. More specifically, the pastors received affirmation of their calling to ministry during their times of prayer and a confidence that this call was a lifetime call, as indicated by the high mean of 3.10 and standard deviation of 0.87 for question 24, and a 3.72 mean and 0.57 standard deviation for question 18. At the same time, there were instances when the pastors had doubts about their call to preach, though this was seldom applicable to the majority and sometimes only for most of the rest of the pastors, as the low mean of 1.59 and high standard of deviation of 0.66 indicate.

In the small group leaders' online survey, the results for questions 15 and 17 were

additional validations for the perception of the congregation that the pastors through their prayer lives had a strong relationship with God and that they were truly called to preach the gospel. The following data were recorded:

**Table 4.6.**

Results for Small Group Leaders' Preaching Observation Survey – Questions 15 and 17

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
15. Preacher has strong relationship with God	616	7	3.83	0.46
17. Preaching as evidence of pastor's calling	616	7	3.84	0.41

Both questions elicited very high mean scores of 3.84 and 3.85, and low standard deviations of 0.47 and 0.43, for questions 15 and 17, respectively.

Confidence in Preaching**Table 4.7.**

Results for Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 25, 31, 32, 33, 34, 45 and 47

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
25. God's grace for preaching	51	0	3.80	0.40
31. Senses the Holy Spirit's enabling to be given words to speak	51	0	3.67	0.47
32. Satisfaction in being used to preach	51	0	3.64	0.52
33. Confidence in having a word for church	51	0	3.61	0.56
34. Sensing God's authority in the Word while preaching	51	0	3.73	0.45
45. Confident in the Holy Spirit to lead and guide people into all truth	51	0	3.82	0.38
47. Sensing God's compassion for people	51	0	3.55	0.54

Prayer opens the door for the pastors to receive God's grace and the confidence that they have a word from God to preach with authority. Questions 25, 33 and 34, all with high means of 3.80, 3.61 and 3.73, and relatively low standard deviations of 0.40, 0.56, and 0.45, respectively, bore this out. They relied on the Holy Spirit not only to enable them to speak, but also to lead and guide God's people into all truth. Questions 31 and 45, again with very high means of 3.67 and 3.82, low standards of deviation of 0.47 and 0.38, respectively, validated this. Through prayer, pastors sense God's compassion for his people, and as they faithfully preach God's word, they receive his commendation and a deep satisfaction that they have been used by God. The high means of 3.55 and

3.64 and low standard deviations of 0.54 and 0.52, respectively, for questions 50 and 32, are evidence of this.

The effectiveness of the pastors' preaching as an outworking of their close walk with God can also be seen in the small group leaders' response to questions 16, 24 and 32. The following are the results:

**Table 4.8.**

Results for Small Group Leaders' Preaching Observation Survey – Questions 16, 24 and 32

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
16. Pastor understands life challenges	617	6	3.50	0.62
24. God speaks through pastor's preaching	616	3	3.69	0.50
32. God's compassion sensed through preaching	617	4	3.77	0.45

The small group leaders, as a representation of the congregation, believed that the pastors understood the challenges they encountered in life and that God is able to speak to them with compassion through the preaching of the word as they faced these challenges. The survey results show very high means of 3.51, 3.70 and 3.78 and relatively low standard deviations of 0.63, 0.50, and 0.46, for questions 16, 24, and 32, respectively.

Two of the apostolic team members emphasized a life of prayer as an essential habit that brings spiritual growth in God and translates into a life of authenticity in preaching so that people are able to relate to the message they bring. Two other members

acknowledged the need to rely and be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit in preaching. In the two focused group discussions, one of the pastors in the first group commented that he would wait on God in prayer even after sermon notes have already been prepared, for there were times when the Lord would lead him differently from what he had prepared. In the meta-cards exercise, prayer was stressed in enabling the preacher to hear God's voice as well as in receiving the Spirit's anointing in preaching. Likewise, the second group meta-card exercise yielded the need to collaborate with the Holy Spirit in receiving direction for preaching.

### **Listening to Preaching**

The value of listening to preaching as an essential spiritual habit to deepen the pastors' relationship with God and enable them to grow in their ability to discern God's voice was repeatedly expressed in the apostolic team interviews as well as in the two focused group discussions. This habit did not appear as a result in the preaching pastors' and the small group leaders' online surveys because there were no questions presented that would possibly draw out this result. However, in the one-on-one interviews and the focused group discussions, the question, "In your development as a minister, how did you learn to preach?" elicited the near unanimous response that the pastors first learned to preach by listening to others preach and other similar responses.

In the apostolic team interviews, seven out of the eight members directly stated that they learned to preach by listening to other preachers, whether that was the live preaching they heard as disciples or leaders in training, or by means of preaching tapes and cassettes, podcasts, videos, etc. This was more informal training rather than a formal apprenticeship program at that time. The eighth member, who narrated that he wanted to

be a pastor but did not want to preach at first, learned to preach through the regular input of God's Word, implying that he also learned from others and not just his own personal study.

Several of the apostolic team members added that they were instructed as young disciples not only to listen to preaching but also to take notes. Two others commented that besides listening, they also watched and observed how the pastors preached. One member learned to not only listen to what the Spirit was saying through the sermon, but also to listen to how the pastor was preaching the Word. Another member stressed that constantly listening to preaching imparted faith to him and enabled him to preach in a way that imparted faith to others as well.

In the two focused group discussions, five of the six pastors interviewed in the first group specifically mentioned listening to sermons as instrumental in their development as preachers. They were instructed by their mentors to take notes of the sermons and to follow them in the way they preached. In the second group, they likewise narrated that it was exposure to preaching, listening to preaching tapes, and copying them, that helped in their development as preachers. In summary, listening to preaching in its various media modes was an essential component in their formation as preachers. Although there were no explicit statements in the interviews specifically mentioning listening to preaching as a spiritual habit, it can still be inferred in the discussions that the pastors still continue to listen to other preachers not only for self-edification but also to hone their preaching skills.



**Research Question #2**

**What characteristics and best practices in preaching not only address current gaps in the preaching capabilities of the Victory pastors, but also align with the mission, values, and culture of Victory?**

The purpose of this question was to identify from both the literature review and the data collected the best practices in preaching that will enable the Victory Metro Manila pastors to fulfill their mission. To accomplish this goal, five mixed-methods research instruments were used. These instruments were designed using the five essential elements of effective preaching distilled from the literature review. These elements are:

1. Preaching as God speaking through the Scriptures;
2. Preaching as a calling from God;
3. Preaching as hearing from God;
4. Preaching as speaking for God, and
5. Preaching as God speaking to his people.

The preaching pastors' self-assessment survey drew out their current practices and experiences in preaching, particularly questions 11, 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, and 48. The second instrument designed was the small group leaders' preaching observation survey for selected Victory group leaders in each of the 18 congregations. This instrument used a Likert scale to determine the extent to which the Victory group leaders agreed or disagreed with the effectiveness of the preaching taking place in their respective congregations on a weekly basis.

The third instrument developed was the apostolic team member interview with the

eight members of the apostolic team. Their perspective as leaders overseeing the churches and stewarding the mission, values, and culture of the ministry gave them the vantage point of being able to recommend the best practices in preaching that would fulfill the church's mission. Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 in the interview will help answer this research question. The fourth instrument designed was the focused group discussions with the senior pastors of each of the 18 congregations. This discussion was intended to draw out the pastors' observations and evaluation of the quality of preaching taking place in each of their congregations by the preaching pastors under their oversight. The senior pastors were divided into two groups and were joined in one group by two seasoned campus missionaries who preached in the youth services.

The fifth research instrument was the outside experts' assessment tool conducted by three doctoral professors who are personally known to the researcher and have done some teaching ministry for the Victory pastors and churches. These three professors, Dr. Nomer Bernardino, Dr. Tim Gener, and Dr. Dave Ward, evaluated six fairly recent video sermons uploaded on YouTube by six different pastors from Victory Metro Manila using certain criteria pertaining to their exegetical, hermeneutical, and homiletical approaches in their sermons.

### **Description of Evidence for Research Question #2**

The literature review and research findings have established that preaching and teaching are the primary means by which God has spoken and continues to communicate with his people and the world. God calls and empowers his chosen servants for this task, but the church needs to prepare and equip these servants for this vital ministry. The research results revealed that there are five major characteristics and practices in

preaching observed in Victory that endeavors to accomplish the mission and promote the values and culture of the church. These are the following: Scripture-based and Spirit-empowered preaching, exegetical practice, contextualization practice, and homiletical practice,. In the course of presenting these elements, the current gaps in the preaching capabilities of the pastors were identified in order for them be addressed in Research Question # 3.

### **Scripture-based**

Preachers are called to proclaim the Word of God, not their own opinions, ideas, or revelations, and the only authoritative source of God’s Word are the Scriptures. All of the five research instrument results highlighted this important element. The following data from the preaching pastors’ survey bore this out:

**Table 4.9.**

Results for Preaching Pastors’ Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 13, 20, 22, and 34

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
13. Understanding of God’s kingdom through Scripture	51	0	3.57	0.60
20. Scripture text as driving force for sermon preparation	51	0	3.69	0.46
22. Growing in knowledge of God through Scripture study	51	0	3.86	0.34
34. Sensing God’s authority in the Word while preaching	51	0	3.73	0.45

For the pastors in the survey, the knowledge of God and his kingdom grew through the study of Scripture, and the pericope became the driving force in their sermon preparation. It was also the source of their sense of authority in preaching. Questions 13 and 22 revealed high means of 3.57 and 3.86 and low standard deviations of 0.6 and 0.34, respectively. Likewise, questions 20 and 34 yielded high results of 3.69 and 3.73 for the means and low results of 0.46 and 0.45 for standard deviation, respectively.

The small group leaders' survey revealed the following results:

**Table 4.10.**

Results for Small Group Leaders' Preaching Observation Survey – Questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, and 19

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
8. Pastor presents clear exposition of text in preaching	615	4	3.80	0.46
9. Pastor's preaching motivates one to study the Bible	616	4	3.66	0.54
10. Preaching Scripture gives understanding	616	1	3.81	0.43
11. Preaching convinces hearer of the authority of God's Word for belief	615	2	3.90	0.32
12. Preaching convinces hearer of the authority of God's Word for living	616	1	3.89	0.35
18. Preaching strengthens faith in God	616	3	3.81	0.42
19. Preaching brings conviction of sin	614	6	3.60	0.60

For the small group leaders, the preaching of Scripture enabled them to understand God's Word in a greater way resulting from a clear exposition of the text, as indicated in the high means of 3.81 and 3.80, and low standard of deviations of 0.43 and 0.46, for question 10 and 8, respectively. Consequently, not only were they motivated to study the Bible for themselves, they became convinced that the Bible has authority to speak to what they believed and how they ought to live their lives, as shown in Questions 9, 11 and 12 with very high means of 3.66, 3.90 and 3.89 and low standard deviations of 0.54, 0.32 and 0.35, respectively. Faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ, so preaching the Scriptures not only strengthens one's faith, but also brings conviction of sin. The high means of 3.82 and 3.61 and standard deviations of 0.43 and 0.61 for questions 18 and 19, respectively, validated these statements.

In the apostolic team interviews, most members specifically mentioned Scripture as the foundation for preaching and the means by which the pastors were able to promote the mission, values, and culture of the church. One member asserted that teaching and preaching the Bible in the context of the church's mission, vision, and values, made a relational connection with people and thus better preaching. Preaching that honors God and makes disciples, Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered, and socially responsible, are all contained in the mission statement of Victory and Every Nation, the global ministry organization which Victory is a founding member of, and what makes preaching in the Metro Manila church effective.

The second member explained that the desire to know Scripture is what motivated him to study and learn in order to preach God's Word. He added the importance of being missional and promoting the church's core values in preaching, and the benefit of Word-

based series preaching. However, he did point out the tendency for some of the pastors to lean more towards trying to be relevant and creative rather than digging deeper in the Scripture. After a recent preaching seminar conducted by Dr. Dave Ward, one pastor commented, “what I learned, . . . before I get so consumed with artistry, now I want to go archeology.” The member concluded that one thing that will help their young preachers is to focus more on Scripture, which will lead to more effective preaching in the future.

The third member also emphasized the need to preach God’s Word that would accomplish the church’s mission and values since these were crafted in accordance with Scripture. The core values of Victory are Lordship, evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, and family. When preaching with these emphases, the people were inspired to “join the mission of God because they hear the heartbeat of God.” He observed, however, that the younger preachers need to improve in accurately handling God’s Word, to teach them how to bridge the church’s mission, values, and culture with the preaching of the Word on a weekly basis, that these elements are lenses by which they are able to preach the rich Word of God.

The fourth member prioritized the use of specific Scriptural truths that lead people to fulfill the mission and vision of the church, like the Great Commission and discipleship. The pastors ought to preach in the way that inspires the people to go home and read their Bibles, to grow in their knowledge of Scripture, and feed themselves with God’s Word. The fifth member also called for the pastors to accurately handle God’s Word and preach every part of Scripture, not just on their favorite topic, rightly dividing the truth and stewarding the mission and vision of God. Preaching that imparts the core values of the church is what will build the church. The sixth member said that preaching

the Word will make the people love God's Word more and have them meditate on it in their homes, and motivate them to prioritize the values of the kingdom.

In the two focused group discussions, one pastor in the first group asserted that preaching must be truthful to be effective. In the meta-cards exercise, the key elements to preaching included being gospel-based, knowing that God wants to speak, and that God speaks through Scripture. For the second group, another pastor declared that the Word of God is both timeless and timely, a third believed that in preaching, God wants to say something to His people, and the fourth that God speaks through His word. The meta-card exercise for the second group elicited the phrase trust, confidence, and love for the Scriptures.

