

GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

PREACH TO REACH:  
SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE SEMINARY FACULTY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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PORTLAND, OREGON

MARCH 2007

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## ABSTRACT

Although studies continually show that Americans consider themselves spiritual, church attendance has continued to decline. A common reason people give for not attending church is that the sermons are boring and irrelevant. Far too few pastors effectively communicate in a way unchurched people understand, relate to and connect with in their sermons. In order to address this problem we will propose seven traits that characterize preaching that effectively reaches unbelievers and leads them to lasting faith in Jesus Christ: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit. In chapter 2, we present biblical materials that show Jesus, Peter and Paul used several of these techniques in their preaching. In chapter 3, we present materials from Christian History and Thought, specifically the results of a study of four of the greatest evangelistic preachers in church history, to show that the elements of effective preaching are timeless. In chapter 4, we present materials from current experts in preaching to unchurched postmoderns that show the principles of effective preaching remain the same. In chapter 5, we show how contemporary academic psychology's Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion would advocate the same seven characteristics for effective evangelistic preaching. In the conclusion, we present our solution: A listing and description of these timeless traits of effective evangelistic preaching with comments on how best to apply each in various contextual settings. Appendix A summarizes the findings of the authors consulted for chapter 4. Appendix B provides anecdotal evidence from a study of actual

preachers—both evangelistically effective and ineffective—to illustrate how these principles work in actual church settings.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to many in completing this paper. First, I acknowledge my beloved wife, Keira, and children, Hannah and Stephen, who have had to sacrifice much over the years for me to complete my education and its culmination in this project. Second, I thank my parents, John and Gayle Ehler, for their generous financial assistance. Third, I thank the board and people of Warm Beach Community Church who have supported me in many ways, including granting me a six-week sabbatical during which time I was able to sit in on seventeen different churches and listen to more than a hundred other sermons to complete the empirical study for appendix B. Fourth, I appreciate the support of my advisor, Doctor Mark Strong, and his excellent recommendations in improving this paper. Fifth, Doctor Leonard Sweet has been an outstanding mentor and inspiration to all of us in the Leadership in the Emerging Culture Third Cohort. Sixth, I thank my ministry peers in the cohort and all those throughout the years who have inspired me by their words and example. Seventh, and most important, I thank my Lord Jesus Christ. He is the reason I live, and these words would be meaningless without him.

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

Religion had always been an unwritten taboo subject for coffee pot conversation, but Sandra, who was a new employee, had not yet learned all of the office protocol. She happened to notice the Scripture plaque on George's desk, so she broached the subject when a break came in George's conversation with Bob.

"I see you have a plaque on your desk, George, with—is that a Bible quote or something?" Sandra asked.

Bob's eyes rolled as George answered, "Uh, yes it is. Why do you ask? Are you a Christian, too?"

"Me? Oh, no," Sandra replied. "Oh, I suppose I believe in God or at least spiritual things. I really don't know what's out there, but I guess I'm kind of curious. My dad was diagnosed with terminal cancer last month, and I've been praying for the first time in my life. I just don't know what or who to pray to."

"I'm sorry to hear that," George replied. "Have you been to church?"

Sandra replied, "Actually I did a couple of times. I even went to one last week hoping to find some answers to my search, but it was hopelessly boring. The preacher was hard to follow. He never looked up from his notes and did not seem to say anything relevant to my life at all."

“Yeah,” Bob suddenly jumped in. “I was forced to go to church as a kid and it was the same way. I do not know if warming a pew earns a person brownie points in heaven, but hell itself can’t be too much worse than enduring some of the hypocritical windbag preachers I have heard. I was bored to tears; and even though I must have heard hundreds of sermons, I can not tell you anything about a single one to this day.”

“That’s too bad,” George said. “I wish you guys would come to my church. I really haven’t been a Christian all that long—only a year or so. My neighbor invited me to join him at this church down the street from my house. I had only been to church a few times as a kid. Just like you guys I found church—especially the sermons—to be boring and irrelevant. That was certainly not the case at Celebration Christian Center.

“Although the people were friendly and the music was lively, it was the sermon that was the highlight for me. Pastor Mike spoke in this real and authentic way about stuff that I was dealing with in my life at the time. Cheryl and I had really been struggling in our marriage, and the suggestions he made - stuff from the Bible - applied completely to our situation. I couldn’t believe it. It was as if he had taken a hidden camera into our house. He was funny, too. He told some hilarious stories, but also some deeply moving ones. He was even transparent about some of the difficulties in his own marriage. I could not believe a pastor would be so open. Yet, he brought hope out at the end. Pastor Mike talked about how he and his wife had worked through their issues, and how they are happier now than they have ever been. The steps they took were things that Cheryl and I could do ourselves.”

“Wow,” said Sandra, “Joe and I could sure use some help like that.”

George continued, “Pastor Mike was passionate about Jesus. His passion was not an act. You could tell he really believed in Jesus; and he made a great case for why we needed to believe in Jesus, too, not just for our marriage, but for our whole lives. Somehow I knew it was true. However, as great a preacher as Mike is, there was something more happening that day. I had never believed before, but in that moment, I felt God calling me. Though I did not give my life to Jesus then, we went back every Sunday after that; and every one of Pastor Mike’s sermons seemed to hit me right between the eyes. A few months later I finally stopped resisting and invited Jesus Christ into my heart. I have not been the same since. I would love you to join us this Sunday, Sandra. You, too, Bob, if you’d like to come.”

“No, thank you!” Bob replied. “I think I have got enough preaching today to last me for awhile.”

Sandra chuckled then said, “Well, you have sure given me a lot to think about George. Maybe I will give it a try.”

Sandra and Bob’s stories are repeated far too often across America today. A large percentage of people of all ages have determined that the church has nothing for them.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ gave his church a mandate to, “Make disciples of all of the nations” (Matt. 28:18 NAS), and, “Preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15 NAS). Unfortunately, churches like the one George described—churches that effectively communicate God’s

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<sup>1</sup> Eileen W. Linder, *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches 2006* (Nashville, TN; Abingdon, 2006), shows only three denominations in the US—the Assemblies of God, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Mormons—with growth in 2005. All other denominations lost both members and attenders.



truth in a way that regularly leads people to lasting faith in Christ—are in the minority.<sup>2</sup> Far too few pastors communicate in a way that connects with unchurched people and leads them to lasting faith in Christ. Therefore, the real question to overcome this problem is, “What sets apart preaching that effectively leads unbelievers to faith in Christ from that which does not?”

This paper will argue that there are seven characteristics of preaching that have effectively led people to faith in Christ throughout Christian history: 1) in the New Testament preaching of Jesus, Peter and Paul, 2) in the preaching of four great evangelistic preachers of different eras—John Chrysostom, Girolamo Savonarola, George Whitefield and Charles Spurgeon, 3) in the teaching of today’s preaching experts, and 4) in the current theories of persuasion psychology. As a result of these studies, this paper claims preaching that effectively brings unbelievers to faith in Christ is usually characterized by: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit. A fifth study of evangelistically effective and ineffective preachers will provide anecdotal evidence for these findings in actual church settings. Though the findings of this paper will likely work in any culture, all of the churches studied and nearly all of the sources consulted for chapter 4 are located in the United States; therefore, the demographic application of this study is primarily Protestant churches in the United States.

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<sup>2</sup> George Barna, *Grow Your Church from the Outside In* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2002), 81, found that boring and irrelevant sermons are also a common complaint from the formerly churched who choose not to attend church anymore.

## **The Importance of Preaching**

On any given Sunday, about four billion words are uttered from pulpits across America. These oratories called sermons have been the foremost trait of Christian worship experience since the Apostle Peter's message on the day of Pentecost. Though the church's influence in Western society is decreasing, the worship service remains the preferred point of entry to church for the unchurched, and the sermon remains the most potent force in swaying people to faith in Christ.<sup>3</sup> In a survey of people who recently came to faith and began attending church, Thom Rainer discovered that pastors and their preaching were the most influential elements in the choice of a church.<sup>4</sup> Improving the preaching of American pastors is imperative to reach this generation of people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The goal of this paper is to identify transferable principles that pastors can implement in their own preaching to bring more people to lasting faith in Christ.

This paper seeks timeless characteristics that distinguish effective evangelistic preaching from ineffective preaching that pastors in local churches can learn and apply to improve their preaching. The analysis begins with the preaching of the three most recorded preachers in the New Testament (Jesus, Peter, and Paul) and four great evangelistic preachers from different eras of church history (Chrysostom, Savonarola, Whitefield, and Spurgeon). The analysis includes a large number of current works

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<sup>3</sup> Barna, 90.

<sup>4</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 21. In an open survey that did not give respondents a list of options to answer, 90 percent of the respondents identified "the pastor and his preaching" as key reasons they chose to get involved in a particular church.

published by homiletics experts on the subject of evangelistic preaching, plus the writings academic psychologists that identify principles from persuasion psychology that apply to evangelistic preaching. Finally, the analysis includes a study of actual preachers to provide anecdotal evidence of the findings. These five analytic approaches provided a plethora of data. Though each preacher evaluated had a unique style and no two experts agree on all the detailed findings, the author of this paper sought commonalities among the sources of data. The goal was to find between four and eight characteristics broad enough to include all of the sources, yet specific enough to be useful to preachers seeking to improve the evangelistic effectiveness of their preaching. Seven general characteristics of evangelistically effective preaching were common to the sources: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, 3) persuasive reasoning, 4) engaging illustrations, 5) dynamic delivery, 6) the preacher's authenticity, and 7) Holy Spirit empowering.

Chapter 2 details the results of the biblical sources. The analysis will demonstrate that the sermons of Jesus, Peter, and Paul in the New Testament that targeted unbelievers possessed these seven traits as seen in the biblical text of the sermons, the comments of eyewitness, and the analyses of commentators and historical experts.

Chapter 3 analyzes the preaching of Chrysostom, Savonarola, Whitefield, and Spurgeon. Their sermons and writings plus the writings of eyewitnesses and historians will demonstrate how their preaching possessed these seven characteristics.

Chapter 4 summarizes current experts' ideas on the subject of evangelistic preaching. Homiletics instructors, well known preachers, and other expert writers have

made numerous suggestions on how to best preach to reach the unchurched. Chapter 4 will show how their findings are in line with the other studies and support the seven categories listed above. Appendix A includes a table and annotated bibliography showing the elements of preaching each of these experts recommended (or alluded to) in evangelistic preaching.

Chapter 5 applies the principles found in academic psychology's most prominent theory of persuasion—the Elaboration Likelihood Method (ELM)—to the preaching event. Chapter 5 will show that ELM would advocate a style of preaching that integrates the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching.

Chapter 6 discusses how best to apply these principles in a local church setting today. Rather than prescribing a certain style, these principles demand a personalization by individual pastors, to themselves, their churches, and their communities to be effective. Yet pastors who seek to reach unbelievers in their communities can apply the principles with a likely result of greater evangelistic effectiveness.

As mentioned above, appendix A summarizes the recommendations of the authors consulted for chapter 4. Appendix B summarizes the results of an empirical study. The author developed a list of thirty-two target churches of various sizes, locations, and denominational-theological backgrounds that have seen large numbers of people come to faith in Christ since the arrival of their current pastors. The study included a comparison group of ten churches also with a variety of sizes and settings that have all seen a significant decline in the number of conversions since the current pastor's arrival. The author of this paper developed an evaluation grid with 185 characteristics based on the

four analyses presented in chapters 2 - 5. The author listened to actual sermons by audio, video, and in person and evaluated each according the criteria. Appendix B lists the compiled results of these evaluations. The results of this study accorded with the findings of the other analyses in this paper. Evangelistically effective pastors demonstrated significantly more relevance, better persuasive reasoning, more engaging illustrations, more dynamic delivery, and more authenticity. The vast majority of both target and comparison pastors preached biblical and Christ-centered sermons. As appendix B discusses, it is difficult to measure the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, so those scores are very subjective; however, the reviewer's scores show a greater sense of the Spirit's presence in effective churches.

### **Definitions**

In order to be of benefit to pastors and educators who want to see an improvement in the quality and effectiveness of evangelism in the local church, the terms that constitute this paper's claims need to be defined and clarified:

Evangelistically effective preaching—For the purpose of this paper, evangelistically effective preaching consists of oral presentations during regular weekly services at local churches by pastors that present the message of Jesus Christ in ways that are likely to lead unbelievers to lasting faith in Jesus Christ.

Biblical, Christ-centered content—Biblical content means that the primary source of authoritative evidence in sermon arguments is the Bible. Other sources may provide additional evidence and support for sermons, but the Bible is specifically quoted, treated as authoritative and used to support sermon conclusions. Christ-centered means that

sermons lift Jesus Christ as Lord and present him as the ultimate source of spiritual hope. The topics of sermons may or may not deal with Jesus' ministry or Christology directly, but sermons reference him in a decisive way at some point.

Relevant to unbelieving listeners—Sermon topics, wording, and modes of address are within the understanding and life experience of non-Christian visitors from churches' target communities. Pastors avoid addressing only Christians. They avoid using terms and phrases that are likely to be understood only by "insider" Christians. The topics may be spiritual in nature, but preachers effectively show how topics relate to the lives of unbelieving listeners.

Persuasive reasoning—Sermons have clear lines of thought that are easy to follow and well supported by appropriate evidence and well-warranted claims that would likely lead listeners to clear decisions for commitment to Christ.

Engaging illustrations—Preachers use interesting stories, metaphors, testimonies and humor to keep the listeners' interest and explain spiritual truths.

Dynamic delivery—Pastors use vocal variety, timing, and gestures to communicate authentic passion for the people and the message and keep the people focused throughout the sermon.

Authentic preacher—Pastors sincerely believe the messages they communicate, love the Lord they serve, love the people to whom they communicate, and live the principles they teach on a daily basis. Pastors are honest about their failings, and they possess enough credibility to be considered trustworthy.

Holy Spirit empowering—The Holy Spirit is at work in the preparation and delivery of sermons to convince unbelievers of the truth of the messages and their need to respond to them.

### **Concessions**

This paper does not claim that better preaching alone will reach this generation of unbelievers. Preaching is only one of a large number of factors affecting the decline of church attendance and conversions in America today. It is beyond the scope of this paper to identify all the factors; however, preaching is an important element in evangelism. Rainier and Barna both have conducted recent studies that found preaching is one of the top two factors in people becoming Christians.<sup>5</sup> Barna also found the worship service is the preferred point of entry to faith and church.<sup>6</sup> In another survey, Barna found that providing better and more interesting sermons was the number one thing churches could do to attract the unchurched to their services.<sup>7</sup> The Bible mandates preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus' last command to his disciples, often known as the Great Commission, had a clear objective. Though the exact wording varies in each account, perhaps Mark's least attested version says it clearest, "Preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15 NAS). Peter said that God "ordered us to preach to the people" (Acts 10:42

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<sup>5</sup> Thom Rainier, "Preaching that Connects, Part 1," 14 Dec 2004, <http://www.churchcentral.com/nw/s/template/Article.html/id/21666> (accessed 4 Jan 2005). Rainier reports his organization surveyed a large group of formerly unchurched people and asked them, "Did the pastor and his preaching play a part in your coming to the church?" More than 97 percent of the respondents said yes. Barna, 114, found the quality of sermons preached was the second most important factor in selecting a church to visit. The first was how much the people in the church seemed to care about each other.

<sup>6</sup> Barna, 90.

<sup>7</sup> Barna Research Group, *Never on a Sunday* (Glendale, CA: Barna Research Group, 1990), 25.

NAS). The Apostle Paul declared, “I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel” (Mark 3:14 NAS). Jesus tied his return to the completion of the mission of evangelistic preaching: “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14 NAS). If evangelical Christians take seriously the Bible, their mission, and the findings of the experts, preaching will remain an important element of evangelism and warrants improvement wherever possible.

One could argue that another set of characteristics might represent the enormous amount of data generated by these studies equally well if not better than the seven this paper identifies as characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching. Although it might be possible to come up with a slightly different set of terms, the list this paper uses was developed after a thorough study of all the data generated by the five studies. The author of this paper sought a manageably small list of characteristics broad enough to include most of the findings that occurred regularly in all of the analyses and specific enough to be of practical use to pastors and educators who seek an improvement in evangelistic preaching. The terminology this paper uses comes largely from phrases that occurred often in the analysis of contemporary experts discussed in chapter 4. Although another researcher might choose to use slightly different terms or divide the results in this study into slightly different categories, the characteristics this paper uses represent the findings of all the analyses and are appropriate to improve evangelistic preaching in pulpits across America.



One final concession is that application of the principles identified by this paper will not guarantee a large increase in the number of people coming to faith in Christ. As mentioned above, preaching is only one of many factors related to effective evangelism in the American church today. Several of these factors may mitigate any gains that might otherwise come to a particular church; however, there is a good likelihood churches will begin to see more conversions if pastors incorporate these elements, because throughout history and in a wide variety of settings effective evangelistic preaching usually consists of 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, dealing with issues 2) relevant to the lives of unbelievers, presented with clear 3) persuasive reasoning, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 2

### EFFECTIVE EVANGELISTIC PREACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: A STUDY OF JESUS, PETER AND PAUL

This chapter argues that the preaching of Jesus, Peter and Paul that effectively led people to faith in Christ as recorded in the New Testament was characterized by: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit. This chapter is the culmination of a systematic study of the recorded sermons of Jesus, Peter, and Paul; any instruction on preaching they gave; plus the observations and comments of eyewitnesses and the writers of Scripture. A large number of secondary sources provided additional insight on the historical and cultural setting of the New Testament and what that preaching was probably like.

Jesus, Peter, and Paul serve as excellent models for effective evangelistic preaching today because the culture of the first century was more similar to that of the twenty-first century than any since.<sup>1</sup> “Not only did [Jesus’] preaching move the unlettered multitudes of the first century, but . . . His preaching methods and communication style

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph L. Lewis and Gregg Lewis, *Learning to Preach like Jesus* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 19; Robert D. Dale, *Seeds for the Future: Growing Organic Leaders for Growing Churches* (Atlanta, GA: Lake Hickory Resources, 2005), 122-123.

seem especially well-suited for twenty-first-century listeners.”<sup>1</sup> These three figures also stand as authoritative examples. In Mark’s account of the calling of the disciples he wrote, “He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14 NAS). They were with him and watched him, and he sent them out to do what he had done. Jesus’ preaching served as the prime example for his first followers as it should for those of the twenty-first century.

Jesus, Peter, and Paul are worthy of imitation because they were effective in their evangelistic ministries. Jesus saw enormous crowds respond to his preaching (Matt. 4:24-25, Mark 3:7-8, and Luke 6:17-19). Because of Peter’s Pentecost preaching, “The infant church was multiplied out of all recognition by a single sermon.”<sup>2</sup> Paul’s evangelistic tours laid the foundations for numerous churches and won so many converts that his opponents said of him, “Not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people” (Acts 19:26 NAS), and, “These men who have upset the world have come here also” (Acts 17:6 NAS).

Finally, the Bible should be consulted for good preaching models because it has stood as the church’s authority since its original writing. Eckhard Schnabel writes:

Based on the conviction that the Bible, as sacred Scripture, is the authority not only for faith but also for practice, and not only for the private life of the individual Christian but also for the life of the church of Jesus Christ as a whole, both in its universal and local expressions, attempts to adopt ‘lessons’ from the missions of Jesus and the apostles are to be welcomed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis and Lewis, 13.

<sup>2</sup> F. D. Coggan, *The Ministry of the Word: The New Testament Concept of Preaching and Its Relevance for Today* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), 11; Acts 2:41, 47, 3:4, 5:42-6:1.

<sup>3</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, vols I and II (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 1569.

Some question whether any of the sermons recorded in the New Testament, and especially Acts, were preached by those claimed. O. C. Edwards claims, “There are probably no sermons as such in the New Testament, no texts that had been delivered orally to an assembly for evangelization, instruction, or worship.”<sup>4</sup> C. H. Dodd, however, in his seminal work, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*, argues that Luke was an eyewitness to Paul’s later preaching and records it as he remembers it. As a case in point, he demonstrates the similarities between Paul’s words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 and those in his epistles. The reason his sermons may seem different in some cases is that his letters lack examples of evangelistic preaching because he wrote them to people who were already Christians. Dodd also believes Luke probably had access to reliable sources for Peter and Stephen’s speeches because none of them shows influences of Pauline theology nor addresses the issues of the late first century church. In addition, the sermons of Acts include many “Aramaisms.”<sup>5</sup> Witherington and Schnabel independently point out that Luke’s writing style and objectives in Acts are much like the school of Greek historians Polybius, Ephorus, and Thucydides who placed a high value

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<sup>4</sup> O. C. Edwards. *A History of Preaching*, vols. I and II (Nashville, TN; Abingdon, 2004), 6-7. Of the Acts sermons he writes, “Their sounding so much like real speeches is evidence not of their historicity but of Luke’s extraordinary literary skill in creating such convincing scenes.”

<sup>5</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, Three Lectures* (New York: Harper and Co., 1964), 17-20.

on ascertaining the accuracy of speeches.<sup>6</sup> Polybius, whose writing Luke's especially resembles, wrote:

The whole *genus* of orations . . . may be regarded as summaries of events and *as the unifying element in historical writing*. . . . It is the function of history in the first place to ascertain the exact words spoken, whatever they may be. . . . A historian . . . who suppresses both the words spoken and their cause and replaces them by fictitious expressions and verbiages, destroys, in so doing, the characteristic quality of history.<sup>7</sup>

Schnabel also points out that the speeches in Acts “reflect different historical and theological perspectives” and this greatly reduces the likelihood that Luke invented them.<sup>8</sup> Underneath this argument is the even greater debate on the authenticity of the New Testament. It is beyond this paper's scope to discuss issues of textual criticism. Instead, this paper will proceed with “advance confidence”<sup>9</sup> and assume the authenticity, reliability, and authority of the New Testament.

### **Preaching in the New Testament**

Preaching and sermons form a major part of the New Testament. The Synoptic Gospels record several extensive sermons of Jesus,<sup>10</sup> shorter conversations with

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<sup>6</sup> Schnabel, 398-400; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 32-33. Witherington cites a TLG and computer aided comparison reported in D. Mealand, “The Phrase ‘Many Proofs’ in Acts 1,3 and in Hellenistic Writers,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80 (1989): 134-45, which provides concrete evidence of the similarities between Luke and Polybius.

<sup>7</sup> Witherington, 33, quotes Polybius with the reference 12.25a-b.

<sup>8</sup> Schnabel, 400.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-34. Schnabel provides an excellent definition and defense for the reliability of the New Testament in such historical studies.

<sup>10</sup> Those directed at general audiences that could be termed evangelistic include the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29), the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49), the extended sermon of Luke 11:1-13:35,

individuals and groups of people, plus many summary statements about Jesus' preaching ministry.<sup>11</sup> These latter summary statements show repeated use of certain words: preaching (*kerusso*), Gospel (*euangellion*), and Kingdom (*basileia*), and demonstrate the main intent of Jesus' preaching was to announce the "good news of the Kingdom." Some of these summary statements also describe the results Jesus sought in his hearers: repentance and faith.<sup>12</sup> Blomberg says, "'The Kingdom' depicts the irruption of God's power into history in a new and dramatic way with the advent of Messiah Jesus... Thus to declare that the kingdom is at hand 'means that the decisive establishment or manifestation of the divine sovereignty has drawn near to men so that they are now confronted with the possibility and the ineluctable necessity of repentance and conversion.'"<sup>13</sup> The Synoptic Gospels also contain several summary statements of the uniqueness and effect of Jesus' preaching.<sup>14</sup>

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parables (Matt. 13:1-53 and 20:1-16, Mark 4:1-34, Luke 8:4-18, 14:5-17:10 and 19:11-27), and his teachings at the Temple (Matt. 21:28-46, Mark 12:1-40, Luke 21:1-47).

<sup>11</sup> These include Matt. 4:17, 4:23, 9:35, 11:1, 11:5; Mark 1:14, 1:39; Luke 4:44, 8:1 and 20:1.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Mark 1:14-15 NAS says, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'" John D. Grassmick, "Mark" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 107-108, writes of this verse, "Repentance and faith (belief) are bound together in one piece (not temporally successive acts). To 'repent' is to turn away from an existing object of trust (e.g., oneself). To 'believe' is to commit oneself wholeheartedly to an object of faith. Thus to believe in the good news meant to believe in Jesus Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God. He is the 'content' of the good news. Only by this means can one enter into or receive (as a gift) the kingdom of God."

<sup>13</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *New American Commentary: Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 73-74, quoting D. Hill, *New Century Bible: The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 90.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Matt. 7:28-29, 13:34-35, 22:33 and 46; Mark 1:22, 4:33-34, 10:1 and 12:37; Luke 4:15, 22 and 31-32.

Most of Jesus' speech in the Gospel of John is not set in typical sermons. Jesus speaks with individuals or groups of people in conversational and circumstantial settings that provided opportunities to explain his nature and ministry.<sup>15</sup> The words for preaching (*kerusso*) and preaching the gospel (*euangalizo*) never occur in John. Yet, evangelistic communication was at the heart of Jesus' message in John to the extent that John records the purpose of his book: "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." This concept of eternal life through faith in Christ is a recurrent theme in Jesus' words in John.

The Book of Acts, as noted earlier, records several sermons in a manner that seems to convey both their salient authenticity and truncation. Other than the Acts 7 sermon by Stephen, all the sermons in Acts were preached by the other two targets of this study: Peter<sup>16</sup> and Paul.<sup>17</sup> The Acts sermons occurred in a variety of settings to a variety of audiences.

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Jesus speaks with the Pharisee Nicodemus in John 3:1-21, the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:1-29, Jewish leaders in Jerusalem in John 5:17-47, Galilean Jews in John 6:25-65, Jerusalem Jews in John 7:16-42, 8:12-58, 10:1-38, Greeks in John 12:20-36, his disciples in John 13:12-16:33, and Pilate in John 18:33-19:12.

<sup>16</sup> Peter's recorded sermons include the Pentecost sermon of Acts 2:14-40, the address at Solomon's Portico in Acts 3:12-29, his two defenses before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:8-20 and 5:28-32, and his address at Cornelius' home in Acts 10:34-43.

<sup>17</sup> Paul's sermons in Acts include the Psidian Antioch address in Acts 13:16-41, the appeal to the people of Lystra in Acts 14:15-17, the Mars Hill address in Acts 17:22-31, the defense on the Temple steps in Acts 22:1-21, his defense before Felix in Acts 24:10-21, and his defense before Festus, Agrippa and Bernice in Acts 26:2-29. It is noteworthy that although his legal defenses did not take place in typically evangelistic settings, Paul used those opportunities to communicate evangelistic messages.

Although the epistles of Paul and Peter were not sermons per se, the letters addressed to churches were most likely intended to be read during church services.<sup>18</sup> They also provide us with a more detailed look at Peter and Paul's writing styles, especially their use of metaphor and rhetoric.<sup>19</sup> Some passages in Paul's epistles provide insights into his techniques and philosophies of evangelistic preaching.<sup>20</sup> Recurring summaries of Christian preaching in Acts and the epistles include the brief statements "preaching the gospel,"<sup>21</sup> "preaching the word,"<sup>22</sup> and "preaching Christ."<sup>23</sup>

The intent of this study was to search out any commonalities of effective evangelistic preaching in the New Testament and compare them with the results of the other studies reported in this dissertation to identify any elements compatible with the findings of all the studies. Some characteristics of preaching discovered in common with the New Testament sources were not identified in the other studies and, therefore, are not included in this chapter.<sup>24</sup> The next section of this chapter shows how the preaching of Jesus, Peter and Paul as recorded in the New Testament reflects the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching supported by all five studies.

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Colossians 4:16.

<sup>19</sup> Brad Ronnell Braxton, *Preaching Paul* (Nashville, TN; Abingdon Press, 2004), 15.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor. 1:15-2:16, for example.

<sup>21</sup> Acts 8:12, 8:40, 13:32, 14:7, 14:15, 14:21, 16:10; Rom. 1:15, 10:15, 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17, 9:16, 9:18, 15:1; 2 Cor. 10:16, 11:7; Gal. 1:8, 1:9, 1:11, 2:2, 4:13; 1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Peter 1:12, 4:6.

<sup>22</sup> Acts 8:4, 8:25, 15:35; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Peter 1:25.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 5:42, 8:5, 8:35, 9:20, 11:20, 15:21, 17:18; 1 Cor. 1:23, 15:12, 2 Cor. 1:19, 4:5, 11:4; Gal. 1:6; Phil. 1:15.

<sup>24</sup> In particular, the divine calling of the preacher and miraculous attestation of his message were common and important factors in the effectiveness of New Testament preachers.



### **Biblical, Christ-Centered Content**

New Testament preachers spoke in a wide variety of settings and to a wide variety of people, yet one theme recurred often: the unique mission of Jesus Christ, especially his crucifixion and resurrection. Though many forms of evidence supported this claim, the Old Testament was the most often used authoritative basis in understanding and defending Christ and His work.

Jesus was clear on both the uniqueness of his mission and the fact he fulfilled the hopes and intents of the Old Testament: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17 NAS). The Gospel of John shows Jesus talking more about his identity and mission than any other topic. “Most of all: He preached about Himself. . . . His entire life was a series of sermons about Himself.”<sup>25</sup>

Jesus is also the central figure in every sermon in Acts by both Peter and Paul. Only the Mars Hill sermon in Acts 17:22-31 does not mention Christ by name. Yet even it recounts his resurrection (Acts 17:31). Paul summarizes his preaching as being, “Nothing but Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2 NAS). In his work analyzing Paul’s preaching, Brad Braxton identifies that Paul’s most deeply held conviction was that the Christ event is central for understanding God’s plan for the world.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hershael York, “Jesus Came Preaching about Himself,” *Preaching*, (July-August 2004), obtained at <http://www.preaching.com>, similarly described in Coggan, 64.

<sup>26</sup> Braxton, 50-51.

All of these preachers pointed out how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of Scripture. “Jesus was a biblical preacher.”<sup>27</sup> “Jesus revealed His identity and authority through the authoritative use of the holy text.”<sup>28</sup> Three major Messianic prophecies framed the outline of Peter’s Pentecost sermon that led 3,000 to faith that day (Acts 2:41).<sup>29</sup> Paul’s sermon at Psidian Antioch in Acts 13 contains at least six direct scriptural quotes and many allusions. This priority of Scripture for use in preaching and teaching was not limited to Jewish audiences. Quotations from the Old Testament also filled Paul’s letters to predominantly Gentile churches to prove Jesus is the Christ, to explain his nature and to provide practical instruction for everyday life. Evangelistic preaching in the New Testament was universally biblical and Christ-centered.

### **Relevance**

The sermons of the New Testament stand out from so much public oration of their day by their relevance to the lives of their listeners. Jesus, Peter, and Paul strove to connect with the people they sought to reach by going to them, treating them with respect, speaking in ways their listeners clearly understood, and dealing with issues that interested them and directly affected their lives.

First, they connected physically by actually going to the people they wanted to reach. Schnabel reports that Jesus was different from the rabbis of his time in that he

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<sup>27</sup> Ted Traylor, “Jesus Came Preaching,” *Preaching*, (July-August 2004); obtained at <http://www.preaching.com>.

<sup>28</sup> York.

<sup>29</sup> The Old Testament passages that framed and evidenced this sermon include Joel 2:28-32, Ps. 16:8-11, Ps. 110:1,

walked from town to town to be able to preach to as many people as possible.<sup>30</sup> The Galilean commissions of Matthew 10 and Luke 9 and 10 plus the Great Commission entailed going to the people to communicate the message. Both Peter and Paul traveled extensively in their preaching ministries to reach as many as possible with the Good News. Schnabel decisively points out how this type of missionary endeavor was unprecedented among the Jews, or any other part of the Greco-Roman world of the first century.<sup>31</sup>

They also deliberately connected with their listeners' minds and hearts through their speaking in order to help them understand the message and the spiritual truth it brought. This connection started with a respect for the listeners. Paul summarized his approach toward people, "Though I am free from all [men], I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more" (1 Cor. 9:19 NAS). He both identified with and respected his listeners. Jesus showed respect to those that no one else in his culture would: a woman caught in adultery, a cohabiting Samaritan woman shunned by her community and forced to draw water in the heat of the day, lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, and officers of the occupying Roman army (John 4:1-42, 8:1-11; Matt. 8:1-7, 9:9-13). Peter willingly broke the Jewish taboo against visiting Gentiles when he went to the Roman Centurion Cornelius' home in Acts 10 to preach there. In each case, the preachers demonstrated an authentic respect for their listeners far beyond the normal expectations of their society.

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<sup>30</sup> Schnabel 208, referring to Mark 1:38.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 170-172 and 536-545.

They also spoke their listeners' language in simple and clear words and phrases. Pascal said, "Jesus Christ speaks the greatest things so simply that it seems as if He never thought about them."<sup>32</sup> Whereas the Greco-Roman rhetoricians adjusted the content of the message to win their audience, all three preachers kept the content the same but adjusted their approach to better connect with their audience. To an agrarian, working-class crowd, Jesus told stories of farms, fields, and homes. To devout Jews, Peter and Paul quoted the Jewish Scriptures. To Athenian philosophers, Paul quoted a Greek poet and referred to a statue in their city. To the centurion Cornelius, Peter further explained events he had already heard about (Acts 10:37). "The audience decides the 'form' in which the gospel is proclaimed. Paul's 'incarnational' maxim of missionary behavior results in the fact that the 'language' in which the proclamation proceeds has been decided on in terms of the situation of the listener."<sup>33</sup> They were "adaptable without compromise."<sup>34</sup>

These great preachers also dealt with issues that affected the listeners. The Sermon on the Mount dealt with issues people wrestled with everyday: anger,

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Coggan, 21, with no reference.

