

Identity in Congregational Development through Hermeneutical and Contextual Preaching

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TABLE OF CONTENT

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCING THE SUBJECT UNDER STUDY

1.1. THE SELECTION OF A THEME

- 1.1.1. AN INTEREST AROUSED
- 1.1.2. AN INTEREST CONFIRMED

1.2. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM AND THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

- 1.2.1. FORMULATING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT
- 1.2.2. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT
- 1.2.3. THE HYPOTHESIS
- 1.2.4. THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH
- 1.2.5. THE AIMS OF THE STUDY EXPRESSED IN FIVE CHAPTERS
- 1.2.6. WHERE WILL THE BORDERS BE ERECTED?

1.3. CONCEPTUALISING

- 1.3.1. THE BUILDING UP OF A LOCAL CHURCH (CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)
- 1.3.2. THE FINDING OF CORE IDENTITY AND PURPOSE
- 1.3.3. PREACHING
- 1.3.4. HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING
- 1.3.5. CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

1.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- 1.4.1. EPISTEMOLOGY
 - 1.4.1.1. The term epistemology
 - 1.4.1.2. The history of Epistemology
 - 1.4.1.3. Knowledge
- 1.4.2. APPROACHES WITHIN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY
 - 1.4.2.1. The Normative-Deductive approach

- 1.4.2.2. The Hermeneutical-Mediative approach
- 1.4.2.3. The Empirical-Analytical approach
- 1.4.2.4. The Political-Critical approach
- 1.4.2.5. The Pastoral-Theological approach
- 1.4.3. THE EMPIRICAL-ANALYTICAL APPROACH MORE CLEARLY DEFINED
 - 1.4.3.1. Johannes Van der Ven
 - 1.4.3.2. Richard R. Osmer
 - 1.4.3.3. A.D. de Groot
 - 1.4.3.4. Heyns and Pieterse
 - 1.4.3.5. Gerben Heitink
- 1.4.4. TYPES OF RESEARCH
 - 1.4.4.1. Descriptive Research
 - 1.4.4.2. Explorative Research
 - 1.4.4.3. Testing Hypotheses
- 1.4.5. THE RESEARCHER'S COURSE OF ACTION

CHAPTER 2

2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1. BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH

- 2.1.1. A DEFINITION
- 2.1.2. THE METAPHOR "BUILDING UP" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
- 2.1.3. THE METAPHOR "BUILDING UP" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
- 2.1.4. THE PROCESS IN BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH
- 2.1.5. THE PURPOSE OF/IN BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH

2.2. IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

- 2.2.1. INTRODUCTION
- 2.2.2. IDENTITY AND PURPOSE
- 2.2.3. WHAT IS THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH?
- 2.2.4. THE MODEL OF CHRISTIAN MISSION – INCARNATIONAL CHRISTIANITY
- 2.2.5. FINDING IDENTITY THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF PREACHING

2.3. PREACHING

- 2.3.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING
- 2.3.2. A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO PREACHING
- 2.3.3. THE CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF PREACHING
 - 2.3.3.1. The Character of the Preacher
 - 2.3.3.2. The Quality of the Preaching
- 2.3.4. WORDS HAVE VALUE
- 2.3.5. IMAGES, AND IMAGINATIVE PREACHING HAS VALUE
- 2.3.6. PREACHING IN VARIOUS MODES
- 2.3.7. A CONCLUDING REMARK

2.4. HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

- 2.4.1. WHAT DOES THE RESEARCHER MEAN BY “HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING”?
- 2.4.2. A DEFINITION OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS
- 2.4.3. PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION
- 2.4.4. PURPOSE OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION
 - 2.4.4.1. The First Assumption
 - 2.4.4.2. The Second Assumption
 - 2.4.4.3. The first fundamental issue of the biblical text relates to meaning
 - 2.4.4.4. The second fundamental issue of the biblical text relates to significance
- 2.4.5. PROBLEMS IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION
- 2.4.6. THE PRODUCT OF HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING
- 2.4.7. THE NECESSITY OF GOOD HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

2.5. CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

- 2.5.1. WHAT DOES THE RESEARCHER MEAN BY “CONTEXTUAL PREACHING”?
- 2.5.2. THE CONTEXT OF THE TEXT
- 2.5.3. THE CONTEXT OF THE PASSAGE
- 2.5.4. THE CONTEXT OF THE HEARER
- 2.5.5. A CONCLUDING REMARK REGARDING CONTEXTUAL PREACHING
- 2.5.6. A CONCLUDING REMARK REGARDING HERMENEUTICAL AND CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

CHAPTER 3

3. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

3.1. WHAT IS QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH?

3.2. A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

3.2.1. THE EXTENT OF THE SURVEY

3.2.1.1. The approach

3.2.1.2. The procedure

3.2.2. THE SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE

3.3. EVALUATING AND INTERPRETING THE SURVEY

3.4. PRESENTING THE INFORMATION/DATA

3.4.1. CATEGORY 1 – VARIABLES

3.4.1.1. The question and data – V1

3.4.1.2. The question and data – V2

3.4.1.3. The question and data – V3

3.4.1.4. The question and data – V4

3.4.1.5. The question and data – V5

3.4.1.6. Reflections on this category of questions

3.4.2. CATEGORY 2 – THE CHURCH

3.4.2.1. The statement and data – V6

3.4.2.2. The statement and data – V7

3.4.2.3. The statement and data – V8

3.4.2.4. The statements and data of V9-V13 evaluated collectively

3.4.2.5. Reflections on this category of questions

3.4.3. CATEGORY 3 – CHURCH IDENTITY

3.4.3.1. The statement and data – V14

3.4.3.2. The statement and data – V15

3.4.3.3. The statement and data – V16

3.4.3.4. The statement and data – V17

3.4.3.5. The statement and data – V18

3.4.3.6. The statement and data – V19

3.4.3.7. The statement and data – V20

3.4.3.8. The statements and data of V21-V22 evaluated collectively

3.4.3.9. Reflections on this category of questions

VIII

3.4.4. CATEGORY 4 – PREACHING

- 3.4.4.1. The statement and data – V23
- 3.4.4.2. The statement and data – V24
- 3.4.4.3. The statement and data – V25
- 3.4.4.4. The statement and data – V26
- 3.4.4.5. The statement and data – V27
- 3.4.4.6. The statement and data – V28
- 3.4.4.7. The statement and data – V29
- 3.4.4.8. The statement and data – V30
- 3.4.4.9. The statement and data – V31
- 3.4.4.10. The statement and data – V32
- 3.4.4.11. The statement and data – V33
- 3.4.4.12. The statement and data – V34
- 3.4.4.13. The statement and data – V35
- 3.4.4.14. The statement and data – V36
- 3.4.4.15. The statement and data – V37
- 3.4.4.16. The statement and data – V38
- 3.4.4.17. Reflections on this category of questions

3.4.5. CATEGORY 5 – HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

- 3.4.5.1. The statement and data – V39
- 3.4.5.2. The statement and data – V40
- 3.4.5.3. The statement and data – V41
- 3.4.5.4. The statement and data – V42
- 3.4.5.5. The statement and data – V43
- 3.4.5.6. The statement and data – V44
- 3.4.5.7. The statement and data – V45
- 3.4.5.8. Reflections on this category of questions

3.4.6. CATEGORY 6 – CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

- 3.4.6.1. The statement and data – V46
- 3.4.6.2. The statement and data – V47
- 3.4.6.3. The statement and data – V48
- 3.4.6.4. The statement and data – V49
- 3.4.6.5. The statement and data – V50
- 3.4.6.6. The statement and data – V51

- 3.4.6.7. The statement and data – V52
- 3.4.6.8. Reflections on this category of questions

3.4.7. COMPARISON TESTS

- 3.4.7.1. The Constructs
- 3.4.7.2. The Comparisons
- 3.4.7.3. Comparison across gender
- 3.4.7.4. Comparison across age-groups
- 3.4.7.5. Comparison across provinces

3.5. AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA AS IT RELATES TO THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

3.5.1. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

3.5.2. THE HYPOTHESIS

3.5.3. THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

- 3.5.3.1. As regards the survey
- 3.5.3.2. As regards the Church
- 3.5.3.3. As regards Church identity
- 3.5.3.4. As regards preaching
- 3.5.3.5. As regards hermeneutical preaching
- 3.5.3.6. As regards contextual preaching
- 3.5.3.7. The assumption
- 3.5.3.8. The reason

CHAPTER 4

4. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

4.1. A QUALITATIVE SURVEY

4.1.1. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH:

- 4.1.1.1. What is qualitative research?
- 4.1.1.2. The strategies and methods of research
- 4.1.1.3. The researcher's strategy and method of research
 - 4.1.1.3.1. The approach
 - 4.1.1.3.2. The procedure
 - 4.1.1.3.3. The questions

4.2. THE SURVEY-QUESTIONNAIRE

4.3. THE RECORDING AND EVALUATING OF THE DATA

4.3.1. RECORDING THE DATA

4.3.2. EVALUATING/INTERPRETING THE DATA

4.4. PRESENTING THE INFORMATION/DATA

4.4.1. CATEGORY 1 – THE CHURCH

4.4.1.1. The question

4.4.1.2. The question

4.4.1.3. Reflections on this category of questions

4.4.2. CATEGORY 2 – THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

4.4.2.1. The question

4.4.2.2. The question

4.4.2.3. Reflections on this category of questions

4.4.3. CATEGORY 3 – THE ISSUE OF PREACHING

4.4.3.1. The question

4.4.3.2. The question

4.4.3.3. The question

4.4.3.4. Reflections on this category of questions

4.4.4. CATEGORY 4 – HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

4.4.4.1. The question

4.4.4.2. The question

4.4.4.3. Reflections on this category of questions

4.4.5. CATEGORY 5 – CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

4.4.5.1. The question

4.4.5.2. The question

4.4.5.3. Reflections on this category of questions

4.5. AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA AS IT RELATES TO THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