In the outside experts' assessments, Ward specifically commented from the six sermons evaluated that the majority of the pastors were committed to Scripture-based preaching. They were, as a whole, focused on a scriptural text in their sermon and endeavored to prepare a message connected to the text. This demonstrated a high value placed upon and reverence for God's Word.

### **Exegetical Practice**

Preparing a sermon usually starts with the selection of a text and studying it in order to discover its meaning and possible application to the congregation. Since Scripture is an ancient text, it creates a gap between the ancient world of the text and the contemporary world. There needs to be an interpretive process in order to bridge that gap and bring understanding to the meaning of the passage for modern hearers. This interpretive work is known as *hermeneutics*, the science and art of discovering the intended meaning of the Scripture by the author of the particular book in the Bible.

According to Osborne, hermeneutics encompasses both what it meant then and what it means today, meaning the dual process of exegesis and contextualization (21). He adds that hermeneutics is the science of the laws of interpretation and the art of applying the laws to selected passages or books (21).

The practice of exegesis then is the second important element necessary for effective preaching. As referenced in the literature review, Zuck explains that exegesis entails the study of a passage of Scripture in its original context, which includes a historical, grammatical, and rhetorical or literary study (20). Newton adds that besides this contextual study, a content analysis to draw out the biblical theology needs to be made on the particular text selected (89-124). This vital element is also highlighted in the research findings along with the assessments of the three outside experts.

In the preaching pastors survey, questions 11, 12, 19, 29, 30, 35, and 36 revealed the pastors' attitude towards this element:



**Table 4.11.**

Results for Preaching Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 11, 12, 19, 29, 30, 35 and 36

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
11. Sermons derived from sound exegetical practice	51	0	3.35	0.62
12. Sermons are developed through a Spirit-led hermeneutic process	51	0	3.45	0.57
19. Makes detailed observations about the text at initial stage of sermon preparation	51	0	3.25	0.84
29. Knowing historical context	51	0	3.57	0.57
30. Grammatical study of text	51	0	3.04	0.84
35. Literary genre of text	51	0	3.00	0.74
36. Dependence on study tools	51	0	2.98	0.80

The pastors are confident that their sermons are developed through sound exegetical practice, and that the Holy Spirit guides them in this hermeneutical process, with high means of 3.35 and 3.45, and standard deviations of 0.62 and 0.57, for questions 11 and 12, respectively. They endeavored to make detailed observations of the text at the start of their sermon preparation, as shown in the 3.25 mean and 0.84 standard deviation for question 19. The pastors also believed that knowing the historical context of the passage was crucial to understanding the meaning of the Scripture passage, as indicated in the high mean of 3.57 and standard deviation of 0.57 for question 29. However, the pastors did not place as much importance to the grammatical study of the text compared to the historical study, as shown in the lower mean of 3.04 and higher standard deviation of 0.84 for question 30. Similarly, they did not see the literary genre study as important as

historical study, with a mean of 3.0 and standard deviation of 0.74 for question 35. In the use of study tools for sermon preparations, the pastors' dependence was even lower compared to the abovementioned studies, with a mean of 2.98 and standard deviation of 0.80 for question 36.

Among the apostolic team members, only one member specifically alluded to the importance of doing proper hermeneutics in order to handle God's Word accurately. For the focused group discussions, one pastor from the second group mentioned the importance of study of the text in sermon preparation. The text study not only allows you to be ministered to by the Word, but it also "frames the content, it provides the boundaries, if you know that you are there to really preach the gospel not to satisfy anyone or just be somebody else, I think it provides that depth and content, it gives direction to how you will craft the message." In their meta-cards exercise, the word exegete was mentioned as one of the elements.

In the outside experts' assessment, Bernardino commented on the exegetical practice of six pastors as a representation of the Victory Metro Manila pastors by observing their preaching on various preaching topics. He noted that the strength of the six sermons was that they mostly gave a basic understanding of the passage's background and used a verse by verse explanation with strong application. However, he pointed out that "there is a tendency though to immediately apply the passage to the present (now), but it is also important to establish first its intent in the original context (then)". Bernardino did affirm at the same time that the six sermons were all consistent in upholding the church's mission and different core values.

Gener similarly commented on the same six sermons that the preachers focused

on explaining the meaning of key words or phrases from the assigned Bible verses, to establish what the texts meant in their immediate literary contexts. However, Gener observed:

. . . most of them do not situate the passages in their larger (whole book, chapters) literary contexts. There's also a tendency in at least a couple of the preachers to jump right away to application, lacking proper exegesis. There's also minimal engagement with 'authorial' intention, literary genres and historical backgrounds. These elements could have strengthened exegeses of the passages (although admittedly too much exegetical details could also weaken the preaching).

At the same time, Gener noted that the exegesis applied in the sermons aligned with the goal of achieving the church's mission and imparting its values, though they could still be deepened and improved.

For Ward, the six sermons assessed demonstrated that the majority of these pastors were devoted to Scripture-based preaching ministry. He elucidated:

The exposition of the text is typically guided by a doctrine or theme as presented in the sermonic series material. The strength in this is a diverse set of sermons covering doctrines such as pneumatology, Christology, theology of mission, and so forth. The weakness is that the bridge between the doctrine and the text, or the theme and the text, is not always exegetically explained. A greater degree of specificity of exposition, and modeling of interpretive decisions would help the average believer develop a faithful hermeneutic of their own.

On the other hand, Ward affirmed that the sermons were consistent with the mission and values of the ministry, though he did notice that there were no references to being socially responsible in the sermons. Considering that this is a major component of Every Nation's mission, this needs to be considered if the church is to fulfill the larger movement's aims.

### **Contextualization Practice**

As previously stated, hermeneutics is the interpretive process of discovering the Scripture passage's intended meaning by the author by first understanding what it meant to its original hearers in order to discern its meaning and application for current hearers. The initial task is called exegesis, and the corollary task is referred to as contextualization. Through the use of biblical hermeneutical principles such as the organic unity principle and historical-grammatical approach, the pastor is able to bring the text's theological truth to bear upon the contemporary audience. The research findings identified this hermeneutical practice as equally essential along with exegesis in sermon preparation prior to sermon delivery.

In the preaching pastors' self-assessment survey, the questions and results pertaining to the hermeneutical work for contextualization are the following:

**Table 4.12.**

Results for Preaching Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 42, 44, 46 and 48

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
42. Preaching relevant to the needs of congregation	51	0	3.35	0.52
44. Not satisfied with spiritual progress of congregation	51	2	2.37	0.72
46. Contextualizing sermon according to needs of congregation	51	0	3.18	0.68
48. The congregants testify that God spoke to them through preaching	51	1	3.00	0.72

The pastors generally believed that their sermons were relevant to the spiritual needs of their congregation, as indicated in the 3.35 mean and 0.52 standard deviation for question 42. They attributed this to their ability to contextualize the sermon to the needs of the members, shown by the 3.18 mean and 0.68 standard deviation for question 46. This was also validated by the comments from the congregants that God speaks to them through their pastor's preaching, shown in the 3.0 mean and 0.72 standard deviation for question 48. Though they are not always satisfied with the spiritual progress of the congregation, the low 2.37 mean and 0.72 standard deviation for question 44 show that this was not the usual case.

In the small group leaders' survey, questions 20 and 21 projected the results of an effective contextualization process:

**Table 4.13.**

Results for Small Group Leaders' Preaching Observation Survey – Questions 20 and 21

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
20. Learning how to rightly interpret Scripture from preaching	617	3	3.62	0.59
21. Learning to hear from God by studying Scripture	614	4	3.77	0.46

These responses indicated that the church members were learning how to interpret Scripture correctly as it is modeled in the pastor's preaching, seen in the high mean of 3.62 and standard deviation of 0.59 for question 20. Not only that, it brought confidence that they can individually hear God by studying the Scriptures for themselves, as the high mean of 3.78 and standard deviation of 0.47 for question 21 show.

For several of the apostolic team members, the process of contextualization was important to make God's Word relevant to their congregations. One member remarked that pastors are called to preach the truth of God's Word, so they need to be clear in their communication of it. He explains effective preaching as "preaching that people can take home and wrestle with God, more than just specific applications. Preaching that they can use to find the application for their own walk with God." Another member said that he preached both prophetically and pastorally to give what the Word of God says and find ways to be able to translate that Word into their daily lives.

The third member believes that the first key ingredient to effective preaching is

the Word and the second is knowing your congregation, taking the time to meet with and get to know them. He adds that their message has to be spiritual because life is spiritual and God is spiritual, and it has to be relational because the heartbeat of people is relationship. The fourth member posited that preaching should present truth that people can apply and transform them. In mentoring the pastors under his leadership, he expressed some frustration, particularly with the more experienced ones, that they tend to depend too much on what they already know, hindering them from further study.

For the two focused groups, one pastor in the first group opined that the best preparation for preaching is your life, that you are endeavoring to have God's Word working in your life before you preach it. Another pastor affirmed the importance of knowing your audience, and when you contextualize the Word to your community, you are able to give God's "now" Word for them. In the second group, one pastor recounted how in their earlier years in training, they were exposed to group sermon preparation so everyone could learn quickly how to prepare a sermon. The questions they derived after this exercise were, "Am I living this truth out," and "Is it relevant to God's people?" Another pastor added that people find their pastors more relatable if they preach from their humanity and weakness, that they are sinners saved by grace. Finally, one of the key phrases included in the meta-cards exercise was proper theology.

Bernardino, in assessing the contextualization practice of the six pastors, observed that they used sound hermeneutical practice, explained the verses, and gave sufficient contextual background, while being sensitive to the needs of the audience and meeting those needs in the application of the passage. The sermons also gave personal inspirational challenges. Furthermore, the sermons succeeded in repeating and upholding

the church mission and core values, being Christ-centered and Spirit-empowered, valuing lost people and offering hope through the gospel.

Gener noted the efforts of the six pastors regarding their exegetical practice:

They sought to correlate God's word gleaned from the Scripture passages with the situation and experiences of the hearers in terms that are understandable and relevant to them. With megachurch congregations such as what Victory has, it may be difficult to draw from from/relate to the personal experiences of members, and thus the tendency to make general/generic connections in contextualizing the text to the life of the congregation. One could sense however that the pastors were trying their best to contextualize the biblical message to the life situation of hearers, especially by relating their own struggles and learnings from their study of the passage.

Gener also saw how the pastors were mindful and even bent on preaching contextually with a view towards faithful worship of God and discipleship in alignment with the church's mission.

Ward observed that the pastors endeavored to preach from a specific scriptural text and provided a sermon connected to it. However, there were times in the conclusions or points made that the interpretive process was not completely clear but assumed. The meaningful connections in the sermon content were at times missing or tenuous.

Nonetheless, there were no concerns of a suspect hermeneutic or contextualization that was not aligned with the church's mission and values.

Ward also observed that the hermeneutic was "primarily a plain sense, English



version hermeneutic. Nuances of historical context, cultural differences, or other issues of the original context were not typically explored or proclaimed in explicit ways. This was a strength and a weakness.” He also had some concerns about cases of psychological interpretation added to the scriptural interpretation, sometimes longer than the scriptural content. The preaching was almost always evangelistic and presented discipleship life issues, which was a strength, but the downside is that there was no opportunity in the 6 sermons to speak on other Christian practices as well as socially responsible living.

### **Homiletical Practice**

The aim of the hermeneutical process involving exegesis and contextualization is to discern the theological meaning of the text in order to proclaim it to God’s people. As Osborne contends, “the actual purpose of Scripture is not explanation but exposition, not description but proclamation. God’s Word speaks to every generation, and the relationship between meaning and significance summarizes the hermeneutical task” (29). In addition, as earlier cited in the literature review, Haddon Robinson defines expository preaching as “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers” (21). The research findings revealed the degree to which the homiletical practices among the pastors in Victory were effective in fulfilling its mission and in consonance with best practices in preaching.

The preaching pastors’ survey revealed the following results for homiletical practice:

**Table 4.14.**

Results for Preaching Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 34, 39, 40, and 41

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
34. Sensing God's authority in the Word while preaching	51	0	3.73	0.45
39. Familiarity with various sermon forms	51	0	2.80	0.79
40. Keeping people engaged while preaching	51	0	3.08	0.62
41. Times when not adequately prepared for preaching	51	0	2.16	0.78

Preaching is not about giving the pastor's own thoughts or ideas but declaring the eternal Word of God to which all people will be judged. As such, the pastor's confidence is not in his or her wise words or eloquence but the inherent authority of the Scriptures. The high mean of 3.72 and relatively low standard deviation of 0.45 for question 34 attest to this. At the same time, it is incumbent upon the preacher to exert every effort to communicate the gospel in such a way that keeps the people's attention to hearing the Word. This is a continuing challenge for all pastors, as seen in the relatively lower mean of 3.08 and standard deviation of 0.62 for question 40. The pastors need to devote more time to sermon preparation, as the low mean of 2.16 and 0.78 standard deviation for question 41 indicate, and to become more familiar with the various forms to keep people engaged, which the low mean of 2.80 and relatively high 0.79 standard deviation attest to.

The small group leaders' survey revealed the significant impact that effective

homiletical practice had upon the congregants. The following are the research results:

**Table 4.15.**

Results for Small Group Leaders' Online Survey – Questions 14, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
14. Pastor's preaching inspires disciple-making	615	3	3.71	0.52
23. Pastor's preaching style engaging	616	2	3.62	0.56
24. God speaks through pastor's preaching	616	3	3.69	0.50
25. Pastor speaks truth that sets people free	617	3	3.77	0.46
26. Pastor's preaching is gracious seasoned with salt	613	4	3.74	0.48
27. Pastor's preaching is sometimes legalistic	615	20	2.07	0.85
28. Wisdom received through pastor's preaching	616	3	3.69	0.52
29. Pastor's preaching not relevant to personal situations	615	19	1.76	0.76
30. Times of disagreement with pastor's preaching	616	17	1.96	0.86
31. Pastor's preaching connects with life issues	613	4	3.50	0.56
32. God's compassion sensed through preaching	617	4	3.77	0.45

Effective homiletical practice enables the pastor to preach not only in an engaging way; it allows God to speak, through the preacher, truth that sets people free and inspires them to the mission of making disciples. The high means of 3.62, 3.70, 3.77, and 3.71 and standard deviations of 0.56, 0.55, 0.47, and 0.53 for questions 23, 24, 25, and 14 bore this out. Furthermore, the hearers gained wisdom as the sermon connected with the issues

they face in life and sensed God's compassion as the pastor preached with gracious words seasoned with salt, indicated in the high means of 3.69, 3.51, 3.78, and 3.78, and standard deviations of 0.53, 0.57, 0.46, and 0.59, for questions 28, 31, 32, and 26, respectively.