<sup>33</sup> Schnabel, 954.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Crabtree, *Pentecostal Preaching: Empowering Your Pulpit with the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2003), 86-89. Schnabel, 1379-1419, demonstrates how Paul used different approaches in his sermons to different types of audiences: (1) Christological communication as pioneer preaching to Jewish audiences ("exegetical sermon," e.g. Acts 13:36-41); (2) theological communication as pioneer preaching to Gentile audiences ("summary sermon," e.g. 1 Thess. 1:9-10); (3) dialogical concentration in terms of a detailed explanation of the gospel ("situational sermon," e.g. Acts 17:22-31); (4) ideological confrontation with the proclamation of Jesus as Messiah and Lord ("antithetical sermon," e.g. Acts 28:17-28); (5) apologetic confrontation as defense of the gospel ("dogmatic sermon," throughout the epistles, especially Galatians); (6) pastoral concretization when Paul encourages the Christian communities ("constructive sermon," throughout the epistles, especially Philippians).

forgiveness, money, marriage, oaths, and other issues.<sup>35</sup> Peter and Paul spoke to current events and situations their listeners experienced. Braxton says, “Paul realized that preaching that neglected to provide useful guidance for daily living was woefully inadequate.”<sup>36</sup> Jesus, Peter and Paul each demonstrated true relevance in their preaching.

### **Persuasive Appeal**

Jesus, Peter, and Paul also used effective persuasive reasoning in their sermons. Jesus clearly won his debates with the Jewish leaders through exceptional reasoning so that Matthew observed, “No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question” (Matt. 22:46 NAS). Each of Peter’s sermons was a careful exposition of something that his unbelieving audience would have accepted as clear evidence for the message of Jesus. In Acts 2, the evidence was a combination of the supernatural signs of Pentecost and the Old Testament Scriptures that prophesied them. In Acts 3, it was the healing of the lame man at the temple and more Old Testament Scriptures. While speaking to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4, Peter again quoted Scripture. However, when speaking to Gentiles in Acts 10, Peter referred to events they knew well and explained that he and his companions served as legal “witnesses” of Jesus’ miracles and resurrection in a way that would have been acceptable evidence in any

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<sup>35</sup> Rick Warren, “A Primer on Preaching like Jesus,” *Rick Warren’s Ministry Toolbox (Online Resource)*, (#47), April 10, 2002, writes, “By beginning with people’s needs when you preach, you immediately gain the attention of your audience. . . . Three things always make it past your reticular activating system: things you value; things that are unique; and things that threaten you. . . . While sharing the Good News in a unique or threatening way can get attention of unbelievers, I believe showing its value to people is most consistent with how Christ taught. . . . While most unbelievers aren’t looking for truth, they are looking for relief. This gives us the opportunity to interest them in truth.”

<sup>36</sup> Braxton, 39.

Roman court of law.<sup>37</sup> Paul, too, used deliberately persuasive reasoning. He summarized his ministry in Colossians 1:28: “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom.” The phrase “with all wisdom” describes a deliberate effort to think through a process to persuade others in his preaching.<sup>38</sup> These preachers did not usually use characteristic Greco-Roman rhetoric, however.

The first-century Christian preachers who followed Jesus and whose sermons are recorded in the book of Acts adopted His inductive, people-centered style. . . . It wasn't until the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era that preaching shifted radically away from the narrative simplicity of Jesus and His early followers.<sup>39</sup>

The effective reasoning New Testament preachers used ultimately called the listeners to make a decision for Christ. While a few New Testament sermons do not call for a specific response from the listeners (for example Jesus' Matthew 13 parables that illustrate spiritual truth instead of calling for action) the vast majority do make a specific appeal. Jesus preached for a decision.<sup>40</sup> Peter's preaching always closed with an appeal for repentance with the promise of forgiveness, the Holy Spirit and salvation (Acts 2:38-

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<sup>37</sup> Schnabel, 369 and 394.

<sup>38</sup> Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Sagra Pagina*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 83. Paul's words in 1 Cor. 1-4 that disparaged rhetorical wisdom can lead one to ask if a preacher should avoid all reasoning and effort to persuade in his preaching. In the same series of letters, Paul uses the wording of persuasion to describe his preaching efforts to reach the lost more than once. “We *persuade* men” (2 Cor. 5:11). “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were *making an appeal* through us; we *beg* you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). Paul obviously used persuasive techniques in his preaching and writing, but the difference was that he believed the Holy Spirit brought the results (See Schnabel, 1328; Duane Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 249-250, 256-257; Bradley Trask, “Pentecostal Preaching and Persuasion,” in *Foundations for Pentecostal Preaching*, James Bridges, ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005), 174) .

<sup>39</sup> Lewis and Lewis, 27.

<sup>40</sup> York.

39, 3:19, 25-26, 4:12, 5:31, and 10:43).<sup>41</sup> Sometimes, as in Athens in Acts 17 or before Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus in Acts 26, Paul was more subtle in his appeal when it was appropriate to his audience, but even on these occasions, Paul was clear what response he was looking for. At the end of his address to Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus, Paul appealed directly: “‘King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.’ Agrippa replied to Paul, ‘In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.’ And Paul said, ‘I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains’” (Acts 26:27-29 NAS). Jesus, Peter, and Paul each used high quality evidence in clear and persuasive arguments to lead their listeners to faith.

### **Engaging Illustrations**

Stories, examples, parables and object lessons aided understanding of abstract spiritual truths and emotionally engaged those who heard Jesus, Peter, and Paul preach. Jesus was a master storyteller, “Jesus didn’t use such stories merely as teasers, light introductions to get His hearers listening for what He really wanted to say. They weren’t just illustrations of the point; they were the point.”<sup>42</sup> One third of Jesus’ words in the New Testament are in parables. “[Jesus’ parables] challenged the mind on the highest intellectual level by using stories that made common sense out of the complexities of religious faith and

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<sup>41</sup> Dodd, 25-26.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis and Lewis, 26. On 46-47 they report that educational style studies have determined that people learn three times as much visually as auditorially, and six times more by doing than hearing alone. In “A Primer on Preaching Like Jesus,” Rick Warren writes, “Stories and illustrations help make the abstract concrete, but they also hold attention, stir emotions, and help the listener remember what they have heard.”

human experience.”<sup>43</sup> Mark 4:33 explains, “With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it.” In other words, the parables themselves were as much spiritual truth as many were ready to hear or could understand at that point.<sup>44</sup>

Jesus also used object lessons to teach. There could well have been actual lilies in the field and birds in the air right in front of the listeners while Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:24-26). Jesus told his disciples to “look on the fields” as a metaphor of the ripe harvest of souls (John 4:35). He took a child on his lap when he wanted to demonstrate the value of humility (Matt. 18:2), and he even cursed a fig tree to show the disciples the power of faith (Matt 21:19-21 and Mark 11:12-14). Paul used the altar to an unknown god to help the Athenians understand the Creator (Acts 17:23). Metaphors are another example of illustration used throughout the New Testament to help bring understanding. Paul was very prolific at adapting the language and images from everyday life to communicate truth. He used an olive tree in Romans 11, athletic

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<sup>43</sup> Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 1. Some authorities question that Jesus’ parables were designed to teach. When asked by his disciples in Matthew 13:10-13, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him [more] shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” This passage tends to have a heavy predestinarian ring to it with the implication that the parables are designed to hide spiritual truth rather than reveal it. Blomberg, 215, says of Jesus’ statement here, “Certain privileges are reserved for Jesus’ followers that are not available for everyone else.” Commenting on Luke’s account of this passage, Joel B. Green, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 326, differs stating, “Jesus’ answer is directed to the disciples but it is given in the presence of the multitudes.” The crowds, too, could understand the parables if their “worldview has been reshaped by their orientation to God’s purpose.”

<sup>44</sup> Young, 33, writes, “Jesus’ parables illustrate and teach, despite the argument of a number of scholars that they were designed to conceal his message from the people.”



competition in 1 Corinthians 9, clay jars in 2 Corinthians 4, fruit in Galatians 5, and a nursing mother in 1 Thessalonians 2 for just a few examples.<sup>45</sup> Peter also used word pictures in his letters to help his readers better understand who they were as Christians by equating them to aliens (1 Pet. 1:1), heirs (1 Pet. 1:13 and 4:1), soldiers (1 Pet. 1:13 and 4:1), children (1 Pet. 1:14 and 2:2), and sheep (1 Pet 2:25 and 5:2). Some may observe a paucity of illustrations in the Acts sermons. As was noted earlier, Luke seems to have abbreviated most of these messages and focused on the primary message—that is the flow of argument and “proof” of the sermons—and did not take the time or space to record all of the illustrations. Since Paul and Peter filled their letters with metaphors to help illuminate the arguments of their writings, it is reasonable to expect their preaching would also have included such illumination.

### **Dynamic Delivery**

The Scriptures record little about the actual vocal and physical delivery of the sermons they contain, but there are strong hints that the great New Testament preachers used dynamic styles of delivery. For example in John 7:37, “Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.’” The verb for “cry out,” *krazo*, means “to make a vehement outcry” or “to communicate something in a loud voice, call, call out, cry.”<sup>46</sup> This was a deeply passionate invitation from Jesus in the words he used and in how he said them. Morris says of this verse, “It is proclaimed

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<sup>45</sup> Braxton, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 563.

loudly and emphatically, perhaps also with great emotion, so that all might hear and all might heed.”<sup>47</sup> Jesus must have had a powerful voice to preach effectively to more than 5,000 men on one occasion, not counting women and children present.<sup>48</sup> York notes many examples of Jesus’ preaching that show in his delivery, “Jesus delivered His messages with fervor and feeling.”<sup>49</sup> Andy Stanley and Lane Jones say Jesus was engaging in His preaching. “He didn’t simply speak. He spoke with authority. . . . He was the master communicator. . . . Jesus wasn’t content with being right. He was committed to being heard.”<sup>50</sup>

Peter also communicated with passion, according to Acts 2:40, “[Peter] kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’” There is also a strong sense of passionate appeal to the listeners in Paul’s sermons and letters. After carefully analyzing Paul’s preaching, Braxton dedicated an entire chapter in his book *Preaching Paul* to “Preaching with Passion.” He writes, “In my exhortation for passionate preaching I am not advocating reckless, unenlightened zeal. I am, however, calling for purposeful abandonment.”<sup>51</sup> Jerome Murphy-O’Connor agrees that zeal characterized Paul’s preaching, “It is the generosity of his acceptance and the zeal with which he carries out

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<sup>47</sup> Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Gospel According to John, Revised* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 373-374.

<sup>48</sup> Matthew 14:21.

<sup>49</sup> York.

<sup>50</sup> Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006), 150.

<sup>51</sup> Braxton, 32-38.

the duty imposed upon him, that permits the word of God active within the preacher to shine through the confines of the ‘vessel of clay’ (2 Cor. 4:7).”<sup>52</sup>

These three preachers also apparently used appropriate physical gestures in the delivery of their sermons. Acts 26:1 notes how Paul began his defense to King Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus: “Then Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense” (Acts 26:1 NAS). I. Howard Marshall states this refers to the typical gestures of great orators of Paul’s day.<sup>53</sup> The same Greek phrase (*ekteinas tan xeira*) describes Jesus pointing out his mother and brothers to make a point during an address in Matthew 12:46.

### **Authentic Preacher**

The New Testament is clear that the messenger is a major part of the message, and Jesus, Peter, and Paul carried an authenticity and credibility with them into their preaching.<sup>54</sup> The moral perfection of Jesus Christ is one of the key doctrinal teachings of the New Testament. The Book of Hebrews records that Jesus was “without sin” (Heb. 4:15 and 7:26). George Buttrick writes that Jesus spoke with authority even though he did not covet the title of best-informed man in his community or a position of accepted leadership. His authority came from his life.<sup>55</sup> In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Paul reminded

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<sup>52</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul on Preaching* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 207.

<sup>53</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 390.

<sup>54</sup> As further proof for the need of the preacher’s integrity, Schnabel, 1551, reports, “Experts in communication theory inform us that the successful transmission of a message depends on, among other factors, the credibility of the communicator.”

<sup>55</sup> George A. Buttrick, *Jesus Came Preaching: Christian Preaching in the New Age* (New York: Scribner, 1951), 21.

his readers of the example he lived before them as he preached the gospel. “There was great harmony between the character of the missionaries and the message they preached, as the Thessalonians themselves could testify.”<sup>56</sup> Paul’s life matched his message so he could say, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1 NAS). Paul passed on to his protégés Timothy and Titus the responsibility of serving as good examples to those to whom they ministered (1 Tim. 4:12 and Titus 2:7-8). Peter lifted his ministry up as an example to church leaders in his first epistle when he appealed to them as a “fellow elder,” then urged pastors “to be examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Jesus, Peter, and Paul were authentic preachers: Their lives matched their message.

### **Holy Spirit Empowering**

The New Testament clearly identifies that the Holy Spirit is ultimately responsible for the conversion of unbelievers. A prerequisite of effective preaching was the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. All four gospels point to Jesus’ baptism as the beginning of his public ministry and note the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus at that time (Matt. 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, 4:14, and John 1:32). All the Synoptic Gospel writers identify the difference between Jesus’ preaching and that of the Pharisees as “speaking with authority (*exousia*).”<sup>57</sup> Although he does not use the word “authority,” John gives a

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<sup>56</sup> Gene Greene, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 96.

<sup>57</sup> Matt. 7:29, Mark 1:27, Luke 4:32 and 36. Commentators have struggled to understand what this “authority” was. Blomberg, 135, believes it means that Jesus spoke with “directness and confidence.” Donald Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary 33A: Matthew 1-13* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 194, is vaguer and says, “Jesus’ authority is not one among other rabbinic teachers; his authority centers not on the tradition of the fathers, not even on the Torah, but somehow, mysteriously and remarkably, it centers in himself.”

similar response from the guards sent to arrest Jesus in John 7:45, “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.”<sup>58</sup> Joel Green identifies this authority as the power of the Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Traylor says, “The key to His power in preaching was the anointing of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>60</sup>

Likewise, before their post-resurrection ministry began, Jesus urged the apostles to “wait for what the Father had promised. . . . You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses” (Acts 1:4 and 8 NAS). Peter’s first great evangelistic sermon was preached upon his Spirit baptism at Pentecost. He also gave clear credit to the Spirit for the effectiveness of the preaching that brought the readers of his first epistle to faith, “These things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven” (1 Pet. 1:12). In discussing 1 Tim. 1:12, Murphy-O’Connor writes, “‘I give thanks to him who infused power (*endunamosanti*) into me.’ . . . The aorist *endunamosanti* refers to a definite moment of past time: Paul’s vocation on the Damascus Road. There he received not only a mission but also the power to make its fulfillment possible.”<sup>61</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 1-4 Paul gives a detailed explanation of his preaching methodology. Forced to defend his preaching ministry because it failed to live up to the Corinthians’ lofty rhetorical standards, he said, “My message and my preaching were not

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<sup>58</sup> Morris, 382, says this construction “puts the emphasis on the manner rather than the content of his teaching.”

<sup>59</sup> Green, 222.

<sup>60</sup> Traylor.

<sup>61</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, 81.

in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”<sup>62</sup>

The gospel ultimately is accepted and believed by listeners only because God himself is effectively present in its proclamation. . . . It is impossible to “force” a decision or to “argue” an unbeliever into the kingdom of God, even if the rhetoric is brilliant and the arguments are theologically compelling—only the power of God can convince people of the truth of the gospel.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> 1 Cor. 2:4-5. Schnabel, 1355-1362 summarizes Reinhold Reck, *Kommunikation und Gemeindeaufbau: Eine Studie zu Entstehung, Leben und Wachstum paulinischen Gemeinden in den Kommunikationsstrukturen der Antike*, SBS 22 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991) and Bruce Winter, *Paul and the Sophists*, SNTSMS 96 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997). He says they place these words in the context of a culture completely obsessed with contemporary forms of rhetoric and the outstanding public speaking it encouraged. Since the earliest Sophists over 400 years earlier, Greek and Roman cultures had established rhetoric as one of their loftiest professions and favorite pastimes. Beginning with Aristotle, continuing with Cicero and down to Paul’s day there was intermarriage between philosophy and rhetoric. In every generation, “rhetoric’s goal was to teach the speaker how to discover and then use with success the persuasive possibilities inherent within any situation, within any audience, within any subject.” A good speaker actually had the object of creating belief (*pistis*) in his listeners. (Litfin, 81, referring to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.2.8.) Corinth, in particular, had a deep enthusiasm for oratory, and the common people were in the habit of evaluating orators on their speaking and persuasion abilities. In all likelihood, Paul at first appeared to the Corinthians like the traveling orators they were used to enjoying and evaluating. Many sincerely responded to the gospel and a church was born during Paul’s 18-month ministry there. However, after he departed, Apollos, perhaps a much more eloquent and effective rhetorician than Paul, arrived from Ephesus and began both teaching the Christians and refuting the Jews and Pagans (Acts 18:24-28). Many of the Corinthian Christians were taken with him and found his speaking superior to Paul’s and began to identify themselves as being “of Apollos.” Others stayed loyal to Paul against Apollos, and perhaps others formed “Cephas” and “Christ” factions (1 Cor. 1:12). When he heard about this division, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in response. Chapters 1-4 are his effort to break down the divisions and explain why his ministry was not built on high rhetoric—“persuasive words of wisdom.” All three of these words in Greek—*πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις*—were commonly used to describe the rhetorical process. Instead, Paul said his ministry consisted of “demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” Unlike the rhetoricians, Paul’s role was not to adapt the message to the audience in an effort to persuade them and create their faith. Rather he identified himself as a herald (*κερυξ*) whose role was to call out “in a clear and audible manner a message that has been given by a ruler or by the state to convey to constituency.” The herald only announced. He did not persuade. As God’s *κερυξ*, Paul communicated God’s message. He could not create faith in the listeners. Only the Holy Spirit could do that.

<sup>63</sup> Schnabel, 1356 and 1583.

As Braxton identifies, the Holy Spirit was Paul's (and any effective preacher's) "ultimate power source."<sup>64</sup> Gordon Fee comments on this passage, "The single concern: the gospel proclaimed through human weakness but accompanied by the powerful work of the Spirit so that lives are changed through a divine-human encounter . . . stands as the true need in genuinely Christian preaching."<sup>65</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the preaching of Jesus, Peter, and Paul demonstrated the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching. Through an analysis of biblical accounts of actual sermons preached, the comments of eyewitness and the authors of Scripture, and secondary sources from Bible scholars and experts in the field of preaching and the early Christian missionary enterprise, we have shown that New Testament evangelistic preaching was 1) biblical and Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to the unbelieving listeners, communicated with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by 6) authentic preachers, who were 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>64</sup> Braxton, 85.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon Fee, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 96-97.

## CHAPTER 3

### EFFECTIVE EVANGELISTIC PREACHING IN CHURCH HISTORY

This chapter will demonstrate that the preaching of four outstanding and effective evangelistic preachers from different periods in church history was characterized by: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit. This chapter is the culmination of a systematic analysis of the recorded sermons of John Chrysostom, Girolamo Savonarola, George Whitefield, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon; any instruction on preaching they gave; plus the observations and comments of eyewitnesses and their early biographers. A large number of secondary sources provided additional insight on the historical and cultural settings of each of these preachers and the nature of their preaching. This chapter looks at these four preachers because: 1) they represent distinct eras and settings of preaching, 2) their preaching resulted in large numbers of conversions, 3) each lived and preached in a time of cultural turmoil, and 4) a good number of their recorded sermons and eyewitness accounts are extant today. This chapter will begin by briefly summarizing each of these preacher's careers and continue by showing how each preacher demonstrated the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching.



Known throughout history as one of the church's greatest preachers, John was given the name Chrysostom (Golden Mouth) after his death. His ministry took place in the Eastern Roman Empire as the Roman Catholic Church was ascending to its zenith yet still struggling against paganism and heretical movements. John placed a very high priority on the conversion of all people<sup>1</sup> and saw greater turnouts for his sermons than anyone could remember.<sup>2</sup> He had eleven successful years of preaching at Antioch before he was forced to become the bishop of the imperial capital of Constantinople. He had an effective way of connecting with the common people of his culture in transition, and though that way offended those in power and eventually led to his death, John Chrysostom remains a tremendous model of effective preaching.

Although Girolamo Savonarola is known for his political influence in Florence in the 1490s, it was his preaching that drove that unprecedented spiritual and democratic revolution. Returning to the city in 1490 at the request of Lorenzo di Medici, the city's ruler, Savonarola was virtually unknown. His outstanding oratory quickly changed that, and in a short period, he was invited to preach in the city's enormous Duomo where crowds of over 20,000 would press in to hear him.<sup>3</sup> Some would leave their homes as early as midnight to ensure a place in the morning sermons.<sup>4</sup> Savonarola prophesied many things from that pulpit that happened including the death of Lorenzo and the

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 37. Chrysostom had a passion for evangelism. He had the Bible translated into Gothic and preached to the large number of Goths in Constantinople through an interpreter.

<sup>2</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: the Story of John Chrysostom* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995), 57, quotes him, "You could not find another city anywhere which had such a passion for [sermons]."

<sup>3</sup> Konrad Eisenbichler, "Introduction," in Savonarola Girolamo, *A Guide to Righteous Living and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2003), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Piero Misciatelli, *Savonarola*, trans. M. Peters-Roberts (New York: Appleton, 1930), 52.

invasion of the French Army.<sup>5</sup> His stirring call to righteous living, warning of imminent judgment, and vision of Florence as the New Jerusalem combined with the fulfilled prophecies to give him enormous influence, especially among the common people of his city. Like Chrysostom, his preaching also made enemies including the reigning pope, and he was brought to a premature death at the stake in May 1498. His sermons hit their mark and transformed a great city, if only for a short while.

The effects of George Whitefield's preaching, however, lasted much longer. He set the model itinerant evangelists around the world still follow centuries after his death. Though Great Britain and the American Colonies were founded with a commitment to the Christian faith, the enlightenment, growing urbanization, and materialism had distracted people from their commitment to Christ. Whitefield entered this period of cultural transformation as a young preacher and led one of the greatest revivals the English-speaking world has ever seen. Ben Franklin described the change, "From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street."<sup>6</sup>

A century later, Charles Haddon Spurgeon was attracting crowds by his preaching. A local pastor, Mr. Knill, prophesied over him while still a boy, "This child will one day preach the Gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes."<sup>7</sup> That prophecy was fulfilled as Spurgeon took over the struggling New Park Street Chapel at just twenty

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (New York: Perkins, 1957), 129.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, ed. by David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1946), 16.

years of age. The church was soon bursting at the seams. The six thousand-seat Metropolitan Tabernacle had to be built in its place, and Spurgeon filled it every week for over thirty years.<sup>8</sup>

Although each of these preachers had a unique style and a unique setting for his preaching, each one demonstrated the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching.

### **Biblical, Christ-Centered Content**

Each of these preachers was convinced of the authority of the Scriptures, and built his sermons around them. These four preachers represent a variety of approaches to the use of Scripture in sermons: expositional (Chrysostom), allegorical (Savonarola), and textual (Whitefield and Spurgeon), yet each sought the Bible as their only source of truth in eras when many others turned elsewhere for their sermon texts.

The most notable characteristic of John Chrysostom's sermons is their Scriptural exegesis. John was reputed to have memorized the entire Bible during his years of asceticism, and he was able to quote Scripture at ease during his extemporaneous sermons.<sup>9</sup> He urged his congregation, "Don't simply dive into [the Scriptures]. Swim in them. Keep them constantly in your mind. The cause of all evils is the failure to know Scripture well."<sup>10</sup> He was also the foremost example of the Antiochene School of exegesis. Most influential preachers before his time came from Alexandria where great

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<sup>8</sup> Donald Demaray, *Pulpit Giants: What Made them Great* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 137-140.

<sup>9</sup> Kelly, 32.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 96, quoting from John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers First Series*, Vol. 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1988.

latitude was taken with Scripture in seeking allegorical interpretations. Chrysostom, however, always sought the literal historical meaning of the text.<sup>11</sup> Most of his sermons were exegetical and read much like modern commentaries.<sup>12</sup> His command of Scripture was so great that he would occasionally invite the congregation to select a verse for him to exegete on the spot.<sup>13</sup>

Like Chrysostom, Savonarola preferred to preach sermon series through books of the Bible. Instead of John's commentary-like exegesis, however, Savonarola preferred to use a single text with an allegorical interpretation to apply it to the issues of his day.<sup>14</sup> Though he used illustrations from everyday life and quoted the church fathers and philosophers to connect with the people and help them understand the Scriptures, his priority was always the Bible, something uncommon in Renaissance Italy.<sup>15</sup>

The doctrine of new birth in Christ was almost unknown in the Anglican churches of the 1730s, but that message filled George Whitefield's sermons. Though he preached hard against sin, he always called his people to the grace that comes from faith in Christ; and hundreds of thousands on both sides of the Atlantic responded.<sup>16</sup>

Spurgeon, too, preached only biblical, Christ-centered messages. He immersed himself in the Scriptures throughout the week in preparation for the following Sunday.

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<sup>11</sup> Purves, 39-40, writes, "Chrysostom developed a matter-of-fact approach to scripture, placing himself into the contexts of the texts themselves by understanding the ordinary use of language. From this point he developed spiritual meanings and applications..."

<sup>12</sup> Edwards, 78.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 82-84.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>15</sup> Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Girolamo Savonarola*, trans. Cecil Grayson (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1959), 34-35.

<sup>16</sup> Harry S. Stout, *Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 37

He did not preach through a set book of the Bible as Savonarola and Chrysostom did, but instead preferred to focus on a verse or two he felt particularly appropriate for his people at that time.<sup>17</sup> His main objective in preaching was always the conversion of sinners to Christ.<sup>18</sup>

In particular, these men repeatedly focused on the cross and eternity. Warnings of the reality of hell fill their messages, but the grace of Jesus Christ for all who would repent and believe was offered more prominently as the hope for the listeners' lives and the world as well.

### **Relevance**

These great expositors broke with established traditions of their day to communicate their messages in words the common people understood. They dealt with issues their people faced. They gave specific applications that their listeners could practice in their lives. To them preaching was more than communicating information, it was about transforming lives.

Though he sought to make his preaching accurate to the text, John Chrysostom strove to make every sermon he preached practical and relevant for his audience.<sup>19</sup> John demonstrated “an amazing ability to bring Scripture to life, both in its theological richness and practical implications.”<sup>20</sup> He gave very clear application to the congregation's lives. “Changed lives were his goal.”<sup>21</sup> John used deliberately simple

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<sup>17</sup> Warren D. Bullock, *The Influence of Puritanism on the Life and Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Seattle: Seattle Pacific College, 1969), 48-50.

<sup>18</sup> Edwards, 461.

<sup>19</sup> Kelly, 95; Edwards, 80.

<sup>20</sup> Hall, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Robert A. Krupp, “Golden Tongue and Iron Will,” *Christian History* 13, no. 4 (1994): 8.

wording that would have been within the reach of the common people. “John had a unique populist flair for making abstruse concepts and complex exegesis accessible to the ordinary folk crowding his church.”<sup>22</sup> Yet, Chrysostom never allowed relevance to compromise his authentic spirituality. He wrote to young priests-in-training, “A [preacher] must not only be blameless, as befits one chosen for so high a ministry, but also very discreet and widely experienced. He [*sic*] ought to be as much aware of mundane matters as any who live in the midst of them, and yet be more detached from them than the monks who have taken to the mountains.”<sup>23</sup>

In that same vein, Savonarola’s preaching was relevant to the issues the people of Florence faced. He said, “My faithful listeners know how fittingly my expositions of the Scriptures always agreed with the present times.”<sup>24</sup> Machiavelli conceded that relevance although he questioned the friar’s sincerity. He wrote to his friend Ricciardo Becchi, “In my judgment, he acts in accordance with the times and colors his lies accordingly.”<sup>25</sup> Savonarola sought to be relevant in the way he spoke. Though he came from Ferrara, a city with a dialect different from Florence, “He took up the use of popular Florentine expressions, such as *moccione* (snotnose), *sta cheto* (be quiet), and *beccarsi il cervello* (to peck away one’s brains).”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kelly, 62.

<sup>23</sup> John Chrysostom, *The Priesthood*, trans. by W. A. Jurgens (New York: MacMillan, 1955), 141.

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, 258, quoting from Savonarola’s *Compendium of Revelations*.

<sup>25</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, “Letter to Ricciardo Becchi, 9 March 1498,” in *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*, ed. and trans. James Atkinson and David Sices (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), 10.

<sup>26</sup> Lauro Martines, *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 95.

Whitefield also worked hard to communicate in a relevant way to his listeners. He often took scenes from the Bible or complex truths and communicated them in such relevant ways that the people understood them clearly.<sup>27</sup> Spurgeon, too, sought to make his preaching relevant to his listeners. Warren Bullock writes, “It was rare indeed when Spurgeon did not show the personal relevance of his text to the hearers.”<sup>28</sup> These great preachers were great, in part, because they effectively connected with their listeners.

### **Persuasive Appeal**

The preachers in this study did not hesitate to make clear, persuasive appeals to their listeners. Each of them became almost legendary in his ability to motivate change in people through sermonic invitations. The cultures of each preacher’s geographic area of influence were deeply affected by the changes in the lives of the people who heard these sermons and responded.

Chrysostom was trained by Antioch’s leading rhetorician, Libanios, with the original aim of entering the legal profession. When John responded to his divine calling, Libanios was asked who should succeed him. “It ought to have been John,” he replied, “had not the Christians stolen him from us.”<sup>29</sup> Chrysostom used elements of his rhetorical training for great effect in his preaching: tropes, pleonasm, anaphora, paronomasia, and vivacity among others.<sup>30</sup> Chrysostom’s sermons often focused on sure eternal rewards

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<sup>27</sup> Edwards, 435.

<sup>28</sup> Bullock, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Kelly, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Edwards, 81.

and judgments as motives for proper behavior, and he always called for specific lifestyle commitments from the people.

Savonarola used straightforward emotional appeal instead of the polished rhetoric of other Florentine preachers.<sup>31</sup> He had a unique ability to make complex doctrines seem simple.<sup>32</sup> His certainty of both heaven and hell left him unafraid to call his audience to repentance. An example of such an earnest appeal comes from “Sermon Number 3 on the Psalms, 13 Jan. 1495”:

Oh, Italy and princes of Italy and prelates of the Church, the wrath of God is upon you, and you have no remedy whatsoever, except to mend your ways! And I will begin in my sanctuary. Oh, Italy, of Florence, the tribulations are coming upon you because of your sins! Oh, nobles, oh, powerful persons, oh, plebeians, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and power cannot resist it, nor knowledge, nor flight. . . . Oh, Florentines, flee from Florence, that is, flee for your penance from sin and flee from wicked people.<sup>33</sup>

George Whitefield was a master of persuasion. He usually used one Bible text from which he clearly spelled out his topic and the points supported it. This simple, clear process ensured all of his listeners could follow the message. He always concluded with a very emotional, yet clear, call for response from his listeners.<sup>34</sup>

Spurgeon bucked the contemporary trend of lofty, Latinized rhetoric and preached in the vernacular of the common people. Yet, his sermons always concluded with a clear, passionate call to faith.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ridolfi, 34.

<sup>32</sup> Martines, 66.

<sup>33</sup> Savonarola, 118.

<sup>34</sup> Edwards, 434.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 458; Bullock, 53-61.



### Engaging Illustrations

These effective preachers of the past used clear, understandable, relevant, and engaging illustrations regularly. Though they ranged in type and quantity from preacher to preacher, each one chose images from the everyday lives of his congregants. This enabled a clearer understanding and application of the biblical text, and, perhaps more importantly, a greater emotional motivation to carry out those principles in their own lives. Savonarola and Whitefield typically used one major metaphor to frame their messages, often including illustrations from everyday life to support the main assertions. Chrysostom and Spurgeon used stories and images throughout their messages to help clarify the meanings and applications of the text. Chrysostom used images and illustrations from athletics, military combat, sea travel, agriculture, and other things that filled the world that surrounded his people to help explain the principles of Scripture.<sup>36</sup>

Savonarola was a master of metaphor. Though modern exegetes often decry the use of allegory in sermons the way Savonarola used it, he deliberately chose passages that gave metaphors around which he could build a sermon. Savonarola's metaphors directly involved the congregation in his sermons. He presented compelling images to bring the truth home to his people like a call to daily look through "the eyeglasses of death" or to visualize "the sword of the Lord" ready to strike the unrepentant city.<sup>37</sup>

George Whitefield got his whole body into the act of communicating his metaphors and illustrations. Early in his career, the unfavorable *Anglican Weekly* described a sermon: "Hark! He tells of a Sensible New Birth then belike he is in Labour,

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<sup>36</sup> Edwards, 81.

<sup>37</sup> Savonarola, 80-148.

and the good Women around him are come to his assistance. He dilates himself, cries out [and] is at last delivered.”<sup>38</sup> He even used the physical landscape around him and spontaneous events like lightning, wind, or rainstorms to add to the effect of his preaching.<sup>39</sup>

Spurgeon also used images and illustrations that connected with his audience emotionally and mentally. Each point of his well-organized outlines contained at least one anecdote, quotation, analogy, metaphor, or even joke to help the people grasp the principle. Spurgeon had another technique he used to engage his listeners in the Bible’s stories. Jay Adams calls this “sense appeal.” He invited listeners to use their senses—most often sight, but also, hearing, touch, smell and taste—to imagine themselves at the particular biblical scene Spurgeon was expositing. For example, “Do you mark him in your imagination nailed to yonder cross! Do you see his hands bleeding, his feet gushing gore? Behold him! Do you see him? Look at him! See him! See him!”<sup>40</sup> Louis Brastow, a studier of preachers at the turn of the twentieth century, acknowledged that much of Spurgeon’s power came from “summoning men [*sic*] to the use of the same faculties in religion that they use in everyday life.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Dynamic Delivery**

Those who observed these great preachers in history first hand consistently remarked primarily on their delivery and its effects. Isidore of Pelusion, a contemporary

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<sup>38</sup> Stout, 40.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>40</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Sense Appeal in the Sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975), 13. Whitefield and Savonarola also used sense appeal quite often.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

“stylist of grace,” said John Chrysostom had clarity of diction unequalled by any other he knew.<sup>42</sup> In *Priesthood*, Chrysostom complained that people came to his sermons more for pleasure than for profit,<sup>43</sup> and his eloquence brought the enormous crowds who came to hear him much pleasure. He did not consider his verbal skills only a gift, however. He wrote, “Eloquence is not given by birth, but the preacher must cultivate its force by constant application and exercise.”<sup>44</sup>

Savonarola’s preaching was marked by passion and an unmatched eloquence. Eyewitness Pico della Mirandola describes himself in third person upon hearing the monk preach, “A cold shiver ran throughout his whole body, and his hair stood on end.”<sup>45</sup> Even his outspoken critic Niccolo Machiavelli had to acknowledge his eloquence, “If you had heard with what boldness he began preaching and with how much he continued it would be an object of no little admiration.”<sup>46</sup> Savonarola integrated play-acting and humor into his sermons to keep his listeners engaged.<sup>47</sup> He also used mock dialogue in his sermons—sometimes even mocking himself—as a way to add levity and increase his credibility by reaching out to all types of people.<sup>48</sup> Yet, Savonarola’s preaching ability was mostly

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<sup>42</sup> Kelly, 82.