4.5.1. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

4.5.2. THE HYPOTHESIS

4.5.3. THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

- 4.5.3.1. As regards the survey
- 4.5.3.2. As regards the Church
- 4.5.3.3. As regards Church identity
- 4.5.3.4. As regards preaching
- 4.5.3.5. As regards hermeneutical preaching
- 4.5.3.6. As regards contextual preaching
- 4.5.3.7. The assumption
- 4.5.3.8. The researchers conclusion

CHAPTER 5

5. THE PRAGMATICS OF THE RESEARCH

5.1. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

5.2. THE HYPOTHESIS

5.3. THE TEST

- 5.3.1. IS THE LOCAL CHURCH BEING BUILT UP?
- 5.3.2. DO WE KNOW WHO WE ARE – OUR CORE IDENTITY?
- 5.3.3. DO WE KNOW OUR REASON FOR BEING – OUR PURPOSE?
- 5.3.4. IS THERE A NEGLECT OF HERMENEUTICAL AND CONTEXTUAL PREACHING?
- 5.3.5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

SUMMARY

The guiding hypothesis to this study is that the local church will be built up and develop missionally when it understands its core identity. The core identity of the local church is metaphorically understood. It can however be defined and ascertained by answering two questions: i) Who are we as the local church? and ii) What is our purpose or reason-for-being? When the local church understands its core identity, it is assumed that it will be built up both in quality and in quantity and that it will develop missionally. The question arises, however, as to how the local church attains its identity? There are many ministries that contribute to the church's identity, for God comes to man in more than one way (Nel 2015:74), but the study seeks to determine whether there is a relationship between the core identity of the local church and preaching. Is the church finding its identity through preaching and is the church being built up missionally through the ministry of preaching? In particular, is the church being built up or developing missionally through what the researcher has called hermeneutical and contextual preaching? Hermeneutical and contextual preaching takes into serious consideration not only the principles of biblical interpretation but also the context of the hearer or listener.

The research focuses especially on an empirical study based on the research model of Gerben Heitink (1999). In order to add quality to the study, both a quantitative and qualitative survey was conducted. Congregation members of thirty-eight city churches within the Baptist Union of SA were approached to participate in the quantitative survey, while a further ten pastors of city churches in the Baptist Union of SA were approached to participate in the qualitative survey. All participants – congregation members, pastors and churches – were randomly selected. The empirical research explores whether the respondents understand their core identity as a local missional church – who they are and their reason for being. It furthermore explores the ministry of preaching – not only whether hermeneutical and contextual preaching is taking place within the local church, but whether preaching of a high hermeneutical order is taking place and whether this preaching in fact affords the church its missional identity. The presupposition is that if this is happening, the local church will be built up both in quality and quantity and it will develop missionally. The research establishes however that while all this appears to be transpiring within the local

church, the local church is failing to be built up (certainly in quantity) and develop missionally. While the local church has an understanding of its nature and identity, it appears however to have no abiding conviction and passionate outworking thereof. While the local church has an understanding of its 3-fold purpose – to bring glory to God; to build up his body; to be on active mission with God – it fails however in its missional vocation. While both hermeneutical and contextual preaching is taking place, a desire is expressed for more time to engage in this practice. Practical theological insight is sought as to why these issues exist and remedial action is suggested to address the problem.

KEY TERMS

Practical Theology

Building up the Local Church / Congregational Development

Core Identity - Identity and Purpose

Preaching

Hermeneutical Preaching

Contextual Preaching

The Mission of God (*missio Dei*)

Missional

Missional Hermeneutic

Incarnational Christianity

Empirical Study

Quantitative Research

Qualitative Research

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE SUBJECT UNDER STUDY

The aim of this chapter is:

- To introduce how the researcher came to select the theme – an interest aroused and an interest confirmed.
- To formulate the problem into a problem statement and hypothesis while stating the purposes and aims of the study.
- To conceptualise the problem statement - clarifying and defining the explicit and implicit concepts in the problem statement.
- To gain a brief overview of epistemology. To explore the various research approaches, models and methods. To choose a research model and give reasons therefore.

1.1 THE SELECTION OF A THEME

1.1.1 AN INTEREST AROUSED

The researcher was a student at the University of Pretoria's Centre for Contextual Ministry where he was privileged to do postgraduate studies in the field of Building up the Local Church (Congregational Development). In the field of Practical Theology, and in particular in the field of Building up the Local Church, and more particularly in the field of Homiletics, the researcher, during a lecture, was introduced to the necessity of keeping the balance between preaching from the indicative texts of the Bible and the imperative texts of the Bible. To build up the local church as an entity (and the life of a believer as an individual), preaching from the indicative texts of the Bible becomes essential. Preaching from the indicative texts of the Bible is preaching that focuses on who God is, what God has so graciously done for humankind, and the church's identity in Christ and its reason for existence. When the church understands these truths, preaching from the imperative texts of the Bible not only becomes logical, but it naturally follows the indicative texts of the Bible.

As the researcher himself is a preacher, the researcher's interest was aroused when the lecturer made a statement about modern preaching to the effect that there is too much emphasis on what we *ought* to be doing as Christians today. It was suggested that there is prevalence on preaching from the imperative texts of the Bible; an overemphasis on the moral injunctions or moral imperatives of scripture, which leads to an unhealthy situation. To express it more positively: there is too little emphasis on preaching from the indicative texts of the Bible which highlight our identity in Christ and reason for existence and too little emphasis on the virtues which extol the grandeur and greatness of God. This, it was proposed, has a negative effect upon the hearer. It leaves the church at risk, feeling quietly defeated and desperate. The researcher's interest was aroused because the researcher as a preacher/pastor has encountered these very feelings of quiet defeat and desperation within the church. It was aroused for it left the researcher wondering whether he is not, as a preacher/pastor, perhaps guilty of this very issue.

The researcher therefore embarked on a Masters Program and conducted some research on the kind of preaching that was taking place within local churches. Was there a dearth of preaching from the indicative texts of the Bible? Was there a dearth of preaching that highlighted our identity in Christ and reason for existence and that extolled the virtues of God's grandeur and greatness? Or, was there an over-emphasis on preaching from the imperative texts of the Bible (the moral injunctions of scripture), and if so, what kind of effect did it have on the local church?

The problem statement that was to be researched was **“In the absence of indicative preaching, imperative preaching is undermining finding identity as a core issue in building up the local church.”**

The study was confined to one specific location – the small geographical area of Malalane in Mpumalanga. The researcher took into account gender, age, language, and church affiliation so that the research was fairly representative of the area. These were the findings:

1. The researcher defined preaching from the indicative texts as preaching that focuses very specifically on who God is, what God has done for believers, and the believer's identity in Christ together with their reason for existence.

The finding: This kind of preaching was undoubtedly taking place in the various congregations with *seemingly* positive effects upon the respondents. The respondents *seemed* to be finding their identity as a core issue through the preaching, and yet, there was something apparently lacking as the preaching did not counteract the negative effects that preaching from the imperative texts had on many of the respondents. It was almost as if the positive effects of preaching from the indicative texts of the Bible were being undone by the negative effects of preaching from the imperative texts of the Bible. Preaching from the indicative texts seemed to be lacking in something important.

What was lacking? With the insights of Long (2009c:5) and Piper (1990:22) the researcher identified a possibility:

- The content of the gospel was not being taught in a way that excited the imagination and inflamed the heart. In other words, there was no “up-building” element in it. According to Long (2009c:5), “If the gospel is taught delightfully, then it will be persuasive... [I]t will open up ways of being and living ethically in the world.” According to Piper (1990:22), what people need to take away from worship/preaching is, “a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory, the grand object of God’s infinite being.” What was possibly missing then was the delightful, persuasive, enchanting sense of God, his sovereign grace, his panoramic glory, the grand object of his infinite being which would not only inflame the heart and excite the imagination but make obedience to the imperatives an imaginable possibility. So while the content of the gospel was being taught, it was possibly being taught pedantically and not delightfully, without enchantment and persuasion.
2. The researcher defined preaching from the imperative texts of the Bible as preaching that focuses on the imperatives that naturally and logically arise out of indicative texts. This kind of preaching ought only to be embarked on once the believer has basked in the glory of who God is, of what God has so graciously done for them, of their identity in Christ and reason for existence. These are the indicative texts. Preaching from the imperative texts ought to follow these texts and to challenge the hearer now to live a life worthy of these truths.

The finding: Preaching from the imperative texts of the Bible was undoubtedly taking place in the various congregations. A staggering 98% of respondents concurred that this kind of preaching not only reminded them of what it was that God required of them, but that the preaching exhorted them to obey what God required of them. What was of concern, however, is the negative effect that preaching from the imperative texts had on a significant number of respondents. It left them, among other things, with a sense of being overwhelmed, quietly desperate, in doubt about themselves and their usefulness to God. It detracted from their personal sense of wholeness and well-being.

What was happening? The researcher identified 2 possibilities:

- There was a lack of preaching from the indicative texts. Yet this was clearly not the case since the research showed that there was more preaching from the indicative texts of the Bible taking place in the local church than preaching from the imperative texts of the Bible. 59.64% of the respondents listened to preaching mainly from the indicative texts while 30.72% of the respondents listened to preaching mainly from the imperative texts of the Bible.
 - There was a lack of preaching from the indicative texts *in an enchanting way*. As noted in point 1 above, what was possibly missing was the delightful, persuasive, enchanting sense of God, his sovereign grace, his panoramic glory, the grand object of his infinite being, which would not only inflame the heart and excite the imagination, but make obedience to the imperatives an imaginable possibility.
3. There was a perceived lack of balanced preaching between the indicative and imperative texts of the Bible. While there was preaching from both the indicative and imperative texts of the Bible, there was no balance, or combination, or compliment of these in each sermon. It was either one or the other. Only 9.64% of the respondents were recipients of balanced preaching, i.e. a balance between the indicative texts of the Bible and the imperative texts of the Bible in each sermon.

The finding: The preaching in the local churches had a significantly negative effect on the hearers. They were generally dispirited and quietly desperate. The impact of an imbalance between preaching from the indicative and imperative texts of the Bible seemed to impair identity-finding and hence the process of building up the local church. Something was missing, which the researcher would define as an apparent lack of identity and purpose.