There may be times, however, that the congregants may not agree with the pastor's preaching, or it may be legalistic and not relevant to their personal situations, but the indications are that this is not that frequent, as shown in the low means of 2.05, 2.16, and 1.86, and high 0.98, 0.98, and 0.93 standard deviations for questions 30, 27, and 29, respectively.

The apostolic team members gave mixed feedback in assessing the homiletical practice among the Metro Manila pastors. One member expressed the belief that the level of effectiveness varied considerably because of the fact that many of the pastors were new in the ministry. In watching their videocasted online sermons randomly, he wanted the pastors to realize that preaching is more than just telling good stories but "it's going deep in God's word and pulling out God's truth . . . I think maybe our biggest area that needs to be improved in my opinion of our preachers, my context is Metro Manila." He added that the preachers need to see that preaching is not a stand-alone but integrated into worship in the worship service.

At the same time two other members affirmed the value of good stories to keep the preaching engaging. Three others saw the need to use technology and social media as tools for communicating the Word, but not to let technology use the preacher. One of the members opined that preachers need to learn to bridge the text with the hearers, to have what God wants to say connect with the people. To do this, another member said the pastor needs to understand the culture of their audience, that there are different kinds of

people who go to the services as another member noted, which ought to guide them in selecting the wording and the sermon structure to facilitate their preaching.

Two of the members identified the great need for the pastors to learn to preach in the local dialect, since English, though widely spoken throughout the country, is still the second language of the country. The Philippines has around seventy languages, but the two main local languages are Tagalog and Cebuano. About 40 of the 140 worship services in Metro Manila use Tagalog-English or Taglish in their preaching. As one member reiterated, the main responsibility of pastors is to feed the flock, thus the need to speak to the people in their heart language. In doing so, another member believes preaching can transform people's lives.

In the focused group discussions, the first group meta-card exercise using words or phrases to identify key elements in preaching reiterated the need for developing tension and at the same time a connection with the audience in sermon delivery, and that preaching should be dynamic. In the second group, one pastor remarked that preaching requires energy; therefore, the pastors ought to learn to manage their energy. Effectiveness in preaching is usually determined in the first 5 minutes of the sermon, so another pastor writes and reenacts in his mind what he will say, then preaches his introduction verbatim. Still another stressed the value of reading the Scripture with clear enunciation and emotion. For the meta-cards exercise, the key words and phrases proposed for homiletical practice were presence, dignity and humility, internalizing and practicing what the preacher will say, and empathy and love for people. Finally, one pastor spoke about the need for advanced sermon preparation and the use of good illustrations.

In the outside expert assessment, Bernardino noted that the pastors were mindful of the struggles and needs of their audience and used approaches and words appropriate for them. The sermons had personal and relevant challenges at the end, but the hope is not in what they can do, but solely on what Christ has done and with the Holy Spirit's help. At the same time, there were some weaknesses in the sermon delivery that Bernardino also noticed. One pastor could have established the main theme in the beginning prior to the verse by verse exposition. Another needed to improve the flow of his presentation, and the third would have been better off using two instead of three personal illustrations. Overall, the homiletical practice still helped in accomplishing the church's mission and values.

Gener observed that most of the pastors were effective in their sermon delivery, trying not to be tied to their sermon manuscripts and even able to preach without notes. They seemed well-versed in public speaking and adept at using catchy illustrations and other creative elements to keep the audience attentive to the message. Their homiletic practice helped to reinforce the church's mission and core values. However, he noted that in a couple of the preachers, he perceived that there was a lack of preparation, including focused study and time to listen to God.

Ward examined the pastors' homiletical practice both theologically and rhetorically. He observed that the sermons were scripture-focused and demonstrated a high value and reverence for God's Word, emphasizing the gospel as the foundation of righteousness. A common theme was preaching against works righteousness for cultural and theological reasons. There were times however that the sermon subtly shifted away from God and more towards the preacher's personality or stories in ways that do not help

the sermon, perhaps in the pastor's desire to connect with the congregation. In Ward's mind, this was not a major weakness.

In the rhetorical aspect of the preaching, he noted that the order of the sermon's content was oftentimes loose and hard to discern. The point-based format is commonly used, but the points tend to be topics rather than actual content statements. Also, the sermon introduction and its connection to the rest of the sermon were often tenuous or surface-level, and the points were not usually woven in a unified sermonic flow. The conclusions then did not usually come across as well thought out. Furthermore, the emotional engagement and appeal of the preacher leaned towards positive rather than negative appeals, encouragement more than conviction, ending with hope-filled praise. Some of the preachers' strengths were that they were approachable and someone the people could identify with; one particular weakness was the use of many illustrations that were too long and unfocused. Overall, the sermons achieved the mission of honoring God and making disciples through an uplifting worship environment and clear, accessible, and applicable scripturally focused messages.

### **Spirit-Empowered**

The fifth characteristic of preaching that accomplishes the mission and promotes the values and culture of Victory is Spirit-empowered preaching. The superintending role of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation and sermon delivery is time and again declared in Scripture. In the launching of his ministry, Jesus himself, who was God in the flesh, quoted from Isaiah 61 that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to proclaim good news to the poor. It was after the outpouring of the Spirit during the Pentecost Feast that emboldened Peter to preach the gospel that brought 3,000 people to repentance and faith

in the resurrected and ascended Christ. The apostle Paul declared that his preaching was not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, in order that the people's faith might not rest on the wisdom of men but on God's power. The research findings all point to the vital ministry of the Holy Spirit in enabling the pastors to preach the transforming Word of God.

In the preaching pastors' survey, the following results were recorded:

**Table 4.16.**

Results for Preaching Pastors' Self-Assessment Survey – Questions 21, 27, 31, 38 and 45

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
21. Experiences illumination in Scripture study	51	0	3.59	0.53
27. Relies on the Spirit's guidance in sermon preparation	51	0	3.73	0.45
31. Senses the Holy Spirit's enabling to be given words to speak	51	0	3.67	0.47
38. Takes time to hear from the Spirit the spiritual needs of people	51	0	3.45	0.60
45. Confident in the Holy Spirit to lead and guide people into all truth	51	0	3.82	0.38

The pastors acknowledged that it is the Holy Spirit who enlightened them as they studied God's Word and brought guidance to their sermon preparation, as shown in the high means of 3.59 and 3.73 and standard deviations of 0.53 and 0.45 for questions 21 and 27, respectively. They took time to listen to the Holy Spirit as they prayed for the spiritual



needs of the people, attested to by the 3.45 mean and 0.50 standard deviation for question 38. Consequently, they sensed the Holy Spirit's enabling to give them words to say in the sermon delivery, confident that he will lead and guide people into all truth in the process, as the high 3.67 and 3.82 means and 0.47 and 0.38 standard deviations indicate.

For the small group leaders' survey, question 22 asks how much the leaders agree that they received illumination of the Scriptures through the pastor's preaching, which was a work of the Spirit. The high mean of 3.69 and 0.55 indicate that they significantly agreed with the statement.

Among the apostolic team members, three of them specifically emphasized the vital role of the Holy Spirit in effective preaching. The first member asserted that because of the church's Pentecostal and charismatic roots, the orientation in Victory has always been towards Spirit-empowered preaching. This preaching does not just result in intellectual assent among the hearers, but spiritually empowers them to do something about what they have heard, to go to the campus and community, to make disciples. Furthermore, the preacher in the worship service is supposed to be the lead pastor, meaning he needs to be directed by the Holy Spirit, not the stage manager. The second member reiterated the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation and delivery. Even if he had been a pastor for some time, he still felt nervous at times before preaching, leading him to cry out for help from the Holy Spirit to enable him to preach. The third member believed that powerful preaching is not in the moment, but because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. He added that the Spirit is at work in people's lives to inspire and bring hope, to teach people the truth.

For the two focused groups, the group one meta-cards exercise cited the anointing

of the Holy Spirit as an important element in effective preaching. For group two, one pastor recounted that even without much effort on his part, the Holy Spirit would remind him of things that happened in the course of the week that would help in his sermon preparation. Another pastor would ask the Holy Spirit how to make the preaching relevant to the people. One other pastor observed that there are times in the course of preaching a morning and afternoon service that the Holy Spirit would move differently in the second service, which affects the sermon delivery.

### **Research Question #3**

**What training modules can be developed to enhance the preaching capabilities of the ninety-one Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors in accordance with those characteristics and best practices?**

The purpose of this question was to propose from both the literature review and the research findings specific training modules to address the gaps in the preaching capabilities of the Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors and enable them to accomplish the mission and promote the values and culture of the church. To accomplish this goal, the results of the five mixed-methods research instruments used in answering the first two research questions will be referred to. In the first chapter of this research project, we have identified in dialogue with the apostolic team and other church senior leaders three observable gaps in the preaching capabilities of these pastors. The proposed training program aimed to address these gaps.

The first was the need for the pastors to deepen their relationship with God through the spiritual habits of prayer, focused study of the Scriptures, as well as other

disciplines, so that they would preach as those who have heard a message from God. The second is the need for them to develop greater skill in the exegetical and contextualization tasks so that preaching would be more text-driven rather than preacher-driven. The third is the need for these pastors to have a greater awareness of the different sermonic forms available in order to communicate the Word in ways that would be effective both for the genre of the Scriptural text being preached as well as the congregation being addressed.

### **Description of Evidence for Research Question #3**

The research findings significantly validated these gaps in the process of identifying the essential habits of pastors and characteristics and best practices in preaching, though there were other discoveries in the course of the research work that will be identified and included in the proposed training program. The training modules to be proposed will address the gaps in the spiritual habits, and exegetical, contextualization, and homiletical practices of the pastors. Although there will always be room for improvement, the Scripture-centered and Spirit-dependent characteristics of preaching are extensively practiced among the Victory pastors. The hermeneutical and homiletical practices need more intervention, and thus the modules to be proposed would address these. The methods of modeling and mentoring by which these modules will be taught will also be explored.

### **Spiritual Habits Module**

All the research findings ascertained the vital importance of cultivating the spiritual habits of devotion to Scripture, the study of Scripture, prayer, and listening to preaching, to spiritually form the pastor and equip them to be effective preachers. The

pastors assessed all practiced these devotional habits, but the question is to what extent. Based on the survey findings and interviews, the main impediment to their consistent practice of these habits is the busyness of ministry. Just like Martha, who was so busy serving Jesus that she did not have time to be with Jesus, the pastors have so many responsibilities in the course of leading growing churches while raising their own families that their devotional time with God gets squeezed out. The varied responses to questions 23 and 26, pertaining to how much time the pastors spend in prayer and the practice of fasting, reflect the challenge of consistently practicing these habits, considering the fact that in the disciple-making culture of the church, these devotional habits were ingrained in them early on.

From the research findings, two modules were recommended to cultivate the consistent practice of spiritual habits by the pastors, and both were proposed by Gener. The first proposal is to conduct regular spiritual retreats, and the second is to teach the practice of *lectio divina*. Most of the retreats that have been conducted in Victory over the years have either been for marriage and family, or refreshing and equipping them in their leadership and pastoral roles. The Victory Ministers Association began to conduct only last year spiritual retreats for the purpose of rest, solitude, and personal reflection. The retreat that Gener proposed encourages time alone with God.

### **Exegetical Practice Modules**

The research findings identified a glaring gap in the pastors' ability to do proper exegesis. The results for the preaching pastors' survey indicate that though they recognize and practice a historical study of the text (question 29), they did not place the same level of importance to the grammatical and literary genre study of the text, as well

as the extensive use of study tools (questions 30, 35, and 36). There was also little reference to the vital need for the exegetical task in sermon preparation from the apostolic team members and the focused group discussions. On the other hand, all the outside experts clearly saw this deficit in their assessments of the six sermons.

In the apostolic team member interviews, one member commented that the current practice of the Victory Metro Manila leadership team in providing study notes for the synchronized preaching series across the congregations needs to be modified. In the last few years, hermeneutical and homiletical notes on the specific texts to be preached along with possible sermon outlines were prepared by some pastors who had formal theological seminary training to jump start the sermon preparation process of the rest of the Metro Manila pastors, specially the newer preachers, whose theological training was primarily from the 4 in-house schools of ministry mentioned in the spiritual habits module. The concern of the member along with the others on the apostolic team has been that the pastors have become too dependent on them that they have not exercised the same diligence in studying and wrestling with the text that every preacher needs to do. Recently, the study notes team has stopped providing possible sermon outlines and have not been as detailed in the exegetical and contextualization notes in order for the pastors to do more of the spade work in their sermon preparation.

Some of the apostolic team members have recommended a number of interventions to address this gap. One member who is in a master's degree program at Asbury proposed the use of the inductive Bible study method in exegeting the text. He explains that one benefit of this approach, which he learned in the seminary, is the generation of the structural relationships from the text. Several members suggested the

more extensive use of study tools in the hermeneutical task, such as word study tools, historical background books, and commentaries. They said that training is needed to orient the pastors on how to properly use these resources.