<sup>43</sup> Chrysostom, *Priesthood*, 127-128.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>45</sup> Misciatelli, 84.

<sup>46</sup> Machiavelli, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Martines, 71.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

learned and not a natural gift. His first preaching tour in Florence was unremarkable. It took several years of itinerant ministry farther north to prepare him to take on Florence.<sup>49</sup>

Whitefield's passionate delivery was key to his success. Trained in theater as a young man, he used every trick of the dramatic trade to engage his audience in the biblical message. He spoke completely without notes, yet often preached the same sermons many times, which enabled him to perfect their delivery. In fact, his friend Benjamin Franklin noted,

His delivery [of the often preached sermons] was so improved by frequent repetition that every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice, was so perfectly well turned and placed that without being interested in the subject, one could not help being pleased with the discourse.<sup>50</sup>

His voice was powerful as well. Franklin estimated he could preach to at least 30,000 outdoors.<sup>51</sup> Contemporary accounts claimed he once preached to 80,000 in Hyde Park.<sup>52</sup> Yet in spite of the volume required, he was able to produce a remarkable variety of tone. “Tenderness and sternness, love and anger—the whole gamut of emotions could be communicated through what must have been one of the most remarkable voices in speech history.”<sup>53</sup> The actor David Garrick said Whitefield could “make his audience weep or tremble merely by varying his pronunciation of the word Mesopotamia.”<sup>54</sup> Sarah

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<sup>49</sup> Eisenbichler, 4-5; Edwards, 256; Misciatelli, 49-50. Martines, 17, says his first preaching in Florence was “a disaster... Savonarola all but drove his listeners away by his funny Lombard speech, weak voice, ungainly gestures, and poor delivery.” Before he returned to Florence in 1490, Martines, 23, says, “During his years away from Florence, the militant knight of Christ had found the skill to turn himself into a superb orator and public personality.”

<sup>50</sup> Franklin, 134.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>52</sup> Edwards, 433.

<sup>53</sup> Demaray, 162.

<sup>54</sup> Edwards, 435.

Edwards, the great theologian Jonathan's wife, saw his speaking gifts as God given. "He is a born orator," she said.<sup>55</sup>

Spurgeon's voice and gestures also set him apart from his contemporaries. He easily filled the Metropolitan Tabernacle with volume and vocalizations that moved people to repentance. Like Chrysostom, he eschewed pulpits because they restrained his gestures.<sup>56</sup> Sheridan Knowles was a popular actor and playwright in London who heard Spurgeon's first two sermons at New Park Street Chapel. He immediately recommended the students at Regent's Park College hear Spurgeon preach, "He is only a boy, but the most wonderful preacher in the world. . . . He has nothing to learn from me or anyone else. He is simply perfect."<sup>57</sup> Yet Spurgeon disagreed. He made it a lifelong pursuit to improve his preaching and study preachers, particularly the Puritans.<sup>58</sup> He even started a school for aspiring preachers next to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The lectures he gave were published in three volumes, which provide specific instruction in preparation and delivery of sermons and the necessary character of the preacher.

These men all used a great deal of vocal variety (volume, pitch, pace, etc.), strong gestures, and manifested overt emotions. One commonality they shared which no doubt aided their delivery was preaching without (or with very few) notes.

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<sup>55</sup> Stout, 127.

<sup>56</sup> Edwards, 457.

<sup>57</sup> Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 70.

<sup>58</sup> Adams, 35; Bullock, 36-40.

### Authenticity

These men lived the Gospel they preached. Each exuded a sincere love for God, passion for communicating the message of the Gospel, and love for the people to whom they preached. Chrysostom's lifestyle resonated with a passion for Christ and commitment to holy living that matched his words. Much of his trouble in Constantinople stemmed from his call for priests to abandon the wanton luxury they had come to expect.<sup>59</sup> In spite of his high rank, John chose to live in Spartan surroundings. John also modeled humility in spite of his great reputation. He wrote in his treatise *Priesthood*,

The man who has accepted the task of preaching should pay no more attention to the commendation of outsiders, any more than he should let them cause him dejection. When he has composed his sermons to please God (and let this alone be his rule and standard of good oratory in sermons, not applause or commendation), then if he should be approved by men, too, let him not spurn their praise. But if his hearers do not accord it, let him neither seek it or sorrow for it. It will be sufficient encouragement for his efforts, and one much better than anything else, if his conscience tells him he is organizing and regulating his teachings to please God.<sup>60</sup>

John sincerely loved his people and mentioned that love frequently in his sermons.<sup>61</sup> He even violated the established protocol and vacated the lofty pulpit to preach from the ambo in order to be closer to the people.<sup>62</sup>

Though his enemies accused him of selfish political motives, Savonarola had a sincere passion to see people respond to the Gospel. He started schools in Florence's Dominican monasteries to train young monks in oriental languages to send them as

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<sup>59</sup> Krupp, 7; Edwards, 76.

<sup>60</sup> Chrysostom, *Priesthood*, 133.

<sup>61</sup> Kelly, 115; Carl A. Volz, "The Genius of Chrysostom's Preaching," *Christian History*, 13:4 (1994), 24-27.

<sup>62</sup> Volz, 27; Kelly, 130.

missionaries to the Turks.<sup>63</sup> He lived the Gospel he preached. His love for Christ drove him to despise the wealth that could have been his and instead lived an authentic asceticism that drew many to become monks and friars in following his example.<sup>64</sup>

Though Whitefield's critics accused him of simply acting, his evangelistic passion was sincere. He said, "God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them," and, "Believe me, I am willing to go to prison and death for you. But I am not willing to go to heaven without you."<sup>65</sup> Stout says of him, "His personal character matched the saints he portrayed. . . . It was his integrity than won the admiration of skeptics like Benjamin Franklin. . . . Whitefield was his own finest convert to the Christian lifestyle he proclaimed."<sup>66</sup>

There was also an authentic love for Christ and concern for the lost in Spurgeon's sermons and life. He told of a time he was preaching the salvation message:

I felt within myself, as preachers often do, that it was but dry work to tell this story, and a dull, dull tale it was to me; but on a sudden the thought crossed my mind, "Why, you are a poor, lost, ruined sinner yourself; tell it, tell it as you received it; begin to tell of the grace of God as you trust you feel it yourself." Why, then my eyes began to be fountains of tears; those hearers who had nodded their heads began to brighten up, and they listened because they were hearing something the speaker himself felt.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Misciatelli, 81.

<sup>64</sup> Martines, 89. On page 102, Martines summarizes his life and vision, "Either you took Christ seriously, or you did not. If not, you had no business seeing yourself as a Christian. But if you did, then the consequence had to be in measures of self-denial, in good works, prayer, fasting, and the correct use of the Church's sacraments."

<sup>65</sup> Demaray, 165.

<sup>66</sup> Stout, xxiv.

<sup>67</sup> Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 37-38.

He once wrote, “I would rather be the means of saving a soul from death than the greatest orator on earth.”<sup>68</sup> Edwards describes Spurgeon’s preaching as having “all the pathos and power of one who believes completely in the reality of the salvation he is offering.”<sup>69</sup> Spurgeon said, “What a dreadful thing it will be for me if I should be ignorant of the power of the truth I proclaim.” He quoted John Owen, “No man preaches his sermon well to others if he does not first preach it to his own heart.”<sup>70</sup>

Savonarola and Chrysostom died holding to the truth they professed. Whitefield and Spurgeon both suffered public ridicule from those in the establishment who opposed their “popular” approach to preaching instead of the more common intellectualism that failed to connect with the bulk of humanity.<sup>71</sup> The sincere conviction of the truth of their message empowered their preaching.

### **Holy-Spirit Empowering**

Each of these four great preachers ultimately credited the success of his preaching to the Spirit of God. Chrysostom acknowledged the Holy Spirit as the source of the power in his preaching in more than one of his sermons: “This we would not do, not for the love of praise, nor because we study to exhibit the powers of oratory (for the things about to be spoken are not our own, but such as the grace of the Holy Spirit may inspire).”<sup>72</sup> In another sermon, he claimed, “God injected these words into my mind.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>69</sup> Edwards, 458

<sup>70</sup> Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students, Second Series* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1881), 11 and 15.

<sup>71</sup> Edwards, 458.

<sup>72</sup> John Chrysostom, “Homily I, Concerning the Statues,” in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series: Volume IX*, Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 332.



Similarly, Savonarola gave God credit for the effectiveness of his preaching.<sup>74</sup> In many of his sermons, George Whitefield specifically identified the Holy Spirit as the only real power that could convict a person of sin through his preaching and bring someone to faith in Christ. For example he once preached, “I shall proceed to explain the general way whereby the Holy Ghost works upon every converted sinner's heart; and I hope that the Lord, even whilst I am speaking, will be pleased to fulfill it in many of your hearts.”<sup>75</sup> Far above any skill of preparation of delivery, Spurgeon believed a reliance on the Holy Spirit was the most important trait of any preacher. He said, “His place as God is on the throne, and in all our enterprises he must be first, midst, and end.”<sup>76</sup> His biographer, Lewis Drummond, credits the Holy Spirit for Spurgeon’s incredible success as a preacher.<sup>77</sup>

### **Conclusion**

A study of the lives of the great people of history may strike readers as irrelevant because they might consider the people to be gifted prodigies who lived in rarified cultures; however, each of these outstanding preachers of history believed great preaching was more a matter of hard work and continual learning than innate gifts. Savonarola practiced preaching for years to gain the voice that revolutionized a city,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 347, from “Homily II, Concerning the Statues.”

<sup>74</sup> Savonarola, 114-115.

<sup>75</sup> George Whitefield, “40. The Holy Spirit Convincing the World of Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment,” in *Selected Sermons of George Whitefield*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/whitefield/sermons.xlii.html> (accessed 3 January 2007). Other sermons in this work that also referenced the Holy Spirit’s work in drawing unbelievers to conviction and faith in his preaching include Numbers 8, 9, 12, 20, 23, 37, 38, 41, 42, 45, 49, 51, 54 and 56.

<sup>76</sup> Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students, Second Series*, 266.

<sup>77</sup> Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1992), 258-274.

Spurgeon never stopped studying and learning from great preachers of history, and Chrysostom believed good preaching came only from hard work. If these, some of the greatest of preachers in all history, placed a priority on growing in homiletic skills, then today's preachers can learn from them and follow their examples. As this chapter has shown their examples are best summarized as sermons with 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 4

### WHAT TODAY'S HOMILETIC EXPERTS SAY WORKS BEST IN EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

This chapter argues that a majority of experts in the field of preaching today would say preaching most effectively brings unbelievers to faith in Christ when it is characterized by: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit. The data for this chapter come from relevant literature produced in recent years dealing with evangelistic preaching in the setting of local churches. Sources consulted include homiletics professors, successful pastors, and other authors who study preaching.

The literature consulted reflects a variety of denominational and theological perspectives. Most of the writers do not attempt to provide a comprehensive guide to effective evangelistic preaching, so complete agreement is unexpected. In many cases, experts choose to focus on one element of preaching they consider important. Sometimes the nature of the article or book directs writers to focus their comments on a specific aspect of preaching. Some of these individuals write from their personal experience. Others provide the results of studies they conducted. Several are theorists who attempt to grapple with the

realities of postmodernism and how to approach them. Many reflect their theological or ecclesiological biases in their suggestions. Some references specifically focus on evangelistic preaching. Others books are more general and apply to homiletics in congregational settings. Although the latter writers do not speak to the issue of evangelistic preaching directly, other works reference these writers as today's leading experts in the subject of preaching. The table and annotated bibliography in appendix A identify the perspectives and objectives of each writer's work consulted for this paper.

One recently published work, *A Light unto My Path: Crafting Effective Homilies*, by Catholic priest James Bacik and psychologist Kevin Anderson, reveals the results of a study that produced nearly the same findings as this paper. Bacik and Anderson conducted four studies between 1994 and 2002 to determine what made preachers effective. Although their target population was primarily active Catholic Church attenders, one of their studies integrates survey responses from people chosen randomly from the American public. Each of their top ten findings fits within one of the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching claimed by this paper. These ten items identify most distinguished preachers who give "effective sermons" in the minds of the listeners from those who do not.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Bacik and Kevin Anderson, *A Light unto My Path: Crafting Effective Homilies* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 148-169.

Table 1. Bacik and Anderson Compared to Corresponding Characteristic

Bacik/Anderson Rank and Finding	Corresponding Characteristic
1. This preacher's style of delivering the sermon helps keep my attention	Dynamic Delivery
2. This preacher's sermons make me feel like he or she knows what's in my heart	Relevant
3. This preacher helped me get a new or deeper appreciation of the Scripture readings	Biblical and Christ-Centered
4. This preacher's sermons usually have a clear central message	Persuasive Appeal
5. This preacher's sermons are relevant to my daily life	Relevant
6. This preacher makes creative use of stories and examples to enhance the sermon	Engaging Illustrations
7. This preacher uses humor effectively in sermons	Engaging Illustrations
8. This preacher usually presents ideas in the sermon very similar to my own	Relevant
9. This preacher is a very likeable person	Authentic
10. This preacher knows the real struggles of life	Authentic/Relevant

Note the eighth strongest variable identifying effectiveness in the Bacik and Anderson study, "This preacher usually presents ideas in the sermon very similar to my own," may not apply in evangelistic preaching because an evangelistic

sermon's objective is to get individuals to change their faith. This entails a fundamental shift of views. The psychological information that forms the basis of chapter 5 of this paper, however, shows that "similarity" often improves a speaker's persuasive ability.<sup>2</sup> Preachers' identification with their listeners can occur in areas other than faith and promote the kind of similarity the Bacik/Anderson study reveals. Responses numbers two, nine, and ten in their study also promote this kind of similarity and identification.

The only item from this dissertation lacking in the Bacik/Anderson study is "Holy Spirit Empowered." The Bacik/Anderson study used a prescribed set of 36 possible responses in their survey. None of these addressed the Holy Spirit or any type of supernatural or spiritual comments on sermons. The structure of their study, therefore, prevented respondents from identifying the role of the Holy Spirit as a distinguishing characteristic of effective preaching. The fact that the findings of the Bacik/Anderson study closely match the findings of this dissertation, although their target population was active church attenders, may show that preaching that effectively connects with unbelievers and that which is seen as effective by church attenders is similar.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 176; Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1998), 170; Kevin Hogan, *The Science of Influence: How to Get Anyone to Say "Yes" in Eight Minutes or Less*, New York: Wiley and Sons, 2004, 29; Richard M. Perloff, *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2003), 169.

The remainder of this chapter analyzes comments from homileticians to demonstrate how the seven characteristics distinguish effective evangelistic preaching.

### **Biblical and Christ-Centered**

More writers call for sermons to be biblical than any other characteristic. Even the most liberal writers consulted plead for biblical sermons.<sup>3</sup> Rainier's study shows that people investigating church actually prefer Bible teaching to watered-down messages.<sup>4</sup> As John Stott writes, "How dare we speak if God has not spoken? By ourselves we have nothing to say. To address a congregation without the assurance that we are bearers of a divine message would be the height of arrogance and folly."<sup>5</sup> "As important as it is to preach with relevance, it must never be thought that any style, approach, methodology, or creative instinct can substitute for the proclamation of God's Word."<sup>6</sup>

Warren Wiersbe says that biblical preaching by definition will be Christ-centered. "Faithful preaching of the Scriptures means 'preaching Christ.' . . . I

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas H. Troeger, *Preaching While the Church Is Under Reconstruction: The Visionary Role of Preachers in a Fragmented World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 30-31. Troeger makes a distinction between being "biblical" and "biblicist," and on p. 96 argues against what he considers two dangerous forms of Biblicism: fundamentalist literalism and scholarly Biblicism that never risks boldness.

<sup>4</sup> Rainier, p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 96.

<sup>6</sup> Richard L. Dresselhaus, "Pentecostal Preaching and Exegesis," in *Foundations for Pentecostal Preaching*, James Bridges, ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005), 67.

suggest that preaching Christ means proclaiming the Word of God in such a way that Jesus Christ is clearly presented in all the fullness of his person and the greatness of his work.”<sup>7</sup> In describing his own experience of building a church focused on leading unbelievers to faith in Christ, Mark Driscoll writes:

I decided that being cool, having good music, understanding postmodern epistemology, and welcoming all kinds of strange people into the church is essentially worthless if at the bedrock of the church anything other than a rigorous Jesus-centered biblical theology guides the mission of the church. And I needed to labor to continually improve as a Bible preacher because there is enough power in the preaching of God’s Word alone to build a church from nothing.<sup>8</sup>

### Relevant

A majority of the experts call for relevant sermons. Both those who advocate expositional sermons for evangelistic messages and those who prefer topical sermons agree that there must be something hearers can put into practice in their lives if the message will connect.<sup>9</sup> Miller says an effective preacher will work to learn “the interests, tastes, and desires of those outside the church and [show] how Christ is adequate to fill them.”<sup>10</sup> Steve Gaines agrees, “Although the

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<sup>7</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Dynamics of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 31-32.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Confession of a Reformation Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 70 and 85; Rainier, 218; George G. Hunter III, *Church for the Unchurched* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 160-163; Ron Martoia, *Morph: The Texture of Leadership for Tomorrow's Church* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2003), 160; Barna, 81, 103 and 112; Craig Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 56.

<sup>10</sup> Miller, 26 and 133.



message of the Gospel never changes, how it is presented should connect with the cultural persuasions and unique personalities of the people addressed.”<sup>11</sup> Part of being relevant to the unchurched is speaking to their felt needs. “Preaching that connects—preaching that changes lives—addresses the felt needs of people.”<sup>12</sup>

It may seem obvious that a message must be understandable to be relevant, but many authors insist that preachers avoid insider church terms that are meaningless to unchurched people. In Hunter’s landmark *Church for the Unchurched*, he prescribes ten principles of pioneering outreach, one of which is: “Use the language of the target population.”<sup>13</sup> As Sweet says, “Communication does not begin with being understood, but with understanding others.”<sup>14</sup> Ron Martoia speaks for many when he writes,

When it comes to communicating that message in the context of our current culture, many of these messages entirely miss the mark. The problem is that they continue to “preach the Word of God” so they say, but the Word of God is miscommunicated and not faithfully rendered when the culture to which it is spoken doesn’t understand the categories, Christian-ese language, and in-house slang we use in most of our churches. A person in our culture today without any background in Bible stories or Christian language has no better chance of understanding the typical pastor than the audiences I speak to in Asia or Eastern Europe have

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<sup>11</sup> Steve Gaines, “The Setting of the Evangelistic Sermon,” Al Fasol et al., *Preaching Evangelistically* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 2.

<sup>12</sup> Leroy Bartel, “Pentecostal Preaching and Homiletics,” in *Foundations for Pentecostal Preaching*, James Bridges, ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005), 125.

<sup>13</sup> Hunter, 161.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard Sweet, “And Glory Crowns the Mercy Seat: Towards an Abductive Homiletic,” 1, [http://www.webct.georgefox.edu/script/LEC3MOD2/scripts/serve\\_home;Internet](http://www.webct.georgefox.edu/script/LEC3MOD2/scripts/serve_home;Internet;); (accessed 20 April 2, 2005).

of understanding my English. Without careful biblical *and* cultural work, we'll never faithfully translate the message into the target culture we are attempting to reach.<sup>15</sup>

### Persuasive Reasoning

Nearly every writer consulted acknowledges a need for clear reasoning. Many writers speak of a need for one clear theme for each sermon. Several writers advocate developing a theme statement to provide focus for the sermon.<sup>16</sup> Andy Stanley and Lane Jones urge limiting a sermon to a single main point.<sup>17</sup>

Postmodern cynicism, especially, demands “apologetic preaching” that deals with the doubts a seeker may wrestle with in coming to faith in Christ;<sup>18</sup> however, imperative preaching filled with “you musts” is out. In its place, the experts call for an inductive approach that “implies leadership without coercion.”<sup>19</sup> Some writers propose anticipating objections and arguing both sides of an issue before drawing conclusions. Hugh Mackay cautions, “If you attack someone else’s point of view, the most likely outcome is that you will reinforce

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<sup>15</sup> Martoia, 160.

<sup>16</sup> Bartel 124-125; Ronald Allen, *Interpreting the Gospel: An Introduction to Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1998), 149-150.

<sup>17</sup> Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006), 101-111.

<sup>18</sup> Loscalzo, 11-28; Johnston, 82; Lee A. Wyatt, " Preaching to Postmodern People." *Confident Witness—Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*. Ed. Craig Van Gelder, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 157-163; Kenton C. Anderson, *Preaching with Conviction: Connecting with Postmodern Listeners*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2001), 144-148.

<sup>19</sup> Calvin Miller, *Marketplace Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 57 and 65; Michael Duduit, *Preaching with Power: Dynamic Insights from Twenty Top Communicators* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 158.

the very view you wanted to change.”<sup>20</sup> Wiersbe writes, “Some people’s minds are like medieval fortresses, with their fears and prejudices united to keep God’s truth from getting in.”<sup>21</sup> Addressing those fears and prejudices in a respectful and understanding way, showing how Christ’s way is better, can help knock down the walls of those fortresses. Brian McLaren advocates dialogue with other faiths rather than fighting them.<sup>22</sup>

Such a dialogue, however, does not mean compromise. Bryan Chapell writes,

Proclaiming the message of eternal salvation in Christ alone unquestionably evidences undiluted arrogance, gross insensitivity, and religious bigotry—unless the message is true. Then, proclamation of the only true hope is the most important and loving message that a person can communicate.<sup>23</sup>

Rainier reports that the unchurched who start attending church place a greater emphasis on doctrine than do long-term Christians. Of the recently churched, 91 percent stated that doctrine was an important factor in their decision to join a church.<sup>24</sup> Although many people today embrace pluralism, biblical

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<sup>20</sup> Hugh Mackay, *Why Don't People Listen?* (Sydney, Australia: Pan Macmillan, 1994), 14-15.

<sup>21</sup> Wiersbe, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2004); and McLaren, *Reinventing Your Church*, p. 83. He suggests a threefold approach: 1) Present the Christian faith as one of many religious armies at war fighting evil. 2) Call people to join an army. 3) Help them decide which army to join.

<sup>23</sup> Bryan Chapell, "The Necessity of Preaching Christ in a World Hostile to Him," *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*. ed. by Scott Gibson, 66.

<sup>24</sup> Rainier, 126-127.

Christianity is a legitimate option for them. Watering down the message to make it culturally acceptable does not make it more inviting.<sup>25</sup>

Although some writers advocate open-ended sermons to allow listeners to draw their own conclusions, the majority of experts call for faith decisions to conclude each sermon. Miller writes, “Whether or not there needs to be an actual altar call the ‘altar mystique’ should characterize great preaching.” He calls the altar the place of “eternal reckoning.”<sup>26</sup> Billy Graham calls for preaching with urgency and decision: “Preach for a verdict like Jesus did.”<sup>27</sup> The goal of evangelistic preaching is to persuade people to come to faith in Christ; therefore, experts say sermons should be simple, direct, respectful, and uncompromising, with a clear call to commitment.

### **Engaging Illustrations**

A large number of writers advocate a liberal use of stories, word pictures, visual images, and other creative ways of communicating to reach unbelievers. This is a visual generation with stories in the form of movies, television, and novels flooding the senses daily. People unaccustomed to attending church that stumble in on a textual treatise will likely lose interest and not see the connection to their lives. As Sweet says, “The emerging culture is expressing its spirituality

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<sup>25</sup> Loscalzo, 91.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, 25 and 141.

<sup>27</sup> Billy Graham, “Evangelists of Grace,” *The Pastor’s Guide to Effective Preaching* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2003), 14.

through images and metaphors, symbols and stories.”<sup>28</sup> He quotes Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman, “Facts go straight to the head; stories go straight to the heart.”<sup>29</sup>

Loscalzo calls for the use of “image-rich narratives and stories” to make the Gospel clear.<sup>30</sup> Unbelieving listeners may have trouble grasping a spiritual concept until a sermon illustration becomes “a doorway into a larger room of understanding and experience.”<sup>31</sup> In particular, real world examples and stories that apply the biblical principles to preachers’ own lives may carry more credibility with postmodern listeners than Scripture itself.<sup>32</sup> John A. Huffman Jr. writes, “My use of personal experience, illustration, and selfhood as a person in preaching does considerably enhance my communication of biblical truth.”<sup>33</sup>

These illustrations can have a powerful effect on listeners. Fred Craddock writes,

In good preaching what is referred to as illustrations are, in fact, stories or anecdotes, which do not illustrate the point; rather they are the point. In other words, a story may carry in its bosom the whole message rather than the illumination of a message, which had already been related in another but less clear way.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Sweet, *And Glory Crowns the Mercy Seat*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Loscalzo, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1989), 175.

<sup>32</sup> Johnston, 73 and 110; Miller, 69; Gaines, “Preparing the Evangelistic Sermon,” Fasol et al, 55.

<sup>33</sup> John A. Huffman Jr., “The Role of Preaching in Ministry,” *The Pastor’s Guide to Effective Preaching* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>34</sup> Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985), 204.

Preachers are encouraged to be as imaginative as possible in developing ways to communicate eternal truth. As Troeger puts it, the role of today's preacher is "to give witness to God with an imaginative power that vitalizes the faith and ministry of the congregation."<sup>35</sup> Brian McLaren seeks to live by the words of the Christian novelist Walker Percy who considered writing fiction as a way to preach: "[A preacher must call on] every ounce of cunning, craft, and guile he [*sic*] can muster from the darker regions of his soul."<sup>36</sup> Sweet and several others advocate building each sermon around a single metaphor.<sup>37</sup> One newer form of sermon that many advocate is the "narrative sermon." Preachers communicate their messages through stories, much as Christ did through His parables. The goal of illustrations in messages according to these authors is two-fold: 1) to engage the listeners by holding their interest and motivating their assent to the Gospel and 2) to explain spiritual truth in an understandable and memorable way.

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<sup>35</sup> Troeger, 16-17.

<sup>36</sup> Walker Percy quoted from a personal letter in Brian McLaren, *Reinventing Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 93.

<sup>37</sup> Sweet, *And Glory Crowns the Mercy Seat*, 19, "The genuine sign of greatness in a sermon is one image—a deep metaphor, not superficial analogy." Rob Ronglien, "Experiential Preaching," and Alan Nelson, "Creating Messages that Connect," seminars presented at the Emergent YS Convention, San Diego, February 1-5, 2005, both advocated the use of a thematic metaphor for each sermon and visual images to reinforce it.

## Dynamic Delivery

Many writers comment that mediocre delivery is unlikely to capture much attention no matter how good the content is. Studies have shown that how the message is communicated has a much greater impact on the listeners than what is communicated.<sup>38</sup> Pastor Jack Graham compared the difference between fair preaching and excellent preaching to baseball pitchers. “A class-A minor leaguer throws the ball in much the same way as a Cy Young winner like Randy Johnson. What separates one from the other is in the delivery.”<sup>39</sup> A George Barna study reveals: “Most unchurched people don’t really listen to the content of the sermon that closely during their first two or three visits, but they scrutinize very carefully the delivery, tone, the audience reaction and both the speaker’s and congregation’s body language.”<sup>40</sup> The Bacik and Anderson study shows that delivery is the most significant variable between effective and ineffective preachers. Bacik and Anderson report that gestures, eye contact, enthusiasm, and vocal variety are significant elements of effective preaching.<sup>41</sup>

Michael Duduit emphasizes the importance of delivery in his “Preaching Truth in a Whatever World Seminar.” He encourages a “relational speaking style” that uses a more natural voice and subtler gestures. He also recommends

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<sup>38</sup> Jana Childers, “Preaching as Incarnational Act,” *The Pastor’s Guide to Effective Preaching* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2003), 133.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Duduit, *Preaching with Power*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Barna, 150.

<sup>41</sup> Bacik and Anderson, 170.

rehearsing a message several times and speaking without notes to improve delivery.<sup>42</sup> Sweet urges an energetic humorous style to capture the attention.<sup>43</sup> Miller calls for passion in preaching.<sup>44</sup> Michael Frost encourages the use of rhythm and aural signals:

The use of pitch, tone, and rhythm actually says something more to a postmodern listener than just making it easy to listen. . . . In this regard, start thinking of sermons as if they were movies. What 'soundtrack' does a sermon need to enhance the narrative line? At what speed should the sermon be preached? This is about more than mere enhancements. Some listeners will learn by the very use of voice, rhythm, language, and body movement.

Frost also encourages preachers to “go for the emotion” because emotion carries so much more weight in the postmodern world than it did in the modern. Postmoderns tend to evaluate the validity of something on the basis of how they feel about it.<sup>45</sup> The importance of preachers’ authenticity, though, tends to temper how preachers should deliver their passion. Kenton Anderson summarizes well the goal of sermon delivery for many of these writers: “An inviting physical style coupled with conversational passion and a minimum of obstacles will enhance the possibility that the listeners will be drawn into the presence of God.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Michael Dudit, “Preaching Truth in a Whatever World” (seminar, *Preaching Magazine*. Northwest Baptist Seminary, Tacoma, WA. October 6, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> Leonard I. Sweet, *AquaChurch* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1999), 178-179.

<sup>44</sup> Miller, 47.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Frost, “Preaching in a Post-Literate Age,” <http://www.cegm.org.au/articles> (accessed 20 November 2004).

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, 149-150.



### **Authenticity**

A wide span of authors notes that authenticity (including integrity and character) is critical in effective preaching. One survey of 100,000 Pentecostal preachers reports the majority of them considered pastors' character more important than their preaching skills.<sup>47</sup>

Many of the writers note how today's listeners tend not to accept the authority of pastors by their titles alone. Many experts believe unchurched people respond better to preachers who are transparent in their weaknesses, use loving tone, and focus more on grace than judgment.<sup>48</sup> Stanley and Jones say, "An audience has to buy into the messenger before they buy into the message. . . . A lack of genuineness makes it difficult to trust a speaker."<sup>49</sup> Rainier's study of unbelievers who came to faith found that pastors' authenticity was a major factor in their decision to trust Christ. Their own phrases to describe these pastors included: down-to-earth, friendly, willing to admit mistakes, not holier-than-thou, real, enthusiastic, walks the talk, relates well, and a regular guy [*sic*].<sup>50</sup>

Part of preachers' authenticity is their ability to "embody" their sermons. Ronald Allen says, "The sermon becomes a sermon only when it comes to life

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<sup>47</sup> Aldwin Ragoonath, *Preach the Word: A Pentecostal Approach* (Winnipeg, MB: Agape Teaching Ministry of Canada, 2004), 16-17.

<sup>48</sup> Johnston, 105, 129, and 144; Rainier, 60; Frank G. Honeycutt, *Preaching for Adult Conversion and Commitment: Invitation to a Life Transformed* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 95; McLaren, *Reinventing Your Church*, 179.

<sup>49</sup> Stanley and Jones, 121-122.

<sup>50</sup> Rainier, 60.

through the self of the preacher in living conversation with the congregation.” In other words, preachers incarnate their sermons. This happens when the delivery and content of sermons are consistent with the characters and personalities of the preachers.<sup>51</sup>

Another aspect of authenticity in preaching is preachers’ sincere faith in what they are preaching.<sup>52</sup> Miller says the most important question to ask about preachers is, “Are the preacher[s] and Christ walking as one through daily life? . . . [The] pastor[s] must know God.”<sup>53</sup> Robert Farrar Capon calls this, “A passion for the Passion. A passion of the preacher’s heart for Jesus himself—a wild romance with the Person for the incarnate Word who reigns in death at the roots of the being of every creature, bar none.”<sup>54</sup> Preachers are far more likely to win the lost if they are humble, transparent, sincere, loving, and passionate about the Lord they preach.

### **Holy Spirit Empowered**

Several writers identify the Holy Spirit’s work as the most important element of a sermon. As Jerry Vines tells Michael Duduit, “The preacher who is walking with God has a communicative tool that is unavailable to any other

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<sup>51</sup> Ronald Allen, 223-225.

<sup>52</sup> Al Fasol “Preaching Evangelistically with Biblical Authority,” Al Fasol et al; Rainier, 62.

<sup>53</sup> Miller, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Farrar Capon, *The Foolishness of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 9.

communicator on earth—and that is the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can take a stumbling, stammering preacher’s message and uses it to bring about miraculous change.”<sup>55</sup> Even revisionary theologian and homiletician Ronald Allen acknowledges, “The Holy Spirit is a partner in the preaching conversation.”<sup>56</sup>

Martoia reports that churches that are effective in bringing postmoderns to faith deliberately mediate a connection with God through deeply moving spiritual experiences.<sup>57</sup> Several postmodern preachers focus on creating spiritual environments through visual images, creative experiences, physical objects, and ancient liturgical practices.<sup>58</sup> Johnston says, “Preachers must help listeners regrasp the spiritual that is all around us.”<sup>59</sup> Randy Hurst points out the Apostle Paul urged his readers to pray for his preaching because he understood that preaching is a spiritual event, that God can affect its effectiveness, and prayer moves him to make it more effective.<sup>60</sup> Gaines says that worship services should not be designed to attract people but “the manifest presence of God. When He

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<sup>55</sup> Dudit, *Preaching with Power*, 204.

<sup>56</sup> Ronald Allen, 121.

<sup>57</sup> Martoia, 135.

<sup>58</sup> For examples of this see Martoia 130-143; Dan Kimball, “Preaching in the Emerging Church: An Interview with Dan Kimball,” *Preaching* 20 (Nov-Dec 2004): 9; Eric Landstrom, “Postmodern Worship Needs,” [http://www.ovrind.com/GeneralInformation/Postmodern\\_Worship.html](http://www.ovrind.com/GeneralInformation/Postmodern_Worship.html) (accessed 23 October 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Johnston, 45.

<sup>60</sup> Randy Hurst, “Cross Culture: Communicating Christ Clearly to a Secular World,” *Enrichment* 4 (Summer 1999): 56.