After the researcher's studies in the Master's Program, the researcher's interest was further aroused. Using Osmer (2008:4), the researcher posed a variety of questions: What was really going on here? Why was this going on? What ought to have been going on? How might someone have responded to the situation? How could it be improved? What needed to happen? If the problem is not an over-emphasis on preaching from the imperative texts of the Bible, is it a lack of preaching from the indicative texts of the Bible in an enchanting way? Is the problem a lack of preaching from the imperative and indicative texts of the Bible in a balanced and complimentary way? Or is there something more that is going on here?

The researcher's thoughts were directed to a more fundamental level. It became the researcher's hypothesis that in building up the local church through preaching, unless there is "hermeneutical preaching" (preaching that takes into account at a fundamental level the principles of biblical interpretation), and unless there is "contextual preaching" (preaching that takes into account at a fundamental level the context), then the local church would not find its identity and purpose. The researcher therefore mused over some questions which he would later explore. These questions were:

- To what extent does true, biblical preaching take place in the local church?
- To what extent does preaching in the local church take into account biblical hermeneutics, or, to what extent do preachers give attention to the principles of interpretation?
- To what extent does preaching in the local church take into account context, or, to what extent is attention given to the context of the text, the passage, the book of the Bible under study, and the hearer? (In taking into account the context, the preacher would take into account the immediate and broader context of the text, the passage, the book and the

hearer. The preacher would also take into account the indicative and imperative texts of the passage.)

- If the preacher does not take into account biblical hermeneutics and context, does this impair the building up of the local church, or, more specifically, does this affect the formation of the church's identity and reason for existence?

1.1.2 AN INTEREST CONFIRMED

Is this a problem? Who says this is a problem? For whom is it a problem? Is this problem confirmed in literature?

The researcher has not come across any literature that specifically confirms that this may well be a problem, yet in all the scholarly literature on homiletics, the recurring theme and underlying concern is that preaching must be conducted or approached in a responsible, faithful and scholarly manner. Perhaps the first steps toward a faithful and responsible handling of scripture are to begin with the biblical principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) and the biblical context. Some examples of where this appears to be the case:

1. Malan Nel: Nel (2005:28-29) in his book *Who Are We?* argues that, "God still speaks (through his Word) to the congregation... Building up the local church, like all Practical Theology, is about God coming to meet people in his Word by means of pastoral ministry. The congregation is prone to superficiality and even degeneracy when it forgets that it exists for the sake of communication with God, the world, and one another." If preaching does not take into account, at a fundamental level, biblical hermeneutics and biblical context, how can God speak through his Word to the congregation, or, how can God meet his people through his Word? Would not the congregation be subject to superficiality and even degeneracy when it is not told or presented with its identity and reason for existence? This, the researcher assumes, will, at a fundamental level, be derived through hermeneutical and contextual preaching.

Nel argues further:

A theological premise in building up the local church is that God has a plan for his congregation. God creates and goes on recreating by means of his Spirit and Word... The Spirit links us to God's Word. When the church listens to God's Word, it understands itself and learns what its origins and objectives are... Building up the local church as a ministry is borne and guided by faithful preaching of the Word... The congregation and the pastors are faced with the responsible handling of Scripture...

(Nel 2005:166-167)

The question that arises from this quote is that in the absence of the “faithful” and “responsible handling of scripture” (preaching that would take into account, at a fundamental level, biblical hermeneutics and biblical context), can the church discover God's plan for itself? Can God create and go on recreating by means of his Word and can the church understand itself and learn what its origins and objectives are without the faithful and responsible handling of God's Word?

2. Thomas Long: Long (2009c:5), in his book *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, quotes and develops an argument by Augustine, in which he says that the goal of each sermon should be to teach, delight and persuade. The responsibility of the preacher is:

...to teach the content of the gospel, but the content needs to be taught not pedantically but delightfully, taught in such a way that it excites the imagination and inflames the heart. If the gospel is taught delightfully, then it will be persuasive, by which Augustine meant that it will open up ways of being and living ethically in the world. When the substance of the gospel is taught with imagination, then the Christian life becomes an imaginable possibility.

(Long 2009c:5)

The thought Long creates in his argument is this: what will excite the imagination, inflame the heart, open up ways of being and living ethically, and make the Christian life an imaginable possibility? Apart from the content or substance of the gospel being taught delightfully, it *must* be taught, and it must be taught *correctly, faithfully, responsibly*. The researcher assumes that biblical hermeneutics and context, at a fundamental level, must be taken into account.

3. John Piper: Piper (1990:12), in his book *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, argues that, “it is not the job of the Christian preacher to give people moral or psychological pep talks about how to get along in the world; someone else can do that.” Piper (1990:22) asks the question: what do people, “...take away from worship nowadays – a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory, the grand object of God’s infinite being?” The inference is that we are exposed to too much moralistic preaching. The kind of preaching that constrains a man’s submission by an act of raw authority – do this, do that, obey this, obey that or otherwise – rather than the kind of preaching that ravishes our affections with irresistible displays of God’s glory. It is argued that what people need is for someone to tell them, week in and week out, about the supreme beauty and majesty of God, which many people appear to be starved of (see Piper 1990:12, 22, 25). The question Piper creates in the researcher’s mind is, “What will produce this?” At the most fundamental level, will not hermeneutical and contextual preaching go a long way to meet this?

4. Michael Horton: Horton (2008; 2009), in his work *Christless Christianity* and his subsequent work *The Gospel-Driven Life*, argues that the church today has been taken captive by the culture and ideals of the world – the culture and ideals of consumerism, pragmatism, self-sufficiency, individualism, positive thinking, personal prosperity and nationalism. The church’s message and faith has become, “trivial, sentimental, affirming, and irrelevant” (Horton 2008:21). The Gospel is now a message of moralism, personal comfort, self-help, and self-improvement. The church’s faith has become an individualistic religion that trivialises God and makes him a means to our selfish ends. Horton suggests that the Church and our Faith is well on its way to a Christless [sic] Christianity (see Horton 2008:15-100).

In his book *The Gospel-Driven Life*, Horton (2009:11) appeals to the church to return to its “Good News” message which it seems to have replaced with a message of “Good Advice.” The goal of his book is to reorient the church’s faith and practice toward the gospel, the “Good News.” The gospel, he contends, is at heart “Good News”, not “Good Advice”, and it is this “Good News” through which the church originates, flourishes, and fulfils its mission in the world (Horton 2009:11). “Only the radical news concerning Jesus Christ can distract us from all the trivial pursuits and transform us from the inside out. Only the gospel can cause such a radical re-evaluation of our core identity that we are willing, like Paul, to throw away what we thought was a great résumé in exchange for being found in Christ”, argues Horton (2009:22).

Long (2009c:117) agrees with Horton’s assessment of the modern church. He states that preachers in mainstream churches have become “apostles of progress” – moral progress, social improvement, the “power of positive thinking”, church growth, together with a psychotherapeutic gospel. By an emphasis on this personal progress in the present tense – pursuing a present tense genre of Wisdom Literature – they have unwittingly become enemies of the Faith (see Long 2009c:117-120).

The question that begs an answer is this: what has contributed, significantly, to the church’s “Christless Christianity” and it’s “Gospel of Good Advice”? Is it not preaching? In particular, is it not preaching that has abandoned, or at least, disregarded and neglected its foundational principles – preaching that takes into account biblical hermeneutics and context? Is it not preaching that has embraced a more popular message of self-help, self-improvement, and personal comfort?

5. Jonathan Edwards: A reflection from history. “Unfortunately, historical research into sermons is a forgotten art. We live in cultures that are so focused on the here and now that we tend to ignore all those who have gone before us”, states Hogan (2007:129). Edwards provides us with a case for historical research into sermons. It is interesting to compare the preparation and preaching of a man like Edwards with the preparation and preaching of many modern day preachers. Not only is the difference in theological emphasis remarkable, but what is missing becomes evident.

As far as Edwards' theological emphasis is concerned, he is said to have been a man with a God centred vision, and what Edwards preached was an extension of his vision of God (Piper 1990:75). What was his vision of God? God is God! He saw a God who was absolutely sovereign, self-sufficient, all-sufficient, infinite in holiness, and therefore perfectly glorious (Piper 1990:80). He believed that as his hearers were confronted with this perfectly glorious God and heard the irresistible displays of God's glory, people would respond to God out of affection and enlightenment.

Concerning Edwards' preparation and preaching, it is said that the essence of his preaching was to be found in 10 characteristics of which one was to enlighten the mind – enlighten the mind of the hearer with divine truth, with the virtues of this perfectly glorious God (Piper 1990:81-86). Edwards treated his hearers as creatures of reason and sought to move their hearts only by giving the light of truth to the mind (Piper 1990:85). Edwards considered it, “very profitable for ministers in their preaching, to endeavour clearly and distinctly to explain the doctrines of religion, and unravel the difficulties that attend them, and to confirm them with strength of reason and argumentation, and also to observe some clear and easy method and order in their discourses, for the help of understanding and memory” (Edwards cited in Piper 1990:86). His philosophy was: make a tree good and its fruit will be good (Piper 1990:83). Stir up holy affections for this perfectly glorious God and these holy affections will become springs of godly action (Piper 1990:83). Clearly, evidently, the theological emphasis, preparation and preaching of Edwards was thorough, responsible, faithful and God-centred. There is every indication that it started with the fundamentals of hermeneutical and contextual preaching.

6. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: A reflection from more recent history. The heartfelt cry of Lloyd-Jones was a cry for depth in two areas – depth in biblical doctrine and depth in vital spiritual experience. He called for light and heat, logic and fire, Word and Spirit. Lloyd-Jones was said to be constantly engaged in war which he fought on two fronts – against the dead, formal institutional intellectualism on the one hand, and on the other hand, against the superficial, glib, entertainment-oriented and human-centred emotionalism (Piper 1991). Lloyd-Jones saw the world in a desperate condition, without Christ and without hope, and a church with no power to change it. And so he resorted to preaching that was both doctrinally sound and deep, yet at the

same time, crystal clear, logical and powerful. It is said that he held audiences by the sheer weight and intensity of the truth that he preached, so that people would remark that they had never before heard such preaching, or that it came to them with the force of an electric shock (Piper 1991). The impact of Lloyd-Jones' preaching, which Packer (1986:7) describes as, "the greatness and weight of spiritual issues", was simply unforgettable and its effect extended to thousands. The preaching of Martyn Lloyd Jones certainly appears to be steeped in biblical hermeneutics and context.