The outside experts gave extensive recommendations for equipping the pastors more thoroughly in exegetical practice. Bernardino suggested from observing the preaching that when using an Old Testament passage and applying it in relation to Christ, there has to be more explanation on why it refers to Christ, e.g., seed, in order to give understanding to the audience. He reinforces the need to continually expose the pastors to sound exegetical and hermeneutical practices, but to exercise caution in giving too much information on the technical aspects of exegesis in the sermon delivery, lest it become an “academic lecture devoid of personal and inspiring relevance.” Gener recommended equipping courses/classes to deepen the exegetical practice for the pastors. He also suggested the formation of study/reading groups that meet regularly to focus on discussing preaching resources.

Ward proposed both training and accountable practice modules to deepen the exegetical practice of the pastors. He specifically mentioned the need to equip them in doing more detailed exegetical work and historical background research to maximize the use of these scriptural resources in discipleship and preaching ministries of the church. The goal of this training would be to “increase the specificity of detailed observations, the clarity of interpretive modeling, and the gospel-catalyzed nature of applications . . .”

### **Contextualization Practice Modules**

As defined in research question # 2, contextualization is the corollary task to exegesis in hermeneutics to discover the scriptural text’s intended meaning for its original

audience in order to discern its theological truth and apply it to the contemporary audience. Several of the apostolic members affirmed the importance of making God's Word relevant to their congregations, making the "timeless" Word "timely" for the people. Specifically, one member cited the need to get to know your congregation and take the time to meet with and get to know them. The focused group discussion comments also mentioned the value of speaking from your own personal challenges so that the people can identify with you more. However, Gener saw the limitation in using personal illustrations whether from the pastor or the congregants when preaching in a megachurch environment, so the pastors end up giving general or generic connections in contextualizing the text to the life of the congregation.

The major gap observed by Ward in the six sermons evaluated were the times when the conclusions or points made in the interpretive process were not clearly stated but assumed. The meaningful connections in the sermon content were tenuous or missing at times. He recommended the same response as in the exegetical practice module, which is to provide training that enables the pastor to make more detailed observations, thus bringing greater clarity in the interpretive modeling and creating more gospel-catalyzed applications. Also, an implication of the statement made by several of the apostolic team members stressing the greater need to know the congregation is the initiation of a demographic profile study of the congregations. This proposal was verbally suggested recently by one of the apostolic team members, but I was not able to record it in the interview.

### **Homiletical Practice Modules**

Osborne contends that the aim of the hermeneutical process is to discern the theological meaning of the passage in order to proclaim it to God's people. The research findings showed strengths and weaknesses in the current homiletical practices of the pastors. The preaching pastors' survey results point to the challenge of devoting more time to sermon preparation in view of their many responsibilities and being able to keep the people engaged in the preaching event. Although there is a relatively high level of satisfaction and impact among the small group leaders regarding the preaching in their congregations, there is still an ongoing need to equip the pastors to sharpen their preaching skills. The apostolic team members recognize that because of the influx of many new pastors in the last decade to shepherd the growing flock, many of these leaders have not been trained adequately, thus the inconsistency in preaching effectiveness across the Metro Manila congregations.

The outside experts also observed several deficiencies in the sermon delivery of the six pastors observed. Bernardino noticed that one pastor did not establish the main theme at the beginning, as well as a weakness in the flow of the presentation in another. Gener perceived that two of the pastors did not adequately prepare for the sermon, taking the time to study and listen to God. Ward observed that the order of the sermon's outline was oftentimes loose and hard to discern, and the point-based format tended to be topics rather than actual content statements, and others already enumerated earlier.

In developing training modules to address these homiletical practice deficits, the apostolic team member who acknowledged the Pentecostal and charismatic roots of the church asserted that whatever trainings we come up with, it is essential to uphold our



theological distinctives as a Spirit-empowered church, that we are continualists and not cessationists when it comes to the operation of spiritual gifts and the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching. With this in mind, he proposed that the study notes that generate the hermeneutical and homiletical ideas for the synchronized preaching series be modified so that the pastors are not just spoon-fed but will themselves be fully engaged in sermon preparation. He and several other members reiterated the need for continuing and regular equipping of the pastors in the hermeneutical practices. Another member proposed the writing of preaching training manuals that can be classified as basic, intermediate, and advanced modules. Also, two members proposed language training in the local dialects to enhance the communication skills of the pastors in the vernacular.

Bernardino cautioned against the practice of too long and broad altar calls and prayers, which tend to become an extension of the sermon, and the need to give immediate feedback after the preaching. He did commend the use of tools such as PowerPoint and visual aids in enhancing the impact of the preaching. Ward recommended the designating of sermon coaches “who are skilled in helping pastors fine tune their sermonic logic and flow in a way that is intimately connected to Scripture . . .” He added that this might be “the most sustainable/scalable way of strengthening the preaching at Victory homiletically.” He continued:

Three concerns exist in this direction: 1) First and foremost the guidance must both emerge from within and be provided from outside Filipino contexts. Missing the one may lead to a neo-colonialist importation of mission-diluting principles. Missing the other may lead to a moment of “cultural cognition” or “group think” which misses what could be

otherwise celebrated or improved. 2) Preaching coaching that is particularized is most helpful when there is a common language and common set of homiletical values from which to work. 3) Preaching coaches have to not only discern what is, but what could be. They need to be able not only to see how to improve a single sermon, but how to guide preachers to strengthen all future sermons in that particular way.

Finally, Ward recommended extended reflection in social responsibility in sermon preparation in order that it is not only stated in the mission statement but actually preached and practiced more in the churches.

### **Modeling and Mentoring**

Throughout the interviews with the apostolic team members and the senior pastors in the focused group discussions, the important roles of modelling and mentoring as methodologies in the training and development of pastors were repeatedly mentioned. The pastors learned how to preach by observing how their pastors preached, and they continued to grow as they asked their pastors to mentor them in the craft. Several of them underscored the value of receiving feedback, whether that be immediate or on a recurring basis, in helping them improve in their preaching.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The goal of this research project was to propose training modules that would enhance the preaching capabilities of the 91 Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors based on the observable gaps in the pastors' preaching. The research instruments were designed from a distillation of the five essential elements in preaching that emerged from the literature review. To a significant degree, the research results corroborated the

observable gaps identified prior to the survey. The combination of the literature review conclusions, summed up in the five essential elements of preaching, and the research results yielded five major findings which define the characteristics and best practices in preaching, and what interventions can be proposed for the benefit of the preaching pastors of Victory.

The first major finding is a Scripture-centered ethos. The priority of Scripture in the devotional and study habits results of the pastors' self-assessment attest to a leadership culture that has valued the Word of God from the church's inception. The apostolic team interviews and focused group discussions likewise place the Word of God in the forefront of their walk with God and their ministry. The small group leaders' responses confirm that the ministry of the Word had helped them in their spiritual journey. Finally, the literature review itself established the Scriptures as the foundation for the faith and practice of those who follow Christ.

The second major finding is thorough exegetical practice. The literature review emphasized the hermeneutical task of exegesis as the initial step in determining the meaning of the text and the biblical author's intent to the original recipients of the writing. The research results and the outside experts' assessments reveal a significant gap in exegetical practice. The pastors' self-assessment results indicate a lower degree of priority given to grammatical and literary study compared to a historical background analysis of the text. The outside experts' assessments of the six sermons all pointed to a cursory explanation of the background of the text in the sermons and proceeding quickly to contextualization.

The third major finding is attuned contextualization. The literature review

reiterated that contextualization is corollary to exegesis in the interpretive work to hear what God is saying to contemporary hearers in the text. The research findings show from the pastors' self-assessment and the small group leaders' observations that their sermons are relevant to the spiritual needs of the congregation. The apostolic team members, senior pastors and outside experts gave a fairly good assessment regarding the contextualization practice of the pastors, but still concluded that improvements are needed to ensure that this is faithfully done in sermons.

The fourth major finding is a sharpened homiletical craft. The aim of the hermeneutical process involving exegesis and contextualization is to discern the theological meaning of the text in order to proclaim it to God's people. The preaching pastors' self-assessment showed a measure of confidence as they sensed God's authority while preaching in spite of their unfamiliarity with different sermonic forms, and the small group leaders attested to their belief that God speaks to them in the pastor's sermon. However, the apostolic team members, senior pastors, and outside experts gave mixed feedback in evaluating these pastors' preaching. There is also much that can still be done to sharpen their homiletical skills.

The fifth major finding is a Spirit-dependent ethos. The literature review reveals the superintending role of the Holy Spirit in enabling the pastors to preach. Not only is the Holy Spirit the Author of Scripture, he is the One who illuminates it as the pastors study the text and empowers them as they proclaim the Word of God. The pastors' self-assessment, the apostolic team members, and the senior pastors all acknowledge dependence on the Spirit to fulfill their ministry. The Holy Spirit is also at work in the hearers as he leads them and guides them into all truth through the preaching of the

Word.

## CHAPTER 5

### LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

This chapter analyzes and synthesizes the results of the research project in order to formulate a fresh approach to preaching training for the Victory Metro Manila pastors as the church continues to grow and expand, and hopefully for the development of preachers in other ministries at the present time. A brief review of the nature and purpose of the project is given to provide a ministry context for the research. The survey and interview results yielded five major findings on the characteristics and best practices in preaching, which will then be evaluated through the three lenses of personal observations, literature review references, and biblical/theological support. The synthesis and conclusions derived from this process will help gain a better understanding not only of the high calling to preach but also of how to better equip pastors in this vital ministry. Finally, this chapter will enumerate and explain the limitations and unexpected observations encountered in assessing the pastors' sermon preparation and delivery practices; recommendations for the enhancement of preaching will be proposed in hope that those called to minister the word will faithfully discharge their duties before God and his people.

The purpose of this research was to develop a training program to enhance the preaching capabilities of the 91 Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors in the task of making disciples, training leaders, and leading their churches. Victory Metro Manila is a multi-site church with 18 congregations and currently meets in 49 locations across the metropolitan area. A preaching pastor is someone who preaches at least once a month in

one of the Victory church's 182 weekly worship services. The continuous growth and expansion of the church and campus ministries of Victory Metro Manila, particularly in the last 15 years, has brought growing pressure on the church leadership to develop new pastors as well as increase the leadership capacities of current pastors, particularly their preaching capabilities, which is a vital function of spiritual leadership.

### **Major Findings**

The research results derived from the implementation of the research instruments and the literature review generated five major findings on what constitute characteristics and best practices in preaching:

1. Scripture-centered ethos
2. Thorough exegetical practice
3. Attuned contextualization
4. Sharpened homiletical craft, and
5. Spirit-dependent ethos.

These practices parallel and at the same time modify what I have initially identified in the literature review as the five essential elements in preaching:

1. Preaching as God speaking through the Scriptures
2. Preaching as a calling from God
3. Preaching as hearing from God
4. Preaching as speaking for God, and
5. Preaching as God speaking to His people.

In analyzing the quantitative research instruments data, I have concluded from a first-hand knowledge of the training and development of our pastors that a mean of 3.0,

which corresponds to the “often” frequency response in the pastors’ online survey, and “somewhat agree” using the Likert scale in the discipleship group leaders’ survey, and a standard deviation of less than 0.75 for both instruments, constituted an acceptable response when assessing the quality of the current sermon preparation and delivery practices of the pastors. The qualitative assessments given by the apostolic team members and focused group discussions helped reinforce the insiders’ perspective, while the three outside experts’ sample sermon evaluations provided the outsiders’ perspective. These data triangulation perspectives of researcher, insider, and outsider lenses helped provide a thick description of the quality of preaching currently practiced among the Victory Metro Manila pastors.

### **Scripture-centered Ethos**

A few months before I surrendered my life to Christ in 1984 at age 24, a childhood friend shared with me the passage in Ephesians 2:8 -9, that “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.” It was this passage that opened my heart and mind to Christ’s redeeming work. Up until then, my religious upbringing (a Roman Catholic school, hearing Mass and occasional attendance at a Methodist church) was what motivated me to try to live for God. However, I failed miserably precisely because I thought it was by works. However, my friend’s quoting the Ephesian passage was like an imperishable seed that eventually grew and brought me to the saving knowledge of Christ, and for that I am eternally grateful.

In the next few years, I started growing in the faith through participation in Bible study, personal discipleship, and church attendance in various denominations both in the



United States and in the Philippines. By 1988, I began to sense the call of God while working in a multinational bank in Manila to go into vocational ministry, even though I had planned to spend my life in the corporate world. Similarly, it was through a prophetic prayer given by a visiting pastor speaking from Jeremiah 1:5 that even before I was formed in my mother's womb, God already knew me and appointed me to his service, that confirmed in my heart his call upon my life. In the two most important decisions of my life, it was through the Scriptures spoken by others that I was convinced that God was speaking to me, and throughout my life God's Word has guided, convicted, corrected, encouraged, and comforted me to live for Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

My testimony of a changed life after encountering Christ and continuing guidance through the ministry of the Word has been replicated in the lives of so many of our church members, and especially among our pastors who corporately shepherd Victory Metro Manila. The consistent answer to research question #1 that devotion to Scripture is the first essential habit to deepen one's relationship with the Lord attests to a Scripture-centered ethos among our pastors. Several of them have indicated that their devotional reading of the Scriptures manifested through consistent reading, meditation, and memorization, becomes the springboard for preaching ideas.

In the literature review, I identified that the first essential element for effective preaching is the conviction that the Scriptures are the inerrant and authoritative Word of God. The research results highlighting devotion to Scripture and the study of Scripture as essential habits for deepening the leader's relationship with God and developing their ears to hear from God reinforce this truth. The foundation of Scripture-based preaching

then is a devotion to Scripture which generates homiletical ideas that can be developed into sermons and sermon series.