‘shows up’ He will attract the people.”<sup>61</sup> Honeycutt advocates providing room for the Holy Spirit to work in every sermon.<sup>62</sup> Will Willimon goes so far as to say, “If there is no Holy Spirit, if Jesus has not been raised from the dead, then our preaching is doomed to fall on deaf ears.”<sup>63</sup>

### **Conclusion**

More than a dozen major books and hundreds of articles on preaching are published every year. Although a complete review of all of these writings in the last decade was impossible, the major works on preaching, especially those targeting evangelistic preaching, reveal harmony in some specific areas. Current preaching experts tend to call for evangelistic sermons to include: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>61</sup> Gaines, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Honeycutt, 152.

<sup>63</sup> William H. Willimon, *The Intrusive Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 22.

## CHAPTER 5

### PREACHING LESSONS FROM PSYCHOLOGY'S ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL OF PERSUASION

This chapter will show how the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion developed and tested by academic psychologists supports a model of evangelistic preaching characterized by: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit. This chapter will begin by briefly explaining the theory and concepts of ELM and their relevance to evangelistic preaching. It will then describe how ELM supports each of the seven characteristics of effective preaching to reach unbelievers. It is important to clarify that ELM is a *secular* theory of academic psychology used to understand how persuasion happens in a variety of settings. While valuable for a study on evangelistic preaching, ELM does not expressly advocate some of the major findings from the other studies reported by this paper. In particular, ELM literature rarely refers to biblical, Christ-centered content and the work of the Holy Spirit, nor does it promote a theistic worldview. However, there are aspects of ELM that correspond to each of the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching.

### How the Elaboration Likelihood Model Works

Academic social psychologists have been researching effective means of persuasion for more than half a century. Carl I. Hovland led a team of researchers in World War II seeking to find ways to better motivate large numbers of people through indoctrinational films. His ground-breaking research, published after the war in *Experiments in Mass Communication*,<sup>1</sup> launched a new field of psychological research into what persuades people. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion was developed by Richard Petty and J. T. Cacioppo in 1984. The ELM, and the similar Heuristic Systems Method (HSM) developed by Shelly Chaiken and A. H. Eagly, have been the basis of the majority of persuasion studies over the past two decades.<sup>2</sup> Both theories assume that people make decisions by two routes. The central (ELM) or systematic (HSM) route is deliberate, cognitive, and based on a careful evaluation of the merits of an argument. The peripheral (ELM) or heuristic (HSM) route is taken when a person lacks the ability or motivation to process an argument cognitively and instead depends on simple “cues” to make a quick decision on the message’s validity. Many studies since the development of these ideas have illuminated which routes are taken by different kinds of people under various circumstances and how to present persuasive

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<sup>1</sup> Carl I. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, and Fred D. Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949).

<sup>2</sup> James B. Stiff, and Paul A. Mongeau, *Persuasive Communication* (New York: Guilford, 2003), 233.

messages in a variety of situations.<sup>3</sup> Since evangelistic preaching is, by its nature, persuasive communication, the results of these studies are relevant to an ongoing effort to determine how to persuade people to come to Christ through the pulpit. Although ELM and HSM are similar theories, this chapter will use the terminology of ELM for the sake of simplicity.

According to ELM, a certain number of unbelievers in church services are likely to weigh carefully the arguments preachers include in their sermons, while the remainder will seek peripheral cues to determine whether the Gospel is true and something to which the listeners are willing to commit. These peripheral cues can be anything other than the direct arguments of the speakers. For example, these cues can come from speakers' mannerisms or listeners' emotions. By definition, ELM functions as a continuum. In a room with hundreds of people, listeners will be at slightly different points in how likely they are to use central cognitive processing to analyze the message instead of seeking peripheral cues.<sup>4</sup>

Two factors must be present for listeners to process messages through the central route using deliberate, thoughtful evaluation of the arguments. First, they must have the ability. Listeners must fully comprehend the subject matter and the words and phrases speakers use to communicate. Listeners must have the intellectual ability to follow trains

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<sup>3</sup> Perloff, 128-142; Stiff and Mongeau, 217-235; Penny S. Visser and Joel Cooper, "Attitude Change," in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Psychology*, ed. Michael A. Hogg and Joel Cooper (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 211-231.

<sup>4</sup> Visser and Cooper, 213; Stiff and Mongeau, 218; Richard E. Petty, Pablo Brinol, and Zakary L. Tormala, "Thought Confidence as a Determinant of Persuasion: The Self-Validation Hypothesis," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 5 (2002): 722-741.

of thought and consider their implications. Next, they must have the motivation. Ambivalent, tired, or distracted listeners are unlikely to follow arguments but will instead look for simple peripheral cues to determine the veracity of messages.

The majority of research shows that attitudes formed as a result of central, cognitive processing are more likely to be durable than those formed through the peripheral route; however, peripheral strategies that enable listeners to access their attitudes and increase their confidence in the validity of their experiences and the message also lead to increased attitude durability.<sup>5</sup> The best preachers will use methods that reach those who are able and willing to receive through the central route as well as those who will depend on peripheral cues. Daniel Goleman implies this when he says,

People adept at influence are able to sense or even anticipate their audience's reaction to their message and can effectively carry everyone along toward an intended goal. . . . Critical in these skills is being able to notice when logical arguments are falling flat and when appeals that are more emotional may add impact.<sup>6</sup>

Ideally, preachers speak in ways that reach as many people as possible who want and are able to take a central route to process and be persuaded by their messages, and the preachers employ peripheral cues to reach those who are unable or unwilling to process centrally.

The remainder of this paper will demonstrate how the seven elements this paper claims as the characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching are in line with the concepts of ELM. One of the characteristics (biblical, Christ-centered content) aids in

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<sup>5</sup> Visser and Cooper, 215.

<sup>6</sup> Goleman, 169.



central processing. Three of the characteristics (preachers' authenticity, dynamic delivery, and Holy Spirit empowering) increase the likelihood that those who use peripheral processing will accept preachers' messages. Three of the characteristics (persuasive appeal, relevance, and engaging illustrations) serve a dual purpose by increasing both the likelihood of central processing and the acceptance of messages through peripheral processing. Because of this grouping, this chapter will list these seven characteristics in the above order in this section rather than the order presented in the rest of the paper.

### **Facilitating Central Processing**

For those who use the central route in evaluating a sermon's message, a strong rational appeal with high-quality content is vital.

#### **Biblical, Christ-Centered Content**

The quality of content directly determines the effectiveness of a centrally-processed argument. "When motivation and ability to process judgment-relevant information are high, all such information is effortfully scrutinized for its 'central merits' relevant to the object."<sup>7</sup> The "object" of evangelistic Christian preaching is Jesus Christ. The ultimate objective of such preaching is unbelieving listeners coming to faith in Christ. Therefore, by Wegener and Petty's definition, central processors need information with central merits relevant to the veracity of Jesus' claims and the validity of the

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<sup>7</sup> Duane T. Wegener and Richard E. Petty, "Understanding the Effects of Mood through the Elaboration Likelihood and Flexible Correction Models," in ed. Leonard L. Martin and Gerald L. Clare, *Theories of Mood and Cognition: A User's Guide* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2001), 177-210.

Christian faith. It naturally follows that evangelistic sermons must contain Christ-centered content. If sermons are other than Christ-centered, they cannot contain reasonable arguments to lead people to faith in Christ.

Several types of information can be effective in helping unbelievers centrally process the message of an evangelistic sermon. Many of these have been included in the category of “Persuasive Reasoning” in this paper, including scientific data, historical evidence, personal testimonies, metaphors and appeals to common sense. As will be shown below, all of these can help meet the standard of “information with central merits relevant to the object.” However, one type of information has taken precedence as a source of information about Jesus: the Bible. The New Testament contains the only recorded statements of the eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ. It has strong documentary and historical evidence dating to the first century, and therefore meets the basic definition of evidence in a persuasive argument: “factual statements originating from a source other than the speaker, objects not created by the speaker, and opinions of persons other than the speaker that are offered in support of the speaker’s claims.”<sup>8</sup> The Bible has remained the authoritative work for messages about Christ throughout Christian history. Therefore, although ELM is a secular psychological theory that does not directly address issues of faith, the application of ELM to evangelistic preaching supports the use of biblical, Christ-centered content for those who will centrally process sermons and carefully evaluate the arguments’ merits before deciding for or against Christ.

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<sup>8</sup> Stiff and Mongeau, 129.

### Facilitating Peripheral Processing

Peripheral cues can often play a role in the decisions people make, and choosing to believe or reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ is no exception. Salesmen have been using various techniques to try to produce a nearly automatic “Yes” to their requests for generations. Robert Cialdini calls this the “Click! Whirr!” phenomenon, parodying machines that simply do what they are told without thinking about it.<sup>9</sup> With their association with crooked salespeople, we may be tempted to dismiss these peripheral tools in preaching altogether. Unfortunately, many charlatan evangelists have earned reputations for insincerely conning people into the faith using some of these heuristic devices. However, Bennett and Bennett point out that religious conversion often happens through a peripheral process: “Rational apologetics can be useful in effecting conversion. But it will be useful only with someone whose rational arguments express his true motivations.”<sup>10</sup> For the others, peripheral routes, when used with integrity by preachers, are essential in faith decisions for Christ.

### Authenticity

The literature of academic psychology identifies authenticity as essential to messages’ success with peripheral processors. Aristotle held that *ethos* (the character of the speaker) was the most potent of all means of persuasion.<sup>11</sup> If their audiences do not

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<sup>9</sup> Cialdini, 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> Art and Laraine Bennett, “Conversion and the Psychology of Change,” *The New Oxford Review* 66, no. 10 (November 1999): 33-38.

<sup>11</sup> Stiff and Mongeau, 104.

consider preachers trustworthy, neither will they trust preachers' messages.<sup>12</sup> If preachers do not live in line with the Gospel, both in and out of the pulpit, peripheral processors are unlikely to take their messages seriously. Social psychologists refer to authenticity as "credibility." Credibility is "the attitude toward a source of communication held at a given time by a receiver."<sup>13</sup> Although credibility is receiver-based, consistent character is essential for speakers to be credible in the eyes of their listeners.

A related aspect of authenticity is the listeners' sense of speakers' authority. Decades of psychological studies, going back to Stanley Milgram in the 1960s, show that many people respond to authority without considering the message at all.<sup>14</sup> Preachers' authenticity and credibility in the minds of their listeners can be enhanced by preachers' expertise on the subject.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes, speakers undermine their own authenticity by powerless speech, for example: hedging their statements (e.g. "I'm not really sure"), using tag questions (e.g. "Don't you think?"), rising intonation, and hesitation. These habits of speech imply speakers are uncertain in their convictions and lack authentic faith in what they preach. Studies have shown that speakers who use powerful, confident speech bolster their authenticity and persuade their audiences more effectively.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Perloff, 164.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 153-158; Cialdini, 201.

<sup>15</sup> Perloff, 162; Hogan, 54 and 64.

<sup>16</sup> Kimberly A. Noels, Howard Giles, and Beth Le Poire, "Language and Communication Processes," in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Psychology*, ed. Michael A. Hogg and Joel Cooper (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 241-242.

Authenticity is a hallmark of biblical preaching, and secular psychologists acknowledge the value of authenticity in persuasive communication.

### Dynamic Delivery

The way preachers deliver their sermons may determine whether peripheral processors will accept the message, and dynamic delivery is more effective than passionless presentation. Those who are emotionally expressive are more emotionally contagious than other speakers and can influence the emotions of those around them.<sup>17</sup> “An audience must be emotionally engaged, but mediocre presenters rarely go beyond the same dry litany of facts, however flashily displayed, and never take into account the emotional temperature of the audience.”<sup>18</sup> Malcolm Gladwell says effective salespeople “seem to have some kind of indefinable trait, something powerful and contagious and irresistible that goes beyond what comes out of his [*sic*] mouth that makes people who meet him want to agree with him. It’s energy. It’s enthusiasm. It’s charm. It’s likeability. It’s all those things and yet something more.”<sup>19</sup> Part of that emotional expressiveness is the rate at which preachers talk. Studies have shown that a moderately fast or fast speech rate enhances speakers’ credibility and makes a strong heuristic cue for low-involvement listeners. When the moods of messages change to sensitive or intimate issues, though, a

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<sup>17</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002), 85; Goleman, 164.

<sup>18</sup> Goleman, 173.

<sup>19</sup> Gladwell, 73.

slower rate is usually more effective as it can show concern and empathy.<sup>20</sup> Another important aspect of delivery is smiling. A study of network news anchors' influence on voters' actions in the 1984 Reagan/Mondale election showed that Peter Jennings' subtle smiles while talking about Reagan tipped the scales for ABC viewers.<sup>21</sup> Pastors who are emotionally expressive and smile often during their messages are likely to be more persuasive.

### Holy Spirit Empowering

The final type of peripheral cue is perhaps the most powerful in an evangelistic setting. Howard Gardner calls it “resonance.”<sup>22</sup> Other writers use the terms “affect” and “feeling right.”<sup>23</sup> A growing number of researchers have been investigating the role of non-cognitive factors in persuasion and decision making, a concept integral to the ELM and HSM persuasion theories.<sup>24</sup> Most secular psychologists focus on the message

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<sup>20</sup> Perloff, 198-199; Hogan, 64.

<sup>21</sup> Gladwell, 74-77.

<sup>22</sup> Howard Gardner, *Changing Minds: The Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004), 15.

<sup>23</sup> Dolores Albaraccin and G. Tarcan Kumkale, “Affect as Information in Persuasion: A Model of Affect Identification and Discounting,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 3 (2003): 453-469; Joseph Cesario, Heidi Grant, and E. Tory Higgins, “Regulatory Fit and Persuasion: Transfer from “Feeling Right,”” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 86, no. 3 (2004): 388-404.

<sup>24</sup> Albaraccin and Kumkale, 453-454, found that people use emotions in making decisions if they believe their feelings are a sound basis for judgment. They found that people tend to use emotional affect as evidence most often when their ability and motivation to process are moderate rather than high or low. High motivation processors tend to use direct evaluation of arguments. Low motivation processors tend to dismiss emotions altogether. Cesario, Grant, and Higgins, 401, discovered this state of feeling right is more likely to occur when messages are framed in ways compatible with the regulatory fit of receivers. They postulate some people are promotion-focused—i.e. more concerned about what can be gained—while others are prevention-focused—i.e. more fearful about what is at risk of being lost. When messages are framed in an eager (as opposed to a vigilant) way to promotion-focused people, regulatory fit occurs and

recipient's mood or emotion when discussing affect, but this concept extends to other experiential ways people seek to determine the validity of an argument.<sup>25</sup> Gardner explains resonance this way:

A view, idea, or perspective resonates to the extent that it feels right to an individual, seems to fit the current situation, and convinces the person that further considerations are superfluous. It is possible, of course, that resonance follows on the use of reason and/or research; but it is equally possible that the fit occurs at an unconscious level, and that the resonant intuition is in conflict with the more sober considerations of Rational Man or Woman.<sup>26</sup>

This definition matches closely with the description of religious conversion given by Kahn and Greene,

Religious writers from Augustine to Eldridge Cleaver have maintained that an essential, and perhaps the essential, element in the experience of surrender [commitment to the new faith in the conversion process] comes from outside the individual, that is, from God or the transcendent dimension of experience. This dramatic inbreaking of the transcendent, or “transforming moment,” is often at the heart of surrender.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, the most decisive element in religious conversion is not usually a cognitive evaluation of the facts or even the speaker himself, but something transcendent

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proposals are more likely to feel right to listeners. Chana Ullman, *The Transformed Self: The Psychology of Religious Conversion* (New York: Plenum, 1989), 139-147, attempted to define transcendent religious conversion experiences as “narcissistic mergers with the perfect object.” Wegener and Petty, 177-210, describe how the mood or emotional state affects a message recipient at all levels of motivation and cognitive ability. Other major recent works exploring the role of affect in persuasion include: *Handbook of Affect and Social Cognition*, ed. J. P. Forgas (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2001) and *Handbook of Affective Sciences*, ed. R. J. Davidson, K. R. Scherer, & H. H. Goldsmith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Cesario, Grant, and Higgins, 388.

<sup>26</sup> Gardner, 15-16. Though Gardner does not explicitly cite ELM or HSM, his concepts are completely in line with and use the same terminology as ELM. On page 162, he asks persuaders to consider whether to use “central or peripheral routes”—the exact terminology of the core concept of ELM.

<sup>27</sup> Peter J. Kahn and A.L. Greene, “Seeing Conversion Whole: Testing a Model of Religious Conversion,” *Pastoral Psychology*, 53, no. 3 (January 2004): 223-258.

and experiential. Bennett and Bennett similarly point out that religious conversion can happen through “first order change” – that is central processing and cognitive evaluation of the message – but more frequently occurs as the result of the peripheral process of second order (dramatic, seemingly illogical, but life-transforming) change.<sup>28</sup>

In the arena of spiritual decisions, affective and transcendent experience can be powerful. It goes beyond the realm of psychology to show whether such experiences are internal emotional processes or authentic spiritual encounters. Yet in the Gospels, Jesus Christ describes the role of the Holy Spirit in effecting conversion in a way not incompatible with ELM’s concept of an affective, transcendent, peripheral route of persuasion. In John 3:5-8 (NAS), Jesus compares the Spirit’s super-cognitive role in conversion to the blowing of the wind:

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Later in John’s Gospel Christ again describes how the Holy Spirit works in the conversion process: “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. . . . But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:8 and 13 NAS). The Holy Spirit’s role in the conversion process clearly goes beyond a central-type evaluation of the sermon’s merits. “He breaks

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<sup>28</sup> Bennett and Bennett, 33-34.



through our defenses and rationalizations and confronts us with at least a glimpse of our true selves in relation to God's standards."<sup>29</sup>

In describing his own evangelistic ministry, Paul claimed that the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in enabling peripheral processors to come to faith in Christ:

My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in *demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. Yet *we do speak wisdom* among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away. (1 Cor. 2:4-6 NAS)

Wisdom, as Paul describes it, requires a deliberate cognitive evaluation of the message, but the "demonstrations of the Spirit and power" would not be direct parts of the message argument according to ELM. Instead, they would serve as powerful peripheral evidence of the credibility of communicators and the validity of their messages.<sup>30</sup>

Although the New Testament does not precisely describe how the Holy Spirit works in the conversion process, it clearly states the Spirit provides an essential and affective role in the process. ELM also does not attempt to explain spiritual experiences, yet there remains much in common with these two arenas: An affective, transcendent encounter with something beyond a listener's own central cognitive processing can lead to major attitude change such as that experienced during religious conversion. The

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<sup>29</sup> Bruce B. Barton, Philip Comfort, David R. Veerman, and Neil Wilson, Life Application Bible Commentary: John, STEP Electronic Edition, ed. Philip Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Perloff, 129.

empowerment of the Holy Spirit in preaching events can produce this kind of resonance and be a powerful way to persuade peripheral processors to come to faith.

### **Appealing to both Central and Peripheral Processors**

As was pointed out earlier, a person who carefully reasons through the Gospel message before making a commitment to Christ is more likely to retain that commitment. An effective preacher can increase the likelihood his congregation will cognitively evaluate his message by integrating *relevance*, *persuasive appeal*, and *engaging illustrations*. Even if these three things do not fully equip or motivate a listener to process a sermon centrally, they can help persuade peripheral processors if used in the right way.

#### Relevance

Relevance of sermons helps listeners centrally process the arguments in two ways: First, preachers speak in language understood by their audiences. People can cognitively process messages only in language they understand. Next, preachers demonstrate how messages apply and can benefit listeners' lives. Claypool and colleagues discovered that the personal relevance of a message greatly increases the likelihood of central processing.<sup>31</sup> Gladwell confirms that listeners are more likely to consider seriously relevant messages than those lacking application in their lives.<sup>32</sup> Darke

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<sup>31</sup> Heather M. Claypool, Diane M. Mackie, Teresa Garcia-Marques, Ashley McIntosh, and Ashton Udall, "The Effects of Personal Relevance and Repetition on Persuasive Processing," *Social Cognition* 22, no. 3 (2004): 310-335.

<sup>32</sup> Gladwell, 98.

and Chaiken demonstrates that listeners consider more seriously messages benefiting their self-interests.<sup>33</sup>

Peripheral processors are more likely to consider preachers and their messages relevant if they find preachers likeable. If audiences like speakers, they are more apt to like their messages even if they fail to consider all of its implications. Likeable speakers make listeners feel good, and those good feelings usually transfer to speakers' messages.<sup>34</sup> Speakers can increase their likeability factor by demonstrating authentic concern for their listeners through the relevance of their messages.<sup>35</sup> Speakers who are similar to listeners also demonstrate their relevance to their listeners. Similarity builds rapport and promotes positive responses to persuasion, especially when the similarity directly relates to the message and deals with personal and emotional decisions.<sup>36</sup> This certainly includes most spiritual commitments. Preachers who can tell their personal stories in ways to which their listeners can relate may be more effective at leading listeners to Christ.

### Persuasive Appeal

Central processors, by definition, evaluate arguments presented by preachers. The argument forms the basis of the persuasive appeal in any kind of persuasive

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<sup>33</sup> Peter R. Darke, and Shelly Chaiken, "The Pursuit of Self-Interest: Self-Interest Bias in Attitude Judgment and Persuasion." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89, no. 6 (2005): 864.

<sup>34</sup> Perloff, 168.

<sup>35</sup> Hogan, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Cialdini, 176; Goleman, 170; Hogan, 29; Perloff, 169.

communication. In their most common and basic form effective arguments consist of claims connected by good warrants to solid evidence.<sup>37</sup> The claims are the conclusions of the arguments and the primary points preachers want their listeners to accept. The warrants make logical connections between the evidence and the claims and explain how the evidence helps prove the claims.<sup>38</sup> For sermons to meet these criteria, preachers must be clear and focused in their presentations, with as little extraneous material as possible. Every claim in effective arguments must be tied to quality evidence with good warrants. Although, as noted above, biblical material is often the best evidence, other types of evidence can also strengthen the persuasive appeal of sermons. Statistics can serve as good evidence if used properly.<sup>39</sup> Vivid testimonies and real-life stories can also be effective, when properly warranted to the claims of messages.<sup>40</sup> As will be demonstrated below, engaging illustrations can also serve as this kind of narrative evidence. A combination of well-used statistics and narrative evidence is recommended for evangelistic sermons.

Some types of persuasive appeal are more effective with peripheral processors than central processors. Some peripherally-processing listeners use the number of arguments or the amount of evidence in favor of a claim as a peripheral cue for speakers'

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<sup>37</sup> Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 2d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 114.

<sup>38</sup> Gardner, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Perloff, 184; Gardner, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Perloff, 182.

credibility and messages' validity.<sup>41</sup> Too many arguments, especially weak ones, however, can be counterproductive for the central processors in the crowd and may undermine the credibility and authenticity of the speakers in the eyes of central processors.<sup>42</sup> Since any Sunday service will likely have both central and peripheral processors present, preachers should use a reasonable number of solid arguments to reach both groups.

In some cases, evangelistic preachers may find emotional appeals effective at persuading peripherally processing people to come to faith. Effective speakers can provoke powerful feelings of fear or guilt that can motivate listeners to take action. Cialdini calls the most common form of fear appeal "scarcity." When people perceive a limited availability of something, their desire for it is often increased. One application of the scarcity principle is the deadline tactic. Salesmen high pressure their customers with warnings like, "This deal is only good today."<sup>43</sup> Some evangelistic crusades incorporate the deadline tactic to motivate people to respond to altar calls, "You don't know whether you'll die on your way home tonight and you may not have time to get right with God. So, come forward now!" Fear appeals work only if they nudge people into danger control and motivate them to change their at-risk attitudes or behaviors. Often, however, people move into fear control mode. In this case, listeners try only to eliminate the emotion of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 180; Gladwell, 70.

<sup>42</sup> Perloff, 180.

<sup>43</sup> Cialdini, 207-209.

fear without taking action on its cause.<sup>44</sup> For example, unbelievers frightened at the thought of eternity in hell during evangelistic services, may leave services as quickly as possible and swear never to return to church because of the negative feelings they felt. Such people might never respond to the message that provoked the fear. Fear appeals also may fail completely because they never arouse the desired emotion nor motivate the desired result.<sup>45</sup>

Persuasive speakers may try to arouse guilt in an attempt to motivate changes in attitudes and behaviors. Cognitive Dissonance, a theory of persuasion popular in the 1950s, incorporates guilt appeals.<sup>46</sup> In essence, it states, “Once we make a choice or take a stand we will encounter personal and interpersonal pressures to behave consistently with that commitment.”<sup>47</sup> Many salespeople try to use cognitive dissonance to change peoples’ minds through the “Low Ball Technique.” Persuaders get their targets to make public commitments to something with which targets may disagree. Persuaders point out the hypocrisy if targets fail to act in accordance with their newly stated views.<sup>48</sup> Preachers can incorporate cognitive dissonance in preaching if they get their audience to agree that certain behaviors are bad or good and then point out how the audience fails to live up to that standard. Preachers can then point out how Christ died to forgive such sin and ask the people to repent and believe.

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<sup>44</sup> Perloff, 185.

<sup>45</sup> Stiff and Mongeau, 147.

<sup>46</sup> Perloff, 223; Stiff and Mongeau, 80; Visser and Cooper, 219.

<sup>47</sup> Cialdini, 53.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 88-89; Hogan, 91.

Reciprocity is another tool salespeople use to generate feelings of guilt and obligation to make a sale. Salespeople give items of perceived value to their customers without charge in the hope that a strong sense of obligation will motivate the receivers to purchase the items the salesperson wants to sell.<sup>49</sup> If evangelists seek to use reciprocity, perhaps they could point out how Jesus has already died for the listeners' sins. The gift has already been given. If they reject Christ's gracious offer of salvation, they are ungracious people and Christ's efforts for them will have been wasted. More recent studies, however, found that guilt appeals, like fear appeals, arouse a diversity of emotions and rarely lead to desired attitude or behavior changes among people today.<sup>50</sup>

Another peripheral cue that could lead some people to convert to Christianity is social proof. Social proof exists in the presence of several others who embrace the message communicated and can wield powerful influence.<sup>51</sup> In a study of what psychological factors led people to convert religions, Chana Ullman found the presence of a group of believers played a significant role for nearly half of the converts she

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<sup>49</sup> Cialdini, 20-41; Hogan, 135.

<sup>50</sup> Stiff and Mongeau, 159. This writer's own opinion on these emotional appeals is that they are generally less effective now than when they were first developed in the 1950s for two reasons: 1) Saturation and immunization: Marketers and salesmen have overused these techniques, and a good percentage of the population is either wary of them or no longer vulnerable to their effects. 2) Cultural change: These theories are built on a modern sense of duty, obligation and moral consistency that is becoming less valued in the Postmodern Era. Most of the studies that "proved" these theories were conducted in the 1950s and 1960s. Many people today no longer struggle with perceived dissonance. Absolute truth is not a priority of a typical secular person's paradigm. Diversity and moral relativism have become the preferred ethics of this generation. Personal obligation does not drive people as much as it did a generation ago. Therefore, Postmoderns are less likely to respond to these kinds of approaches. Preachers should be very careful when using negative emotional appeals because they are likely to be seen as manipulative and actually undermine a preacher's credibility with a Postmodern audience.

<sup>51</sup> Stiff and Mongeau, 199-205; Gardner, 187-189.

studied.<sup>52</sup> Billy Graham and other evangelists often ask their altar workers to leave their seats and come to the front when they give salvation invitations. The movement of the altar workers gives the impression of an enormous response and can influence listeners who are wrestling with making a faith commitment.<sup>53</sup> Some churches encourage the power of social proof through “call and response.” The congregation becomes verbally involved in the sermon with responses like, “Amen!” and “Preach it!” To newcomers this may be evidence that the rest of the congregation embraces the message the preacher is speaking. This can be a strong peripheral cue that the message is valid. In more restrained churches, pastors can still point to the number of people involved in the church or Christianity in general as social proof. Testimonies shared by congregants can wield this kind of influence.

Group involvement may solidify the commitment of converts and increase the likelihood their faith commitments will last. Gladwell presents John Wesley as an effective example of leading lasting religious change this way: “Wesley realized that if you wanted to bring about a fundamental change in people’s belief and behavior, a change that would persist and serve as an example to others, you needed to create a community around them, where those new beliefs could be practiced and expressed and nurtured.”<sup>54</sup> Emotional appeals have been shown to have some effect on peripheral processors in the past, but often produce negative results on central processors because of

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<sup>52</sup> Ullman, 78.

<sup>53</sup> Cialdini, 100.

<sup>54</sup> Gladwell, 172-173.



their perceived manipulative nature. Preachers should use these emotional appeals sparingly and with care; however, studies have shown both central and peripheral processors are more likely to accept the message of persuasive communication when it has a definite conclusion and call for a specific commitment.<sup>55</sup> Rather than letting listeners determine their own ending to a sermon, preachers may be more effective when they invite their listeners to respond to sermons through altar calls, raised hands, or faith commitments to Christ.

### Engaging Illustrations

Perhaps the most powerful tool in helping potential converts centrally process the Gospel message is the use of engaging illustrations. Scientific studies have shown that metaphors and illustrations help people who otherwise would rely on peripheral cues to process cognitively a persuasive message for two different reasons: First, metaphors or stories dealing with subjects of interest to listeners greatly increase the probability of systematically processing messages even if the metaphors are irrelevant to the arguments. A study that used random sports metaphors completely unrelated to the message found listeners interested in sports seriously considered the same message they would have used peripheral cues to evaluate without the athletic imagery.<sup>56</sup> Secondly, well-used illustrations enable some people to process cognitively where they otherwise would have

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<sup>55</sup> D.J. O'Keefe, "Standpoint Explicitness and Persuasive Effect: A Meta-analytic Review of the Effects of Varying Conclusion Articulation in Persuasive Messages," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 34 (1997): 1-12.

<sup>56</sup> Victor Ottati, Susan Rhoads, and Arthur C. Graesser, "The Effect of Metaphor on Processing Style in a Persuasion Task: A Motivational Resonance Model," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 4 (1999): 688 and 695.

no choice but to depend on peripheral cues. One study showed that when metaphors accurately demonstrated principles of the argument they increased listeners' ability to understand and remember the messages.<sup>57</sup> Emotionally-moving stories and illustrations can lead peripheral processors to accept Christ even when they have been unable to follow the complete argument of a message. Many studies have shown that persuasive messages using metaphors are more effective at changing attitudes than those without.<sup>58</sup> Gardner found that a story that is "simple, easy to identify with, emotionally resonant, and evocative of positive experiences" can be a positive tool to persuade a diverse group.<sup>59</sup> Preachers who integrate relevance, emotional appeal, and engaging illustrations may increase the likelihood people will use their central cognitive skills to evaluate their messages positively. Simultaneously, those who are unable or unwilling to weigh the merits of their arguments will be more likely to accept Christ because of peripheral cues.

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<sup>57</sup> S. J. Read, I. L. Cesa, D. K. Jones, and N. L. Collins, "When is the Federal Budget Like a Baby? Metaphor in Political Rhetoric," *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 5 (1990): 125-149. As a case in point, one Sunday I preached on the life of Josiah but used the metaphor of "finishing the race well." I used stories and examples from my own life and others in the real world related to races to show that how people finish depends on how well they run throughout the race. The next day a young moms' study was meeting at the church. The leader has a son named Josiah but she was unable to attend the service on Sunday. Another lady in the study came up to me and expressed how much she appreciated the message the day before. The leader asked what it was about and I remarked how it was about her son's namesake. However, the lady who was in the service looked uncomprehending the relevance of the name Josiah and said, "No, it was about finishing the race." She did not remember the name of the main character in the sermon, but she had not forgotten the metaphor and its relevance to her life.

<sup>58</sup> Perloff, 203.

<sup>59</sup> Gardner, 82.

## **Conclusion**

Although this author is not aware of a single previous study or work that seeks to apply the findings of the Elaboration Likelihood Model or Heuristic Systems Method of persuasion psychology to preaching directly, the principles of these two theories support the claim of this paper: preaching is more likely to persuade unbelievers to come to faith in Christ when it is characterized by: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This paper has shown how evangelistically effective preaching tends to be characterized by: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, preached with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit. This conclusion summarizes the results of the analyses that led to these seven characteristics and describe how preachers might implement these principles in their preaching.

Chapter 1 served as the paper's introduction. It provided a story to show anecdotally how much of a difference the effectiveness of preaching makes on the likelihood of an unbelieving listener coming to faith in Christ and returning to church. The first chapter laid out the problem of preaching in America today and presented the methodology for the five analyses that produced the findings of this paper. It also defined relevant terms for the paper.

Chapter 2 analyzed the preaching of Jesus, Peter, and Paul as recorded in the New Testament. Chapter 2 used New Testament accounts and the conclusions of Bible scholars and historical researchers to demonstrate how the preaching of the three demonstrated the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching. Chapter 3 demonstrated how the preaching of John Chrysostom, Girolamo Savonarola, George

Whitefield, and Charles Spurgeon also demonstrated the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching. Chapter 4 examined the writings of a large number of today's preaching experts, and showed how the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching harmonize their theories. Chapter 5 showed how the Elaboration Likelihood Method of persuasion as developed by academic psychology supports a model of evangelistic preaching consisting of the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching. Appendix B analyzed the results of an empirical study of evangelistically effective and ineffective pastors, and their preaching illustrated the seven characteristics that tend to distinguish effective preaching to reaching unbelievers.

### **Improving the Evangelistic Effectiveness of Preaching Today**

Nearly every preacher can apply these seven characteristics. This section will give some specific suggestions for pastors who want to see more people reached through their preaching to actualize the characteristics. The characteristics must be tailored to the unique cultural issues of different communities by pastors who know their communities and listeners; however, the principles behind the characteristics can be applied in any church.

#### Biblical, Christ-Centered Content

For a sermon to be biblical and Christ-centered, the main principles the sermon communicates should be drawn from the Bible and seek to direct the listeners to Christ.

Long says,

Preaching is biblical whenever the preacher allows a text from the Bible to serve as the leading force in shaping the content and purpose of the

sermon. More dynamically, biblical preaching involves telling the truth about—bearing witness to—what happens when a biblical text intersects some aspect of our life and exerts a claim upon us.<sup>1</sup>

This means that some Scripture should be included in every message and specifically support any conclusions preachers try to make. The Bible should be interpreted and applied in harmony with good exegesis of the original intent of the passage. Trask says that when preachers seek to persuade people to come to faith, they should “allow integrity with impartiality to guide the use of the text.”<sup>2</sup> This means doing adequate study to ensure preachers are not reading incorrect messages into the text.