7. Hennie J.C. Pieterse: A book review. In reviewing the book *Preaching as a Language of Hope* (*Studia Homiletica* 6), a book which contains a number of papers presented by various scholars, and a book which presents a refreshing diversity of approaches and aspects of contemporary research in homiletics, Pieterse makes two interesting observations:

1. "The papers all follow a *contextual* approach", (Pieterse 2011:1). They all deal with the issue of preaching in different contexts. Context, even if it is just the context of the hearer/situation, is given serious consideration. Context is important.
2. "Fundamental *theological* arguments play a role in putting theoretical insights on the table for contemporary preaching...", (Pieterse 2011:1). There is integrity on the part of the scholars when approaching the text, resulting in fundamental theological argument.

What is interesting about these observations is that while practical theologians in homiletics deal with the questions raised by postmodern challenges and work with a post-fundamentalist approach to epistemology, the concept of "context" and "fundamental theological argument" (which surely takes biblical hermeneutics into account) are still concepts that are cherished. The questions to be asked are: Do not these concepts of context and fundamental theological argument have their roots in biblical hermeneutics and biblical context? Does it not indicate that these scholars have as their foundation and premise, biblical hermeneutics and biblical context?

1.2. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM AND THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

1.2.1 FORMULATING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

As there is evidence that this may well be a problem, the researcher would seek to ascertain as to what extent hermeneutical and contextual preaching is taking place within local churches and to what extent this has an impact on the formation of their core identity and purpose.

1.2.2 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

“In building up a local church, is the finding of core identity and purpose impaired due to a neglect of hermeneutical and contextual preaching?”

1.2.3 THE HYPOTHESIS

The supposition is that the local church (or faith community) will find and live up to its core identity and reason for existence when there is hermeneutical and contextual preaching. While this is the researcher’s initial supposition (a working formula or supposition if you like), this will be tested, reformulated and restated at the end of the study when all the data of the empirical study has been collated and analysed.

1.2.4 THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH WOULD BE:

- To generate knowledge, “for research always aims to generate knowledge that will enable one to change the current situation into a more desirable situation...” (Heitink 1999:223-224). Bear in mind that research presupposes a search (Verschuren 1999:19), and this search would be aimed at attaining that knowledge that one does not yet know, but about which one’s curiosity has been aroused. The search seeks to answer the question regarding the why, what, where, and how (Heitink 1999:224).
- To provide meditative action to the research topic. “Improvement of the situation toward the desired praxis is the underlying interest of practical-theological research”, says Heitink (1999:225). The research must, ultimately, result in meditative action – concrete suggestions for action.

The researcher would furthermore hope . . .

- To develop or enhance greater faith in God. Van der Ven (1998:120) says that, “[f]aith in God is not merely the object of empirical-theological research; it is the ultimate goal of this research...” (cf Pieterse 2001:7).
- To improve what Van der Ven (1998:120) calls “the hermeneutic-communicative praxis.” The contention is that communication has a certain amount of indoctrination and manipulation and this research encourages freedom from these constraints and an expanding of communications boundaries (see Van der Ven 1998:120).
- To be of benefit to theologians in the field of Practical Theology, in particular in the field of Building up the Local Church or Congregational Development.
- To be of benefit to pastors in their preaching as it would provide challenge, inspiration and encouragement to faithful and responsible preaching.
- To be of benefit to the local church in the building up of their faith both personally and as a faith-community.

1.2.5 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY ARE EXPRESSED IN FIVE CHAPTERS:

- Chapter 1: To begin to formulate a hypothesis based on an observation arising out of the researcher’s present studies. The hypothesis (or presupposition) is that the church will find and live up to its core identity and reason for existence when there is the presence of responsible, faithful hermeneutical and contextual preaching.
- Chapter 2: To identify and define the key words and concepts in the Problem Statement. The researcher has identified the key words and concepts in the problem statement as ‘building up a local church’, ‘core identity and purpose’, ‘preaching’, ‘hermeneutical preaching’ and ‘contextual preaching’. After conducting a word search on and defining these words and concepts, the researcher will explore the relationship between them.

- Chapter 3: To Conduct a Quantitative Research. The study will be restricted to the Baptist Union of South Africa. The research will take into account gender, age, language, race, and culture so that the research is fairly representative of the Baptist Union. With the assistance of the Statistical Department of the University of Pretoria, a quantitative research questionnaire will be formulated whereupon the data will be collated and recorded. An Explorative Research on the data will then be conducted. Here the researcher will seek to explore – to analyse, interpret and explain – the data gathered from the empirical research. Rather than adopting a purely deductive method of reasoning, the researcher will resort to an abductive method of reasoning. The main accent however will be on interpreting and explaining the data. The findings will be recorded.
- Chapter 4: To conduct a Qualitative Research. The qualitative method of gathering data involves an “understanding process” (Heitink 1999:239). In-depth interviews and participatory observations will be embarked upon with a sample group of people from the Baptist Union of South Africa and once the relevant information/data has been collated, this will then be subjected to analysis and the findings will be recorded.
- Chapter 5: Conclusion. Once the findings have been recorded, the researcher will seek to answer the questions “So what?”, and “Where to from here?” The researcher will make recommendations on the findings of the research.

1.2.6 WHERE WILL THE BORDERS BE ERECTED?

- Border 1: The research will be conducted in the area of Practical Theology. In particular, the subject field will be congregational studies, or congregational development, or what is more specifically referred to as ‘Building up the Local Church’, ‘*Gemeentebou*’ in Afrikaans.
- Border 2: Within the study of Practical Theology is the field of congregational development, and within congregational development (Building up the Local Church) there are various forms of ministry that contribute to it, one of them being preaching.

Other recognised forms of ministry in congregational development are worship, pastoral care, administration, teaching, fellowship, deeds of mercy and witnessing (Firt 1986:14; Nel 2005:111; 2015:71). The research will be confined to the ministry of preaching as important within congregational development. This is however not per se a study of preaching within the subject field of homiletics. The reason for this is that the researcher is himself a preacher and has a desire not only to be the best preacher he can be, but to make a contribution to the ministry of preaching today, and in this case, as it specifically relates to congregational development.

- Border 3: The scope of the empirical research is going to be the Baptist Union of South Africa, of which the researcher is a member. The research will entail a random sample of 40 metropolitan churches within the Baptist Union of South Africa and a random sample of 10 metropolitan pastors within the Baptist Union of South Africa.
- Border 4: Using the Empirical Analytical Research model by Gerben Heitink (Heitink 1999:238) the researcher will aim to categorise, analyse, interpret and evaluate the problem and thereafter to make recommendations for action. The research will follow the course of, “observation – description – analysis – reflection – suggestions for action” (Heitink 1999:238). The researcher perceives there’s a problem and is curious to know more. Using scientific research, the researcher will perform an empirical study, describe the data he has collected, analyse, evaluate and interpret it and finally make suggestions regarding the findings. The empirical research will include both a quantitative and a qualitative survey, or what is known as a *mixed method* of research (Osmer 2008:49-50). As part of analysing, interpreting and evaluating the problem, the researcher will conduct both a descriptive and explorative research on the findings of the empirical research.
- Border 5: The research would seek to answer 2 questions in particular:
 1. Does hermeneutical and contextual preaching take place within the local metropolitan churches of the Baptist Union?
 2. Does hermeneutical and contextual preaching contribute to the formation of the church’s core identity and purpose?

1.3. CONCEPTUALISING

Clarifying and defining the explicit and implicit concepts in the problem statement:

The problem statement: **“In building up a local church, is the finding of core identity and purpose impaired due to a neglect of hermeneutical and contextual preaching?”**

1.3.1 THE BUILDING UP OF A LOCAL CHURCH (CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

In the study of building up the local church, every believer is not only seen as belonging to the body of Christ, of which Christ is the head, but every believer is seen as an integral member of that body – gifted, active, interrelated, interconnected, interdependent (NIV, 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 2). Other biblical analogies are used. For instance, believers are likened to living stones being built into a spiritual house (NIV, 1 Peter 2:4), or as sheep of the Good Shepherd’s pasture (NIV, Psalm 100:3; John 10). In building up the local church it is important that each member of the body of Christ be built up, or edified, or come to maturity, or take their rightful place so that together the church can be of service to God, to each other and to the world (see Nel 2005:30). This is accomplished through an eight fold ministry namely, worship, pastoral care, administration, teaching, fellowship, deeds of mercy, witnessing and *preaching* (Nel 2005:111; see Nel 2015:70-75).

1.3.2 THE FINDING OF CORE IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

In order for the local church to find its core identity and purpose in life, questions like “Who are we?”, “Whose are we?”, “What has God so graciously done for man?” and “What has God called us to be and do?” must be answered from the Bible.

1.3.3 PREACHING

To effectively build up the local church, faithful and responsible preaching is essential. That which constitutes faithful and responsible preaching, among other things, is preaching that takes into account biblical hermeneutics and context.

1.3.4 HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

This is preaching that takes serious account of the principles of interpreting the texts or passages or books of the Bible. It is preaching that honestly seeks to understand and correctly interpret all the linguistic and non-linguistic expressions of the text.

1.3.5 CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

This is preaching that takes into account the context of the text, the context of the passage, the context of the letter/book from which it comes, and the context of the hearer. Contextual preaching would give adequate and serious consideration to these various contexts understanding that these various contexts have a direct bearing on the understanding of the text and the application or significance thereof.

1.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Heitink (1999:156) defines methodology as, “the principles of the method” which one would follow in the research process. Research, according to Heitink (1999:224), first of all presupposes a search. Research is primarily aimed at generating knowledge. It aims at what one does not know, but is curious to know.

Before the researcher looks at the Methodology he will adopt for his research, a brief note on Epistemology. This is necessary as epistemology forms the basis of the researcher obtaining his knowledge in the research process.