As Osborne asserted, the Bible has an inherent sense of authority through the Old Testament prophets' oft-repeated declaration, "The Lord says . . . ," as well as the apostolic authority entrusted to the New Testament writers (25). At the same time, Moses made it clear in Deuteronomy 18:18-20 that the credibility of the messenger also needs to be ascertained in order for the Word of the Lord to be established as truly coming from him. This is why a Scripture-centered ethos among the pastors is so important for the preaching ministry, for those who are devoted to God's Word will most likely live according to that Word as well. Chapell points out that the apostle Paul in writing to the Thessalonian church believed it was not just his words but the way he lived his life that affected how the church received his message, "giving scriptural credence to the notion that ethos is a powerful force in the ordinary process of spiritual persuasion" (35). He adds that ,while preaching should reflect the uniqueness of our personalities, the way we live should somehow reflect Christ so that his Word would be received without hindrance (36).

However, the pastors' devotion to Scripture is insufficient by itself to promote a Scripture-centered ethos in the church as a whole. The church leadership needs to promote devotion to Scripture not only among the pastors but among the members themselves together with a belief in its authority for faith and daily living. In the discipleship culture that has been propagated since the earlier days of the church, the reading and memorization of Bible verses was instilled among the new believers as a way of hiding God's Word in their hearts. The cultivation of a love for God's Word among

the people provides the atmosphere and motivation for future generations of pastors to desire to study God's Word not only to feed themselves but to feed his people as well. A Scripture-centered ethos will enable the pastors and the congregants to fulfill the church's mission to honor God and make disciples.

Several texts from Psalm 119 reinforce the value of a Scripture-centered ethos among pastors and in the church. First, in Psalm 119:9-11, the psalmist insists that the key to a young person's ability to stay in the path of purity is to live according to God's Word, to hide the Word in their hearts that they might not sin against him. As is often applied, to hide God's Word is to meditate or memorize the Scriptures or even both. The second is in Psalm 119:35-36, where the author confesses his delight in God's commands which results in his heart being turned towards his statutes instead of selfish gain. The third is from Psalm 119:97-100, where the psalmist exults in his love for the law of God. His conviction was that meditating upon the Word would not only give him wisdom over his enemies, it would also give him more insight and understanding than his teachers or elders.

### **Thorough Exegetical Practice**

The foundation of Scripture-based preaching then is a devotion to Scripture which generates homiletical ideas that can be developed into sermons and sermon series. The executive leadership of Victory Metro Manila has always prioritized the training and development of our pastors in spiritual leadership, including the ministry of preaching and teaching. This training has been mostly in-house training. We have an initial 3- to 4-month leadership training school which provides basic hermeneutics and homiletics modules for our pastors, campus missionaries, and cross-cultural missionaries at the

beginning of their ministry, then augment this with ongoing training on a recurring basis. Because we are a very missional organization, we believe that in-house training enables us to impart our mission, values, and culture more directly in our teaching.

While we do value formal theological seminary education, the rapid growth of our church has prevented many of our pastors from availing of seminary education beyond our in-house courses. A few of our pastors have master's and doctoral theological degrees, and they are the ones who have more input in our preaching training and preaching series. We have also invited a number of doctoral professors to teach on preaching, including the three outside experts who assessed our preachers in the research project.

The deficiencies therefore identified in the research findings could be attributed in large part to the lack of formal theological training in hermeneutics and homiletics. However, formal theological training in hermeneutics and homiletics does not always yield excellence in those areas in pastors who receive them. The assessments given by the three outside experts on six of the sermons all pointed to a weakness in exegetical work, and even the pastors in the online survey did not place as much importance on the grammatical and literary study of the text compared to the historical background study, as indicated by the lower mean scores in the first two categories compared to the third. As previously stated, Zuck emphasized that exegesis entails the study of a passage of Scripture in its original context, which includes a historical, grammatical, and rhetorical or literary study (20). There is therefore a need for the pastors to develop a more thorough, but not necessarily exhaustive, exegetical practice.

Fee, however, points out that there is an ongoing conflict between exegetical methodology and spirituality, with one side insisting that the historical-critical method gives them mastery over the interpretation of the text, while the other side asserts that a more devotional reading of the text is a better means of receiving a word from God (8). Fee reconciles these seemingly polarized views by saying that even though the first task of the exegete is the historical one, it is not the final step (11). The ultimate task in exegetical method is spiritual, that is, to hear the text in such a way that it produces worship in the heart of the disciple and conformity with God's image and his ways. Determining the spiritual intent of the text is part of the historical exegetical task at first, but the end goal is to engage with the author's spirituality, not just his words (11).

The question then is, how do we hear the text in such a way that it produces spirituality in the disciples and conformity with God's image and ways? One significant way is Mulholland's proposal that there are two theological orientations in the reading of Scripture that can be applied to sermon preparation: reading the text for information and reading it for formation (49). Mulholland observes that human cultures are increasingly being shaped by an informational mode of being and doing, which has crept into the way we read Scripture (50). The text becomes something we master and bring under our control rather than for the text to master us, to solve our problems rather than to submit to him (52-53). In a sense, sermon preparation becomes an academic exercise rather than an encounter with God while studying the text.

Formational reading, as Mulholland asserts on the other hand, is allowing the text to master you, to "come with an openness to hear, to receive, to respond, to be a servant of the Word rather than a master of the text" (57). The goal of formational reading is not

just to read through a book but to meet God in the text, and we meet God in the text when he speaks to us! (55) Formational reading therefore allows us to hear from God while studying the text, and this is confirmed by the quickening of our faith, for faith comes by hearing the word of Christ as Romans 10:17 declares. Hearing from God what he wants to speak to his people will produce spirituality in the hearers, i.e., Spirit-empowered disciples.

In the desire to equip our pastors with better exegetical skills, it is important to guard against the possibility that they lapse into Scriptural reading and studying for information rather than for formation. Academic and spiritual reading are not mutually exclusive, so it would not be ideal for Victory Manila pastors to ignore either one. Still, informational reading should be seen as a precursor to and secondary to formational reading particularly in sermon study. As Jesus refuted the Jewish leaders in John 5:39-40, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” At the same time, however, as we cultivate a devotional and formational approach to scriptural study, we can be assured of God’s promise to the prophet in Isaiah 50:4, that he will give us a well-instructed tongue, to know the Word that sustains the weary, for he will waken us morning by morning, to waken our ear to listen like one being instructed.

### **Attuned Contextualization**

The Word of God still speaks to us today not because its truth is timeless, but because it is timely for the situations we face today. As a pastor, the exegetical study of the text, as a part of the hermeneutical task, is completed when I am able to contextualize the passage and explain its spiritual meaning to the congregation. In the years that I have

been preaching, there were times when I have been able to preach the eternal Word of God to the contemporary audience in a straightforward manner, such as the moral imperatives given in Ephesians 4-5 as a result of faith in Christ. At other times though, the historical, literary, and cultural distance make it difficult to directly apply the text to current hearers. There is much that our pastors, myself included, can gain by honing the ability to contextualize the text for the congregation that is attuned to the original intended meaning of the author and the discerned intent of the Spirit, and at the same time relevant to the present audience.

For several of the apostolic team members in the one-on-one-interviews, the process of contextualization is important to make God's Word relevant to their congregations, that the preacher ought to know not only the text but the congregation as well. One pastor in the focused group discussion opined that the best preparation for preaching is your life, that you are endeavoring to have God's Word working in your life before you preach it. In the sermon assessments, the three experts noted that the pastors do use sound hermeneutical practice, but Gener observed that there is a tendency to make general/generic connections in contextualizing the text to the life of the congregation, in part because a mega-church setting often prevents the pastor from drawing out from the personal experiences of the members. Ward also had some concerns about cases of psychological interpretation added to the scriptural interpretation, sometimes longer than the scriptural content.

In the literature review, I identified two of the essential elements in preaching as hearing from God and God speaking to the congregation. Hearing from God involves the dual hermeneutical tasks of exegesis and contextualization, discerning the spiritual

meaning of the text to its original recipients, and bringing application to the current hearers. The application, however, is contingent on the target audience. Craddock says that interpretation is not only a matter of understanding the meaning of the text to the original audience and attempting to contemporize it to the modern audience, but the question is whether or not the sermon preached was appropriate for the congregation in their particular situation. In essence, “we do not interpret Scripture; we interpret Scripture for someone somewhere” (136). Long asserts that preachers not only need to exegete the text but the congregation as well, and they are able to do this because they come from the congregation and are therefore in a position to understand and discern the spiritual needs of God’s flock (ch.1).

Similarly, Olford insists on the responsibility of the preacher to not only exegete the text but to bring application to the hearers (597). He explains that there are three applications that every sermon should make: a call to biblical repentance, turning back to God, and doing works of repentance; biblical renewal, which includes regeneration for the sinner and being filled with the Spirit for the saint; and biblical reality, living authentically for God (607-09). For preaching to be effective then, there must be movement in the application of truth from the mind to the heart then the will (612). Olford concludes that the end goal of all preaching and teaching is conformity to Christ (615).

From these assertions, just like in exegetical practice, clearly the work of contextualization cannot be just an academic task but is dependent on God’s enabling the preacher to accomplish the goal of preaching. Keener promotes a dynamic, experiential reading of Scripture by espousing a hermeneutical approach that starts with responsible



exegesis, then asks the question about how we hear the Spirit's voice in Scripture. More specifically, he asks how the Holy Spirit is able to bring application of the text to the believers' lives and communities (1-3). His interest in the biblical texts is not only in what they taught the original hearers in their historical contexts, but in how current readers can share in the same spiritual experiences and interaction with God that the original audience received from the Lord in the Scriptural account (5).

McGowan likewise points out in Luke 24:44-45 the need for Jesus to open the minds of the disciples to understand Scripture despite the fact that they had been with him for over three years, accentuating the noetic effects of sin on the human mind's inability to comprehend spiritual things without the Spirit's working (401). Likewise, he concludes from Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 2:11-14 that true understanding of the meaning of Scripture comes only to those who have the Spirit of God living in them (402). These accounts point to the need for the Holy Spirit's work of illumination, not so much that Scripture needs to be illumined, but that the human mind needs to be acted upon by the Holy Spirit because of the noetic consequences of sin, in order for the believer to recognize the Scripture as the revealed truth of God (403).

To reiterate, the hermeneutical tasks of exegesis and contextualization cannot be accomplished on the pastor's intellectual or academic abilities alone; we need the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit upon our minds to understand God's Word as truth. It is in this light that Mindling advocates for prayer as a vital part of the interpretive work, for as validated as an essential habit in research question #1, we acknowledge through prayer our need for God's enabling grace in our Scriptural study. Mindling sees prayer as a dialogue between Scripture, Spirit, and servant, the song sung in the

perichoretic dance of this triad (131). He adds that prayer must never be seen as a substitute for the best exegetical tools, neither should it be viewed as superfluous or mere “spiritualizing” the task of exegesis. Instead, prayer must be restored as a constitutive factor in the hermeneutical process. The psalmist’s petition in Psalm 119:18, “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law,” should therefore be the continuing prayer of the pastor in their study of the text. One of the important functions of prayer is that it creates a psychological openness in the person praying, and this openness can increase the person’s capacity to receive new insight as he or she reflects upon the text.

### **Sharpened Homiletical Craft**

The goal of the hermeneutical process involving exegesis and contextualization, according to Osborne, is to discern the theological meaning of the text in order to proclaim it to God’s people. The hours of study and prayer to prepare the sermon culminate in the 30 to 45-minute message that our pastors deliver to God’s people on a weekly basis, and it is both an exhilarating and exhausting experience at the same time. Just like most of our pastors in the surveys and interviews in research question #1, I learned how to preach by observing how our earlier pastors proclaimed God’s Word. In retrospect, I learned both good and bad habits in preaching, like high-pitched energetic preaching that left people exhausted after the service, and moving sermons that not only brought the congregants to tears but genuine change as a result. The research findings and synthesis will serve to strengthen the pastors’ skill in the homiletical craft.

The small group leaders’ survey results indicated that the pastors were effective to a certain degree in their sermon delivery. The pastors not only preached in an engaging way, but God spoke through the preacher truth that set people free and inspired them in

the mission of making disciples. The hearers gained wisdom as the sermon connected with the issues they faced in life, and sensed God's compassion as the pastor preached with grace and authority. There were times that the congregants did not agree with the pastor's preaching, sometimes it was either legalistic or not relevant to their personal situations, but these were infrequent.

On the other hand, the apostolic team members gave mixed feedback in assessing the homiletical practice among the Metro Manila pastors. One member expressed that the level of effectiveness varied considerably because of the fact that many of the pastors were new in the ministry. Another pointed out the tendency for some of the pastors to lean more towards trying to be relevant and creative rather than digging deeper in Scripture. Two others identified the great need for the pastors to learn to preach in the local dialect such as Tagalog or Cebuano, since English, though widely spoken throughout the country, was still the second language of the country. In the outside expert assessment, Bernardino cited the need to improve the flow of the presentation in one sermon, while Gener perceived that in a couple of the preachers, there was a lack of preparation. Ward observed that the point-based format was commonly used, but the points tended to be topics rather than actual content statements.

In addressing these deficiencies, the literature review provides several effective practices in sermon delivery. Buttrick explains that since spoken language is invariably linear, sermons are thus a "movement of language from one idea to another, each idea being shaped in a bundle of words (ch. 2). Preaching then is being able to speak in formed modules of language arranged in some patterned language called moves (ch. 2). This approach can help pastors in crafting point-based sermons that are more content-

oriented rather than topical, creating movement in the preaching, and keeping the people engaged. Frymire espouses on the other hand storytelling as modelled by Jesus to connect with people, in contrast to the Pharisees who were more didactic and propositional in their teaching (17). He cites Breneman's assertion that "story is a mystery that has the power to reach within each of us, to command emotion, to compel involvement, and to transport us into timelessness" (qtd. in Frymire 17). Coupled with speaking in the local dialect, storytelling can transcend the cultural barriers that are created because of the ancient nature of the text and present God's truth that the people can receive.