The Bible text(s) can interact with the structure of sermons in a variety of ways. Among today’s preaching experts, the starting place for the message showed more disagreement and emotion than any other issue. Many seminary professors and several pastors urged the use of expositional sermons at all times. They express concern that sermons that begin at the point of felt needs of the audience with Scripture as an after thought are like “cotton candy that appeals to people’s hungers but possesses no value as food.”<sup>3</sup> Bartel explains how expositional sermons work: “Expository preaching proclaims the message of a passage of Scripture to a contemporary audience in such a way that

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<sup>1</sup> Long, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Trask, 175.

<sup>3</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, “The Relevance of Expository Preaching,” *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*, ed. Scott Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 82.

people hear what a passage of Scripture says, identify with the situation it addresses, become aware of how it applies to their lives, and are led to a decision.”<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, several pastors whose ministries have led thousands to faith in Christ in recent years lean more heavily on topical sermons than exegetical ones. Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, Andy Stanley, Ed Young Jr., and Craig Groeschel do topical series and deliver them when unchurched guests are most likely to attend.<sup>5</sup> These preachers argue their sermons are no less biblical because their outlines are created to fit topics rather than from the text.<sup>6</sup> Topical sermons can provide a broader view of the whole Bible’s teaching on a topic and often work better in teaching practical life skills. Hunter supports this approach on a list of “Ten ways that apostolic churches communicate the Gospel;” the first item is, “They begin where people are—their felt needs and wants.”<sup>7</sup> The study of actual preachers discussed in appendix B supports this view. Nearly 60 percent of evangelistically effective preachers used topical sermons while 70 percent of the comparison group used exegetical sermons.

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<sup>4</sup> Bartel, 115-116.

<sup>5</sup> Ed Young Jr. and Andy Stanley. *Can We Do That? 24 Innovative Practices that Will Change the Way You Do Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard, 2002), 134, 139-148; Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 224-230, 294-296. Warren explicitly states, “Topical exposition works best for evangelism” (296). Information on Craig Groeschel was based on a survey of his messages at the Lifechurch.tv website. Information on Joel Osteen was based on a survey of his televised sermons.

<sup>6</sup> Young and Stanley, 157; Warren, 294-298.

<sup>7</sup> Hunter, 163.

Barna's research also supports the use of topical messages rather than book series.<sup>8</sup> The people Rainier interviewed disagreed, and he advocates using exegetical series.<sup>9</sup> The strong disagreement by these two researchers is indicative of the broader disagreement among preaching experts. Some experts advocate a variety of approaches.

Nearly all of the New Testament sermons analyzed quoted from several Old Testament texts. Although Peter, in Acts 2, does some exegesis work on Psalm 16 and 110 and Joel 2, his Pentecost sermon's outline was not driven by any one of these texts. His exegesis simply supported the topical claim that Old Testament prophesied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Christ. The historical preachers analyzed used a variety of approaches to the text. Chrysostom nearly always preached exegetically, Savonarola used a systematic series approach to determine his preaching texts, but more often than not interpreted his texts allegorically. Spurgeon and Whitefield preferred textual sermons but did not preach systematically through books of the Bible. Contemporary preachers who want to reach unbelievers will do well to consider the education level and spiritual experiences of their listeners in deciding how to approach the biblical content of their sermons.

To ensure their sermons remain Christ-centered, pastors should make sure they points their listeners to Jesus in every sermon. Dresselhaus writes, "The preaching of

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<sup>8</sup> Barna, 103. Unchurched people in Barna's survey much preferred sermons dealing with issues and concerns people face in their lives (44% strongly, 19% somewhat) over book studies with verse by verse explanations (15% strongly, 6% somewhat).

<sup>9</sup> Rainier, 45 and 58.



Jesus Christ and him crucified must form the nucleus of authentic proclamation.”<sup>10</sup> Even an exegetical study of the Old Testament can point to Jesus as the fulfillment of the passages pastors use. Pastors should avoid the temptation of preaching sermons solely providing psychological solutions to common problems without directing people to Jesus. Preachers should communicate the hope and grace Jesus offers in every message if they want to see unbelieving listeners respond to the Gospel.

### Relevance

Though the principle of relevance is timeless, its very nature means that its application is constantly changing. Chris Altmann uses the metaphor of boarding an airplane in the US—a land where he speaks the language, eats the food, and knows some of the history—and landing in Amsterdam where he finds himself surrounded by people speaking a language he does not understand, eating food he cannot pronounce, holding values he does not share, and having a history foreign from his own. This, he says, is what has happened in the postmodern revolution of thought.<sup>11</sup> The non-Christian world has changed radically in the last few decades. Relevant preaching in 2007 is very different from relevant preaching in 1977. Pastors who want to see the unchurched in their communities come to faith need to understand how this cultural change has affected the lives and understandings of those outside the church. Spending time with unbelievers,

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<sup>10</sup> Dresselhaus, 79.

<sup>11</sup> Chris Altmann, *Preaching to Pluralists* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2004), 7.

listening to their concerns, understanding their ways of viewing the world, and even learning their ways of communicating is essential to communicating relevantly.<sup>12</sup>

Altrock gives pastors a head start on this process for those whose context includes preaching to postmoderns by identifying seven characteristics of postmodernism and prescribing two ways preachers can address each: 1) Postmoderns are uninformed about Christianity, so preachers should not use words and stories that presume knowledge of the Bible but instead teach them the basics of the Gospel. 2) Postmoderns are interested in spiritual things, so preachers should connect their listeners with God and equip them to experience God's presence on a daily basis. 3) Postmoderns have an anti-institutional bias, so preachers should point out the benefits of a faith community and help them experience those benefits first hand. 4) Postmoderns tend to be pluralistic, so preachers should reveal the inclusive nature of the Gospel, while revealing the uniqueness of Jesus and the Gospel and pointing out the fallacies of pluralism. 5) Postmoderns are usually pragmatic, so preachers should show how the Gospel relates to everyday concerns and offers a better life before death, not just after. 6) Postmoderns are relational, so sermons should reveal the community the church offers, bring practical help for relationships, and connect the listeners in meaningful relationships with other Christians. 7) Postmoderns are experiential, so sermons should enable postmodern listeners to experience the Gospel

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<sup>12</sup> Bacik and Anderson, 110.

through inductive and narrative preaching, testimonies, multi-sensory methods and hands-on experience.<sup>13</sup>

It is important for preachers to address issues their listeners face and clearly show how their messages are relevant to their listeners' lives. Warren writes,

By beginning with people's needs when you preach, you immediately gain the attention of your audience. . . . Three things always make it past your reticular activating system: things you value; things that are unique; and things that threaten you. . . . While sharing the Good News in a unique or threatening way can get attention of unbelievers, I believe showing its value to people is most consistent with how Christ taught. . . . While most unbelievers aren't looking for truth, they are looking for relief. This gives us the opportunity to interest them in truth.<sup>14</sup>

Even spiritual issues such as salvation, eternity, and spiritual growth can be connected to peoples' experience of peace and well-being in this life. Bacik and Anderson list several "great questions" that people, including unbelievers, often ask that, when addressed in sermons, connect with their hearts and lives:

Who am I? What am I meant to do with my life?  
 How can I experience deep, loving relationships?  
 What should I do for meaningful work in the world?  
 How do I support my family financially, yet not make money too important?  
 How do I create a beautiful marriage?  
 How do I raise my children in the best manner possible?  
 Why do evil and suffering exist?  
 How do I handle conflict, forgiveness, failure, sin, and other shadow sides of being human?  
 How do I get through life's difficult crises?  
 How do I create a healthy relationship with time?  
 Is it wrong to be wealthy or want to be wealthy?  
 How can I celebrate a responsible and enjoyable sexuality?

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<sup>13</sup> Altrack, 11-12. These seven characteristics and Altrack's suggested responses form the outline for his book.

<sup>14</sup> Rick Warren, "A Primer on Preaching like Jesus," *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox (Online Resource)*, (#47), April 10, 2002,

What is happiness and how does one find it? Why is it often so fleeting?  
 Who or what is God?  
 How can I be more aware of or connected to God?  
 What happens when we die?<sup>15</sup>

Preachers should clearly demonstrate how the messages they preach relate to the lives of their listeners (normally both pre-Christian and Christian) early in the messages to engage the attention and interest of their listeners. Jud Wilhite pastors Central Christian Church in Las Vegas. In June 2006, he preached a message series with the title “Lost” derived from the popular television series. One of these messages was entitled “Secrets.” To demonstrate the relevance of his message early on, Wilhite described the postsecrets.com phenomenon. Tens of thousands of people have sent in post cards containing secrets they have never shared, and the anonymous postcards are published on a popular website. Wilhite showed a video of the cards early in his message to encourage his listeners to think about their own secrets. He followed the video with the statement, “We all have secrets.” This is a good lead into the message’s theme of forgiveness, and it hit people at a place of deeply felt needs. It spoke to both Christians and the uncommitted. Finally, he identified himself as needing forgiveness. That increased his humility and credibility and his identification with unbelieving listeners. After explaining sin and Christ’s forgiveness, he concluded the message by giving several examples of common secret sins people by introducing each with the statement, “In a room this size, there is a man who . . . .” After sharing many examples that were specific enough to be engaging, and general enough to apply to his listeners, Wilhite invited people to fill out

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<sup>15</sup> Bacik and Anderson, 61.

their own secret cards and drop them in trashcans on the way out as a visual reminder of Jesus' forgiveness of their sins.<sup>16</sup>

One way preachers can demonstrate their messages' relevance to unbelievers is to identify with and specifically address their unbelieving audiences. Mark Driscoll pastors Mars Hill Church in Seattle. This church has been exceptionally effective at reaching postmoderns in a culture typically hostile to what it sees as an intolerant evangelical Christianity. Mars Hill has not compromised the message of Christ to reach this group; however, Driscoll deliberately identifies with his unchurched listeners. In a message on 1 Corinthians 2, Driscoll began, "If you are like me . . . before I became a Christian, I thought Christians were some of the weirdest, freakiest, nut jobs on the planet—social outcasts and just the weirdest people I had ever met. Some of you who are still non-Christians are, like, 'I know!'" Driscoll went on in detail and with humor to describe his negative early impressions and experiences with Christians. Many unbelievers in his congregation that day likely shared these impressions. As Driscoll shared his journey from skepticism to faith in Christ, he established a common road that motivated and equipped unbelieving listeners to make the same journey.<sup>17</sup>

Some basic principles of relevant communication are easy to overlook but essential for effective preaching to unchurched people. Preachers need to avoid churchy jargon and terms that those without church experience are unlikely to understand. They

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<sup>16</sup> Jud Wilhite, "Lost: Secrets," (sermon, Central Christian Church, Las Vegas, NV, June 11, 2006), <http://www.centralchristian.com> (accessed 15 June 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Mark Driscoll, "Boasting about Jesus," (sermon, Mars Hill Church, Seattle, January 29, 2006), <http://www.marshill.fm> (accessed 5 September 2006).

should avoid using words that imply everyone in the room should already be familiar with the Bible. For example, pastors who say something like, “Of course you know the story of Joseph” insults those who have never read Genesis. Pastors should be careful to be inclusive in their address and avoid insulting unbelievers unnecessarily. One comparison preacher in the empirical study actually began his sermon with disparaging remarks about non-Christians in America.

All of the analyses showed relevant sermons are more effective than irrelevant ones. Preachers’ efforts at understanding the unchurched and learning to communicate in a relevant way will likely bear much fruit in reaching unbelievers for Christ.

### Persuasive Appeal

To make sermons persuasive in leading unbelievers to faith, preachers should find simple, clear approaches and structure their sermons accordingly. They should use a wide variety of good quality evidence to support their points and, in most cases, call their listeners to specific commitments.

The majority of the experts said sermons targeting unbelievers should stay simple, to the point, and easy to understand. Even many who advocate exegesis do not recommend deep teaching in weekend sermons. Duduit, editor of *Preaching* journal, Miller, and Stanley and Jones strongly suggest having one simple idea in every message.<sup>18</sup> Miller points out that nearly all other public events use one-point

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<sup>18</sup> Duduit, “Preaching Truth in a Whatever World Seminar;” Miller 145-147; Stanley and Jones, 101-118.

communication.<sup>19</sup> Stanley and Jones say communicators should pick a single idea to communicate, “And once that point, that idea, that destination is clear, then the goal is to bend everything in the message towards that one thing.”<sup>20</sup> Even if they choose more than one point, preachers should be able to identify the main objective of sermons in single sentences.

Many of those who advocate more depth in teaching are actually pastors of churches that target postmodern unbelievers such as Dan Kimball, Dustin Bagby, and Eric Landstrom. Kimball says, “I think what people are looking for in our culture is depth.”<sup>21</sup> More than likely, the education level and sub-cultural ethos of listeners will determine how responsive they will be to in-depth teaching. Churches that target highly educated young urban postmoderns may find deep teaching connects well, but in most cases, pastors will have more success with simple and clear messages. Whatever approaches they choose, pastors should avoid comments and stories irrelevant to the main point of the sermon. Several of the ineffective preachers studied added many stories and comments irrelevant to the main message, and in some cases, the messages lacked a main theme. The effective preachers used much less irrelevant material in their sermons.

Repeating the main theme from the pulpit often, and occasionally asking people to repeat major thoughts aloud or to their pew mates (if this is culturally appropriate) may help listeners understand the main theme and principle of application. Sweet urges this

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<sup>19</sup> Miller, 146.

<sup>20</sup> Stanley and Jones, 101.

<sup>21</sup> Kimball, 9; Dustin Bagby, “God is in the Pub,” *The Relevant Church: A New Vision for Communities of Faith*, ed. Jennifer Ashley (Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books, 2004), 100-101; Landstrom.

kind of listener participation in sermons to connect with postmodern listeners. He suggests

[M]onitoring the reaction and resistance of your congregation with feedback loops like "I see some smiles" or "I feel some scowls out there . . ." Non-threatening interactivity includes call-backs like "Will you repeat after me?" or "Turn to your neighbor and say . . ." or safe karaoke sermons like "letters from home," pageants, or dramatic monologues and dialogues ("duet sermons"). Or it can include risky karaoke sermons like "brown bag sermons," mediated sermons, talk-back sessions, sermon seminars, or . . . "roundtabling" where the dynamics of roundtable conversation actually midwife the sermon.<sup>22</sup>

Several of the target preachers evaluated for the empirical study described in appendix B integrated these kinds of interactive elements—especially the call-backs.

The writers consulted for chapter 4 called for a variety of logical approaches to help preachers convince the unconvinced. Several writers advocated Socratic dialogue. Jeffrey Arthurs calls this a "two-sided argument." To bring listeners along in the process and help their faith development, preachers explore other explanations of reality and spiritual issues. Preachers present and analyze multiple perspectives on an issue, and anticipate listeners' objections.<sup>23</sup> Honeycutt encourage preachers to raise doubts in cynical listeners about the listeners' own doubts. If skeptics can begin to doubt their skepticism as much as they doubt the Christian faith, they are near to the Kingdom of God.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Sweet, *And Glory Crowns the Mercy Seat*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey D. Arthurs, "The Postmodern Mind and Preaching." *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*. Scott Gibson, ed., 191-192; Johnston, 150-151.

<sup>24</sup> Honeycutt, 94-95.



Loscalzo and Johnston suggest structuring sermons inductively. In past centuries, when most people accepted the veracity of the Scriptures and the authority of pastors, deductive approaches worked. Today's listeners, however, often accept their own experience and ideas as the ultimate authority. If preachers can connect with their listeners at the point of their experience, they can then lead listeners to the bigger story of Scriptural truth their messages seek to convey. The inductive process naturally provides a suspense that postmoderns are accustomed to in the entertainment world and develops a greater desire to hear the conclusion.<sup>25</sup> Loscalzo, however, cautions against protracted arguments because postmoderns tend to think mosaically—always aware of the whole while looking at the component parts—rather than linearly.<sup>26</sup>

Sweet says Postmodernism demands going a step beyond inductive sermons to abductive sermons. “Abduction is ‘a feeling kind of knowing’ not sufficient in and of itself but indispensable in the knowledge of truth. It is a more basic form of reasoning than deduction or induction because it is the function of induction and deduction to test abductions and because it is sensory knowing.”<sup>27</sup> He urges preachers to make their sermons as “EPIC” (Experiential, Participatory, Image-rich, Connective) as possible.<sup>28</sup>

Preachers should strive to integrate a wide variety of good quality evidence. In addition to the Bible, preachers can use statistical and scientific data, quotes from experts,

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<sup>25</sup> Loscalzo, 39-40; Johnston, 151-155.

<sup>26</sup> Loscalzo, 118.

<sup>27</sup> Sweet, *And Glory Crowns the Mercy Seat*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-25.

testimonies from real people, and real world examples of sermons' principles to help convince listeners of the messages' truth. A majority of the preachers evaluated for appendix B used common sense and everyday experiences most listeners could understand to prove their points. Mike Hosueholder pastors the Lutheran Church of Hope in Des Moines, Iowa. His church has experienced explosive growth in recent years—most of it from previously unchurched people. For their Easter 2006 message, the church rented the largest arena in the city. Householder presented a variety of types of evidence in that message. He did some biblical exegesis on the resurrection texts and added some historical insight. He used archaeological and scientific data to refute some common arguments against the resurrection of Christ. He had a doctor from the congregation share what a crucifixion victim goes through physically and how the Gospel of John's account of Jesus' crucifixion accurately describes that medical condition. A couple from the church shared testimony of how their lives had changed since they came to faith in Christ. Householder explained the relevance of the resurrection to the lives of his listeners, and he concluded the message with a specific and passionate call to faith in Christ. Householder's faith in Jesus and love for all the people was evident through an emotional breaking in his voice.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to call listeners to a spiritual commitment at the end of the message. On some occasions, a sermon's topic may not lend itself to a specific call to faith or action, but in most cases, people are far more likely to experience life change if

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<sup>29</sup> Mike Householder, "Rolling Stones," (sermon, Lutheran Church of Hope, Des Moines, IA, April 16, 2006), <http://www.hopewdm.org> (accessed 20 April 2006).

they have an opportunity to make a commitment. A traditional altar call can be effective in some settings. Many churches have followed Warren's lead in using a response card.<sup>30</sup> This gives people an inconspicuous way to respond, yet allows pastors to follow up with those who make spiritual decisions. Some pastors call for a clandestine raise of hands, and others pray a general prayer and allow listeners to respond in their hearts. The call to commitment varies depending on the culture of the church, the community, and a pastor's personal style. Preachers should make their sermons persuasive by using clear reasoning, simple structure, a variety of good quality sources of evidence, and a specific call to commitment.

### Engaging Illustrations

A variety of good illustrations can help listeners understand and stay interested in a sermon. Pastors should seek to include up-to-date stories, metaphors, and appropriate humor.

Stories should relate directly to the theme of the message. Some of the most effective stories are personal stories from the lives of preachers. When told well, pastors can show humility, identify with their listeners, get people to laugh, move emotions, and provide real life examples of Bible concepts. When communicated with humble transparency, telling personal stories can improve preachers' authenticity in the minds of the audience. The Bacik and Anderson study found that sharing "significant personal

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<sup>30</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 305-306.

experiences” in their sermons improved preachers’ effectiveness.<sup>31</sup> Having other people share their stories can move unbelievers’ emotions and encourage them to respond to sermons. When testimonies are live, pastors should coach those who share to make sure their stories are short yet effective. Many churches use video to share these kinds of testimonies to enhance the experience and control timing.

Sometimes pastors may hear stories of real people in their congregations that involve important issues, yet are far too personal or embarrassing to be shared by name. In some cases, it may be appropriate to build composite stories that deal with real issues in a natural way while protecting the anonymity of the sources.<sup>32</sup> Whether a story is personal or not, it is important that it relate directly to the main point of the sermon.<sup>33</sup>

Metaphors and verbal images can help listeners understand and remember a sermon. Allen says, “An image is a word-picture. When it is spoken, it evokes or creates a scene in the mind, heart, and will of the listeners. . . . An image can be very short, or it can be developed in several sentences, even paragraphs.” An entire sermon can be built around a metaphor. The Bible texts often use metaphors and images to communicate spiritual truths. Preachers can adapt biblical metaphors and images. For example, Bob Marvel preached a message using water as a metaphor for sex derived from Proverbs 5:15. After explaining God’s standard for purity, Marvel took a bottle of water with some dirt and cat litter added. It provided a tangible illustration for how damaging a little bit of

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<sup>31</sup> Bacik and Anderson, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 127.

impurity can be. He closed with an invitation for everyone to take a bottle of pure water on the way out. He even addressed those who did not accept his message specifically and ask them to take a bottle anyway and read the label. For those who accepted the challenge of his message, the bottle was to represent a lifelong commitment to sexual purity.<sup>34</sup>

Pastors can also look for non-biblical metaphors and images to help their listeners understand and implement the truths of their messages. For example, Wayne Cordeiro preached an entire sermon around a metaphor derived from a harbor in Italy with one narrow safe access from the sea that required the harbormaster to place three separate lights on the hillside above the harbor. Only when a ship's captain could see all three lights in one line did he know it was safe to enter the harbor. Cordeiro went on to equate those three lights to three attitudes his listeners need to have aligned in their hearts to be able to enter with Jesus.<sup>35</sup>

Humor can be a very effective way to keep listeners engaged. The Bacik and Anderson study identified humor as the seventh most important factor in distinguishing effective preachers. The effective preachers in this paper's empirical study used humor more effectively than the ineffective preachers. Some of the experts consulted for chapter 4 caution against certain types of humor, however. Miller warns against jokes, and instead advocates light-hearted humor from real life.<sup>36</sup> Pastors should avoid humor that

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<sup>34</sup> Bob Marvel, "Let's Talk about Sex I," (sermon, Cornwall Church, Bellingham, WA, March 26, 2006), <http://www.cornwallonline.com> (accessed 20 April 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Wayne Cordeiro, "Palm Sunday," (sermon, New Hope Christian Fellowship, Honolulu, April 9, 2006), <http://www.enewhope.org> (accessed 20 April 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Miller, 105-106 and 183.

insults groups of people or individuals; however, it may be beneficial for preachers to make fun of themselves.<sup>37</sup> As long as self-deprecating humor does not undermine their credibility, well-told personal stories of pastors' mistakes and difficulties can help on many fronts: People more readily identify with the pastors. Laughter makes listeners feel better about the church experience. Pastors seem more humble and authentic. People understand the grace of Christ can apply to them. This kind of humor may move listeners emotionally to be more ready to respond to the Gospel.

Another kind of humor used by the majority of effective preachers in the empirical study is off-the-cuff comments, usually one or two sentences thrown out at various times during messages. Stand up comedians, television situation comedies, and humorous movies use off-the-cuff comments to keep people laughing. Off-the-cuff comments include: plays on words (for example, Mark Driscoll's, "We put the *fun* back into *fundamentalism*"<sup>38</sup>), use of irony and appropriate exaggeration (for example, David McDonald describing his baptism, "It was my dad who was able to baptize me, holding me under for eight or ten minutes before letting me up for air"<sup>39</sup>), and preachers making fun of their own verbal mistakes. Timing and use of vocal tone can enhance the delivery of all humor and especially these one-liners. Some people are naturally gifted at this kind

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<sup>37</sup> Earl Creps, "Text Meets Text: Preaching with Real-Time Feedback," (article on-line), [http://mondaymorninginsight.com/index.php/site/comments/text\\_meets\\_text\\_preaching\\_with\\_real\\_time\\_feedback/](http://mondaymorninginsight.com/index.php/site/comments/text_meets_text_preaching_with_real_time_feedback/) (accessed 19 February 2007), promotes the value of self-deprecating humor and says, "Humor can have no victim but me."

<sup>38</sup> Mark Driscoll, "Under Authority like Christ," (sermon, Mars Hill Church, Seattle, July 19, 2006, 9 AM service).

<sup>39</sup> David McDonald, "Insurrection," (sermon, Westwinds, Jackson, MI, April 16, 2006), <http://www.westwinds.org> (accessed 20 April 2006).

of humor, but if pastors study other effective preachers and comedians, they can develop comedic timing and sensitivity to the opportunities for off-the-cuff comments.<sup>40</sup> Mark Driscoll specifically studied stand up comedians to improve his humor delivery.<sup>41</sup> An example of the good use of comedic timing is Bob Marvel who completed the introduction of his sermon on sex by saying, “So we’re going to talk about sex” as if he were going to continue the sentence. Instead, he paused for about two seconds then said, “So, I think we ought to pray.” His tone of voice communicated that he understood this would be a tough subject for everyone and that they needed God’s help. The suspense his brief pause brought was resolved with humor through his light-hearted request for prayer. Later in the same message, he quoted from Genesis 2, “Adam said, ‘You are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.’” Then he said, “That’s Hebrew for, ‘Hubba-hubba, ding-ding, she’s got everything!’”<sup>42</sup> Although these one-liners sound off-the-cuff, preachers can write them into their messages in advance to keep their listeners engaged throughout their sermons.

Creativity and variety in illustrations and the means of presentation can help engage listeners and maintain their interest and attention. Sweet says such creative variety is essential in this postmodern world: “To embrace participation is to embrace imperfection over control; to leave lots of breathing room for God’s Spirit to work. It is worship that’s more slot machine than gumball machine: worship where you never know

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<sup>40</sup> Creps says, “The optimal large-group communication genre is stand-up comedy.”

<sup>41</sup> Driscoll, *Confessions*, 70.

<sup>42</sup> Marvel.

what's coming up next versus putting a quarter in and the same thing comes out except in different colors.”<sup>43</sup> Well-illustrated messages are far more memorable and far more likely to lead to life change than those without illustrations.

### Dynamic Delivery

Preachers who want to see people come to faith through their preaching need to ensure their deliveries are as good as possible. Natural, passionate delivery with lots of vocal variety and a positive tone using good gestures and few notes can increase the effectiveness of pastors' preaching. Preachers need to fight the urge to put on a “preaching voice.” Even Holden Caulfield, the anti-hero of J. D. Salinger's classic *Catcher in the Rye*, hated inauthenticity: “If you want to know the truth, I can't stand ministers. The ones I've had at every school I've gone to, they all have these Holy Joe voices when they start giving their sermons. God, I hate that. I don't see why . . . they can't talk in their natural voice. They sound so phony when they talk.”<sup>44</sup> Bacik and Anderson say, “You will be more effective as a homilist when your style matches your personality, when you can be yourself in the act of sharing the good news with others.”<sup>45</sup>

While maintaining an authentic style, preachers should also be energetic and passionate in their delivery. Miller encourages preachers to draw energy from three sources: 1) personal interest in the subject, 2) a conscious push, and 3) the Holy Spirit's

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<sup>43</sup> Sweet, *And Glory Crowns the Mercy Seat*, 14.

<sup>44</sup> J. D. Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), 100.

<sup>45</sup> Bacik and Anderson, 138.



empowering work.<sup>46</sup> As the psychology analysis in chapter 5 revealed, a slightly faster than normal rate of speech helps communicate energy, passion, conviction, and expertise.<sup>47</sup> Good vocal variety in tone, rate, and volume with good use of pauses keep a sermon interesting; however, in many American churches speakers overdo the volume and energy and rob themselves of authenticity. Significant exceptions are African American and Latin American churches that may respond well culturally to enthusiastic preaching.

Preachers should also use a positive, loving tone of voice on most occasions to prevent alienating spiritual seekers. Avoid sharp and falling tones at the end of words, and instead use varying pitch. Many of the effective preachers analyzed for appendix B used vocalizations and characterizations that introduced humor and maintained interest. The variation ranged from using different voices for different characters—including retellings of the Bible stories—to using sound effects to enhance illustrations.

Preachers should develop a natural physical presence in sermon delivery. Childers asks, “Want your sermons to sail out into the listener’s minds and hearts and not just dribble down the front of the pulpit? Let your body have its say.”<sup>48</sup> She suggests maximizing visual interest by moving in triangles. Preachers should save the middle front of a platform for peak moments and move in 45-degree angles on either side of that

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<sup>46</sup> Miller, 83-86.

<sup>47</sup> See page 807.

<sup>48</sup> Childers, 135.

point.<sup>49</sup> One simple way preachers can improve their delivery is to smile as they speak. This can increase speakers' likeability and credibility.<sup>50</sup>

Several experts advocate memorizing a sermon and delivering it without notes. Stanley and Jones ask why preachers would expect their congregations to remember their sermons if preachers cannot. "Constantly referring to notes communicates, 'I have not internalized this message. I want everybody else to internalize it, but I haven't.'"<sup>51</sup> Many of the target preachers evaluated spoke from memory or used few notes.

### Authenticity

Because preachers are major parts of their messages, their authenticity is vital to their effectiveness. Sermons must communicate pastors' humility, integrity, conviction, and love for their Lord and listeners. Several of the other six characteristics intersect here. The content, structure, illustrations, delivery, work of the Holy Spirit, and relevance of messages cue listeners to preachers' authenticity. Huffman explains how these all cooperate:

I discovered that people sense our desperate desire to apply the biblical message to ourselves and our problems prior to sharing that word with them. This builds a personal identification factor. They want to identify with the preacher who is a real person dealing with the real world in his or her own life. The hearers of the Word want to sense "believability," "credibility," and "integrity" in their preacher. Nonverbal gestures, physical bearing, eye contact, vocal variety, and the use of comic relief, all with one's normal communication style, are important to the hearer.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>50</sup> See page 78.

<sup>51</sup> Stanley and Jones, 135.

<sup>52</sup> Huffman, 40.

Probably the most important thing preachers can do to maintain this kind of authenticity is to stay deeply in love with Jesus Christ. It is also important to love the people who hear the sermon—both those in church every Sunday and those there for the first time. Preachers should convey a sincere love for their Lord and their listeners through their words and delivery.

Preachers should also be authentically transparent about their own struggles when appropriate. Anderson says, “A preacher who can communicate a genuine sense of having wrestled with the difficulty of keeping spiritually centered in a materialistic, work-centered, time-starved culture will have listeners’ full attention.”<sup>53</sup> Creps says authenticity:

Seems to require a high level of spontaneity, is helped by using either no notes or a manuscript (for word control), and feels like a roller coaster ride when you’re in the middle of it. What it lacks in polish is made up for in energy, sincerity, and personal commitment.<sup>54</sup>

Preachers should never compromise their convictions in the messages they preach. Authentic humility and conviction are powerful forces in the effort to encourage listeners to respond to gospel messages.

### Holy Spirit Empowering

The final characteristic of effective preaching may be outside preachers’ control; however, all the analyses in this paper indicate the importance of the Holy Spirit’s role in

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<sup>53</sup> Bacik and Anderson, 60.

<sup>54</sup> Creps.

preaching. The most important thing pastors can do to increase the empowering work of the Spirit is to pray. Capon says, “You must pray if you’re to be of any use to God as a preacher—or as anything else.”<sup>55</sup> Bacik and Anderson write, “Prayer reminds us of our absolute dependence on God in carrying out the crucial preaching ministry, and it makes us more receptive to the wealth of meaning found in the Scripture passages.”<sup>56</sup> Preachers should begin their preparation with prayer and pray throughout the process, allowing time for the Spirit to give guidance on what and how to deliver a message. Most of the experts from chapter 4 who dealt with preparation encouraged a week-long preparation process saturated in prayer to give God plenty of opportunities to speak through the process.

Prayer before delivering the sermon is important, too. Adam Hamilton, pastor of one of America’s largest United Methodist churches, tells of a time he spent so much time in sermon preparation, he neglected to pray. He sensed God convict him of that as he was on his way to the first of six Christmas Eve services. He took what little time he had left to pray for those who were about to come.

An hour later I got up to preach and the sermon was fine. It was well written. My presentation was okay. Yet I knew there was something missing. . . . So it went for the first three services. . . . Just before I got up to preach the fourth service I felt God speaking to me again. This time I heard the Lord say, “I let you do the first three on your own power. Now I will show you what happens when you preach with the power of my Spirit.” As I began to preach at that service, I felt the heaviness in my heart dissipate. I felt a power in my preaching. In the midst of the congregation something palpable happened to the congregation. You could hear a pin drop. The service was almost overwhelming. This continued through the rest of the evening’s sermons. At the end of one of

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<sup>55</sup> Capon, 69.

<sup>56</sup> Bacik and Anderson, 109.

the last services my wife came to me—she had been present for the first service and now for one of these last three. She said, “What did you do to your sermon? It was so different from before.” The truth is, it was exactly the same manuscript, exactly the same sermon—only this time it was preached with the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, the message and the entire worship service should be structured to allow people to experience the working of the Holy Spirit. How this happens will vary depending on the denominational and cultural leanings of the individual church. In some cases, God speaks in shared silence. Sometimes an appropriate song at the end of a message allows the Holy Spirit to bring the message home. Altar calls are effective in many settings. In many churches, the Eucharist can be a powerful, participatory experience with God at the conclusion of a message. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be the convicting and empowering force in the church’s ministry of communicating the gospel (John 16:8-11, Acts 1:6-8). Preachers who want to reach people with that message must be empowered by the Holy Spirit and give the Spirit an opportunity to work on the minds and hearts of the listeners.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided some guidelines preachers can follow to incorporate the seven characteristics of effective evangelistic preaching advocated by this paper. Pastors can measure the effectiveness of their efforts in three ways. The first is to measure their own performance based on the seven characteristics. Some writers advocate self-

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<sup>57</sup> Adam Hamilton, *Unleashing the Word* (Nashville, TN; Abingdon, 2003), 147-148.

evaluation through video or audio recordings.<sup>58</sup> Preachers can begin by listening to their messages before they implement these suggestions. As they incorporate the seven characteristics, they could listen to their messages on a weekly basis, periodically going back to the earlier sermons to ensure they are making progress.

Pastors could also enlist the help of their congregations or unbelieving acquaintances. They could develop an evaluation sheet based on the seven characteristics and ask people to evaluate their messages on the seven criteria. As their average scores increase, pastors can be encouraged that their preaching is improving. Finally, pastors can measure the outcome of their efforts. The ultimate objective of this paper is to see increasing numbers of people come to faith in Christ. As more people become Christians through their preaching, pastors will obtain their real objective.