1.4.1 EPISTEMOLOGY

1.4.1.1 The term epistemology

The term epistemology, introduced by Scottish Philosopher James Frederick Ferrier (1808-1864), comes from the Greek word *επιστημη* (meaning knowledge or science) and *λογος* (meaning study of) (Steup 2005; Suchting 2006). Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that is the science, the logic, the study of knowledge. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge. Epistemology addresses the questions of:

1. What is knowledge?
2. How is knowledge acquired?
3. How do we know what we know?

Alternatively, epistemology attempts to answer the basic question: what distinguishes true or adequate knowledge from false or inadequate knowledge? (Suchting 2006; see also Steup 2005).

1.4.1.2 The history of Epistemology

The first theories of knowledge emphasised the absolute and permanent character of knowledge, but subsequent theories put the emphasis on its relativity or situation – dependent on situation. Knowledge is thought to be continually developing and evolving because it actively interferes with its surrounds – its subjects and its objects. The trend of epistemology therefore moved from a static and passive view of knowledge (Foundationalism) to a more adaptive and active view (Post-foundationalism) (see Müller 2005; Steup 2005).

Plato's view of knowledge was that knowledge was simply an awareness of absolute, universal *Ideas* or *Forms* that existed independently – independent of any subject trying to apprehend them. Aristotle's view of knowledge was similar, although he put more emphasis on logical and empirical methods for gathering knowledge (Steup 2005). Following the Renaissance, two main views of epistemology emerged namely *Empiricism* and *Rationalism*.

- Empiricism: Empiricism is essentially knowledge attained as the result or product of sensory perception. It is the theory of knowledge emphasising the role of experience, especially experience based on perceptual observations obtained by the senses.
- Rationalism: Rationalism is essentially knowledge attained as a result or product of rational reflection.

Two other views of epistemology:

- Idealism: Idealism believes that knowledge is primarily acquired by *a priori* processes. It is innate – in the form of concepts not derived from experience.

- Constructivism: Constructivism is a view in philosophy in which all knowledge is “constructed” in as much as it is contingent on convention, human perception, and social experience.

(see Raskin 2002:2-5; Steup 2005)

Suffice to say that in 1963, Edmund Gettier called into question the whole theory of knowledge which has become known as the Gettier Problem. Gettier argued that there are situations in which one's belief may be justified and true, yet fail to count as knowledge. Gettier contended that while justified belief in a true proposition is necessary for that proposition to be known, it is not sufficient. Responses to this have been varied, among the more notable ones are Infallibilism, Reliabilism, and on the other hand, Skepticism.

- Infallibilism is the theory that a belief must not only be true and justified, but that the justification of the belief must *necessitate* its truth. In other words, the justification for the belief must be infallible (Steup 2005).
- Reliabilism is the theory that states that a true belief counts as knowledge only if it is produced by a reliable belief-forming process (Steup 2005).
- Skepticism is the theory that says that we do not and cannot know anything at all (Steup 2005).

A note on Foundationalism: In Epistemology, Foundationalism is the understanding that all knowledge, principles and beliefs are based, rest and built upon a basic foundation that is certain. One could call this foundation basic beliefs or first principles. According to Foundationalism, our justified beliefs are structured like a building: they are divided into a foundation and a superstructure, the latter resting upon the former. Beliefs belonging to the foundation are *basic*. Beliefs belonging to the superstructure are *non-basic* and receive justification from the justified beliefs in the foundation (Fumerton and Hasan 2010). The premise of all reasoning and knowledge then, moves in one direction, namely from the bottom up – from the basic beliefs or first principles to a resultant conclusion (Grenz & Franke 2001:30). Foundationalism however is in question today. Foundational beliefs or first principles in a postmodern world must be reviewed. Hence a new epistemology, a new way of thinking, and new research methods are

being explored. Müller (2005:8-9) has developed seven movements by which post-foundational research can be conducted. Quoted, they are:

- A specific context is described.
- In-context experiences are listened to and described.
- Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with 'co-researchers'.
- A description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretation.
- A reflection on the religious and spiritual aspects, especially on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation.
- A description of experience thickened through interdisciplinary investigation.
- The development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community.

1.4.1.3 Knowledge

In epistemology there are various kinds of knowledge namely propositional knowledge, procedural knowledge and acquaintance knowledge:

1. Propositional knowledge: This is also known as “knowledge that”. For example, in mathematics we know *that* $2+2=4$. It is a declarative statement or sentence which purports to describe a fact or state of affairs.

Epistemologists also distinguish between different types of propositional knowledge.

- *A priori* knowledge is knowledge that is known independently of experience (that is, it is non-empirical, or arrived at beforehand, usually by reason).
- *A posteriori* knowledge is knowledge that is known by experience (that is, it is empirical, or arrived at afterward through experience or the senses).

2. Procedural knowledge: This is also known as “know-how” knowledge. Example: It knows *how* to add 2 and 2 together to equal 4. Or it knows *how* to ride a bicycle or *how* to drive from one city to another.

3. Acquaintance knowledge: This is knowledge that is familiar with a person, place or thing. Example: I am *acquainted* with the head of department, or I am *familiar* with the layout of a letter.

(see Steup 2005)

Epistemology in general is primarily interested in propositional knowledge. To attain propositional knowledge however, a general characterisation or nature of knowledge is needed and epistemologists have suggested three conditions that are necessary for us to determine propositional knowledge. These three conditions are:

1. Belief: Knowledge is a mental state. It exists in one's mind. It is also a specific kind of mental state. It is a belief about a particular matter, a matter that we entertain in our mind, apart from which we cannot have knowledge. It is a belief that we actively entertain, also called a "concurrent belief".
2. Truth: Knowledge requires belief. Our beliefs however are not necessarily always true. Some beliefs are true and some are false. Sometimes we are mistaken in what we believe. As we try to acquire knowledge, we are really trying to increase our true beliefs while minimising our false beliefs. To attain knowledge therefore we need belief and truth – true beliefs.
3. Justification: Knowledge requires factual belief. But it requires more than factual belief. What is important in acquiring this factual belief is the way we arrive at this factual belief, i.e. how we form that belief or the path we travel to attain that belief. We must go about it the right way. Not all true beliefs constitute knowledge, but only true beliefs arrived at in the right way constitute knowledge.

(see Steup 2005)

In the search for knowledge, Heitink (1999:223) suggests that there are various ways in which one may approach the search. He differentiates between fundamental research, applied research, and technological research. Fundamental research is aimed at increasing theoretical knowledge.

Applied research is directed toward changing or improving a situation in the short term while technological research focuses on the development of working models (Heitink 1999:223). In the actual practice of practical-theological research, one usually meets a combination of these. This research will focus primarily on the theoretical and applied fields.

Before the researcher looks at the various research models and makes a choice as to which he will use in the research project, a brief mention on the various traditions/trends/approaches in the research field of Practical Theology. The researcher will then look at one specific approach and thereafter at the different types of research.

1.4.2 APPROACHES WITHIN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Heitink (1999:171) identifies five approaches, namely: a normative-deductive, a hermeneutical-deductive, an empirical-analytical, a political-critical, and a pastoral-theological approach for the actions that result from theology. Mentioned briefly:

1.4.2.1 The Normative-Deductive approach

This school of thought relies on the exegesis and dogmatism of the Word of God (the normative-theological theory) in order to deduce its beliefs and consequently actions of faith. This approach places great emphasis on a person's actions which are based in the person's belief in objective truth. Great attention is given to doctrinal matters.

1.4.2.2 The Hermeneutical-Mediative approach

This school of thought places a major emphasis on what Heitink (1999:172) calls "professional preparation" or "pastoral profession", which determines the person's action or faith expression. On the basis of your faith, resulting from "professional preparation" or "pastoral profession", your action is determined and fostered. It is also improved with a greater input from "professional preparation".

1.4.2.3 The Empirical-Analytical approach

This school of thought is primarily focused on research for right actions. The research aims to, "categorise, analyse, interpret, and evaluate the religious convictions, ideas, images and feelings

of the people. The inductive approach, starting from experience, is therefore followed by the deductive approach: developing theological concepts and making these operational, and testing them empirically” (Heitink 1999:174). Proponents of this approach feel at home with the school of critical rationalism.

1.4.2.4 The Political-Critical approach

This school of thought follows the tracks of political theology. It engages and involves itself with the political sphere, in particular with the poor and the oppressed and the persecuted in society. It seeks an action of liberation – it seeks to liberate the poor and oppressed. The bias however to this specific group of people leads to one-sidedness.

1.4.2.5 The Pastoral-Theological approach

This school of thought is partly a continuation of what Heitink (1999:176) calls “the old pastoral theology”. The actions of the church and its members are derived from or are dependent on the professional activities of the pastor and church. The role of the pastor obviously plays an important part in how the church and its members act.

1.4.3 THE EMPIRICAL-ANALYTICAL APPROACH MORE CLEARLY DEFINED

The word empirical or empiricism is derived from the Greek word ἐμπειρία, which means “experience”. Empirical or empiricism is the term used for an epistemological approach in which the researcher, “attempts to show that all scientific knowledge is based on experience and can in all respects, through sense perceptions, be deduced from experience” (Heitink 1999:221; see note on Epistemology).

The empirical-analytical approach then entails a practical theological research. It is a practical theological research through testing, or more specifically, through a “difficult” methodology of counting and measuring. The method calls for a testing process, much like that of the judicial system which is confronted with various interpretations of wrongful actions. Testing is required to arrive at a verdict that is valid, reasonable, and just (Heitink 1999:164). This approach then provides an adequate scientific basis for the academic enquiry into the meaning and effectiveness of human action (see Heitink 1999:164).

The researcher will now look at the various proponents of the empirical-analytical approach or at the various research models in this approach.

1.4.3.1 Johannes Van der Ven: In his empirical-theological cycle there are a number of phases that the researcher has to work through (see Van der Ven 1998:119-155).