Craddock enumerates some concerns that pastors often have as they walk towards the pulpit, such as what preaching aids to bring, e.g., manuscripts, notes, or nothing (214). He asserts, however, that adequacy of preparation is not ultimately dependent on the quantity and quality of one's notes. Instead, preparation is dependent on:

. . . [the] certainty of the theme and purpose and clear movement towards one's goal with serious delight. The listeners desire a sense that the message is important for them and for the preacher but not an impression from the pulpit of a super seriousness which is messianic in its manner and judgmental in its demands. The minister thoroughly prepared is free to preach with grace. (216)

More than trying to be creative, it would do our pastors well to focus their energies on being clear with the theme and purpose of their sermon, trusting God to anoint the preaching of the Word.

The apostle Paul understood in 1 Corinthians 2:4 that the power in his preaching was not in wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power. His

challenge was to be able to distinguish himself from the Sophists of his day who were trained rhetoricians peddling the latest philosophies. It seemed like there were still some in the Corinthian church who saw Paul as simply another Sophist propagating a new teaching, that is why Paul was resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul's personal knowledge of Christ and the preaching of the cross was his source of power in proclamation. The message of the cross was foolishness to those who were perishing, but for those who were being saved, it was the power of God.

### **Spirit-dependent Ethos**

According to Jesus in John 3:5, it is by the regenerating work of the Spirit that we are able to enter the kingdom of God. Through faith in Christ, we receive the Spirit of sonship by which we cry, "Abba Father," and the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children (Rom. 8:15-16). The promise of the Holy Spirit's presence and power is assured for all those who will believe in Jesus, as Acts 2:38 and 1:8 declare. The Holy Spirit is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession as promised in Ephesians 1:14. The reception of the Spirit is the confirmation that we belong to Jesus and have now become God's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Apart from the spiritual blessings we have in Christ as believers, the Scriptures also portray the superintending role of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation and sermon delivery. The literature review and research findings likewise acknowledge the vital role that the Holy Spirit plays in the preaching practices of the pastors. In the Scripture-centered ethos of the pastors, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in their devotional study of the Word and empowers them to live a life worthy of his calling. The exegetical practices

of the pastors are not an end in and of themselves, but produce spirituality in both the pastors and the disciples, that they would live in the power of the Spirit. The faithful contextualization of the text is dependent on the Spirit's illuminating work to enable the pastors to understand God's truth and apply them to the contemporary audience. Finally, the pastors' homiletical craft is evidenced not by wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power as they resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The apostle Paul acknowledged that the power in his preaching was by the Holy Spirit's enabling and not his wise and persuasive words. He amplifies this in 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 by saying that by receiving the Holy Spirit who is from God, we can understand what he has freely given us. We can therefore speak in words taught by the Spirit, not by words taught by human wisdom. The person's unwillingness to accept his preaching was because they were without the Holy Spirit, and thus considered Paul's teaching as foolishness. The same Holy Spirit who anoints the pastor in their preaching is also the same Holy Spirit who will teach the hearers to understand the things of God.

These observations are consistent with the core beliefs of the ministry in establishing churches that are both Christ-centered and Spirit-empowered. In the founding of Victory in 1984, the evangelists and pastors who laid the foundation of the church emphasized from Acts 2:38 and Acts 1:8 that the reception of the Spirit was the confirmation that someone had truly come to faith in Christ, and that he would grant them power to be his witnesses. By God's grace, the vibrancy of the Spirit is still evident in our churches as there are many who are still passionate in their worship of God, doing the

works of the ministry through the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, and continually witnessing for Jesus to their family, friends, and in other nations.

The apostolic team members and the outside experts have all identified weaknesses in the hermeneutical and homiletical skills of the pastors. Much can be done to enhance their preaching capabilities beyond their current effectiveness. However, it seems like the Holy Spirit has somehow made up for their lack by continuing to use them in spite of these gaps to preach the gospel and continually see our churches grow as thousands have come to faith in Christ in the last 35 years. My hope is that just like the apostles in Acts 4:13 who were observed by the chief priests and elders to be unschooled, ordinary men, yet were nonetheless courageous in their preaching, the distinctive characteristic of our pastors as they learn to be more effective is that they had been with Jesus through a Spirit-dependent ethos.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

Although our current training and development practices in our schools have already been improved over the years, the lessons gleaned from this project will significantly boost the learning experience of our pastors in their hermeneutical and homiletical practices. Our approach to developing our leaders with an initial three- to four-month intensive school, followed by ongoing modular training on a recurring basis, is effective, as opposed to requiring them to go through full-time formal theological training at the outset. Our ministry graduates for the most part can preach with some measure of confidence, adequate if not exemplary content, and certainly with great zeal.

I would have significant concerns if we front load the more in-depth theological courses without giving them the opportunity to step out into the waters of preaching. On

the other hand, the aim of this project is to identify at this stage of our ministry's training program the interventions using the five major findings to introduce as courses as we track the development of our pastors, and campus and cross-cultural missionaries. Since our schools run either on an annual or semi-annual basis for the campus ministry school, we can monitor the development of our ministers by chronologically mapping out their training in the ensuing years.

An important component of these training modules, as identified in the answer to research question # 3, is to use modelling and mentoring methods in the training modules. Our pastors learned how to preach primarily by observing their pastors deliver their own sermons, and by receiving feedback after preaching from mentoring pastors. This should not be surprising, for this was Jesus's own method of developing his own disciples in the three years that he was with them. There is an art to giving feedback, however, because on the one hand you want to be affirming to the leader, but on the other hand unless you point out certain habits or mannerisms and ways of communicating that hinder their effectiveness in preaching, they will not grow in their craft.

The value of this project in the practice of ministry is that it will hopefully caution those entrusted with developing pastors, because it does require intellectual rigor, to guard against teaching hermeneutical and homiletical methods only as academic exercise rather than opportunity to have a spiritual encounter with God while studying God's Word. To encounter God in the scriptural study of the text is to be transformed by the renewing of one's mind. Out of that renewing comes the power and anointing to preach the living Word of God. In an increasingly post-modern world where intellectual discourse on the Scriptures alone may not convince a skeptical world, it is when the pastor encounters



Christ in their study that they cannot help but speak what they have seen and heard to turn people's hearts to God.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In the undertaking of the research project, there were constraints to getting all the data that I had targeted. For one, only fifty-one of the ninety-one preaching pastors agreed to participate. It would have been ideal if all of them participated since they were the direct beneficiaries of the training modules to be proposed. Nonetheless, the research results were still valid since the fifty-one pastors were more than half of the total number and therefore still representative of the population. On the other hand, I got more participants for the discipleship group leaders' survey at 607 than the minimum 450 participants that I had targeted.

Also, I realized in the design of the online pastors' study that though I was able to get the demographic profile of the participants such as how long they had been in ministry, I was not able to segment them in their responses according to their longevity. My assumption was if they had been pastoring longer, their responses in their sermon preparation and delivery practices might be different than the newer ones. Consequently, my recommendations would probably be different as a result. Another issue in the online pastors' survey is that I failed to ask questions pertaining to the contextualization task in interpreting the text. As a result, I was unable to determine the extent to which the pastors practiced the task.

In the one-to-one interviews of the apostolic team members and the focused group discussions, my questions were general in that I asked them to identify the essential elements in preaching, so my answers were also general in a sense. I was hoping to elicit

more responses in the exegetical, contextualization, and homiletical practices of the pastors, but did not get much information on these practices precisely because my questions were too broad. If I could redo the research questions, I would include more specific questions on these practices.

For the outside expert assessments, I was only able to provide six sample sermons because I anticipated that these professors would not be able to listen to more sermons given their busy schedule. Although they certainly gave keen observations that I would consider very valid given my first-hand experience in listening to these same preachers, I am still aware that the small number of sermons evaluated may limit the validity of their insights. Ideally, it would also be good to do a longitudinal observation of certain pastors over a period say of a few months after exposing them to some training and seeing if it has enhanced their preaching.

Finally, I was not able to explore adult education principles and methods for preaching training. Since this is a pre-intervention research project involving the training of pastors, there is certainly merit in understanding the dynamics of adult learning or andragogy. Earlier, I underscored the value of modelling and mentoring methods as observed in the research findings, but it would help if these methods can either be affirmed or refuted when examined in the light of these adult education principles.

### **Unexpected Observations**

One observation is that almost all our pastors learned how to preach by observing other preachers doing so. In a craft that entails so much individual preparation, it came as a surprise that they would glean so much from this mode of learning. I am wondering if

this is an offshoot of a strong discipleship culture that the church has nurtured throughout its 35-year history, and spilled over into our leadership development paradigms.

The second unexpected observation is more from the literature review, that in a couple of the dissertations I read, there were cautions against turning the hermeneutical and homiletical tasks into an academic endeavor apart from encountering Christ in the study of the text. In my own spiritual journey, I have always loved learning and enjoyed science and math, pursuing a mechanical engineering undergraduate degree and a master's in business. However, when I met Christ, I began to love God with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I have always found the Scriptures both intellectually engaging and spiritually uplifting. I realize as I have gained new knowledge in hermeneutics and homiletics that this caution is valid because of Paul's warning that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations that I make in the practice of ministry pertain to three areas: the spiritual formation practices of the pastors, their hermeneutical training, and homiletical development. Although these proposals are intended for our specific ministry context, my hope is that this would also stimulate the thinking of church leaders who desire to equip their pastors to be better preachers. For spiritual formation practices, the Scripture-centered ethos and Spirit-dependent ethos that were distilled from the research findings are evidences of the importance for pastors to continually cultivate the spiritual habits of devotion to and the study of Scripture as well as prayer if they will be effective pastors. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved him and Peter affirmed it, Jesus commanded

him to feed and take care of Jesus's sheep. Love for Jesus gave Peter the passion and perseverance to feed the people of God.

### **Spiritual Formation Practices**

Gener proposed two training modules to nurture the spirituality of the pastors: the first is to conduct regular spiritual retreats, and the second is to teach the practice of *lectio divina*. Most of the retreats that have been conducted in Victory over the years have either been for marriage and family, or refreshing and equipping them in their leadership and pastoral roles. In the last year, the Victory Ministers Association began to conduct spiritual retreats for the purpose of rest, solitude, and personal reflection. The retreat Gener proposed was to encourage time alone with God. Although he did not elaborate, Gener's suggestion can be conducted on an individual or corporate basis, but the advantage of a corporate retreat is that the more experienced pastors can guide the others on how to make the most of their time of solitude so that the pastors can continue to practice solitude on their own initiative.

Ward also recommended a more regular pattern such as a monthly spiritually focused day for the practice of solitude. The 8-hour day can be allotted for Scripture reflection, journaling, prayer, etc., and could include individual or communal components. He argues that regular rhythms can shape the leader more than an annual or biannual retreat.

The practice of *lectio divina* is a relatively new paradigm for our leaders, but for several of our pastors who are currently in the master's and doctoral programs at Asbury, this has apparently been a tried and tested practice. The devotional reading of the Scriptures coupled with meditation and prayer fosters communion with God and results

in the leader growing in the knowledge of God's Word. Gener mentioned that *lectio divina* is being taught in the seminary that he leads; this formative practice will be valuable in promoting the spirituality of pastors as they pursue their theological education.

### **Hermeneutical Training**

In the hermeneutical training of pastors, all the outside experts identified the exegetical practice of the pastors as the most significant weakness in assessing the sample sermons. This is coupled with the pastors' own self-assessment that they do not place as much emphasis on the grammatical and literary analysis of the text compared with the historical background study. The three experts all proposed training and accountable practice modules to deepen the exegetical practice of the pastors.

Ward specifically mentioned the need to equip them in doing more detailed exegetical work and historical background research to maximize the use of these scriptural resources in discipleship and preaching ministries of the church. The goal of this training is to "increase the specificity of detailed observations, the clarity of interpretive modeling, and the gospel-catalyzed nature of applications . . ." Another practical proposal in the focused group discussion is the use of the inductive Bible study method which gives the exegete the ability to recognize the structural relationships within the text, and thereby explain the meaning of the text in the text's own logic.

A unique context in Victory is the collaborative preaching series because the leaders consider the 18 congregations across the metropolitan area as one church. The apostolic team provides the series themes and Scriptural texts on an annual basis. The pastoral teams then develop exegetical notes and possible outlines, but give each pastor

the discretion to tailor fit it according to his or her own style and the congregation's needs. In the last decade and a half that the preaching series have been synchronized, it has allowed the younger pastors to develop in their hermeneutical and homiletical skills at a faster pace, but the downside has been that some have become less diligent in their personal study of the text and more dependent on the sermon notes provided by the team. This practice can be modified by requiring each pastor to do their own inductive Bible study and exegetical work two weeks prior to the preaching weekend, then gather together in congregational teams in the week of the preaching weekend to glean from one another and share even sermon illustrations.

For contextualization, it would help the pastors to undergo advanced English grammar modules to enhance their ability not only to do exegesis but also to make the text relevant to a bilingual audience. Since English is the second language of the nation, not everyone among the pastors have the same level of acumen in understanding scholarly materials such as lexicons and commentaries that come from the English-speaking world, and so they would be at a disadvantage when it comes to using these resources. In addition, it would also be good for the pastors to be trained in the vernacular dialects, Tagalog and Cebuano being the two major ones in the country, so that they are proficient in both English and the local dialect. Communicating in the heart language of the people enables the preacher to more readily connect with them.