Preaching alone will not solve all the evangelistic problems of the twenty-first century church in the United States.<sup>59</sup> God has chosen throughout history, however, to use preaching to bring people to faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. If this generation of preachers can learn their lessons from the New Testament, history, homiletic experts, and those who are doing it right, with God's help evangelistic preachers can see many more come to know Jesus in the years ahead. May the Lord enable them to make that happen.

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<sup>58</sup> Stanley and Jones, 179-180.

<sup>59</sup> See page 10.

## APPENDIX A

### RESEARCH OF CURRENT HOMILETICIANS

The attached spreadsheet is a summary compilation of the different approaches advocated for evangelistic sermons by homiletic experts analyzed. In some cases, the writers used the exact words found in the headings, in other cases, they implied agreement with the concepts. There is some subjectivity in the placement of comments, but use of this spreadsheet greatly helped to simplify and evaluate a wide variety of information.

The “Aspect of Preaching” column has been sorted to correspond to the categories listed in this essay. This paper did not address every item listed. Where comments and aspects were similar, they were combined to provide a simpler overview for analysis.

Some of these authors did not specifically address evangelistic preaching. Many of the works consulted were parts of larger volumes and/or narrowly focused on a certain aspect of preaching. The annotated bibliography notes the theological perspective of the writers and the focus of their works consulted.

In the following tables, a “1” indicates the writer advocates this trait either explicitly or implicitly. An “O” indicates the writer explicitly opposed the use of this trait in evangelistic preaching. An “S” indicates the writer allowed judicious use of this trait on some occasions.





Table 2 – *Continued*

<b>Aspect of Preaching</b>	<b>Allen, J.</b>	<b>Allen, R.</b>	<b>Altrock</b>	<b>Anderson, K.C.</b>	<b>Arthurs</b>	<b>Anderson</b>	<b>Bagby</b>	<b>Barna</b>	<b>Bartel</b>	<b>Bridges</b>	<b>Capon</b>	<b>Chapell</b>	<b>Dresselhaus</b>	<b>Duduit</b>	<b>Fasol</b>	<b>Frost</b>	<b>Gaines</b>
Use suspense			1														
Audiovisual		1	1		1		1		1				1	1			1
Art	1	1					1							1		1	
Testimonies			1														1
Humor						1											
<b>Dynamic Delivery</b>																	
Energetic						1							1		1		
Positive					1	1											1
Passionate				1								1	1		1	1	
Vocal variety		1				1									1		
Rhythm and aural signals		1				1									1	1	
Full vocalization		1				1									1		
Slightly faster rate		0															
Lots of eye contact		1				1			1						1		
Memorize sermon																	
Relational/Conversational style						1							1	1			
Inviting physical style		1		1		1									1	1	
Consistent style		1			0								1				
Minimize physical obstacles				1													
<b>Authentic Preacher</b>																	
Authentic	1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1
Transparent with weakness	1				1	1					1		1				
Integrity		1				1			1	1	1		1		1	1	1
Humility					1	1			1	1			1				
Conviction		1							1	1	1		1		1		
Not claiming all the answers						1										1	
Demonstrate expertise															1		
Loving tone					1	1		1				1					1
Non-adversarial								1									1
Filled with grace			1		1	1		1		1		1					1
<b>Holy Spirit Empowered</b>																	
Anointed / Spiritual		1	1	1			1		1	1		1	1			1	1
Spirit-led		1							1	1			1				1
Pray throughout the process		1	1	1		1			1	1	1		1				1







Table 2 – *Continued*

Aspect of Preaching	McManus	Miller	Ming	Rainier	Ragonath	Robinson	Spitzer	Spurling	Stanley	Sweet	Trask	Troeger	Vertefeuille	Warren	West	Wiersbe	Willhite	Willimon	Wyatt	Young
Audiovisual									1	1										1
Art	1									1										
Testimonies			1																	
Humor		1		1						1										
<b>Dynamic Delivery</b>																				
Energetic					1					1	1									
Positive		1								1				1						
Passionate		1			1				1		1				1					
Vocal variety					1								1							
Rhythm and aural signals																				
Full vocalization					1															
Slightly faster rate					1				1											
Lots of eye contact		1							1											
Memorize sermon									1				0							
Conversational style		1				1														
Inviting physical style					1															
Consistent style														1						
Minimize physical obstacles		1																		
<b>Authentic Preacher</b>																				
Authentic		1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1		1			1				
Transparent with weakness		1		1		1		1	1				1							
Integrity		1			1				1		1		1			1				
Humility				1					1	1	1		1			1				
Conviction		1			1						1		1			1		1		
Not claiming all the answers												1						1		
Demonstrate expertise																				
Loving tone		1	1	1						1						1				
Non-adversarial		1										1								
Filled with grace			1							1								1		
<b>Holy Spirit Empowered</b>																				
Anointed / Spiritual		1			1					1	1							1		
Spirit-led		1			1					1	1							1		
Pray throughout the process		1			1						1							1		

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR CHAPTER 4 AND APPENDIX A

Allen, Jack. "Whazzup Interview with Jack Allen." <http://www.freshministry.org>. (Accessed on November 20, 2004).

This brief interview of an Albuquerque pastor gets his input on how best to reach unchurched postmoderns. Preaching is one element briefly addressed.

Allen, Ronald. *Interpreting the Gospel: An Introduction to Preaching*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1998.

Allen is associate professor of preaching at Christian Theological Seminary and may be the most prolific writer on the subject of preaching in the last decade. This book summarizes his views on the entire process of preaching and is primarily a homiletics textbook. He does not address evangelistic preaching separately, but this work was included because of his influence in the homiletical community. Allen calls himself a "revisionary" theologian.

Altrock, Chris. *Preaching to Pluralists: How to Proclaim Christ in a Postmodern Age*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2004.

Altrock is pastor of Highland Street Church of Christ in Memphis. This book is a reworking of his own Doctor of Ministry dissertation and deals directly with how to preach to unchurched postmoderns.

Anderson, Kenton C. *Preaching with Conviction: Connecting with Postmodern Listeners*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2001.

Anderson is a conservative homiletics professor in Canada. This book uses an extended vignette to provide a paradigm for preaching to postmodern listeners.

Arthurs, Jeffrey D. "The Postmodern Mind and Preaching." *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*, ed. Scott Gibson, 177-198. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004.

This work consists of twelve separate articles written by theologically conservative homiletics professors and two pastors on how to preach effectively to postmoderns. Arthurs teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Bacik, James J., and Kevin E. Anderson. *A Light unto My Path: Crafting Effective Homilies*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006.

Bacik is a Catholic priest, and Anderson is a psychologist in his congregation. The authors devised a study to determine what differentiated effective from ineffective

preachers. Although their goal was not the unchurched, the results nearly matched the findings of this paper.

Bagby, Dustin. "God is in the Pub." In *The Relevant Church: A New Vision for Communities of Faith*. ed. Jennifer Ashley. Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books, 2004.

This is one essay from a book compiling essays from emergent church leaders around the world. Bagby pastors Mosaic Manhattan.

Barna, George. *Grow Your Church from the Outside In*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2002.

George Barna is arguably the evangelical church's leading researcher. In this book, Barna presents the results of a study of the unchurched revealing what keeps them away from church, what would bring them back, and what would effectively connect them to Christ. Preaching is one of many factors addressed.

Bartel, Leroy. "Pentecostal Preaching and Homiletics." In *Foundations for Pentecostal Preaching*. ed. James Bridges. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005.

This book was prepared for a Pentecostal preacher's conference and presents articles from Assemblies of God professors and leaders. Bartel is dean of Southwestern Assemblies of God University.

Bridges, James. "Introduction." In *Foundations for Pentecostal Preaching*. ed. James Bridges. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005.

This book was prepared for a Pentecostal preacher's conference and presents articles from Assemblies of God professors and leaders. Bridges is the denomination's General Treasurer.

Capon, Robert Farrar. *The Foolishness of Preaching: Proclaiming the Gospel against the Wisdom of the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.

Capon is an Episcopalian priest. This book does not describe preaching to the unchurched per se, but it does provide a unique approach and a mix of practical and theoretical suggestions.

Chapell, Bryan. "The Necessity of Preaching Christ in a World Hostile to Him." In *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*, ed. Scott Gibson, 59-77. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004.

This work consists of twelve separate essays written by theologically conservative homiletics professors and two pastors on how to preach effectively to postmoderns. Chapell teaches at Covenant Theological Seminary.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Future of Expository Preaching." *Preaching* 20 (Nov-Dec 2004): 28-32.

This is article by Chapell argues the merits of expositional preaching over topical preaching.

Dresselhaus, Richard. "Pentecostal Preaching and Exegesis." *Foundations for Pentecostal Preaching*. ed. James Bridges. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005.

This book was prepared for a Pentecostal preacher's conference and presents articles from Assemblies of God professors and leaders. Recently retired, Dresselhaus was one of the movement's leading pastors.

Duduit, Michael. "Preaching Truth in a Whatever World." Seminar. *Preaching Magazine*. Northwest Baptist Seminary, Tacoma, WA, October 6, 2004.

This conference was designed to help pastors preach more effectively in the postmodern world. Duduit is editor of *Preaching Magazine*.

Fasol, Al. "Preaching Evangelistically with Biblical Authority," and "Hiding Behind the Cross As You Preach." In *Preaching Evangelistically: Proclaiming the Saving Message of Jesus*, Al Fasol, Roy Fish, Steve Gaines and Ralph Douglas West, 63-74 and 91-106. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006.

Four Baptist homiletics professors and pastors wrote this book offering specific recommendations on how best to preach to unbelievers. Each author wrote one or more chapters. Fasol teaches at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Frost, Michael. "Preaching in a Post-Literate Age." <http://www.cegm.org.au/articles> (accessed November 10, 2004).

This article features the author's ideas on how best to preach to postmoderns. Frost is a professor at Morling Theological College in Sydney, Australia.

Gaines, Steve. "The Setting of the Evangelistic Sermon" and "Preparing the Evangelistic Sermon." In *Preaching Evangelistically: Proclaiming the Saving Message of Jesus*, Al Fasol, Roy Fish, Steve Gaines and Ralph Douglas West, 1-16 and 43-62. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006.

Four Baptist homiletics professors and pastors wrote this book offering specific recommendations on how best to preach to unbelievers. Each author wrote one or more chapters. Gaines pastors Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis.



Gibson, Scott. "Biblical Preaching in an Anti-Authority Age." In *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*, ed. Scott Gibson, 215-227. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004.

This book consists of twelve separate essays written by theologically conservative homiletics professors and two pastors on how to preach effectively to postmoderns. Gibson teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Graham, Billy. "Evangelists of Grace." In *The Pastor's Guide to Effective Preaching*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2003.

This book reprints articles on preaching from a wide variety of experts. World-renowned evangelist Billy Graham first shared the words of his article with a gathering of evangelists in Amsterdam in 1983.

Hamilton, Adam. *Unleashing the Word*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003.

Hamilton, one of the United Methodist Church's leading pastors, provides a description of his approach to preaching. He focuses much of his material on bringing the unchurched to faith.

Hansen, David. "Who's Listening Out There?" In *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*, ed. Scott Gibson, 129-146. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004.

This book consists of twelve separate essays written by theologically conservative homiletics professors and two pastors on how to preach effectively to postmoderns. Hansen pastors Kentwood Baptist Church in Cincinnati.

Honeycutt, F. G. *Preaching for Adult Conversion and Commitment: Invitation to a Life Transformed*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003.

Honeycutt pastors a smaller mainline church in a small Virginia town. He invited a group of skeptics and seekers to listen to several of his sermons and give him feedback. He summarizes their input to help pastors better communicate with these two types of people.

Huffman Jr., John A. "The Role of Preaching in Ministry." In *The Pastor's Guide to Effective Preaching*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2003. 35-46.

This book reprints articles on preaching from a wide variety of experts. Huffman pastors St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Newport Beach, CA.

Hunter III, George G. *Church for the Unchurched*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996.

Hunter, Dean of the School of Missions and Evangelism at Asbury Seminary, lays out the case for what he calls an “Apostolic Congregation” that can be postured to reach unchurched postmoderns. The book provides a model of a type of church Hunter believes would be most effective at evangelism. Preaching is one of many factors he addresses.

Hurst, Randy. “Cross Culture: Communicating Christ Clearly to a Secular World.” *Enrichment* (Summer 1999): 56-58.

Hurst is director of communications for the Assemblies of God World Missions. This article specifically addresses preaching to the unchurched.

Johnston, Graham. *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001.

This work identifies several things a preacher needs to consider in connecting with his audience in the postmodern culture. Johnston pastors in Australia, but was trained in the US.

Kimball, Dan. “Preaching in the Emerging Church: An Interview with Dan Kimball.” Interviewed by Michael Duduit. *Preaching* 20 (Nov-Dec 2004): 7, 9, 48-51.

Kimball is one of the leading authors of the emergent movement. He pastors an emergent congregation in Southern California. This interview addresses his approach to preaching.

Landstrom, Eric. “Postmodern Worship Needs.” [http://www.ovrInd.com/GeneralInformation/Postmodern\\_Worship.html](http://www.ovrInd.com/GeneralInformation/Postmodern_Worship.html) (accessed October 23, 2004).

This is a scholarly article addressing how to reach postmoderns in worship. The author does not provide any personal information.

Law, Eric. *The Word at the Crossings: Living the Good News in a Multicontextual Community*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2004.

Law is a Chinese-American Episcopalian priest. This book deals with preaching to a multi-cultural congregation, and it has some material on reaching the unchurched.

Long, Thomas. *The Witness of Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.

This is a much-quoted book primarily directed toward preaching to church congregations. Long taught at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Loscalzo, Craig A. *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.

Loscalzo writes as a pastor and provides philosophical and practical suggestions on how to preach to postmoderns—churched and unchurched.

Martoia, Ron. *Morph: The Texture of Leadership for Tomorrow's Church*. Loveland, CO: Group, 2003.

Martoia planted the innovative Westwinds Church in Jackson, Michigan. This book provides his theories and suggestions on how to pastor in the postmodern world.

McLaren, Brian D. *A Generous Orthodoxy*. El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2004.

McLaren is one of the most visible leaders in the emergent movement, and was recognized as one of the America's 25 leading evangelicals by Time Magazine in their February 7, 2005 issue. This book presents McLaren's approach to ministry and theology in a pluralistic society.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Reinventing Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.

This is the original version of a book McLaren later revised and re-titled *The Church on the Other Side*. It addresses ministry in the postmodern world. Preaching is one of many factors discussed.

McManus, E. R. *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God had in Mind*. Loveland, CO: Group, 2001.

McManus pastors Mosaic—a Los Angeles church that has made significant ministry and style changes to reach the unchurched. This book tells the story and ministry philosophy of the Mosaic in terms of movements that can be applied in any church setting.

Miller, Calvin. *Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where It Belongs*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995.

A prolific writer, Miller taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at the time he wrote this book. This influential book gives Miller's theories on how best to preach to reach the unchurched.

Ragoonath, Aldwin. *Preach the Word: A Pentecostal Approach*. Winnipeg, MB: Agape Teaching Ministry of Canada, 2004.

Ragoonath teaches at a Bible college in Winnipeg. This book does not explicitly address preaching to unbelievers, but provides some principles for preaching in Pentecostal churches.

Rainier, Thom S. *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

Rainier is an influential church researcher. For this book Rainier interviewed hundreds who were recently unchurched but had come to faith in Christ and gotten involved in the church within the previous two years. His main goal was to see what factors led them to commit to the Christian faith and church. The number one factor was the pastor and his preaching.

Robinson, Haddon W. "The Relevance of Expository Preaching." In *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*, ed. Scott Gibson, 79-94. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004.

This work consists of twelve separate essays written by theologically conservative homiletics professors and two pastors on how to preach effectively to postmoderns. Robinson is one of the most quoted conservative homileticians and teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Spitzer, Todd. "The Death of Cool." In *The Relevant Church: A New Vision for Communities of Faith*, ed. Jennifer Ashley, Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books, 2004.

This is one essay from a book compiling essays from emergent church leaders around the world. Spitzer pastors Regeneration Berkeley.

Spurling, John. "Bridging the Gap: Reaching the Unchurched through the Sunday Morning Service." *Enrichment* (Summer 1999): 30-33.

This article is from a special edition of the Assemblies of God journal for ministers focused on preaching. Spurling taught at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary when he wrote this article.

Stanley, Andy, and Lane Jones. *Communicating for a Change*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006.

This book provides a simple approach for effective preaching in a church setting to connect with both the church and unchurched. Stanley and Jones are both pastors at suburban Atlanta's Northpoint Community Church.

Sweet, Leonard I. *AquaChurch*. Loveland, CO: Group, 1999.

Len Sweet is a leading Christian author, professor and futurist. The metaphor of an ocean-going voyage provides many pictures of a how a church should be postured to navigate the waters of postmodernism in this book.

\_\_\_\_\_. "And Glory Crowns the Mercy Seat: Towards an Abductive Homiletic."  
[http://www.webct.georgefox.edu/script/LEC3MOD2/scripts/serve\\_home](http://www.webct.georgefox.edu/script/LEC3MOD2/scripts/serve_home).

This essay applies Sweet's "EPIC" motif to preaching to help pastors preach effectively to postmoderns.

Trask, Bradley. "Pentecostal Preaching and Persuasion." *Foundations for Pentecostal Preaching*. ed. James Bridges. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005.

This book was prepared for a Pentecostal preacher's conference and presents articles from Assemblies of God professors and leaders. Trask pastors Brighton Assembly of God in suburban Detroit.

Troeger, T. H. *Preaching while the Church is Under Reconstruction: The Visionary Role of Preachers in a Fragmented World*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999.

Troeger is more theologically liberal and philosophical in this book than most other authors studied. Troeger teaches preaching at Yale Divinity School. This book does not specifically address preaching to the unchurched.

Warren, Rick. "A Primer on Preaching like Jesus." *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox*. Issue #47. April 10, 2002.

Warren, who planted the Saddleback Community Church, is one of America's top evangelicals according to Time Magazine (February 7, 2005 issue). His *Ministry Toolbox* is sent to thousands of pastors via E-mail every week.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

This was Warren's first best selling book. It provides a model for leading churches. An entire chapter is dedicated to preaching to the unchurched.

West, Ralph Douglas. "Selecting the Text for an Evangelistic Sermon." In *Preaching Evangelistically: Proclaiming the Saving Message of Jesus*, Al Fasol, Roy Fish, Steve Gaines and Ralph Douglas West, 17-42. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006.

Four Baptist homiletics professors and pastors wrote this book offering specific recommendations on how best to preach to unbelievers. Each author wrote one or more chapters. West pastors Brookhollow Baptist Church in Houston.

Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Dynamics of Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999.

Prolific author and editor, Wiersbe teaches at Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary. This is a basic textbook on congregational preaching.

Willhite, Keith. "Connecting with Your Congregation." *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects*, ed. Scott Gibson, 95-111. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004.

This work consists of twelve separate articles written by theologically conservative homiletics professors and two pastors on how to preach effectively to postmoderns. Willhite taught at Dallas Theological Seminary until his death in 2003.

Willimon, W. H. *The Intrusive Word: Preaching to the Unbaptized*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.

Willimon teaches at Duke University and is one of the most renowned experts on preaching in the mainline church today. This book is more theoretical than practical, but focuses on preaching to the unbaptized.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Postmodern Preaching: Learning to Love the Thickness of the Text." *Journal for Preachers* 19 (March 1996): 32-37.

This article provides Willimon's theories on how best to preach to postmoderns.

Wyatt, Lee A. "Preaching to Postmodern People." *Confident Witness—Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*, ed. Craig Van Gelder, 155-170. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

This is a transcript of a 1996 interdenominational conference by the same title. The speakers covered a broad range of background and ministry settings. This article addressed preaching to unchurched postmoderns.

Young, Ed, and Andy Stanley. *24 Best Practices: Discovering what Works in the 21st Century Church*. Keller, TX: HeartSpring Media, 2001.

Ed Young pastors Fellowship Church in suburban Dallas, and Andy Stanley is founding pastor of Northpoint Church in suburban Atlanta. In this book, they tell how their churches approach ministry in many different areas including preaching.

## APPENDIX B

### THE EMPIRICAL STUDY OF EVANGELISTICALLY EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE PREACHERS

This appendix provides and analyzes the results of an empirical study by the author of actual preachers. This study provides anecdotal evidence that supports and illustrates the claim of this paper: preaching can become more effective at leading unbelievers to lasting faith in Christ if it consists of: 1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, with 3) persuasive appeal, using 4) engaging illustrations and 5) dynamic delivery, spoken by an 6) authentic preacher, who is 7) empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated that these seven characteristics typified effective evangelistic preaching in the New Testament and at various times in church history. Chapter 4 showed how today's preaching experts recommend these seven characteristics, and chapter 5 demonstrated how the principles of contemporary persuasion psychology are compatible with these characteristics. In order to see how these elements of preaching impact actual preaching settings, the author of this paper developed a list of target churches of various sizes, locations, settings, and denominations that have seen significant conversion growth since the arrival of the current senior pastor. Data from the first group were compared to a group of churches that have seen a significant decline in conversions since the arrival of the current senior pastor. These lists went through several iterations as some churches that appeared to have significant growth did not see many conversions, experienced pastoral change, or had large fluctuations in attendance. The



final list consisted of 32 target preachers and ten comparison preachers. The author of this paper developed an evaluation grid including 184 elements of each message to evaluate. These included all of the factors suggested in the four previous studies plus other elements often recommended by experts in public speaking. Specific criteria for the churches are provided, but the pastors and churches are anonymous to protect the self-esteem of the comparison pastors.

Whenever possible, three sermons from each preacher were reviewed and scores were averaged and placed into the grid. Each preacher was scored on each element. Table 3 lists these scorings. The numerically scored elements were rated between 0.0 and 5.0. The mean and standard deviation of each item for target preachers and comparison preachers were calculated on the grid to determine which elements were not significant (**N**—Less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  standard deviation between the target and comparison preacher means), possibly significant (**P**—between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and 1 standard deviation difference between the targets and comparison preachers), significant (**S**—between 1 and 2 standard deviation difference) and very significant (**VS** - more than 2 standard deviation difference between the target and comparison means). Table 3 lists the evaluated pastors by a letter (T for target preachers and C for comparison preachers) and a number. The key for church characteristics (noted on pages 159-160) is found on pages 183-184.

Several items were scored quantitatively. These categories were compared on a percentage basis to determine significance. Other items were scored verbally. A visual comparison was used to determine significance.

There is admittedly a large subjective element in this study. One evaluator conducted all of the reviews. Many of these categories are subjective by nature. A different series of churches or a different evaluator might lead to slightly different results. On the other hand, the scope of preachers studied, the clear definition of each criterion, and the enormous number of sermons evaluated offers objective and consistent summary results to this study.

Table 3. Empirical Evaluation of Target and Comparison Preachers

Preacher	Biblical and Christ-Centered						Relevant						
	Attitude toward the Bible	Number of passages referenced	Word studies - use of original	How does psg. direct msg.?	Christ-centered	Any pluralism evident?	Relevant to unbelievers	Issues the listeners deal with?	Felt needs and wants?	Relevance well demonstrated?	Language and style of the target	Any "Christianese?"	Verbosity
T1	Auth	3		Topic	Y	N	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.5	Y		
T2	Auth	7	X	Theme	Y	N	4.0	3.2	2.0	4.0	Y	X	
T3	Auth	7		Topic	Y	N	3.8	3.0	3.0	3.0	M	X	
T4	Auth	1	X	Outline	Y	N	3.8	3.2	2.4	4.1	Y		
T5	Auth	3	X	Outline	Y	N	2.7	2.0	1.5	2.4	Y	X	
T6	Auth	2		Topic	Y	N	4.5	4.4	2.4	4.5	Y		
T7	Auth	4	X	Topic	Y	N	4.5	4.5	3.5	4.0	Y		
T8	Auth	1		Theme	Y	N	4.1	4.1	3.8	4.4	Y		
T9	Auth	4		Topic	Y	N	4.3	4.0	4.0	4.5	Y		
T10	Auth	1		Theme	Y	N	3.3	2.9	2.4	3.0	N	X	
T11	Auth	4		Topic	Y	N	4.6	4.6	3.8	4.3	M	X	
T12	Auth	5	X	Topic	Y	N	1.8	1.5	1.3	2.4	M	X	
T13	Auth	3	X	Outline	Y	N	3.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	Y	X	
T14	Auth	3		Theme	Y	N	3.0	2.8	2.0	4.0	Y		
T15	Auth	2		Theme	Y	N	4.0	3.0	2.5	3.5	Y		
T16	Auth	2	X	Outline	Y	N	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.2	Y		
T17	Auth	5		Topic	Y	N	4.5	4.0	2.5	4.3	Y		
T18	Auth	6		Topic	Y	N	3.2	3.2	2.5	3.2	Y		
T19	Auth	3		Theme	Y	N	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.1	M		
T20	Auth	3	X	Topic	Y	N	4.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	Y		
T21	Auth	1	X	Outline	Y	N	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.8	Y		X
T22	Auth	3		Allegory	Y	N	4.0	2.8	2.3	3.5	Y		
T23	Auth	12		Topic	Y	N	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.6	Y		
T24	Auth	3	X	Concept	Y	N	3.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	Y		
T25	Auth	6		Topic	Y	N	3.5	4.0	4.0	2.6	M		
T26	Auth	2		Topic	Y	N	2.1	2.3	1.8	2.5	Y		
T27	Auth	3	X	Topic	Y	N	3.5	3.0	1.5	2.0	N	X	
T28	Auth	1		Theme	Y	N	4.7	4.5	4.3	3.0	Y	X	X
T29	Auth	2		Topic	Y	N	4.3	3.9	4.3	4.3	Y		
T30	Auth	2		Concept	Y	N	4.8	4.5	4.5	4.0	Y		
T31	Auth	2		Theme	Y	N	3.5	3.5	2.5	3.1	Y		
T32	Auth	1	X	Concept	Y	N	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.8	Y		
Avg.		3.34	38%		100%	0%	3.8	3.4	3.0	3.6	86%	28%	6%

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Biblical and Christ-Centered						Relevant						
	Attitude toward the Bible	Number of passages referenced	Word studies - use of original	How does psg. direct msg.?	Christ-centered	Any pluralism evident?	Relevant to unbelievers	Issues the listeners deal with?	Felt needs and wants?	Relevance well demonstrated?	Language and style of the target	Any "Christianese?"	Verbosity
C1	Auth	3	X	Concepts	Y	N	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.5	Y	X	
C2	Auth	1	X	Outline	Y	N	1.4	1.4	1.7	1.2	N	X	
C3	Auth	3	X	Theme	Y	N	4.4	3.9	3.5	3.5	Y		
C4	Auth	3	X	Outline	Y	N	2.0	2.0	3.0	1.0	N	X	X
C5	Auth	7	X	Topic	Y	N	1.5	2.0	1.0	1.2	N	X	
C6	Auth	3	X	Topic	Y	N	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.0	Y	X	X
C7	Auth	1	X	Outline	Y	N	2.0	1.5	1.2	2.8	Y		
C8	Auth	3	X	Outline	Y	M	3.0	3.0	2.5	2.2	Y		
C9	Auth	2		Outline	Y	N	2.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	M	X	
C10	?	1	X	Theme	M	M	3.5	3.0	1.5	3.5	Y		
Avg.		2.70	90%		95%	10%	2.3	2.2	2.0	2.0	65%	60%	20%
T													
SD		2.30					0.73	0.88	1.00	0.78			
C													
SD		1.68					0.97	0.82	0.80	0.89			
<b>Sig.</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Relevant								Persuasive Appeal
	Use of slang and vernacular?	Directed at the unconvinced	Directed at believers	Directed to both	Derogatory remarks about unbelievers	Identification with unbelievers	Disidentification with unbelievers	Similarity with unbelieving listeners	Introduction
T1	X			X				Y	Published joke
T2		X						Y	Referred to numbers
T3	X		X	X					Intro series
T4	X		X	X					Set up topic
T5	X		X	X				Y	Quoted Socrates
T6	X			X					Personal story
T7				X					Published story
T8	X			X				Y	Video & personal story
T9	X	X		X		X		Y	Anticipates objections
T10	X	X		X		X			Addressed unbelievers
T11	X		X					M	Set up topic
T12	X		X						Intro series
T13	X	X				X		Y	Historical background
T14	X	X		X				Y	Intro series
T15	X	X		X		X		Y	Personal story
T16		X		X				Y	Question & personal story
T17	X	X			X	X		Y	Theme video
T18		X						Y	Set up topic
T19	X	X		X				Y	Topic & story
T20	X	X				X		Y	Personal story
T21	X	X		X		X		Y	Demonstrate relevance
T22	X	X				X		Y	Personal story
T23		X		X	X	X		Y	Published joke
T24	X	X						Y	Object lesson - theme
T25				X				Y	Explain relevance of Bible
T26	X		X			X		Y	Intro series
T27	X		X	X				Y	Intro series
T28			X						Intro series
T29	X	X		X		X		Y	Video
T30		X		X				Y	Intro series
T31	X		X	X					Personal story
T32		X	X	X					Provoking questions
Avg.	72%	56%	31%	66%	6%	34%	0%	70%	

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Relevant								Persuasive Reasoning
	Use of slang and vernacular?	Directed at the unconvinced	Directed at believers	Directed to both	Derogatory remarks about unbelievers	Identification with unbelievers	Disidentification with unbelievers	Similarity with unbelieving listeners	Introduction
C1	X		X						Seasonal thoughts Explained passage Welcome, Bible, relevance Negative story Slammed unchurched world Random comments Personal story Referred to movie Thought Prayer & thought
C2			X						
C3		X				X			
C4			X						
C5			X		X		X		
C6	X		X		X		X		
C7			X					Y	
C8			X					M	
C9			X						
C10				X					
Avg.	20%	10%	80%	10%	20%	10%	20%	15%	
T									
SD									
C									
SD									
<b>Sig.</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Persuasive Appeal													
	Structure					Argument					Evidence			
	Exegetical	Topical	Metaphorical	Other:	Length (Mins.)	Level of complexity	Appropriate for the people	Structure obvious & clear?	Random content / structure?	Use of claims and warrants	Quantity of evidence	Bible	Common sense / experience	Examples
T1		X			25	2.4	Y	Y	1.8	3.2	2.8	X	X	X
T2		X			40	3.2	Y	Y	1.7	3.3	3.7	X	X	X
T3		X			40	2.9	Y	N	1.8	3.1	2.7	X	X	X
T4	X				40	2.4	Y	Y	1.9	4.1	3.8	X	X	X
T5	X				50	3.5	M	Y	1.9	3.0	3.3	X	X	X
T6		X			30	2.3	Y	Y	0.5	3.6	3.6	X	X	X
T7		X		Allegory	40	3.3	Y	N	1.2	3.1	2.8	X	X	
T8		X			40	2.3	Y	Y	1.5	3.7	3.5	X	X	
T9	X	X			35	3.2	Y	Y	1.5	3.5	3.5	X	X	X
T10				Thematic	45	2.2	Y	N	2.3	2.3	2.5	X		
T11		X			50	2.8	Y	N	3.2	3.4	2.8	X	X	X
T12		X			65	3.0	M	Y	2.5	3.1	3.3	X	X	X
T13	X				28	2.8	Y	Y	1.0	3.9	3.0	X	X	
T14				Character	40	2.6	Y	Y	2.4	3.1	3.3	X	X	X
T15	X	X			25	3.5	M	M	2.4	3.3	3.3	X	X	X
T16	X				30	2.8	Y	Y	1.4	4.2	4.3	X	X	X
T17		X			30	3.1	Y	Y	1.0	3.9	3.9	X	X	
T18		X			30	3.5	Y	Y	1.2	3.8	3.5	X	X	
T19	X				27	2.9	Y	Y	2.2	2.9	2.9	X	X	X
T20		X			45	3.1	Y	Y	1.4	4.7	4.8	X	X	X
T21	X				60	3.3	Y	Y	1.5	4.4	3.4	X	X	X
T22			X		40	2.8	Y	Y	1.7	3.5	3.0	X	X	X
T23		X			35	3.0	Y	Y	1.2	4.3	3.8	X	X	X
T24			X		35	2.5	Y	Y	2.0	2.8	3.0	X	X	X
T25		X			47	3.2	Y	Y	2.4	3.4	3.2	X	X	X
T26			X		45	1.8	Y	Y	1.2	2.9	2.0	X		X
T27		X			32	2.8	Y	Y	2.5	3.0	3.0	X	X	X
T28		X			40	2.7	Y	N	3.4	2.8	3.0	X	X	X
T29		X			40	2.6	Y	Y	2.1	4.5	4.6	X	X	X
T30		X			40	3.2	Y	Y	1.3	4.0	4.5	X	X	X
T31	X				33	2.2	Y	Y	1.9	3.2	3.5	X		X
T32	X				20	3.1	Y	Y	1.0	3.6	3.3	X	X	X
Avg.	31%	59%	9%	9%	38	2.8	95%	83%	1.8	3.5	3.4	100%	91%	84%

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Persuasive Appeal													
	Structure					Argument					Evidence			
	Exegetical	Topical	Metaphorical	Other:	Length (Mins.)	Level of complexity	Appropriate for the people	Structure obvious & clear?	Random content / structure?	Use of claims and warrants	Quantity of evidence	Bible	Common sense / experience	Examples
C1	X				55	3.9	N	N	3.3	2.9	2.6	X		X
C2	X				24	3.3	Y	N	1.0	2.8	2.2	X		X
C3	X				25	2.4	Y	Y	2.8	3.3	3.3	X	X	X
C4		X			30	3.6	N	N	3.3	2.8	2.3	X		
C5		X			45	3.0	Y	Y	3.4	1.5	2.5	X	X	X
C6		X			45	4.0	N	N	4.3	1.7	2.2	X	X	X
C7	X				30	2.8	Y	Y	2.3	3.1	2.7	X		X
C8	X				20	3.1	Y	Y	1.7	2.9	2.9	X	X	X
C9	X				17	3.3	Y	N	2.2	1.9	1.7	X		
C10	X				10	3.0	Y	Y	3.0	2.9	2.0		X	X
Avg.	70%	30%			30.1	3.2	70%	50%	2.7	2.6	2.4	90%	50%	80%
T														
SD					10	0.42			0.64	0.56	0.60			
C														
SD					13	0.47			0.90	0.60	0.44			
<b>Sig.</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>



Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Persuasive Appeal													Quality of evidence
	Type of Evidence													
	Data & statistics	Narrative evidence	Benefits to the listener	Appeal to authority	Both sides explained	Emotional appeal	Fear appeal	Guilt appeal	Social proof	Appeal to numbers	Trained altar workers	Call and response	Testimonies	
T1		X	X											2.7
T2	X			X						X		X		3.3
T3		X	X						X	X	X			2.8
T4			X			X								4.1
T5		X	X											3.1
T6		X						X						3.5
T7		X						X						2.9
T8														3.7
T9		X	X		X								X	3.5
T10			X				X	X						2.7
T11		X	X			X		X	X			X		2.4
T12			X											2.7
T13									X	X				3.1
T14							X	X						3.5
T15	X	X	X	X	X				X				X	3.5
T16	X	X		X		X			X	X			X	4.3
T17	X	X	X			X		X		X				4.1
T18	X	X												3.5
T19		X	X											3.0
T20	X													4.4
T21	X	X	X	X	X		X	X						4.3
T22														3.0
T23		X	X											3.2
T24		X		X										3.8
T25													X	3.1
T26		X						X	X	X	X			3.5
T27									X				X	3.0
T28	X	X	X					X						3.0
T29	X	X	X	X	X							X	X	4.6
T30	X	X	X	X									X	4.5
T31		X	X											3.2
T32		X	X	X									X	3.6
Avg.	31%	66%	56%	25%	13%	13%	9%	28%	22%	19%	6%	9%	25%	3.4



Table 3—Continued

	Persuasive Appeal										Quality of evidence		
	Type of Evidence												
Preacher													
C1				X								2.5	
C2												2.0	
C3												3.1	
C4			X									2.4	
C5						X						2.6	
C6						X						2.0	
C7							X		X			2.8	
C8		X										2.7	
C9			X									1.9	
C10				X								2.0	
Avg	0%	10%	20%	20%	0%	0%	10%	20%	10%	0%	0%	20%	2.4

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Persuasive Appeal													Core doctrines?
	Powerful speech (no hedging)	Memory Tools				Call for Commitment								
		Repeated theme	Repetition by people	Questions and Answers	Repetition of key words/phrase	Altar call	Raised hands	Fill out card	In your heart	General Prayer	Call to action	Other	None	
T1	4.6	X							X					
T2	4.7		X	X	X	X	X							
T3	4.7	X		X		X	X				X			X
T4	4.2	X								X	X			
T5	4.5	X								X				
T6	4.7				X				X					
T7	4.4	X			X	?			X					
T8	4.4	X								X				
T9	4.5	X								X				
T10	4.9	X		X		X								X
T11	4.8	X	X		X	?								
T12	4.5		X	X	X	X								X
T13	4.6		X						X					X
T14	4.8								X		X			X
T15	3.2	X		X					X	X				
T16	4.8								X	X				
T17	4.5	X	X		X		X			X				X
T18	4.6								X					
T19	3.9	X								X				
T20	4.9	X							X	X				
T21	4.7	X							X		X	X		
T22	4.2	X							X	X				
T23	4.0	X						X	X					
T24	4.5	X	X	X	X								X	
T25	4.5			X		X	X							
T26	4.6					X	X							X
T27	4.6	X		X		X	X							X
T28	4.7			X		X								
T29	4.6	X	X						X					X
T30	4.5	X								X	X			
T31	4.2	X			X						X			X
T32	4.0									X				
Avg.	4.5	69%	22%	28%	25%	31%	19%	3%	41%	37%	19%	3%	3%	31%

Avg.	3.7	20%	10%	20%	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	40%	50%	0%	20%	0%
T														
SD	0.34													
C														
SD	0.47													
Sig.	S	VS	S	N	VS	N	S	N	VS	N	S	N	VS	VS

Table 3—Continued

		Persuasive Appeal	
		Memory Tools	Call for Commitment
	Preacher	Powerful speech (no hedging)	
C1	3.9	Repeated theme	
C2	3.9	Repetition by people	
C3	3.9	Questions and Answers	
C4	4.0	Repetition of key words/phrase	
C5	4.5		Altar call
C6	3.0		Raised hands
C7	3.9		Fill out card
C8	3.3		In your heart
C9	3.0		General Prayer
C10	3.3		Call to action
			Other
			None
			Core doctrines?