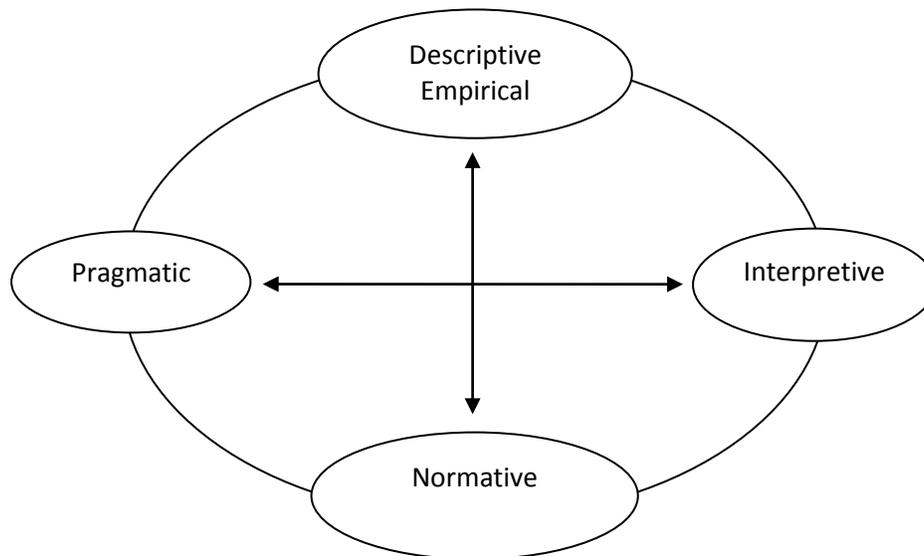
- The phase of developing a theological problem and goal. In this phase the researcher develops the theological problem and goal. What, according to Van der Ven (1998:119), is the ultimate aim of the research? Faith in God! Yet that statement “faith in God” is not only the theological nature, but the problem as well as the goal of empirical-theological research.
- The phase of theological induction. This phase requires the researcher to give attention to theological perception, theological reflection, the formulation of the theological question and the research design.
- The phase of theological deduction. Here the researcher is required to conceptualise the research, determine the conceptual model that is to be used, and then to put it into operation.
- The phase of empirical-theological testing. This phase would comprise of data collection, the preparation of that data and then an analysis of that data.
- The phase of theological evaluation. In this phase, the results of the testing process are referred back to the original problem and goals of the research.

1.4.3.2 Richard R. Osmer: Osmer (2008:4), in laymen’s language, seeks to guide a person in the interpretation and response to a situation by encouraging them to ask four questions.

- 1) What is going on?
- 2) Why is this going on?
- 3) What ought to be going on?
- 4) How might we respond?

Alternatively, in theologian’s language, there are four core tasks of practical theological interpretation. The researcher quotes Osmer (2008:4):

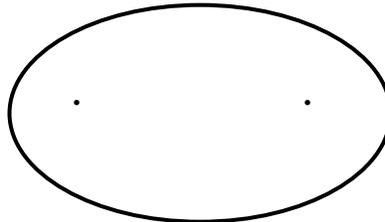
- *The descriptive-empirical task.* Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations or contexts.
- *The interpretive-task.* Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring.
- *The normative-task.* Using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses and learning from “good practice”.
- *The pragmatic-task.* Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the “talk-back” emerging when they are enacted.



1.4.3.3 A.D. de Groot: In de Groot’s empirical-theological cycle, research rests on the experiential process of every person. Firstly, we observe. Something in the environment affects us, or piques our interest, or we sense something. This observation then causes us to react to our environment and we may react in various ways. These various reactions are then tested to establish which alternatives seem preferable to us. In this way we acquire experiential knowledge about the impact of a specific kind of reaction in a concrete situation. This then leads to a preliminary “judgment” as a particular guideline for action (see Heitink 1999:233).

To express this theologically, the empirical cycle of research for de Groot consists in the following: observation – induction – deduction – testing – evaluation (Heitink 1999:231). To en flesh this formula, “observation” is the gathering and categorising of empirical data with a view to formulating a hypothesis. The “induction” phase has to do with an actual formulation of the hypothesis, whereas the “deduction” phase is the drawing of a conclusion or conclusions from the hypothesis, in the form of testable predictions. The “testing” phase will result in new empirical data, based on the outcomes of the predictions. The “evaluation” phase is the feedback to the theory while it also suggests issues for additional research.

1.4.3.4 Heyns and Pieterse: Heyns and Pieterse are South Africa’s ground-breaking theologians when it comes to developing a new model or adopting a new approach to theological research. Their approach is, “die eerste volledige uiteensetting in ons land van die nuwe benadering in die praktiese teologie, wat sedert die sestigerjare in Europa ontwikkel is” (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:voorwoord). This is loosely translated: “It is the first presentation of a new approach in practical theology in our country since practical theology was first developed in Europe in the sixties.” Their model would be graphically depicted by an ellipse with bipolar focal points which would be held in constant tension with each other (see Nel 1991:22-37).



The one focal point represents theory in practical theology while the second focal point represents praxis. Research would revolve around these two focal points, the theory and praxis being held in balance or tension with one another which would ensure integrity in research. According to Heyns and Pieterse (1990:35; see Pieterse 1987:3-4), the most important aspect of practical theology is the bipolar relationship of theory and praxis.

This is undoubtedly a good working model, yet a third dimension could be added to it (a tri-polar focal point if you like) which would ensure even greater integrity in research. While Heyns and

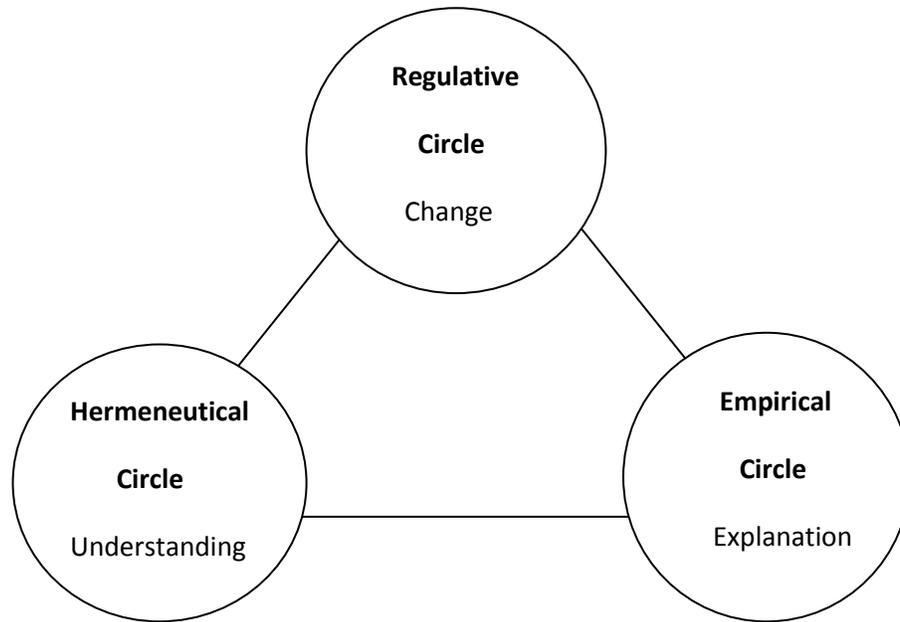
Pieterse have two focal points or two cycles in their model, namely theory and praxis, Heitink (1999:165) adds a third dimension to that. The three focal points or cycles are the hermeneutical cycle, empirical cycle and strategic/regulative cycle. The hermeneutical cycle relates to theory, the empirical to praxis while the strategic/regulative cycle relates to action/changes to be made. This is the addition to the model. These three focal points/cycles are held in tension with one another and are constantly interactive with each other (see Heitink 1999:163-166).

1.4.3.5 Gerben Heitink: Heitink suggests that the simplest form of practical theological study or research consists fundamentally of description – interpretation – explanation – action (Heitink 1999:228). This formula however is deceptively simple. A more thorough plan of executing the research could be seen in this form: “observation – description – analysis – reflection – suggestions for action” (Heitink 1999:238). A layman’s description of this formula is that the researcher perceives that there is a problem and is curious to know more. Using scientific research, the researcher will perform an empirical study, describe the data he has collected, analyse, evaluate and interpret it and finally make suggestions regarding the findings.

A more elaborative description of this formula by Heitink (1999:238) is as follows:

1. An introductory chapter would deal with the definition of the problem, the statement of the goals and the statement of the question to which an answer is sought.
2. The first chapter would then map out the theoretical framework of the study in its historical, sociological and theological sections.
3. The second chapter would deal with the empirical research, a description of what has been done and a statement about the results.
4. The third chapter would critically evaluate the results with a view to making recommendations or with a view to pastoral action.

As mentioned in 1.4.3.4 above, Heitink (1999:178-240) has not two, but three cycles in his research model – the hermeneutical, empirical and strategic/regulative cycle. These three cycles are held in tension with each other while there is a constant and critical interaction between the three. This model is graphically depicted like this:



1.4.4 TYPES OF RESEARCH

Before we look at the various types of research, a brief word on the methods we use to obtain data on which we can perform the various types of research. According to Heitink (1999:239) there are primarily two methods of gathering data:

1. Quantitative Method: Proponents of the quantitative method of gathering data are the theologians de Groot and Van der Ven. The quantitative method consists of gathering data by means of questionnaires. A definitive set of questions is drawn up and submitted to a representative sample of a group to be studied. The data is then collated, captured on a computer program and then made available for analysis, interpretation and evaluation (cf Osmer 2008:49-50). Quantitative surveys are considered the difficult method of counting and measuring. The quantitative method has distinct limitations.

2. Qualitative Method: Proponents of the qualitative method are theologians like P.J. van Strien and F. Wester. The qualitative method of gathering data involves an “understanding process”. In-depth interviews and participatory observations are

embarked upon with a sample group of people and once you have the relevant information/data, this is then subjected to analysis (cf Osmer 2008:49-50). The results that emanate from the data analysis do not necessarily lead to suggestions for action, but rather to reflection. Good empirical research would have a combination of both a quantitative and qualitative study, or a *mixed method* of inquiry.