### **Homiletical Development**

In the homiletical development of the pastors, the preaching moment is a recurring activity that would require ongoing feedback. Although training modules to enhance preaching skills have already been provided in recent years, the times when the

pastors were given continual feedback were the times when they were able to change their sermon delivery. Ward recommends the appointment of sermon coaches “who are skilled in helping pastors fine tune their sermonic logic and flow in a way that is intimately connected to scripture . . . ;” this might be “the most sustainable/scalable way of strengthening the preaching at Victory homiletically.” One practical way that Ward had helped the pastors in preaching seminars that he had conducted was the use of a “descriptive affirmation/constructive suggestion/final blessing” feedback mechanism where the observing pastors commented on the pastor’s sermon. This mechanism can enable the senior pastors in their congregations’ weekly services to get immediate feedback for their sermons.

Finally, there should be a review of the hermeneutics and homiletics modules in the initial three- to four- month leadership training for pastors and campus missionaries. Since the weaknesses identified particularly concerned exegetical practice, examination of whether the current lectures and exercises are adequately equipping the pastors would be advisable. Increasing the number of lectures as well as providing preaching mentoring for students in training early on will increase their confidence as they step into the preaching waters.

### **Postscript**

The most significant development that has occurred in the course of my pursuing this doctoral degree, along with our founding pastor and a few others from Victory and Every Nation, is that the international leadership of Every Nation has decided to establish its own in-house theological seminary in the next few years. Without realizing it then, this dissertation will provide the initial framework for the homiletics course of this

seminary. What a privilege to be able to lay the groundwork for an institution that will allow us to train pastors in preaching and leadership for many years to come!



## APPENDIXES

### A. APOSTOLIC TEAM MEMBER INTERVIEW

Dear Apostolic Team member,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. The purpose of this research is to help enhance the preaching capabilities of our Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors. As a member of the apostolic team, you have the vantage point of not only being one of our most experienced preachers, but also the wisdom of stewarding the mission, values, and culture of our ministry. In the course of the interview, if at any point you prefer not to answer any of the questions, please feel free not to do so. Also, our interview will be recorded and eventually transcribed, but your responses will be kept in strict confidence.

#### **Interview Questions:**

1. How long have you been in ministry?
2. In your development as a minister, how did you learn to preach?
3. What would you consider as the most helpful factor that contributed to your growth as a preacher of the gospel?
4. What would you consider as 3-5 essential qualities that a minister should have to be an effective preacher? (i.e., habits, attitudes, skills, trainings, etc.)
5. What would you consider as effective preaching that enables us to fulfill our organization's mission, values, and culture?

6. How effective are our ministers in the preaching of the Word within the context of the organization's mission, values, and culture?

- highly ineffective

- slightly ineffective

- slightly effective

- highly effective

7. Can you identify areas of improvement in the preaching capabilities of our preachers in Victory?

8. What interventions can you propose to enhance the preaching capabilities of our preachers in Victory?

## B. PREACHING PASTORS' SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Greetings! I am currently working on a dissertation at Asbury Theological Seminary to develop a training program to enhance the preaching capabilities of our Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors. The purpose of this online survey is to assess your current spiritual habits and sermon preparation practices as one of our preaching pastors.

This survey is purely voluntary and there will be no penalty if you choose not to participate. If you do choose to participate, the results will be kept strictly confidential and will be used to develop preaching training modules for your benefit. Please also note that if you do participate, you have the option to skip any of the questions in the survey if you prefer not to answer them.

If you have any questions or clarifications regarding this survey, please feel free to contact me at any time. Thank you and may God continue to bless you and your ministry!

Bishop Manny Carlos  
Office Phone: 817-1212  
Email: manny.carlos@victory.org.ph

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Do you willingly choose to participate in this online survey?

- I agree
- I disagree

Basic Information:

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How many years have you been in full-time vocational ministry?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What School of Ministry did you attend?

- School of Campus Ministry
- School of World Missions
- School of Church Planting
- School of Local Church Leadership
- School of Church Leadership

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Year you graduated from the School of Ministry

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Your current ministry role (e.g., lead pastor, campus missionary, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How many times do you preach in your congregation in a month?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How many hours on average do you spend preparing each sermon?

- 1 to 2 hours
- 3 to 4 hours
- 5 to 6 hours
- 7 to 8 hours
- 9 or more hours
- Prefer not to answer

9. Did you attend the Biblical Preaching Seminar in September 2017 with Dave Ward?

- Yes
- No

Instruction: Please answer the following information questions and the survey by marking the frequency by which each statement below is true in your life and ministry practice. Place a check mark [✓] on your preferred answer.

1. I am confident that my sermons are derived from sound exegesis.

- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost Always
- Prefer Not To Answer

2. I am confident that my sermons are developed through a Spirit-led hermeneutical process.

- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost Always
- Prefer Not To Answer

3. I have an understanding of the reality of God's kingdom whenever I read the Scriptures.

- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost Always
- Prefer Not To Answer

4. I spend thirty minutes or more daily meditating on Scriptures.
  - Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
5. I believe God is for me in the midst of trials and difficulties.
  - Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
6. I am able to prioritize my personal devotional time with God in the midst of the busyness of ministry.
  - Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
7. There are times when I doubt whether God has really called me to preach.
  - Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
8. I believe my calling to vocational ministry is a lifetime call.
  - Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
9. I make detailed observations about the text at the initial stage of sermon preparation before using any study tools (e.g., commentaries, dictionaries, concordance, etc.).
  - Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
10. The Scripture text serves as the driving force in my sermon preparation.
  - Seldom

- Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
11. I experience the Spirit's illumination in my study of the Scriptures.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
12. I believe I am growing in the knowledge of God through my study of Scripture.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
13. I spend thirty minutes or more daily in prayer to God.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
14. I receive affirmation from God of my calling to preach during my personal times of prayer.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
15. I am confident in the grace of God to enable me to preach.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
16. I practice regular fasting as a spiritual discipline.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always

- Prefer Not To Answer
17. I rely on the Spirit's guidance in my sermon preparation study of the Scriptures.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
18. I meditate on the text to be preached at the beginning of my sermon preparation.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
19. Knowing the historical context of the text helps me understand the meaning of the passage of Scripture.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
20. The grammatical study of the text (how each word in a sentence relates to each other) helps me to understand the meaning of the passage of Scripture.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
21. I sense the enabling of the Holy Spirit to give me the words to speak as I preach.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
22. I feel a deep satisfaction from being used by God in preaching.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer

23. I feel confident that I have a word from God for the congregation as I step into the pulpit.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
24. I sense the authority in the Word of God as I preach.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
25. The literary genre of the text (the type of literature within a book or the whole book) helps me to know the meaning of the passage of the Scripture.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
26. I depend a lot on study tools (e.g., commentaries, dictionaries, concordance, etc.) in sermon preparation.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
27. I have a sense of being spiritually formed as I prepare my sermon.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
28. I take time to hear from the Spirit how my preaching would minister to the spiritual needs of my congregation.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer



29. I am familiar with various sermon forms (e.g., expository, topical, inductive, deductive, etc.) as vehicles to effectively convey Scriptural truth.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
30. I believe I am able to keep the people engaged as I preach.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
31. There are times I feel I have not adequately prepared for my preaching.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
32. I believe my preaching is relevant to the spiritual needs of the congregation.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
33. I consistently pray for my congregation.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
34. I am not satisfied with the spiritual progress of our congregation.
- Seldom
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Almost Always
  - Prefer Not To Answer
35. I am confident in the Holy Spirit to lead and guide the people into all truth as I preach the Word.
- Seldom

- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost Always
- Prefer Not To Answer

36. I am able to contextualize my sermon according to the spiritual needs of the congregation.

- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost Always
- Prefer Not To Answer

37. I sense the compassion of God for his people when I preach to them.

- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost Always
- Prefer Not To Answer

38. The congregants testify that God spoke to them through my preaching.

- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost Always
- Prefer Not To Answer

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Do you want to submit your answers to this online survey?

- I choose to submit.
- I choose not to submit.

### C. SMALL GROUP LEADERS' PREACHING OBSERVATION SURVEY

Greetings! I am currently working on a dissertation at Asbury Theological Seminary to develop a training program to enhance the preaching capabilities of our Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors. The purpose of this online survey is to solicit your feedback on the preaching that you are hearing on a regular basis in your congregation.

As one of our Victory Group leaders who have completed the Leadership 113 training, you have received teaching in basic hermeneutics and homiletics that enables you to have some basis to assess the quality of the sermons that our pastors/campus missionaries preach on a weekly basis.

This survey is purely voluntary and there will be no penalty if you choose not to participate. If you do choose to participate, the results will be kept strictly confidential and will be used to develop preaching training modules that will benefit our pastors/campus missionaries.

Please also note that if you do participate, you have the option to skip any of the questions in the survey if you prefer not answer them. If you have any questions or clarifications regarding this survey, please feel free to contact me at any time. Thank you and may God continue to bless you and your ministry!

Bishop Manny Carlos  
Office Phone: 817-1212  
Email: manny.carlos@victory.org.ph

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Do you willingly choose to participate in this online survey?

- I agree
- I disagree

Basic Information:

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you get saved in Victory or another church?

- Victory
- Another Church

4. How many years have you been a follower of Christ?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How many years have you been a Victory group leader?

\_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Year you completed Leadership 113 course

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Instruction: Please answer the following information questions, then the survey by marking to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement given about the pastor or campus missionary who regularly preaches in your congregation. Place a check mark [✓] on your preferred answer.

1. The pastor presents a clear exposition of the Scripture text in his or her preaching.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
2. The pastor's preaching motivates me to study the Bible for myself.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
3. I am helped by the pastor's preaching to understand the Scriptures in a greater way.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
4. The pastor's preaching convinces me of the authority of God's Word towards what I believe.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
5. The pastor's preaching convinces me of the authority of God's Word about how I should live my life.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer

6. The pastor's preaching convinces me of the authority of God's Word about how I should live my life.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
7. I am inspired by the pastor's preaching to make disciples.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
8. I sense the preacher's ministry is reflective of a person who has a strong relationship with God.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
9. I sense from the pastor's preaching that he or she understands the challenges I go through in life.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
10. The pastor's preaching is evidence that he or she is truly called by God to be a minister of the gospel.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
  
11. The pastor's preaching strengthens my faith in God.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer

12. I am convicted of my sins through the pastor's preaching.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
13. I learn from the pastor's preaching how to rightly interpret the Scriptures.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
14. The pastor's preaching inspires me so that I can hear God by studying the Scriptures myself.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
15. I receive illumination of the Scriptures through the pastor's preaching.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
16. The pastor's preaching style is engaging.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
17. God speaks to me through the pastor's preaching.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
18. The pastor preaches truth that sets me free.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree

- Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
19. The pastor's preaching is with gracious words seasoned with salt.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
20. The pastor's preaching is sometimes legalistic.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
21. I receive wisdom from God through the pastor's preaching
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
22. The pastor's preaching is not relevant to my situation.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
23. There are times I don't agree with the pastor's preaching.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
24. The pastor's preaching connects to the situations I face in life.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer

25. I sense the compassion of God through the pastor's preaching.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  - Prefer Not To Answer
- 

Do you want to submit your answers to this online survey?

- I choose to submit.
- I choose not to submit.



#### D. SENIOR PASTORS' FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION

Dear Pastor,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this focused group discussion. The purpose of this research is to help enhance the preaching capabilities of our Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors. As a senior pastor or youth service preacher, you have the vantage point of not only being an experienced preacher, but also the ability to discern the quality of the preaching among your pastoral team. In the course of the interview, if at any point you prefer not to answer any of the questions, please feel free not to do so. Also, our interview will be recorded and eventually transcribed, but your responses will be kept in strict confidence.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How long have you been in ministry? In your development as a minister, how did you learn to preach?
2. In your experience, what beliefs, attitudes, and practices constitute effective sermon preparation?
3. In your experience, what beliefs, attitudes, and practices constitute effective sermon delivery?
4. Can you identify 5-7 elements (i.e., parts, components, beliefs) that are essential in effective preaching?
  - a. *Steps: Use meta-cards to write your answers. Then consolidate the answers according to the five elements mentioned below. Note: The facilitator will provide a succinct explanation from his literature review on how each element below contributes to effective preaching:*

- Preaching as God speaking through the Scriptures
- Preaching as a calling from God
- Preaching as hearing from God
- Preaching as speaking for God
- Preaching God speaking to His people

b. *To the participants: Please comment if and how each of the following elements contributes to effective preaching.*

5. What interventions would you like the ministry organization to provide you to become a more effective preacher?

## E. OUTSIDE EXPERTS' ASSESSMENT TOOL

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for sharing your theological expertise and experience in assessing the quality of preaching that our pastors deliver on a weekly basis for our Victory Metro Manila congregations. Your familiarity with our ministry, coupled with your outsider's perspective, will be very helpful in providing an objective appraisal of our pastors' preaching capabilities. Your observations and recommendations will assure me of an expert's viewpoint as I propose a training program for preaching for our pastors in this pre-intervention research.

You will be provided video links to 6 sermons that were delivered sometime this year by various Victory Metro Manila pastors who regularly preach in one of 150 weekly worship services that take place in Victory Metro Manila. If time permits, you may opt to view some more sermons of other pastors to give you a broader sense of the preaching taking place in our congregations. I am also including our mission, discipleship process, and core values statements, which are available on our webpage as well as our training materials, for your reference.

All of the pastors in the video links were ordained in the last 2-22 years and have no formal seminary education, having only been trained in our 3-month practical ministry and leadership schools, interspersed with ongoing preaching training on an annual basis. I request that you watch and listen to the six preselected sermons before answering the questions in writing below.

Questions regarding exegetical practice (explanation of the original meaning of the passage):

1. To what extent are the pastors demonstrating proper exegesis of the text(s) in their sermon? What are the strengths and weaknesses of their exegetical work?
2. In what ways is the exegesis accomplishing the church's mission of honoring God, making disciples, and imparting its core values? Are there ways in which the treatment of the passage(s) contradicts the church's mission or its core values?