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Engaging Illustrations												
									Humor				
	Emotional stories	Personal stories and illustrations	Testimonies of others	Storytelling ability	Narrative preaching	Object Lessons	Metaphors interesting to the listener	Metaphors demonstrate the argument	Published jokes	Off-the cuff comments	Self-deprecation	Teasing others	Puns
T1	X	X	X	3.2			some	some	X	X	X	X	
T2		X		3.5			some	many		X			
T3	X			3.6			some	many		X			
T4	X	X	X	4.3			many	many		X	X		X
T5		X	X	3.3			some	some		X	X		
T6		X		3.8			some	some		X	X		
T7	X			3.4			some	some	X				
T8	X	X		3.8				many		X			
T9	X	X	X	4.3			many	many	X	X	X		
T10			X	3.5			some	some		X			
T11				3.2			some	some		X			
T12		X		3.0		X	some	some		X			
T13		X	X	3.3			some	some		X			
T14		X	X	2.9			some	some		X	X		
T15	X	X	X	3.6			some	some	X	X	X	X	
T16		X	X	3.6			some	some		X			
T17		X	X	3.5			few	some		X	X	X	
T18	X			3.3			many	many		X			
T19	X	X		3.2			some	some		X	X	X	
T20		X	X	4.2			few			X	X	X	X
T21		X		4.3			many	many		X	X	X	
T22		X		2.8			some	many		X	X	X	
T23	X	X	X	3.5		X	some	some	X	X	X	X	
T24				2.5		X	many	many		X			
T25		X	X	3.5			some	some	X	X			
T26	X	X	X	3.5			many	many		X	X		X
T27	X	X	X	3.0			many	many	X	X			
T28	X	X		2.8			some	some		X	X	X	
T29	X	X	X	3.4		X	some	some		X			
T30	X	X	X	4.3			some	some	X	X	X	X	
T31	X	X		3.6			some	many	X	X	X		
T32	X	X	X	3.3			some	some		X			
Avg.	53%	81%	56%	3.5	0	13%	97%	97%	28%	97%	53%	31%	9%







Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Engaging Illustrations						Dynamic Delivery								
	Humor				Pop Culture References	Interactive exercises	Quantity of Illustrations	Energy level	Rate of speech	Intensity	Variety of rate	Variety of intensity	Rhythm & aural signals	Use of pauses	Shouting used
	Funny stories	Common experiences	Physical humor	Quantity of humor used											
T1	X	X		3.2	X	X	3.5	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.0	2.4	3.3	3.3	X
T2	X			2.8	X	X	3.8	3.3	3.1	3.4	3.3	3.7	2.9	3.2	
T3			X	2.4	X	X	3.3	4.2	3.2	4.4	3.9	4.5	4.3	4.3	X
T4	X		X	4.2	X		4.3	4.2	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.5	4.2	3.8	
T5	X	X		2.8	X		3.6	4.5	4.7	3.9	3.8	3.5	2.4	2.7	
T6	X	X	X	3.0	X	X	4.2	3.8	3.4	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.0	
T7				2.4	X		3.3	4.2	3.6	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3	X
T8	X	X		3.3			4.2	4.2	4.3	3.7	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.3	
T9	X		X	3.3	X		4.2	4.1	4.3	3.9	4.2	4.4	4.0	4.2	
T10			X	2.9			3.6	4.8	4.1	4.6	4.1	4.4	3.3	3.2	X
T11		X		1.5	X		3.5	4.5	3.1	4.8	4.1	4.6	4.7	4.7	X
T12	X		X	1.8	X	X	2.5	4.2	3.5	4.2	3.7	4.4	3.2	2.8	X
T13				2.0			3.6	4.1	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.3	3.1	3.4	
T14				2.4	X		3.1	4.4	4.0	4.5	4.1	3.3	2.9	3.0	X
T15	X	X	X	3.4	X	X	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.6	
T16	X			3.1			3.4	3.6	3.9	3.6	4.0	3.4	3.1	3.2	
T17	X		X	3.0	X		3.9	3.7	3.3	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.1	3.5	
T18				1.5			3.2	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.8	3.8	2.7	1.5	
T19				1.7	X		3.1	2.8	2.8	2.3	3.6	2.9	2.0	3.3	
T20	X	X	X	4.0	X		4.2	4.5	4.3	4.5	4.0	3.9	2.5	2.7	
T21	X			3.9	X		4.3	3.5	3.3	3.2	2.9	3.2	2.9	3.4	
T22	X			3.1			3.3	3.7	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.5	2.9	2.8	
T23	X			4.0	X	X	4.4	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.5	
T24			X	2.5			3.3	4.3	3.9	4.4	3.9	4.2	3.1	3.4	X
T25				3.3		X	3.2	3.6	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.7	
T26		X		1.9	X			4.2	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.3	3.7	X
T27	X			2.2	X		3.4	4.0	3.9	4.7	4.3	4.7	3.6	3.5	X
T28				1.8	X		2.7	4.4	3.7	4.3	3.7	4.2	3.3	3.5	X
T29	X		X	2.3	X	X	4.5	4.1	3.8	4.4	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.7	
T30	X	X		3.7		X	4.2	4.2	4.5	3.8	4.2	3.2	3.8	4.1	
T31	X			3.3			3.3	3.3	2.9	3.3	3.1	3.0	2.7	2.5	
T32	X			2.1	X		3.6	3.4	2.2	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.5	3.3	
Avg.	63%	28%	34%	2.8	69%	31%	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.3	3.4	34%



Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Dynamic Delivery											
	Anger /indignation	Loving / positive	Whispers used	Chanting	Vocalization /characterizations	Style	Approach to Words					Verbal precision
							Memorized verbatim	Scripted	Tight outline	Loose outline	Extemporaneous	
T1		4.5			few	Smiling & positive	X					4.6
T2		4.0				Sincerely smooth			X			3.4
T3	X	3.3			some	Energetic charismatic			X			3.1
T4		4.7			many	Engaging entertainer			X			3.9
T5		4.0				Fast, deep & clear			X			3.8
T6		4.0			many	Creative	X					3.4
T7	X	3.4	Y			Southern preacher	X					4.4
T8		4.0				Positive passion	X					4.2
T9		4.4			some	Entertaining	X					3.1
T10		3.5			many	Southern evangelist				X		2.2
T11	X	3.7		some	some	Powerful preacher				X		3.9
T12		3.5		some	some	Preacher-teacher			X			3.2
T13		4.2			few	Benevolent gent	X					4.1
T14	X	3.0			few	Passionate preacher			X			3.1
T15		4.0			some	Funny philosopher			X			3.4
T16		3.9				Provocative & precise	X					3.8
T17		4.0			few	Polished presenter	X					4.2
T18		3.5				Earnest teacher			X			3.8
T19		4.2				Mellow teacher			X			3.7
T20		4.0			many	Energetic authenticity			X			2.6
T21		3.1			many	Dynamic teacher			X			4.2
T22		4.2			few	Conversational			X			3.4
T23		4.0			some	Entertaining equipper		X				4.0
T24		2.5			few	Pictorial preacher				X		3.0
T25		4.0			some	Positive preacher			X			3.1
T26		4.2			some	Authentic intensity			X			3.4
T27		4.2				Pentecostal evangelist			X			2.4
T28		4.0				Pentecostal evangelist						2.8
T29		4.5				Authentic passion		X				4.2
T30		4.4				Engaging equipper		X				4.4
T31		4.1				Mellow conviction			X			4.0
T32		4.2				Polished presenter		X				4.4
Avg.	3%	3.9	3%	6%	53%		25%	13%	50%	9%	0%	3.6

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Dynamic Delivery											
	Anger /indignation	Loving / positive	Whispers used	Chanting	Vocalization /characterizations	Style	Approach to Words					Verbal precision
							Memorized verbatim	Scripted	Tight outline	Loose outline	Extemporaneous	
C1	3.7					Hyperactive philosopher			X			2.8
C2	3.0		some			Polished presenter	X					4.6
C3					slight	Positive smiler	X					3.7
C4	1.7					Droning teacher				X		3.0
C5	X	1.3				Old-time revivalist			X			3.2
C6	2.4					Aimless wanderer				X		1.7
C7	3.4					Sincere yet struggling		X				3.8
C8	3.2					Reserved reader		X				3.3
C9	3.5					Precise plodder		X				4.3
C10	3.0					Unclear precision		X				4.4
Avg.	10%	2.8		10%	10%		20%	40%	20%	20%	0%	3.5
T												
SD		0.5										0.6
C												
SD		0.8										0.8
<b>Sig.</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>VS</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Dynamic Delivery														
	Wrong words?	Gestures				Quantity of note use Eye contact		Vocal Pitch				Tonal resonance	Diction		
		Stayed behind pulpit	Wandered around platform	Wandered into people	large physical gestures			High pitch	Moderate pitch	Deep pitch	Variety of pitch		Understandability	Overemphasis of syllables	Natural diction
T1			X			1.0	4.8	X	X		3.4	3.4	4.0	3.3	3.0
T2			X			2.0	4.0		X		3.5	4.4	4.0	2.0	4.0
T3				X	X	1.0	4.7		X		4.6	3.3	3.7	4.4	1.0
T4									X		3.2	3.0	3.7	3.4	3.5
T5								X			3.2	2.2	3.6	2.6	3.2
T6			X		X	0.5	4.8			X	4.2	4.6	3.8	3.3	2.0
T7			X		X	1.0	4.8		X		4.3	3.5	3.7	4.3	1.0
T8			X		X	1.0	4.8	X			3.1	2.5	3.8	2.0	3.9
T9			X			0.5	4.8		X		4.3	3.8	3.7	3.9	2.5
T10				X	X	1.1	4.5		X		4.1	3.4	3.3	3.5	2.4
T11				X		1.0	4.7			X	4.3	4.8	3.5	4.4	1.0
T12	X	X			X	2.5	3.0		X		3.6	3.3	3.6	3.6	3.0
T13										X	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.3	2.3
T14									X		3.5	2.8	4.0	3.2	2.3
T15		X			X	2.0	3.6		X		3.3	3.3	4.0	2.0	4.0
T16										X	3.4	4.4	4.0	3.1	3.6
T17										X	3.2	4.0	4.0	3.6	1.9
T18									X		3.0	3.8	4.0	2.0	3.9
T19		X				3.0	2.0		X		3.3	3.1	4.0	1.3	3.8
T20									X		3.8	3.4	3.7	3.1	4.5
T21		X				0.5	4.8		X		3.1	3.2	4.0	3.0	3.9
T22									X		2.6	4.2	4.0	2.6	4.2
T23		X				2.8	3.2			X	3.1	3.8	4.0	3.3	3.7
T24									X		3.8	3.7	4.0	4.0	1.5
T25			X		X	1.5	4.4		X		3.6	4.1	3.8	3.0	3.4
T26			X		X	1.0	4.5		X		3.2	4.1	4.0	3.0	3.5
T27									X		3.5	3.4	4.0	3.8	1.2
T28	X									X	3.5	3.6	4.0	3.4	3.8
T29									X		3.6	3.7	4.0	3.1	3.2
T30									X		3.9	3.5	4.0	3.3	3.8
T31	X								X		2.8	2.9	4.0	2.8	3.5
T32									X		3.6	4.1	4.0	4.5	1.7
Avg.	9%	31%	50%	19%	56%	1.4	4.2	9%	69%	22%	3.5	3.6	3.9	3.2	2.9

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Dynamic Delivery														
	Wrong words?	Gestures				Quantity of note use	Eye contact	Vocal Pitch				Tonal resonance	Diction		
		Stayed behind pulpit	Wandered around platform	Wandered into people	large physical gestures			High pitch	Moderate pitch	Deep pitch	Variety of pitch		Understandability	Overemphasis of syllables	Natural diction
C1								X		3.3	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.3	
C2								X		4.3	2.4	3.5	4.3	1.2	
C3								X		3.6	3.5	4.0	3.0	3.5	
C4	X								X	2.2	3.8	4.0	2.1	2.0	
C5		X		X	2.0	4.0			X	4.0	4.3	4.0	4.3	1.1	
C6	X							X		2.8	2.9	4.0	2.7	3.6	
C7								X		2.9	3.5	4.0	1.5	3.3	
C8		X		X	3.2	2.0	X			3.0	2.0	4.0	2.7	3.2	
C9							X			3.0	2.3	4.3	3.8	1.7	
C10								X		3.3	4.0	3.5	3.9	1.2	
Avg.	20%				2.6	3.0	20%	60%	20%	3.2	3.1	3.8	3.1	2.3	
T															
SD										0.5	0.6	0.2	0.8	1.0	
C															
SD										0.6	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.0	
<b>Sig.</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P</b>

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Authenticity												Anointing			
	Humble & transparent Conviction Passion for the message			Likeability						Non-adversarial Filled with grace			Expertise			Level of perceived anointing
				Passion for the people	Physical attractiveness	Smiling	Over/underweight	Style of dress	Refer to training or knowledge?				Miraculous attestation	Divine calling		
T1	3.8	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.5	5.0	good	suit	4.5	4.6			X	3.6		
T2	4.0	4.6	4.6	4.5	3.8	3.7	good	suit	4.3	4.5				4.2		
T3	1.4	4.5	4.2	4.2	3.2	3.3	good	suit	2.6	3.2		X		3.8		
T4	3.8	4.2	4.2	1.5	3.8	4.4	good		4.3	4.1				4.0		
T5	3.5	4.4	4.5	4.5	3.6	4.0			4.2	4.3				3.5		
T6	2.8	4.5	4.5	4.2	3.8	3.3	good	cas	2.8	4.0				3.3		
T7	2.3	4.5	4.2	4.1	3.0	3.7	good	suit	3.0	3.8				3.3		
T8	3.7	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.0	2.4	good	cas	4.0	4.2				3.3		
T9	4.0	4.6	4.5	4.6	3.6	4.5	good	cas	4.5	4.5				3.0		
T10	1.7	4.8	4.7	4.5	3.3	4.2	good	suit	1.1	2.9				4.3		
T11	1.4	4.5	4.8	4.4	2.1	3.0	over	suit	3.1	3.8				4.4		
T12	3.0	4.8	4.5	4.3	3.6	4.1	good	cas	4.0	4.2	X			3.8		
T13	3.0	4.7	4.2	3.7		4.2			4.2	4.4				3.5		
T14	3.5	4.8	4.2	4.2		3.0			2.0	4.0				3.8		
T15	4.0	4.5	4.0	4.2	3.7	3.8	good	cas	4.0	4.5				3.3		
T16	4.1	4.5	3.9	3.7		3.8			4.0	4.0				3.3		
T17	4.0	4.8	4.5	4.2	3.5	3.7	good		3.0	4.0				4.0		
T18	3.5	4.5	4.3	4.1		2.9			3.0	4.0				3.3		
T19	3.5	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.3	3.4	over	cas	4.0	4.2				2.5		
T20	4.3	4.9	4.9	4.4		4.2			4.4	4.4				4.2		
T21	3.7	4.2	4.8	4.4	3.4	4.1	over	cas	1.7	3.8			X	3.5		
T22	4.4	4.5	4.8	4.4		3.7			4.1	4.1				3.8		
T23	4.0	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.5	3.8	over	cas	4.0	4.0		X	X	3.5		
T24	2.5	3.9	3.7	3.3	3.3	2.0	good		2.9	3.8				3.3		
T25	3.0	4.5	4.2	4.3	3.3	2.2	good	suit	4.1	4.2		X		4.0		
T26	3.5	5.0	4.5	3.5	4.2	2.5	good	cas	4.0	4.0		X	X	3.7		
T27	3.0	4.8	4.8	4.5	4.3	3.8	good		3.6	4.0		X	X	4.3		
T28	3.7	4.7	4.7	4.5	3.2	4.0			3.5	3.8			X	4.0		
T29	4.2	4.9	4.9	4.7		3.8			4.8	4.9		X		4.7		
T30	3.2	4.4	4.6	4.8	2.5	3.8	good	robe	4.5	4.0				3.7		
T31	3.3	4.3	4.1	4.1	3.1	3.0	good		4.0	4.0	X		X	3.3		
T32	3.2	4.4	4.0	4.1		3.3			4.0	4.2				3.1		
Avg.	3.3	4.5	4.4	4.2	3.5	3.6			3.6	4.1	6%	18%	22%	3.7		



Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Authenticity											Anointing		
	Humble & transparent Conviction Passion for the message			Likeability					Non-adversarial Filled with grace Refer to training or knowledge? Miraculous attestation Divine calling			Level of perceived anointing		
				Passion for the people	Physical attractiveness	Smiling	Over/underweight	Style of dress						
C1	3.1	4.0	4.3	4.2						3.7	3.7		3.7	
C2	2.0	4.0	4.2	4.1	3.8	2.3	good	suit	3.5	3.5			2.7	
C3	3.3	4.4	4.4	4.3	3.1	3.7			3.9	4.2			3.2	
C4	2.9	3.4	2.3	2.0	1.8				2.0	2.8			2.2	
C5	1.8	5.0	4.6	4.2	2.0	2.0	over	suit	1.2	2.5			3.1	
C6	3.5	3.9	3.7	3.9		4.0	over		2.0	3.0			2.0	
C7	3.6	4.1	3.6	3.6					3.9	4.2			2.9	
C8	2.6	3.2	2.9	2.8	2.2	3.5	over	suit	4.0	4.0	X		2.5	
C9	2.4	2.9	3.0	3.2		4.0			4.0	3.5			2.9	
C10	1.7	3.0	3.0	3.0		2.0			3.3	3.0			1.5	
<b>Avg.</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.1</b>			<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2.7</b>
T														
SD	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.7			0.9	0.4			0.5	
C														
SD	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9			1.0	0.6			0.6	
<b>Sig.</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>VS</b>

Table 3—Continued

Preacher	Church Characteristics				Other Tools					
	Denomination/Theology	Size	Setting	Region	Drama	Art	Use of video	Use of PowerPoint, etc.	Use of objects on stage	Multiple presenters
T1	P	M	U	S			X	X		
T2	P	M	S	NW			X	X		
T3	P	M	S	NW			X	X		
T4	P	M	U	SW				X		some
T5	P	M	U	S			X			
T6	B	M	S	S			X			
T7	B	M	U	S						
T8	B	M	S	S			X			
T9	B	L	U	SW				Art		
T10	B	L	C	S			X			
T11	P	M	U	S				Bible		
T12	B	L	U	NW						
T13	F	M	S	S						
T14	F	M	T	NW		X				
T15	F	L	T	MW		X		X		
T16	F	M	S	SW				X		
T17	F	M	S	S			X	X		
T18	F	M	T	NE						
T19	F	L	T	NW	X			Bible		
T20	F	M	C	NW			X	X		
T21	F	M	U	NW		X		Art		
T22	A	M	C	MW						
T23	A	M	S	SW			X			
T24	A	L	C	NW					X	
T25	A	S	S	NW			X			
T26	A	S	S	NW				Thematic	X	
T27	A	S	T	NW			X			
T28	A	S	T	NW					X	
T29	M	M	S	MW			X			X
T30	M	M	S	MW						
T31	M	S	S	NE						
T32	M	L	S	NW						

Table 3—Continued

	Church Characteristics				Other Tools						
	Preacher	Denomination/Theology	Size	Setting	Region	Drama	Art	Use of video	Use of PowerPoint, etc.	Use of objects on stage	Multiple presenters
C1	P	L	U	S							
C2	B	M	C	S							
C3	F	M	S	NW			X				
C4	A	S	U	NW							
C5	A	S	T	NW							
C6	A	S	U	NW			X				
C7	M	S	U	NW							
C8	M	S	S	NW							
C9	M	S	C	NW							
C10	M	S	S	SW							
T											
SD											
C											
SD											
Sig.							P			P	

## Analyzing the Study Results

The evaluation grid was divided into major sections corresponding to the general results of the earlier studies. Any criteria found in the earlier studies that could be evaluated was placed in one of these sections. After careful analysis of the results of this study and the other research for this dissertation, the final arrangement of data is presented in slightly different form to match the thesis of the paper. The narrative below defines the criteria, states how each element was evaluated in the sermons, explains the level of significance of the findings and briefly discusses the implications for the greater study. The implications for each major section are discussed at the end of each corresponding section.

### Biblical and Christ-Centered

#### *Attitude toward the Bible*

The vast majority of contemporary preaching experts claim that evangelistic preaching is most effective when the preacher holds to the authority of Scripture. The historical study backs this up as well. However, nearly all of the comparison churches in this study—including the mainline denominational churches—also held to the authority of Scripture, with only one possible exception. Though this study did not find this to be a significant element, it could be assumed a church interested in seeing people convert to Christianity most likely will have a high view of Scripture. In addition, the fact that every target church treated the Bible as authoritative gives merit to the conclusions of the other studies that effective evangelistic preaching will be biblical.

### ***Number of Passages Referenced***

There was a wide variety of preaching styles represented in this study, and, correspondingly, a wide variety in the number of Bible passages referenced in a sermon by both target and comparison churches. This was not a significant factor in a preacher's effectiveness.

### ***Word Studies and Use of Original Languages***

Some preachers like to share the results of in-depth study into biblical words in their sermons, including the explanation of words in the original Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic. Although many pastors in both groups used word studies of one sort or another, comparison preachers incorporated word studies into their delivered sermons more than twice as often as target preachers. This supports the concept that simple, clear sermons in the language and style of the target audience are more likely to connect with an unbeliever.

### ***How the Biblical Text Directs the Message***

Many contemporary preachers advocate using only expositional preaching in which the outline of the text studied drives the outline of the message. However, while half of the comparison churches followed this recommendation, only 31% of the target pastors preached this way. It was far more common for the text to produce a concept, theme or topic for the sermon rather than a rigid outline.

### *Christ-Centered or Pluralistic*

A few current experts advocate pluralism in preaching, but the vast majority advocates a clear, Christ-centered message in every sermon. However, neither of these factors was significant in this study because nearly all of the churches in both categories were Christ-centered and clearly avoided any hint of pluralism.

### *Category Summary*

Every target preacher in this study used the Bible as the primary source of material for his sermon. Every target preacher stated or implied that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. None of the target preachers had any trace of religious pluralism (which would identify another religious system as valid as Christianity) present in his sermon. The choice of sample churches deliberately included as broad a theological base as possible for these target churches and even churches from mainline denominations with significant numbers of theologically liberal churches had sermons that were evangelically conservative and biblical.

Although the majority of comparison pastors also preached biblical, Christ-centered sermons, one comparison pastor implied an acceptance of pluralism and a lack of authoritative trust in the Bible. Since nine out of the ten comparison pastors had no trace of pluralism or low view of Scripture, this illustrates that although an essential element, biblical, Christ-centered content is insufficient by itself for a preacher to be evangelistically effective.

A broader study comparing a large number of churches that advocate pluralism with a group that does not might produce findings that show theologically conservative

churches are more likely to see a large number of conversions. However, what the results of this section do show is that preachers holding to the authority of Scripture and Christ as the only way to God can be ineffective. In other words, the view that the Bible alone leads people to faith in a sermon is simply not true. The truth of Scripture must be effectively communicated. This leads to the significance of the other factors.

## Relevance

### *Relevance to Unbelievers*

All earlier studies showed that a message relevant to the life of the listener was far more likely to be accepted. A large number of preachers today, however, preach sermons directed specifically to members of their churches or Christians in general. This element determined how relevant the topics of the sermons by a given preacher were to a non-Christian listener. Several preachers' sermons varied in their relevance from week to week depending on the topic for any given week. There was a wide variety of scoring in this category for both groups. However, target preachers' sermons overall were significantly more relevant to unbelievers than those of comparison preachers.

### *Issues Listeners Deal With*

This question probes the practicality of a sermon's topic and material. The other studies showed preaching is more effective when it addresses an issue the listener deals with in her everyday life. A sermon that was theoretical or theological in nature or addressed a topic only relevant to church-going Christians was scored low. Effective

churches were much more likely to tackle issues that unbelievers deal with in their everyday lives.

### *Felt Needs and Wants*

Some experts said a sermon should address the felt needs and wants of unbelieving listeners. Although highly subjective, evaluation of this element considered the likelihood of the topic being an emotional issue for an unbelieving listener. If the sermon addressed common concerns such as family, money, happiness, fear or overall well-being it was scored high. Once again, target preachers were more likely to address these types of issues in their preaching.

### *Demonstration of Relevance*

Part way through the evaluations it became clear that although two preachers may both address equally relevant issues for an unbeliever, one preacher might be far more effective at motivating the listener to consider the message by demonstrating its relevance. Although this category has much in common with the evidence categories discussed later, rather than persuading the listener of the message's truth, this element draws the reader in by showing him how the topic applies to his life. The use of rhetorical questions, personal stories, and even jokes can help a listener understand that a message is relevant. In this case, there was a very significant difference between the target and comparison preachers.



### ***Language and Style of the Target Audience***

All studies showed that listeners are far more likely to respond to a message communicated in their everyday language. This is a function of the elements of *verbosity* (a high number of long words and sentences), unfamiliar words (*Christianese* is a slang term referring to words used only among Christians and not likely to be understood by an unbeliever), and the use of *slang or vernacular*. Though this element did not show as much significance as other elements of relevance, target churches are less likely to use *Christianese* and verbosity, and more likely to use slang and vernacular and speak the way unbelievers do.

### ***Intended Audience***

One way a preacher shows the relevance of his message is by specifically identifying an intended audience. When a preacher specifically speaks directly or indirectly to unbelievers, he is more likely to gain their attention than by specifically addressing only Christians. In this study target preachers specifically addressed unbelievers or both believers and unbelievers far more often than the comparison pastors did. They also avoided negative remarks about unbelievers (except in jest in a few cases) and readily identified themselves with unbelievers. The preacher and his unchurched listeners were also more culturally similar. All of these illustrate how an evangelistically effective preacher works to make his message relevant to unbelievers and skeptics.

### *Category Summary*

Target pastors in the study tended to be more relevant to unbelieving listeners. They usually chose topics to which unbelievers could relate and addressed the felt needs of unbelievers. They were also much more effective at demonstrating the relevance of their topics to the lives of unbelieving listeners through stories, examples, and statistics. Target preachers tended to identify more with unchurched people and speak to them directly to help demonstrate the relevance of the message to their lives. The vast majority of comparison preachers addressed only believers. Target preachers were more likely to speak in the same way unbelievers do by using common vernacular and slang and avoiding church-specific terms and interjections. In every evaluated element related to the relevance of sermons, target preachers were more effective on average than the comparison preachers were.

## Persuasive Appeal

### *Introduction*

Preachers introduced their sermons in a wide variety of ways. Although no one approach stood out, the effective preachers were more likely to engage the audience and the topic in a compelling way from the beginning of the message. Two of the comparison pastors would likely have offended an unbelieving listener from the very beginning.

### *Structure of the Sermon*

Some contemporary experts advocate using nothing but expository preaching, in which a sermon's structure and content is drawn directly from one passage of Scripture.

Although more than 30% of effective preachers used this approach, more than twice that number preferred a topical outline drawing from many passages. Evangelistically ineffective preachers were more than twice as likely to use an expositional approach as effective preachers were.

### ***Length***

Although the comparison pastors studied preached an average of 8 minutes less than the target preachers, a larger portion of the comparison preachers come from mainline denominations that typically allocate less time for the preaching portion of the service than fundamentalist or Pentecostal churches. There was a great variety of sermon lengths in both categories leading this item to be insignificant in the results of the study.

### ***Complexity of Argument***

This item attempted to measure the intelligence ability and effort required to follow the argument through to its completion. A higher score means a more complex structure was used. A high score could also indicate a sermon with multiple unrelated thoughts. In general, arguments of effective preachers were simpler and easier to follow.

### ***Appropriate for the People?***

A church with a high percentage of well-educated people in its community can do well with a complex, but well structured sermon argument. However, most of the population prefers a simpler structure. Again, target churches are better at communicating at a level the unchurched in their community can understand.

### *Structure Clear and Obvious?*

Some preachers do not clearly tie in the data, stories and biblical texts in their sermons. Others clearly identify their thesis and the relationship of all the material. Target preachers were significantly more likely to use clear and obvious structures in their sermons.

### *Amount of Random Content or Structure*

This item measured the amount of material in the sermon not directly related to the thesis, if there was one. When a sermon had a large amount of random or irrelevant material, it was scored high. Effective pastors had far less random content than ineffective ones.

### *Use of Claims and Warrants*

This item sought to measure how well a pastor argued the main points of his sermons. Comparison pastors were significantly more likely to make claims that were not well connected to good evidence than the target preachers were.

### *Quantity of Evidence*

The Elaboration Likelihood Method (ELM) of persuasion theory suggests that people who do not have the time, energy, or ability to evaluate the quality of an argument will often do so on the basis of the number of arguments used.<sup>1</sup> This empirical study supported ELM as preachers who are more effective at leading people to make faith

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<sup>1</sup> Perloff, 180; Gladwell, 70.

commitments tend to use significantly more evidence in their sermons than the comparison preachers.

### *Type of Evidence*

This study looked for both substantive (Bible, data, statistics, examples) and affective (common sense and experience, narrative evidence, appeal to authority, explaining both sides of the argument, fear appeal, guilt appeal and social proof) evidence in sermons. The results for each item are listed on the table. In general, effective preachers use a wider variety of evidence and are more likely to use evidence that appeals to the affective (ELM's peripherally processing approach) listener. Comparison pastors tend to stick more with substantive (direct approach) evidence plus fear and guilt appeals.

### *Quality of Evidence*

This item was a measure of the objective quality of the evidence presented. In other words, how well would it stand up in a court of law or in an advanced academic paper? Although the target preachers used more peripheral-type evidence than the comparison preachers, the data they presented was significantly better quality than the comparison preachers' data.

### *Powerful Speech*

Many psychologists have found that "powerful speech" (confident, unqualified assertions) is far more effective at persuasion than weak speech. This study supported that theory with target preachers speaking significantly more powerfully than the comparison preachers did.

### *Call for Commitment*

A few preaching experts call for open-ended sermons in which listeners draw their own conclusions.<sup>2</sup> More comparison preachers than target preachers followed this recommendation. Target preachers were also more likely to call for a faith response of some kind, while comparison pastors were more likely to call for some kind of action after they left the worship service.