With this in mind, we now look at the different types of research. There are three main types of research that are used in empirical studies namely: descriptive, explanatory and testing research. Discussed briefly, they are:

1.4.4.1 Descriptive Research

According to Heitink (1999:229), “descriptive research focuses on a systematic description of a topic on the basis of the empirical data”. Once the researcher has obtained the empirical data on, say, the way faith is experienced in various denominations or a particular denominational or population group, then descriptive research is the systematic description of that data. In many cases, descriptive research is only the first phase in the process, thereafter it is followed by explorative or testing research.

1.4.4.2 Explorative Research

Heitink (1999:230) also states that, “explorative research always aims at the formulation of a theory or of certain presuppositions, which might develop into hypotheses”. Explorative research is often a mixture of descriptive research and testing research, which may (or may not) lead to a hypothesis (or presupposition). If there is a hypothesis (or presupposition) that emanates from the research, that would then lead to testing research. In contrast to descriptive research, explorative research places the emphasis on explanation and interpretation.

1.4.4.3 Testing Hypotheses

What is characteristic about this research is that a hypothesis (or hypotheses), which are normally derived from a theory, is put to the test in an empirical way (Heitink 1999:230). A survey is performed on a representative sample of data and these tests will give clarity as to whether “reality” can be detected in the theory, or not.

1.4.5 THE RESEARCHER'S COURSE OF ACTION

While there are many different approaches to methodology, the researcher has decided to adopt the Empirical Analytical Research model, in particular, the model as advocated by Heitink. The research will therefore follow the course of, “observation - description - analysis - reflection - suggestions for action” (Heitink 1999:238).

The researcher has chosen this model essentially for 3 reasons:

1. There is constant, critical tension and interaction between the hermeneutical, empirical and strategic cycles of the Empirical Analytical model. These three cycles more than adequately cover all aspects of the research thereby leaving little to chance.
2. It is a popular, widely accepted model in theology for the past 20 years or so (see Dingemans 1990:103-105; also Van der Ven 1994:37-42).
3. A quantitative research is often criticised for its failure, “to capture the meanings that inform human action and the diversity of life-worlds” (Osmer 2008:50), while a qualitative research is often criticised for it, “being soft, subjective and unscientific” (Osmer 2008:50). The researcher wants to avoid the criticism of both and therefore to add quality and integrity to the study, both a qualitative and quantitative survey will be conducted in the research.

Having observed or experienced the problem then, and described it theologically, the researcher will now test it empirically through aiming to categorise, analyse, interpret and evaluate the stated problem. The empirical research will include the *mixed method*, or both a qualitative and quantitative survey. As part of analysing, interpreting and evaluating the problem, the researcher will conduct both a descriptive and explorative research on the findings of the empirical research. The researcher will then record the findings, consider the matter, and finally make recommendations or provide guidelines for action.

CHAPTER 2

BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH THROUGH PREACHING

(THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY)

The aim of this chapter is:

- To explore the theory of “building up the local church” and to look at both the process and purpose of building up the local church.
- To explore the theory of the “identity and purpose” of the local church: its identity/nature and its purpose/mission in the world.
- To explore the theoretical importance of preaching as a ministry that enables the church to find its identity and purpose.
- To explore the theoretical term “hermeneutical preaching” and how it relates to the honest, accurate and principled interpretation of the scriptures.
- To explore the theoretical term “contextual preaching” and it how it relates to the context of the text, the passage and the hearer.

The Problem Statement:

In building up a local church, is the finding of core identity and purpose impaired due to a neglect of hermeneutical and contextual preaching? Within the problem statement the researcher has identified these key words and concepts: “building up the local church”, “identity and purpose”, “preaching”, “hermeneutical preaching” and “contextual preaching”. The researcher will now set out to explore each one of these concepts.

2.1 BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH

2.1.1 A DEFINITION

What exactly is meant by the phrase “building up the local church”? It has been suggested that the term *congregational development* would be a better term while Carroll (2000:80) and Van Gelder (2007b:12) refer to it as *congregational studies*. While there is no concise English term

for building up the local church, the idea of building up the local church is firmly established and grounded in scripture (Nel 2005:2). The building up of the local church is a biblical issue. The Church itself is in existence because of God's salvation act in his Son Jesus Christ and because Jesus himself assures us, not only of its existence, but also of its continuance: "... I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it" (NIV, Matthew 16:18).

In Acts 2, we clearly see the establishing and building up of the local church.

They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

(NIV, Acts 2:42-47)

Similarly, in Acts 9:31, we see the local churches being strengthened, encouraged, growing in numbers, and living in fear of the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church: "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (NIV).

Not only are these graphic and wonderful pictures of the first congregations of believers being established and built up in their faith, but these examples are interspersed in the New Testament. In Acts 14:23-27 and in Revelation 1:12-20 we have examples of organised congregations of believers who were being established, being built up, and growing.

The term in its present form is just over a century old. It originated in Germany, in the German *volkskirchen* (the church of the nation) (Nel 2005:10; 2015:23; Te Velde 1992:18). In about

1890, concern arose due to a dwindling number of members that were involved in the *volkskirchen* in the city. Concerned Ministers therefore set about to revive the *volkskirchen* – to build up the local church. In about 1930 this term began to have an impact in Holland in the Reformed Church (Te Velde 1992:18), and there was an endeavour to build up these local churches. In South Africa this term is still relatively young (about twenty five years old) (Nel 2005:11; 2015:24). The first serious attempt to broach the subject of building up the local church was in 1986, in an article published in Afrikaans in the journal *Theological Perspectives*. Since then, the idea has been growing steadily. Among those in South Africa who have made important contributions to this field are Nel (1993, 1998, 2006), Burger (1991, 1995, 1999), Breytenbach and Pieterse (1992) and Hendriks (2001, 2007).

In order for us to understand what we mean by the phrase “building up the local church” we need to look at the use of the biblical metaphor “building up”.

2.1.2. THE METAPHOR “BUILDING UP” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, the root of the verb “to build” (*bnh* or *bānāh*) occurs about 390 times, in various forms, and it almost always refers to God who builds, makes, constructs, establishes and repairs (Nel 2015:13; Wagner 1974:166).

One of the first uses of the word *bānāh* relates to the promise that God made to the patriarch Abraham, and subsequently to the patriarch’s Isaac and Jacob. In Genesis 12:2-3, God expresses this promise to Abraham: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (NIV). The promise, among other things, is that God would not only make Abraham an “exalted father” (Abram), but that he would make him a “father of many” (Abraham). God was going to make or *build* a great nation of Abraham, and from Abraham all the nations of the world would be blessed. In other words, through Abraham and his offspring, God would fulfil his salvation plan for the world. Through Abraham and his offspring God would birth the Messiah (or Saviour) into

the world, and the Messiah would build his church in the world. This is more commonly known as “salvation history” (Lundbom 2010:34).

In this regard, the word *bānāh* appears for the first time in Genesis 16:2, where Sarai, perhaps a little impatient that God is not fulfilling his promise to Abraham and her, suggests to Abraham that he take her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and have a child through her: “Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build (*bānāh*) a family through her” (NIV). A similar incident occurs in Genesis 30:3 where barren Rachel suggests to her husband Jacob that he sleep with her maidservant Bilhah: “Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build (*bānāh*) a family” (NIV). In both cases, the women are cognisant of the promise that God has made to their respective husbands, and both are eager to have that promise fulfilled through them.

Later, it is the prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah particularly who use the image of “building up” in terms of God who is at work with his covenant people, building them up. The emphasis is always on God who does the building up even if he uses people to do it. Building is God’s work (Allen 2008:27; Hendriks 1992:40; Lundbom 2010:53-55; Nel 2005:2-3; Te Velde 1992:10).

To understand how the concept of God *building* his people took shape, we need to understand that in the Ancient Near East, during times of war there was inevitable destruction. There was the destruction of dwellings or houses, fields, harvests and even lives. Then, during times of peace, there was a rebuilding process. People’s dwellings or houses were rebuilt, crops and fields were replanted, and lives were restored. In peace each one could live in their homes again, plant and eat the produce of their land and rebuild their lives and families. This action of destruction and restoration, tearing down and rebuilding, uprooting and replanting is the imagery that the prophets employed to demonstrate how God deals with his people, both negatively and positively (Hendriks 1992:48-54; Lundbom 2010:55; Nel 2005:3; Nel 2015:14-15). Negatively, God would destroy, tear down and uproot his people. Positively he would build or rebuild them again. While it might sound cruel that God would actually destroy, tear down or uproot his people, we need to know that it was always for the purpose of building or rebuilding them again. In Isaiah 65 we see

a typical example of God *building up* Israel after he has destroyed them. After the sound of Israel weeping and crying due to God's judgement and punishment on them, the writer says:

They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as in the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them.

(NIV, Isaiah 65:21-23)

An example of the building metaphor in the book of Jeremiah:

1. Jeremiah 1:4-10: In this pericope we have the appointment of Jeremiah, in particular, the appointment of Jeremiah “over nations and kingdoms, to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant” (NIV, Jeremiah 1:10). There are six verbs in Jeremiah's appointment of which four are negative – uproot and tear down, destroy and overthrow – and two are positive – to build and to plant. Or, to judge and to save, to kill and to make alive as Fretheim (2002:51) puts it. According to Thompson (1980:151), Jeremiah did very little constructive preaching and a great deal of the destructive kind. It was not a pleasant task for Jeremiah to fulfil, which led to him being known, traditionally, as “the weeping prophet” (see NIV, Jeremiah 20:8). We need to understand however that these six verbs provide the essential shape of the book of Jeremiah (Allen 2008:18; Brueggemann 1998:24; Lundbom 1999:229-230). It was ultimately, in the purpose of God, to rebuild Israel and establish a new and greater covenant with her (Lundbom 2010:55), of which Jeremiah speaks so eloquently in Jeremiah 31:

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of man and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,” declares the

Lord... “The time is coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...”

(NIV, Jeremiah 31:27-34)

While Jeremiah chapter 1 provides us with the first mention of the building motif of God, it appears regularly in the book thereafter (see NIV, Jeremiah 12:14-17, 18:7-9, 24:6, 31:27-34, 45:4). Two more examples follow:

2. Jeremiah 18:1-17: In this pericope we have the account of Jeremiah who is instructed to go to the potter’s house where he will receive a message from God. By observing the potter crafting the malleable clay at the wheel, Jeremiah will learn and come to understand how God would deal with his people Israel, i.e. how God would deal with them by breaking them down and building them up (Allen 2008:215-216; Lundbom 2010:54). Just as clay cannot remonstrate with the potter, so Israel cannot remonstrate with God in the whole process (see Brueggemann 1998:160-163).