Questions regarding hermeneutical practice (contextualization of the text for the listeners):

3. To what extent are the pastors demonstrating sound hermeneutical practice? What are the strengths and weaknesses of their hermeneutical practice?
4. In what ways is the hermeneutical practice accomplishing the church's mission of honoring God, making disciples, and imparting its core values? Are there ways in which the contextualization of the text contradicts the church's mission or its core values?

Questions regarding homiletical practice:

5. To what extent are the pastors demonstrating a theologically, rhetorically, and performatively effective homiletic? What are the strengths and weakness of their sermon delivery?
6. In what ways is the homiletical practice accomplishing the church's mission of honoring God, making disciples, and imparting its core values? Are there ways in which the homiletical practice contradicts the church's mission or its core values?

Concluding feedback:

7. Given your assessment of the quality of preaching in Victory Metro Manila, what 3-5 interventions can you recommend to enhance the preaching capabilities of its pastors?

Thank you so much and may God continue to bless your family and ministry!

**Bishop Manny Carlos**

*Appendix*

**Six Preselected Sermons:**

**Additional Videos:**

**Every Nation Mission Statement:**

To honor God by establishing Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered, socially responsible churches and campus ministries in every nation.

**Why does Victory exist?**

We are Victory, a church in the Philippines that exists to honor God and make disciples.

***Honor God.***

*We desire to honor God in every area of life. Our starting point, goal, and motive is the honor of God. This is foundational for understanding why we do what we do. It is all about Him, not us.*

***Make Disciples.***

*We follow Jesus and help others follow Him. We make disciples by engaging culture and community, establishing biblical foundations, equipping believers to minister, and empowering disciples to make disciples.*

**Every Nation Core Values:**

Our core values describe how we build. Whether we are building a Victory group, a music team, or a new church, these core values are the essential issues:

**Lordship.** We value obedience.

Because Jesus is “King of kings and Lord of lords,” we believe that wholehearted submission to God’s will and His Word is the starting point of the Christian faith and the foundation of all spiritual growth. (Colossians 2:6)

**Evangelism.** We value lost people.

Because God’s heart is to reach the lost, we seek to build churches primarily through evangelism—not transfer, through birth—not adoption. (John 3:16; Luke 19:10)

**Discipleship.** We value spiritual growth.

Because we are called to make disciples, our primary focus is ministering to people, not conducting meetings, facilitating programs, or building buildings. (Matthew 28:19,20)

**Leadership.** We value leadership development.

Because we are called to develop future leaders who will serve in the church and in the community, we prioritize leadership development. We do this by deliberately creating opportunities for young potential leaders to develop their gifts, and empowering them through identification, instruction, impartation, and internship. (2 Timothy 2:2)

**Family.** We value long-term relationships.

Because the family is the foundation and validation of ministry, we refuse to sacrifice our marriages and our children on the altars of temporal success. And because we believe God has called us to be a spiritual family, we embrace community, reject the idea of disposable relationships, and choose to walk in love, respect, and unity. (Psalm 127:1,3; Ephesians 4:3)

**The Victory Discipleship Process / Four Essentials of Effective Biblical Discipleship (4 Es):**

Because lost people matter to God, we **ENGAGE** our culture and community.

Key verses – Luke 15:1-7, 1 Corinthians 9:22

Goal – Preach the Gospel

Environment – Victory Groups, Weekend Services, Engage Events

Tool – One 2 One

Because every church and Victory group will grow as it is built on Christ, we **ESTABLISH** biblical foundations.

Key verses – Matthew 7:24-27, 1 Corinthians 3:10

Goal – Establish in the Faith, Word and Prayer, and Church

Environment – Victory Groups, Prayer and Worship Nights

Tool – Preparing for Victory Weekend, Victory Weekend, The Purple Book, The Purple Book Study Guide, Church Community

Because ministry is not only for full-time ministers, we **EQUIP** believers to minister.

Key verses – Matthew 4:19, Ephesians 4:11-13

Goal – Equip in Basic Ministry Skills

Environment – Victory Groups

Tool – Making Disciples

Because everyone is called to make disciples, we **EMPOWER** disciples to make disciples.

Key verses – Matthew 28:19,20, 2 Timothy 2:2

Goal – Make Disciples with Confidence and Competence

Environment – Victory Groups, Leaders' Convergence

Tool – Empowering Leaders



At Victory, we believe discipleship is a 24/7 lifestyle of following Jesus, and helping others do the same, and discipleship is most effective when it happens within a community. The relationships that can be built in church and a Victory group will help you continue in your walk with God.

#### Summary:

Every Nation exists to honor God by establishing Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered, socially responsible churches and campus ministries in every nation. We build by valuing Lordship, evangelism, discipleship, leadership, and family. As a member of Every Nation, Victory exists to honor God and make disciples.

F. INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (For Preaching Pastors)

**Preaching Training for a Multi-Site Church**

You are invited to take part in a research study being undertaken by Emmanuel P. Carlos from Asbury Theological Seminary because you are one of the preaching pastors in Victory Metro Manila.

Initially, you will be asked to join a 30-minute meeting after our monthly staff meeting in our national office with other Victory Metro Manila preaching pastors, to orient you on the purpose and benefits of the research study. If you agree to participate, you will be handed and asked to sign this consent letter. Your participation is purely voluntary and you will not be penalized if you decide not to join the study.

After you sign, you will be emailed a link to an online survey by SurveyMonkey later in the week, concerning your personal devotion habits and sermon preparation practices. You have the option even then to discontinue your participation in the survey should you decide not to do so. No one else among the participants will know the content of your responses to the survey. Furthermore, we will ensure that the questionnaire will not contain information that will personally identify you.

By signing this letter, you are signifying that you have read the contents and are agreeing to participate in the research study. If you do not want to join the study, then please do not sign the letter. Thank you for your time and God bless.

---

Signature Over Printed Name  
of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

---

Date Signed

G. INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (For Apostolic Team Members)

**Preaching Training for a Multi-Site Church**

You are invited to take part in a research study undertaken by Emmanuel P. Carlos from Asbury Theological Seminary because you are one of the apostolic team members of Victory who lead Victory/Every Nation Philippines.

Initially, you will be visited or called by the researcher to orient you on the purpose and benefits of the research study. If you agree to participate, you will be handed and asked to sign this consent letter. Your participation is purely voluntary and you will not be penalized if you decide not to join the study.

After you sign, the researcher will schedule a one-hour interview with you regarding your personal devotion habits and sermon preparation practices, as well as your perspective of preaching best practices that align with Victory's mission, values, and culture. You have the option to discontinue your participation in the interview should you decide not to do so.

Your responses are confidential and no one else among the other participants will know the content of your responses to this interview. Furthermore, we will ensure that the questionnaire will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purpose only, and may be shared with representatives from Asbury Theological Seminary.

By signing this letter, you are signifying that you have read the contents and agree to participate in the research study. If you do not want to join the study, then please do not sign the letter. Thank you for your time and God bless.

---

Signature Over Printed Name  
of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

---

Date Signed



H. INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (For Senior Pastors/Campus Missionaries)

**Preaching Training for a Multi-Site Church**

You are invited to take part in a research study undertaken by Emmanuel P. Carlos from Asbury Theological Seminary because you are one of the senior pastors/campus missionaries of our congregations.

Initially, you will be visited or called by the researcher to orient you on the purpose and benefits of the research study. If you agree to participate, you will be handed and asked to sign this consent letter. Your participation is purely voluntary and you will not be penalized if you decide not to join the study.

After you sign, the researcher will schedule a two-hour focused group discussion with several other pastors/campus missionaries regarding one's personal devotion habits and sermon preparation practices, as well as observations on the quality of the pastoral team's preaching in your respective congregations. You have the option to discontinue your participation in the interview should you decide not to do so.

By signing this letter, you are signifying that you have read the contents and are agreeing to participate in the research study. If you do not want to join the study, then please do not sign the letter. Thank you for your time and God bless.

---

Signature Over Printed Name  
of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

---

Date Signed

I. INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (For Victory Group Leaders)

**Preaching Training for a Multi-Site Church**

You are invited to participate in a research study undertaken by Emmanuel P. Carlos from Asbury Theological Seminary because you are one of our Victory Group leaders in Victory Metro Manila who have completed the Leadership 113 training program.

Initially, you will be emailed by the senior pastor of your congregation to orient you on the purpose and benefits of the research study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to type in the reply line “I agree” and your name to signify your willingness to participate, then send the email back to your pastor. Your participation is purely voluntary and you will not be penalized if you decide not to join the study.

After you sign, you will be emailed a link to an online survey by SurveyMonkey the following week regarding your experiences and observations with the weekly preaching in your respective congregations. The survey will probably take no more than 30 minutes. You have the option even then to discontinue your participation in the survey should you decide not to do so. No one else among the participants will know the contents of our responses to the survey. We hope you can fill it out within the next two weeks from the time you received the online survey.

By typing “I agree” and your name in the reply line, you are signifying that you have read the contents and are agreeing to participate in the research study. If you do not want to join the study, then please do not reply to the letter. Thank you for your time and God bless.

---

Signature Over Printed Name  
of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

---

Date Signed

## J. PREACHING PASTORS' SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY RESULTS

### SUMMARY

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
11. Sermons derived from sound exegetical practice	51	0	3.35	0.62
12. Sermons are developed through a Spirit-led hermeneutic process	51	0	3.45	0.57
13. Understanding of God's kingdom through Scripture	51	0	3.57	0.60
14. Devotional Scripture Meditation	51	0	3.0	0.86
15. God is for me in trials and difficulties	51	0	3.96	0.19
16. Priority of devotional time	51	0	3.18	0.68
17. Doubts about God's call to preach	51	0	1.59	0.66
18. Lifetime calling to ministry	51	1	3.72	0.57
19. Makes detailed observations about the text at initial stage of sermon preparation	51	0	3.25	0.84
20. Scripture text as driving force for sermon preparation	51	0	3.69	0.46
21. Experiences illumination in Scripture study	51	0	3.59	0.53
22. Growing in knowledge of God through Scripture study	51	0	3.86	0.34
23. Time in prayer	51	1	2.68	0.88
24. Affirmation of calling during prayer	51	0	3.10	0.87
25. God's grace for preaching	51	0	3.80	0.40
26. Fasting discipline	51	0	2.29	0.94
27. Relies on the Spirit's guidance in sermon preparation	51	0	3.73	0.45
28. Sermon text meditation	51	0	3.51	0.61
29. Knowing historical context	51	0	3.57	0.57
30. Grammatical study of text	51	0	3.04	0.84
31. Senses the Holy Spirit's enabling to be given words to speak	51	0	3.67	0.47
32. Satisfaction in being used to	51	0	3.64	0.52

preach				
33. Confidence in having a word for church	51	0	3.61	0.56
34. Sensing God's authority in the Word while preaching	51	0	3.73	0.45
35. Literary genre of text	51	0	3.00	0.74
36. Dependence on study tools	51	0	2.98	0.80
37. Spiritual formation in sermon preparation	51	0	3.53	0.54
38. Takes time to hear from the Spirit the spiritual needs of people	51	0	3.45	0.60
39. Familiarity with various sermon forms	51	0	2.80	0.79
40. Keeping people engaged while preaching	51	0	3.08	0.62
41. Times when not adequately prepared for preaching	51	0	2.16	0.78
42. Preaching relevant to the needs of congregation	51	0	3.35	0.52
43. Consistent praying for congregation	51	1	3.20	0.72
44. Not satisfied with spiritual progress of congregation	51	2	2.37	0.72
45. Confident in the Holy Spirit to lead and guide people into all truth	51	0	3.82	0.38
46. Contextualizing sermon according to needs of congregation	51	0	3.18	0.68
47. Sensing God's compassion for people	51	0	3.55	0.54
48. The congregants testify that God spoke to them through preaching	51	1	3.00	0.72

**K. SMALL GROUP LEADERS' PREACHING OBSERVATION SURVEY****RESULTS SUMMARY**

Question No.	No. of Participants	Preferred Not to Answer	Mean	Standard Deviation
8. Pastor presents clear exposition of text in preaching	615	4	3.80	0.46
9. Pastor's preaching motivates one to study Bible	616	4	3.66	0.54
10. Preaching Scripture gives understanding	616	1	3.81	0.43
11. Preaching convinces hearer of the authority of God's Word for belief	615	2	3.90	0.33
12. Preaching convinces hearer of the authority of God's Word for living	616	1	3.89	0.35
13. The pastor's preaching convinces me of the authority of God's Word about how I should live my life	612	2	3.87	0.38
14. Pastor's preaching inspires disciple-making	615	3	3.71	0.53
15. Preacher has strong relationship with God	616	7	3.84	0.47
16. Pastor understands life challenges	617	6	3.51	0.63
17. Preaching as evidence of pastor's calling	616	7	3.85	0.43
18. Preaching strengthens faith in God	616	3	3.82	0.43
19. Preaching brings conviction of sin	614	6	3.61	0.61
20. Learning how to rightly interpret Scripture from preaching	617	3	3.62	0.59
21. Learning to hear from God by studying Scripture	614	4	3.78	0.47
22. Illumination of scripture	615	14	3.69	0.55
23. Pastor's preaching style engaging	616	2	3.62	0.56
24. God speaks through pastor's preaching	616	3	3.70	0.50
25. Pastor speaks truth that sets	617	3	3.77	0.47

people free				
26. Pastor's preaching is gracious seasoned with salt	613	4	3.75	0.49
27. Pastor's preaching is sometimes legalistic	615	20	2.16	0.98
28. Wisdom received through pastor's preaching	616	3	3.69	0.53
29. Pastor's preaching not relevant to personal situations	615	19	1.76	0.76
30. Times of disagreement with pastor's preaching	616	17	1.96	0.86
31. Pastor's preaching connects with life issues	613	4	3.51	0.57
32. God's compassion sensed through preaching	617	4	3.78	0.46

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