### *Were Core Doctrines Addressed?*

Some preaching experts advocate teaching on core doctrinal themes. A large minority of target preachers did address core doctrines periodically but not necessarily on a weekly basis.

### *Approach to Words*

Preachers go to varying degrees of effort in the verbal preparation of their sermons. Certain clues in word choice and verbal precision can indicate if a sermon was scripted word for word, written with a detailed outline, based on a loose outline or spoken extemporaneously. Ineffective preachers were far more likely to use a verbatim script not from memory and effective preachers tended to use a tight outline not written out word for word.

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<sup>2</sup> Honeycutt, 153. Landstrom; Frost; Honeycutt, 88; Kimball, 50; Jack Allen, "Whazzup Interview with Jack Allen," <http://www.freshministry.org> (accessed on 20 November 2004); McLaren, *Reinventing Your Church*, 77, 89; Loscalzo, 27; William Willimon, "Postmodern Preaching: Learning to Love the Thickness of the Text," *Journal for Preachers* 19 (March 1996): 32-37; Troeger, 16-152.

### *Verbal Precision*

This item measured how carefully chosen the words spoken appeared to be. Audible pauses, stuttering, poor word choice, poorly constructed sentences, repeated words and the like reduced the score in this area. There was a very wide range of scores in each group of churches studied with minimal differences in overall averages.

### *Memory Tools*

Some preachers use tools such as alliteration, repetition and call and response to help their listeners remember key points of a sermon. The only significant differences noted are that effective preachers are more likely to repeat the theme or key words and phrases and ask the people to repeat these phrases as well. One approach used by some target churches was to ask the listeners to repeat the phrase to their neighbors.

### *Category Summary*

Although there was not a significant difference between evangelistically effective and ineffective preachers in every feature evaluated, target preachers used persuasive appeal more often than not. The items that were significantly different can help clarify what constitutes effective persuasion in preaching.

Both groups of preachers used a wide variety of introductions. Target preachers were slightly better at whetting the appetite of listeners for the topic of the sermon itself than comparison preachers. Pastors used a variety of approaches to the biblical text in both groups; however, target preachers were more likely to preach topical sermons in which the topic, rather than a single passage of Scripture, determined the outline of the

message. More comparison preachers used exegetical sermons in which one passage of Scripture determined the structure of the sermon. There was also not a significant difference in the lengths of the sermons of both groups of preachers.

Target preachers were better at clearly demonstrating the arguments and making them easy to follow. They included much less random content including stories and comments unrelated to the main theme of the message. They were more likely to repeat the theme and/or key words throughout the message to reinforce the central theme and help the congregation remember it. Target preachers used significantly more and better evidence in their sermons and did a better job of demonstrating how the evidence supported their conclusions. Finally, target preachers were more likely to call for a specific, personal, spiritual response from their listeners than comparison pastors. Although target pastors chose a variety of types of evidence, they were better at delivering sermons with clear, concise, compelling persuasive arguments and calling for a specific response from the listeners than the comparison preachers.

This study illustrated well the claim that sermons with simple, clear, well supported and structured arguments and a specific call to faith are far more likely to lead people to lasting conversion than poorly supported, complicated or confusing arguments.

### Engaging Illustrations

#### *Stories*

Both target and comparison preachers used stories, but target preachers used more stories and told them much better. The ability to hold an audience's attention with a good



use of vocal variety, concise yet graphic description without verbosity, suspense and plot twists and the effective use of pauses made a sermon more engaging.

### ***Narrative Preaching***

None of the over 150 sermons sampled for this study were done in a strictly narrative format.

### ***Object Lessons***

A small portion of the target preachers used physical objects for teaching. None of the comparison pastors used object lessons.

### ***Metaphors***

All of the earlier academic studies revealed the importance of metaphor in public speaking and preaching. This item was scored either “few,” “some,” or “lots” in terms of the quantity of metaphors used in two ways: 1) Were the metaphors used likely to be interesting to unbelieving listeners? 2) Did the metaphors aid understanding of the argument? There was an enormous difference in the quantity and quality of metaphor use between the two groups.

### ***Type of Humor***

Target preachers used more humor of nearly every kind: Published jokes include those circulating the Internet or obtained from a book. Off the cuff comments include one-liners, spontaneous comments to the crowd, or funny jests at a person, incident or topic. Self-deprecation occurs when a speaker pokes fun at himself in a way that shows humility without undermining his credibility as a preacher of the Gospel. Some preachers

teased other people, used puns or told funny stories. Some made light of common experiences to which most people can relate. Others used funny physical gestures to add levity to their sermons.

### ***Quantity of Humor***

Target preachers used nearly twice as much humor as comparison preachers.

### ***Pop Culture References***

A similar number of target and comparison churches referred to popular movies, television shows, music, personalities or cultural phenomenon.

### ***Interactive Exercises***

Several target preachers asked the congregation to participate in a brief activity of some kind to reinforce the teaching of the sermon. None of the comparison churches did this.

### ***Quantity of Illustrations***

There was a very significant difference between the quantity of illustrations used by target preachers and those by the comparison group.

### ***Category Summary***

Target preachers used significantly more illustrations and told them more effectively than comparison preachers did. The study showed that target preachers were more likely to tell personal stories, emotional stories, and the testimonies of other people. These stories both served as evidence for the claims of the sermons and examples of how

to live the principles of the sermons in everyday life. Target preachers tended to tell the illustrations in a more engaging way without letting them get too long.

Target preachers used more humor and used it more effectively than comparison preachers. In particular, target preachers told more funny stories, especially personal stories in which they were the object of their own joke. This self-deprecating humor tended to reinforce their humility and authenticity, another major factor this paper identifies as a characteristic of evangelistically effective preachers. Nearly all target preachers used off-the-cuff comments for humor. In most cases, these appeared to be spontaneous remarks or one-liners typical of stand-up comedians.

Target preachers used metaphors more often to aid the understanding of abstract concepts, reinforce their argument, or maintain interest of their listeners. This study clearly reinforced the claim that evangelistically effective pastors preach sermons with more and better illustrations.

## Delivery

### *Passion*

Though passion is difficult to measure objectively, several components can give a speaker a sense of passion: the amount of energy the preacher puts into his delivery, the rate of speech, the intensity of vocal tone and body language, the variety of rate and intensity and the use of pauses and rhythm and other vocal signals. Effective preachers used significantly more of all of these items on average than evangelistically ineffective preachers with the possible exception of rate of speech.

### *Tone of Voice*

The study looked for the following types of vocal tones in the preachers studied: shouting, anger, positive tone, whispers, chanting, and voice characterizations. There was only a significant difference between effective and ineffective preachers in two areas. Effective preachers were far more likely to have a positive tone of voice and to use a variety of voice characterizations in their preaching.

### *Style*

This section includes a brief phrase characterizing the vocal style of each preacher studied. It provides more of a point of reference than an effective tool to determine commonalities among effective preachers.

### *Gestures*

Only a small number of comparison preachers were evaluated live or by video, but those that were seen all stayed behind the pulpit, while the majority of target preachers walked around the platform or into the seating area. Most preachers in both categories made effective gestures with their hands.

### *Quantity of Note Use/Eye Contact*

Comparison preachers were much more tied to their notes and thus had much less eye contact than the target preachers had. A large number of target preachers used no notes at all except for their Bibles.

### ***Vocal Pitch***

This study found no significant difference between the pitch or variety of pitch of effective preachers and ineffective preachers. However, target preachers' voices were slightly more resonant (containing multiple audio frequencies and overtones in the voice's normal range).

### ***Diction***

Three items were used to determine if a preacher's speaking was similar to everyday speech patterns: how understandable the preacher was, how much he overemphasized certain words and phrases and how natural his diction was. Although target preachers were more likely to use natural diction, no other real difference was noted in the area of diction.

### ***Category Summary***

This study illustrates the claim that evangelistically effective preachers tend to use a more dynamic delivery style and helps illustrate the range of effective delivery styles. There was not a significant difference between the target and comparison groups in many of the elements of delivery evaluated in this section; however, several key features of delivery characterized the effective preachers in this study.

Target preachers used more energy, intensity, and vocal variety in preaching, but they did not sacrifice a natural tone as comparison preachers often did. Target preachers were significantly more likely to use a positive tone of voice than comparison preachers. Target preachers had more eye contact and referred to their notes less often. In summary, the style of delivery that best represents the target group combined an authentically

natural and positive tone of voice with lots of energy and eye contact to convey authenticity, passion, and conviction.

## Authenticity

### *Authenticity*

Authenticity came up repeatedly as a key component of effective evangelistic preaching in the academic studies. Although authenticity in preaching is easily defined as a congregation's sense that the preacher believes and lives what he is talking about and is what he claims to be, it can be difficult to verbalize what that really consists of in preaching. Some suggestions are that humility, transparency with one's own weakness, a sense through voice and words that the preacher holds a sincere conviction in what he preaches, and a real passion for the message he preaches. Effective preachers tended to demonstrate more of all of these characteristics in their preaching.

### *Likeability*

The persuasion psychology study revealed that one factor peripheral processors use to evaluate a message is the likeability of the speaker.<sup>3</sup> Some studies showed things like a speaker's apparent love for his audience, similarity with the listeners, and identification with the listeners improves likeability.<sup>4</sup> There was a significant or very significant difference in each of these areas. Evangelistically effective preachers met all the criteria of being more likeable to an unbelieving crowd than the comparison preachers

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<sup>3</sup> Hogan, 26; Perloff, 168.

<sup>4</sup> Cialdini, 176; Goleman, 170; Hogan, 29; Perloff, 169.

were. Some psychology studies suggested the physical appearance of a speaker could increase or decrease acceptance of a message. Effective preachers were more attractive on the average and less likely to be overweight. They also smiled slightly more.

### *Loving Tone*

A majority of current day preaching experts advocate a loving tone in preaching. This study evaluated a combination of tone of voice and word choice to determine if a preacher's tone was loving or adversarial. There was a wide variety of scores in both categories regarding the adversarial tone of the preaching, but effective preachers' sermons were significantly more loving.

### *Expertise*

The psychology study showed a speaker's perceived expertise increased his credibility. This study looked for any reference to training or expertise in a preacher's speaking as a clue for this. The biblical study showed how Jesus, Peter and Paul used miracles to add credibility to their message. Reference to any kind of miracle including a dramatic testimony of a changed life resulted in a check in this item. The initial biblical study also showed that divine calling was a key element of effective preachers. If a preacher referenced his or her personal call, a check was placed here. Few preachers studied used any of these elements in their sermons.

### *Category Summary*

As chapter 5 pointed out, individual listeners determine speakers' credibility.<sup>5</sup> Individual listeners could let tone of voice, action, or encounters with preachers reduce the preachers' credibility in their minds. Although listeners likely use a slightly different set of criteria to determine preachers' levels of authenticity, the elements evaluated in this section primarily were items the psychology study showed affect listeners' attitudes toward speakers. The evaluation of these elements shows that target preachers are more likely to use characteristics that tend to convey authenticity to listeners.

As seen in the previous section, target preachers demonstrated more authenticity through natural, yet passionate, vocal styles. They used words that conveyed an authentic love for Jesus Christ and the people they spoke to as well as conviction in the truth of the message they spoke. The target preachers used more self-deprecating humor and openly and seriously confessed their own failings and weaknesses to communicate humility. Preachers in the southern United States were less likely to demonstrate humility in their preaching than those in other regions, however. This could be a cultural phenomenon. In some places, the expertise or perceived holiness of preachers may be more important in establishing credibility and persuading unbelievers to come to Christ than preachers' frailties. As mentioned earlier, target preachers were less likely to use notes than comparison preachers. This could also increase listeners' sense of preachers' authenticity by conveying that preachers speak from their hearts.

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<sup>5</sup> See page 76.



Though perceived credibility is very personal and subjective, effective preachers demonstrated some common indicators significantly more often: particularly authenticity and likeability. This supports the findings of the other studies in this paper.

### Holy Spirit Empowered

The biblical and homiletical studies clearly demonstrated the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing unbelievers to faith in Christ. The analysis of historical preachers supported this claim, and chapter 5 demonstrated that secular psychologists acknowledge the role of affect—which may be a good description of the Holy Spirit’s work during an evangelistic sermon—in peoples’ decisions.<sup>6</sup>

This is the most subjective element of this empirical study. The author of this paper debated about attempting to measure the level of Holy Spirit anointing in worship services for several reasons: 1) he could not be physically present at most of the sermons evaluated, 2) he has found his level of sensitivity to the Spirit varied depending on a number of factors, and, most of all, 3) it seemed presumptuous to try and claim where and when God’s Spirit was and was not at work. This dissertation would be incomplete or inaccurate, however, without “empowered by the Holy Spirit” as a characteristic of evangelistic preaching. The author has experienced powerful worship services with a sense of the Holy Spirit’s presence verified by the testimony of many participants. The author is accustomed to this sense of the presence of the Spirit in his church’s services and has been aware of the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit in gatherings of

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<sup>6</sup> See pages 78-82.

believers. Though it may be subjective and presumptuous, the author evaluated the perceived Holy Spirit anointing of the sermons based on verbal cues and the evaluator's sense of the Holy Spirit's presence in the message and posted the scorings on the results in Table 3. Target preachers had a significantly higher level of perceived anointing than the comparison preachers.

### **Other Tools**

A final part of the study looked to see if the use of extra tools such as video, objects, image projectors, etc. had any significant impact on a preacher's success. No significance was found in any of these.

### **Other Trends**

The data was also evaluated to see if there were general trends in preaching depending on 1) the denominational/theological affiliation of the church, 2) the size of the church, 3) the setting of the church, and 4) the geographical region of the church. The denomination/theological (D/T) affiliation was divided into three major categories: Pentecostal/Charismatic, Fundamentalist, and Mainline. Although many churches would not necessarily identify themselves by these categories, these labels generalize churches by their historical identification. Pentecostal/Charismatic churches are those that believe in supernatural experiences today, often including speaking in tongues as evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This larger group includes two subgroups: 1) Assemblies of God churches (A), and 2) all other Pentecostal/Charismatic churches (P). Fundamentalist churches (F) place a high value on the authority (and usually inerrancy) of Scripture and

the need for individuals to make a personal faith commitment to receive salvation through Jesus Christ but do not traditionally seek supernatural experiences. There is a huge breadth of theology on other issues within these churches. Baptist churches (B) are evaluated as a separate category within this group because of the large numbers of Baptist churches represented in America's fastest growing churches. The final group includes the historical mainline churches (M). The majority of these churches studied embrace evangelical theology.

Church sizes were broken down into three categories: small (S), large (L) and megachurch (M). Small churches average less than 400 in Sunday morning attendance, large churches range from 400 to 3,000, and megachurches run more than 3,000 in attendance each week. Although these size categories are not proportionally representative of American churches in general, there are limited resources available for research of much smaller churches.

Settings for the churches studied included: 1) Urban (U), located within the city limits of the primary city of a metropolitan area of more than 500,000 population; 2) Suburban (S), located outside the city proper but within a metropolitan area of 500,000 or more; 3) City (C), located in or near a city with a population of between 50,000 and 500,000; and 4) Town (T), located in or near a community of less than 50,000 people.

Regions were divided into Northwest (NW), Southwest (SW), South (S), Midwest (MW) and Northeast (NE).

Summary scores of the preachers divided into these different categories are published below. Although of limited value for the study as a whole, this data does show where trends vary between categories.

Table 4. Target Church Sorted Averages

Category	Length (Mins.)	Biblical & Christ-Centered		Relevant									
		Number of passages referenced	Word studies - use of original	Relevant to unbelievers	Issues the listeners deal with?	Felt needs and wants?	Relevance well demonstrated?	Language and style of the target	Any "Christianese?"	Verbosity	Use of slang and vernacular?	Directed at the unconvinced	Directed at believers

Sorted by church size

Small	39	2.8	20%	3.5	3.5	2.8	2.6	70%	40%	20%	60%	0%	80%
Large	36	2.7	43%	3.4	2.9	2.9	3.4	71%	29%	0%	86%	86%	29%
Mega	39	3.7	41%	3.9	3.4	3.0	3.8	91%	27%	5%	68%	55%	23%

Sorted by setting

Town	32	3.0	17%	3.7	3.3	2.8	3.3	75%	33%	17%	67%	67%	33%
City	41	2.5	50%	3.6	2.4	2.3	3.3	75%	25%	0%	100%	100%	0%
Suburban	36	3.9	29%	3.9	3.6	3.2	3.7	93%	21%	0%	57%	57%	29%
Urban	46	3.1	63%	3.8	3.6	3.2	3.9	88%	38%	13%	88%	25%	50%

Sorted by region

Northeast	32	4.0	0%	3.4	3.4	2.5	3.2	100%	0%	0%	50%	50%	50%
Midwest	36	2.3	0%	4.3	3.6	3.4	3.8	100%	0%	0%	75%	100%	0%
South	38	2.9	33%	3.9	3.6	2.9	3.8	83%	44%	0%	89%	33%	22%
Southwest	35	4.8	50%	4.2	3.8	3.6	4.4	100%	0%	0%	50%	75%	25%
Northwest	41	3.5	54%	3.5	3.1	2.8	3.3	77%	38%	15%	69%	54%	46%

Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	39	4.3	29%	3.6	3.2	2.9	3.0	79%	29%	14%	57%	43%	43%
Other P/C	41	4.2	50%	3.9	3.4	2.8	3.7	83%	67%	0%	83%	17%	67%
Baptist	43	2.8	33%	3.8	3.6	2.9	3.8	75%	33%	0%	83%	33%	17%
Other													
Fund.	35	3.1	44%	3.8	3.2	2.9	3.9	94%	11%	11%	78%	100%	0%
Mainline	33	1.8	25%	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.8	100%	0%	0%	50%	75%	50%



Table 4—Continued

Category	Relevant		Persuasive Appeal	
			Structure	Argument
Directed to both	Derogatory remarks about unbelievers		Exegetical	Appropriate for the people
	Identification with unbelievers			
	Disidentification with unbelievers			
	Similarity (culturally) with unbelieving listeners			
Topical	Metaphorical		Other:	Level of complexity
Random content / structure?				Random content / structure?

Sorted by church size

	Small	Large	Mega
60%	0%	20%	0%
71%	0%	43%	0%
59%	5%	32%	0%
60%	60%	60%	70%
20%	60%	20%	0%
57%	43%	14%	14%
27%	59%	5%	9%
100%	100%	2.5	2.3
86%	86%	2.9	2.0
89%	89%	2.9	1.7

Table 4—Continued

Category	Persuasive Appeal										
	Use of claims and warrants	Structure obvious & clear?	Quantity of evidence	Quality of evidence	Type of Evidence						
					Bible	Common sense / experience	Examples	Data & statistics	Narrative evidence	Benefits to the listener	Appeal to authority

## Sorted by church size

Small	3.1	80%	2.9	3.2	100%	60%	100%	20%	60%	40%	0%	0%
Large	3.1	79%	3.1	3.3	100%	86%	86%	14%	71%	86%	43%	29%
Mega	3.7	77%	3.5	3.5	95%	91%	73%	36%	59%	45%	27%	9%

## Sorted by setting

Town	3.2	75%	3.2	3.3	100%	100%	83%	50%	67%	50%	17%	17%
City	3.3	75%	3.3	3.5	100%	75%	75%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%
Suburban	3.7	93%	3.5	3.6	100%	86%	79%	36%	71%	50%	36%	7%
Urban	3.5	75%	3.2	3.2	100%	100%	88%	13%	75%	88%	13%	25%

## Sorted by region

Northeast	3.5	100%	3.5	3.4	100%	50%	50%	50%	100%	50%	0%	0%
Midwest	3.8	88%	3.9	3.9	100%	100%	100%	75%	75%	75%	75%	50%
South	3.3	67%	3.1	3.1	100%	89%	44%	11%	67%	56%	0%	0%
Southwest	4.0	100%	3.9	3.8	100%	100%	100%	25%	75%	75%	25%	25%
Northwest	3.3	85%	3.2	3.4	100%	92%	100%	31%	54%	46%	31%	8%

## Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	3.2	86%	3.0	3.2	100%	86%	100%	14%	57%	29%	14%	0%
Other P/C	3.4	67%	3.2	3.1	100%	100%	100%	17%	67%	83%	17%	0%
Baptist	3.2	67%	3.2	3.2	100%	83%	50%	0%	50%	50%	0%	17%
Other												
Fund.	3.8	94%	3.6	3.7	100%	100%	67%	67%	67%	44%	33%	22%
Mainline	3.8	100%	4.0	4.0	100%	75%	100%	50%	100%	100%	75%	25%



Table 4—Continued

Category	Persuasive Appeal												
	Type of Evidence								Powerful speech	Memory Tools			
	Emotional appeal	Fear appeal	Guilt appeal	Social proof	Appeal to numbers	Trained altar workers	Call and response	Testimonies		Repeated theme	Repetition by people	Questions and Answers	Repetition of key words/phrase

## Sorted by church size

Small	0%	0%	40%	40%	20%	20%	0%	40%	4.5	40%	0%	60%	20%
Large	0%	14%	14%	14%	0%	0%	0%	43%	4.2	71%	29%	57%	29%
Mega	18%	9%	27%	18%	23%	5%	14%	14%	4.5	64%	23%	9%	23%

## Sorted by setting

Town	0%	17%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%	33%	4.3	50%	0%	50%	0%
City	0%	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4.6	100%	25%	50%	25%
Suburban	14%	0%	21%	29%	43%	14%	14%	36%	4.5	50%	29%	21%	29%
Urban	25%	13%	38%	13%	0%	0%	13%	13%	4.5	88%	25%	13%	38%

## Sorted by region

Northeast	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4.4	50%	0%	0%	50%
Midwest	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	25%	75%	4.1	100%	25%	25%	0%
South	22%	11%	56%	22%	22%	0%	11%	0%	4.6	78%	33%	11%	44%
Southwest	50%	0%	0%	25%	25%	0%	0%	50%	4.4	75%	0%	0%	0%
Northwest	0%	15%	31%	23%	23%	15%	8%	23%	4.5	46%	23%	54%	23%

## Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	0%	0%	29%	29%	14%	14%	0%	29%	4.4	57%	14%	57%	14%
Other P/C	33%	0%	17%	33%	33%	17%	33%	0%	4.6	83%	33%	33%	33%
Baptist	0%	17%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	4.6	67%	17%	33%	50%
Other													
Fund.	22%	22%	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%	22%	4.4	56%	22%	11%	11%
Mainline	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%	4.3	75%	25%	0%	25%

Table 4—Continued

Category	Persuasive Appeal								Illustrations			
	Call for Commitment								Core doctrines?	Emotional stories	Personal stories and illustrations	Testimonies of others
	Altar call	Raised hands	Fill out card	In your heart	General Prayer	Call to action	Other	None				

## Sorted by church size

Small	80%	60%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	60%	80%	100%	60%
Large	29%	0%	0%	14%	57%	0%	0%	14%	29%	57%	71%	57%
Mega	9%	14%	5%	55%	41%	27%	5%	0%	23%	41%	73%	55%

## Sorted by setting

Town	33%	17%	0%	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%	33%	83%	83%	50%
City	25%	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	25%	25%	0%	50%	50%
Suburban	29%	36%	7%	36%	36%	21%	0%	0%	43%	57%	93%	64%
Urban	13%	0%	0%	38%	38%	25%	13%	0%	13%	50%	75%	50%

## Sorted by region

Northeast	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%	100%	50%	0%
Midwest	0%	0%	0%	75%	75%	25%	0%	0%	25%	75%	100%	75%
South	11%	11%	0%	44%	33%	0%	0%	0%	33%	33%	67%	56%
Southwest	0%	0%	25%	50%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	75%	100%	100%
Northwest	54%	38%	0%	23%	23%	23%	8%	8%	38%	46%	85%	46%

## Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	57%	43%	14%	29%	14%	0%	0%	14%	29%	57%	86%	57%
Other P/C	33%	33%	0%	17%	33%	33%	0%	0%	17%	50%	67%	50%
Baptist	33%	0%	0%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%	33%	50%	67%	33%
Other												
Fund.	0%	11%	0%	78%	56%	22%	11%	0%	33%	33%	89%	67%
Mainline	0%	0%	0%	25%	50%	50%	0%	0%	50%	100%	100%	75%

### Sorted by setting

Town	3.1	0%	73%	73%	33%	100%	67%	50%	0%	33%	17%	17%
City	3.3	25%	63%	65%	0%	100%	50%	50%	25%	50%	25%	75%
Suburban	3.6	14%	56%	74%	29%	100%	43%	21%	7%	71%	29%	29%
Urban	3.6	13%	75%	75%	38%	88%	63%	25%	13%	75%	38%	38%

### Sorted by region

Northeast	3.5	0%	80%	100%	50%	100%	50%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%
Midwest	3.5	25%	60%	70%	50%	100%	75%	75%	0%	100%	50%	50%
South	3.4	0%	50%	64%	22%	89%	44%	22%	0%	56%	56%	33%
Southwest	3.9	25%	80%	80%	50%	100%	75%	25%	25%	100%	0%	50%
Northwest	3.3	15%	70%	74%	15%	100%	46%	31%	15%	46%	15%	31%

### Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	3.1	29%	77%	83%	43%	100%	57%	43%	14%	43%	14%	14%
Other P/C	3.5	0%	67%	80%	17%	100%	50%	17%	17%	67%	50%	33%
Baptist	3.6	17%	57%	73%	33%	83%	33%	0%	0%	67%	33%	67%
Other	3.5	0%	62%	62%	11%	100%	67%	56%	11%	56%	22%	33%
Fund.	3.7	25%	60%	70%	50%	100%	50%	25%	0%	100%	25%	25%
Mainline	3.7	25%	60%	70%	50%	100%	50%	25%	0%	100%	25%	25%

Table 4—Continued

Category	Illustrations	
	Humor	
Storytelling ability		
Object Lessons		
Metaphors interesting to the listener		
Metaphors demonstrate the argument		
Published jokes		
Off-the cuff comments		
Self-deprecation		
Teasing others		
Puns		
Funny stories		
Common experiences		
Physical humor		

Sorted by church size

	Small	Large	Mega
3.3	0%	76%	84%
3.3	29%	71%	71%
3.5	9%	55%	65%
	60%	100%	60%
	29%	100%	43%
	18%	91%	50%
	20%	29%	32%
	20%	0%	9%
	40%	57%	64%
	20%	14%	32%
	0%	71%	27%

Table 4—Continued

Category	Illustrations				Dynamic Delivery									
	Quantity of humor used	Pop Culture References	Interactive exercises	Quantity of Illustrations	Energy level	Rate of speech	Intensity	Variety of rate	Variety of intensity	Rhythm & aural signals	Use of pauses	Tone		
												Anger /indignation	Loving / positive	Whispers used

Sorted by church size

Small	2.5	60%	20%	3.3	3.9	3.6	4.0	3.7	4.0	3.5	3.4	0%	4.1	0%
Large	2.5	71%	29%	3.4	3.8	3.4	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.2	3.4	0%	3.8	0%
Mega	2.8	68%	32%	3.7	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.3	3.4	18%	3.9	5%

Sorted by setting

Town	2.2	83%	17%	3.1	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.0	3.1	17%	3.8	0%
City	3.1	25%	0%	3.6	4.3	3.9	4.3	3.8	4.0	3.0	3.0	0%	3.6	0%
Suburban	2.9	57%	50%	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	7%	4.1	0%
Urban	2.9	100%	25%	3.7	4.1	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.7	25%	3.9	13%

Sorted by region

Northeast	2.4	0%	0%	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.4	2.7	2.0	0%	3.8	0%
Midwest	3.1	50%	75%	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.6	0%	4.3	0%
South	2.7	67%	22%	3.7	4.1	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.6	22%	3.9	11%
Southwest	3.7	75%	25%	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	0%	4.3	0%
Northwest	2.5	85%	31%	3.4	3.9	3.5	3.9	3.7	3.9	3.2	3.4	15%	3.7	0%

Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	2.7	57%	29%	3.4	4.0	3.7	4.0	3.7	4.0	3.5	3.4	0%	3.9	0%
Other P/C	2.8	100%	50%	3.7	4.0	3.5	3.9	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.7	33%	4.0	0%
Baptist	2.8	67%	33%	3.7	4.2	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.7	3.6	17%	3.8	17%
Other														
Fund.	2.8	67%	11%	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.4	2.8	3.1	11%	3.8	0%
Mainline	2.9	50%	50%	3.9	3.8	3.4	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.4	0%	4.3	0%

Table 4—Continued

Category	Dynamic Delivery												
	Chanting / rhythm	Vocalization /characterizations	Approach to Words				Verbal precision	Wrong words?	Gestures				Quantity of note use
			Memorized verbatim	Scripted	Tight outline	Loose outline			Stayed behind pulpit	Wandered around platform	Wandered into people	Large physical gestures	

## Sorted by church size

Small	0%	24%	0%	0%	80%	0%	3.1	40%	0%	40%	0%	40%	1.3
Large	9%	44%	14%	14%	43%	29%	3.3	14%	43%	14%	14%	43%	1.8
Mega	3%	33%	32%	14%	45%	5%	3.8	0%	9%	23%	9%	18%	1.2

## Sorted by setting

Town	0%	15%	0%	0%	83%	0%	3.2	17%	33%	0%	0%	17%	2.5
City	0%	65%	0%	0%	50%	50%	2.8	0%	0%	0%	25%	25%	1.1
Suburban	0%	29%	36%	29%	36%	0%	3.8	7%	7%	36%	7%	36%	1.4
Urban	15%	51%	38%	0%	50%	13%	3.9	13%	25%	38%	13%	25%	1.1

## Sorted by region

Northeast	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	3.9	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Midwest	0%	23%	0%	50%	50%	0%	3.9	0%	25%	0%	0%	25%	2.0
South	7%	39%	67%	0%	11%	22%	3.9	0%	0%	44%	22%	44%	0.9
Southwest	0%	55%	50%	25%	25%	0%	3.7	0%	25%	25%	0%	0%	1.7
Northwest	5%	38%	0%	8%	77%	8%	3.3	15%	23%	23%	8%	31%	1.6

## Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	0%	34%	0%	14%	57%	14%	3.2	14%	14%	29%	0%	29%	1.8
Other P/C	10%	42%	17%	0%	67%	17%	3.8	0%	0%	33%	33%	17%	1.3
Baptist	10%	53%	67%	0%	17%	17%	3.4	17%	17%	67%	17%	83%	1.1
Other													
Fund.	0%	39%	33%	0%	67%	0%	3.7	0%	33%	0%	0%	11%	1.8
Mainline	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%	4.3	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	

Table 4—Continued

Category	Dynamic Delivery								
	Eye contact	Vocal Pitch					Diction		
		High pitch	Moderate pitch	Deep pitch	Variety of pitch	Tonal resonance	Understandability	Overemphasis of syllables	Natural diction

## Sorted by church size

Small	4.5	0%	80%	20%	3.3	3.6	4.0	3.2	3.1
Large	3.6	0%	100%	0%	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.3	2.7
Mega	4.5	14%	59%	27%	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.2	3.0

## Sorted by setting

Town	2.8	0%	83%	17%	3.4	3.3	4.0	2.6	3.2
City	4.5	0%	100%	0%	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.3	3.2
Suburban	4.3	7%	57%	36%	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.2	3.0
Urban	4.5	25%	75%	13%	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.6	2.6

## Sorted by region

Northeast		0%	100%	0%	2.9	3.4	4.0	2.4	3.7
Midwest	3.6	0%	100%	0%	3.4	3.7	4.0	2.8	3.8
South	4.7	33%	33%	44%	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.4	2.3
Southwest	4.0	0%	50%	50%	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.4	3.3
Northwest	3.9	0%	92%	8%	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.3	2.9

## Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	4.0	0%	71%	29%	3.3	3.8	4.0	3.3	3.0
Other P/C	4.6	33%	67%	17%	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.4	2.6
Baptist	4.5	17%	67%	17%	3.9	3.5	3.7	3.4	2.5
Other									
Fund.	3.5	0%	67%	33%	3.4	3.6	4.0	2.7	3.4
Mainline		0%	100%	0%	3.5	3.6	4.0	3.4	3.1

Table 4—Continued

Category	Authenticity								Anointed
	Humble & transparent	Conviction	Passion for the message	Likeability			Non-adversarial	Filled with grace	Holy - Spirit Empowering
				Passion for the people	Physical attractiveness	Smiling			

## Sorted by church size

Small	3.3	4.7	4.5	4.2	3.6	3.1	3.8	4.0	3.9
Large	3.1	4.4	4.1	4.1	3.5	3.6	3.5	4.0	3.3
Mega	3.4	4.5	4.5	4.2	3.4	3.7	3.6	4.1	3.7

## Sorted by setting

Town	3.5	4.5	4.3	4.3	3.6	3.5	3.4	4.1	3.5
City	3.2	4.5	4.5	4.2	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.8	3.9
Suburban	3.4	4.6	4.4	4.2	3.5	3.3	3.9	4.1	3.7
Urban	3.2	4.4	4.5	4.0	3.5	4.1	3.7	4.1	3.6

## Sorted by region

Northeast	3.4	4.4	4.2	4.1	3.1	3.0	3.5	4.0	3.3
Midwest	4.0	4.6	4.6	4.5	3.1	3.8	4.4	4.4	3.9
South	2.9	4.5	4.5	4.3	3.5	3.7	3.3	4.0	3.7
Southwest	4.0	4.5	4.3	3.5	3.6	4.1	4.2	4.2	3.5
Northwest	3.3	4.5	4.4	4.2	3.6	3.4	3.5	4.0	3.7

## Sorted by denominational / theological affiliation

A/G	3.4	4.6	4.5	4.1	3.6	3.1	3.7	4.0	3.8
Other P/C	3.0	4.4	4.4	3.9	3.5	3.9	3.8	4.1	3.9
Baptist	2.9	4.6	4.5	4.4	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.9	3.5
Other									
Fund.	3.7	4.5	4.3	4.1	3.5	3.7	3.4	4.1	3.7
Mainline	3.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	2.8	3.5	4.3	4.3	3.5



## **Conclusion**

The results of this empirical study illustrate the paper's thesis and are consistent with the findings of the four other analyses. Each of the seven characteristics that typify evangelistic preaching—1) biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, 3) persuasive reasoning, 4) engaging illustrations, 5) dynamic delivery, 6) authentic preachers, and 7) Holy Spirit empowerment—were more prevalent in evangelistically effective churches than in evangelistically ineffective churches.

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