Then the word of the Lord came to me: “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended for it.”

(NIV, Jeremiah 18:5-10)

And it happened. God not only uprooted, tore down and destroyed Israel, but God also, in time, built Israel up and planted her (see Brueggemann 1991:41).

3. Jeremiah 31:31-34: A passage with a Messianic emphasis. In the building imagery of the Old Testament there is also a strong emphasis on Messianic fulfilment and the future of God's people (Allen 2008:356-358; Hendriks 1992:42; Lundbom 2010:68-69, 72; Nel 2005:3; see Richards 1981:27-38). In this pericope God talks of building or establishing a *new creation* of people through the coming of the Messiah. When the Messiah comes, these people will receive a *new heart* and a *new spirit*. They will *know* God in a way that they have never known him before, for their sins will now be forgiven and remembered no more (see Brueggemann 1991:70-72). Under the old covenant or old dispensation, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (NIV, Hebrews 10:4), but the shed blood of the Lamb of God under the new covenant could: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation..." (NIV, 2 Corinthians 5:17). Attached to this covenantal promise is a missionary emphasis or perspective where this is not only confined to the Jew as God's people, but extends to the Gentile as well (Allen 2008:154-155; Lundbom 2010:74; Nel 2005:4; cf Hendriks 1992:42). As the Gentiles (those who are outside of the covenant of God) turn to God, they too will be built into the new people of God.

And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the Lord lives' – even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal – then they will be established among my people. But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it," declares the Lord.

(NIV, Jeremiah 12:16-17; see NIV, Ezekiel 36)

2.1.3 THE METAPHOR 'BUILDING UP' IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament, the Greek word to build is *oikodomein* (Michel 1968:139). The use of this term in the New Testament is intimately linked with the Old Testament, particularly with the Messianic promise: "The Messiah builds the new temple and the new community. God is the subject – it is he who builds and who maintains the new community of the faithful that is built on the Messiah. God builds a congregation; he lives among them and works through them" (Michel 1968:139; Nel 2005:4; cf Nel 2015:15-16; cf Hendriks 1992:40). Comparing Jeremiah 31 with its New Testament counterpart, Hebrews 8 and Hebrews 10, we see this direct link. In these

passages we see the uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice which becomes the basis of God building a new temple or a community of people: a people with a new heart and a new spirit, a people who are forgiven and who know God in a way not known before (NIV, Hebrews 8:7-13, 10:11-18).

The term “building up” is most frequently used by the apostle Paul. It is noteworthy that in Pauline literature there is a dual emphasis on God as the one who builds, but also on his people who build (Nel 2005:5; 2015:16 cf Hendriks 1992:65-69). O’Brien (1999:314) says: “While the empowering for growth comes from above, members of the body themselves are fully involved in the process.” In Ephesians 4 we have a picture of the congregation being built up when the believers, through their God-given gifts or ministries use these gifts or ministries to build up the church, the body of Christ (see Getz 2012; O’Brien 1999:313-317; Roberts 1983:123-128). Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, we have a picture of the church exercising their various God-given gifts for the common good or advantage of all (NIV, 1 Corinthians 12:7), so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged (NIV, 1 Corinthians 14:31), for the mutual edification and building up of the body (Bray 1999:121, 144; Thiselton 2006:197, 248). As we use our gifts or ministries we, among other things, encourage one another, exhort one another, admonish one another, love one another, bear with each other, pray for one another, and are patient with one another, and in this way the body of Christ or the local church is built up: “...[T]he congregation is not only built up by what God does for them, but also what they do for each other” (Nel 2005:6; cf Nel 2015: 18; see Hendriks 1992:65-69).

Some New Testament examples of the building up process:

1. Matthew 7:24-27: In this passage, Jesus refers to believers’ lives being built and established by God when they take to heart and establish their lives upon his Word, which is the foundation (Morris 1992:182). The Word here coincidentally can refer to both the spoken Word of God (the Bible) and the Living Word of God, namely Christ. “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (NIV, Matthew 7:24). If the person of Christ and God’s word is our foundation, and our lives are built

and being built upon that, then our lives become established, immovable: they will not fall (Daniel 2008:98).

2. Matthew 16:13-20: In this passage Jesus talks of himself as the one who builds his church which, he says, cannot be overcome: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it” (NIV, 16:18). This is Jesus’ response to Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (NIV, 16:16). Theologians have debated whether the church is built upon Peter (the word rock and Peter in the Greek is the same – *petros*) or whether the church is built upon Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ – Peter’s confession being the rock of our faith (Daniel & Harrington 1991:252; Morris 1992:422-423). The debate aside, we have a very clear example that Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, is the One who builds and will build his church (see Boring 1995:334-348).

3. 1 Corinthians 3:5-17: In this passage we have not only a building metaphor, but as in the Jeremiah 1, we also have the planting metaphor. Paul likens the church of Christ both to a field and building: “... you are God’s field, God’s building” (NIV, 3:9).

In God’s field, Paul contends that there are various people who plant seed and water it, but ultimately it is God who makes the field grow: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (NIV, 3:6-7). In this case, as in the one to follow, we note the dual emphasis of God and his co-workers who are involved in the “building up” process (Thiselton 2006:63).

In God’s building, there are various people who contribute to the building, but ultimately it is God who is the one that builds: “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds” (NIV, 3:10). In verse 16-17 Paul then declares that we ourselves are God’s temple in whom his Spirit lives. We are God’s sacred temple that is built by and “houses” the Spirit of God, so let anyone who seeks to destroy this temple, beware (see Sampley 2002:826-832; Thiselton 2006:66-68).

4. Ephesians 4:11-16: In this passage the author gives us a clear example of how the whole body of Christ “grows and builds itself up in love” (NIV, 4:16), as each member or part of the body fulfils their God-given function or role within that body: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (NIV, 4:11-13). While Paul is very specific as to the function or roles that God has given to believers in the building up process, it is by no means a comprehensive list. The point that Paul is making is that the whole body of Christ is meant to grow and be built up in love as each member or part of the body fulfils their God-given work (NIV, 4:16) (MacDonald 2000:294-295; Nel 2015:17-18; see Perkins 2000: 422-425; Roberts 1983:123-128; also Hirsch 2012:13-16).

5. 1 Peter 2:4-5: “As you come to him, the living stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones are being built into a spiritual house (*by God*) to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (NIV). Here is a clear example of God building his church (see Bartlett 1998:265).

2.1.4 THE PROCESS IN BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH

Nel (2005:15; 2015:85) has suggested a working formula for building up the local church which he has summarised as follows:

- Father, Son and Holy Spirit build the church, and do so by means of people.
- God builds his church because he brings about the coming of his Kingdom by means of the congregation.
- The purpose of the existence of the church is of vital importance.
- The empirical church must be led through the Spirit working in a given place and time to become what it already is in Christ. The gap between the defined and empirical subjects must be narrowed.
- The total congregation, as regards essence, functions and structure, is to be in focus. Comprehensive and constant renewal remains crucial.

From this working formula it is clear that Nel has not only adopted a comprehensive approach to building up the local church, but that his key idea in building up the local church has to do with the congregation, with people. Building up the local church is really about the renewal of people, which constitute the church, and not about the mere adjustments to structures and programs within the church (Nel 2005:138). The renewal of people or the church is a process, a long-term process, and Nel (2005:139) has attempted to describe the natural phases that one can expect in any process of change. He describes it as “[B]uilding up the local church is the ministry whereby a local church is trained and led to:

- understand its own nature (identity) and reason for existence (purpose) (Hermeneutical dimension);
- evaluate, as a body of believers, its own functions, formulate objectives accordingly, and reach these objectives in a planned manner (Agogical-Teleological dimension);
- develop, as required and on a continuing basis, structures for congregational life that will serve the Triune God and his Salvific acts in His church and in the world – to the glory of HIS NAME (Morphological dimension).”

(Nel 2005:139; 2015:87)

While others like Seifert and Clinebell (1969), Hendiks (1992), Easum (2001) and Kallestad (2001) have developed their own phases in the process of change, Nel has simplified the process even more. The simplified phases are:

- motivation, unfreezing, and developing a mission statement;
- analysis of the congregation;
- planning a strategy;
- implementing the strategic plan and reaching objectives;
- evaluating, stabilising and repeating the process.

(Nel 2005:147; 2015:222)

A brief explanation of each:

Phase 1: Motivation, unfreezing, and the developing of a mission statement

“Motivation is essentially about leading people towards recognising their identity. The congregation is led on the way to understanding who it really is in Christ” (Nel 2005:151; cf Nel 2015:226). So the essence of building up the local church is helping the congregation to understand itself - its nature and objectives, or God’s will for it (Nel 2005:149). It is about helping the congregation to understand its God-given identity (Nel 2005:172; 2015:226). The “unfreezing process” is a part of the motivation process – unfreezing what the local congregation has wrongfully thought about itself and the way it has done things in the past. Carroll (2000:1-26) talks of living in a “post-traditional” society (the more recent term, a “postmodern” society) in which it may be necessary for the local church to “detraditionalise” those traditions that would have led it to an incorrect thinking about itself. Easum (2001:11, 31) talks about the need for a congregation to break free from its “system story” – a continually repeated life story that determines how an organisation thinks and thus acts – in order for it to unfreeze and discover its true identity.

For any building to take place then, the local church would need to understand its identity and purpose and be motivated in it. We could call it purposeful motivation (Nel 2005:149). Once the congregation grasps its identity and purpose, it, in a sense, has its mission – it understands its mission. It just needs to describe it in words which then become its mission statement, sometimes called its vision or statement of faith (see Easum 2001:87-91). In building up the local church the drafting of the mission statement then is the logical outcome of an effective process of motivation and unfreezing. It needs to be emphasised that this is a process, a long-term process, which requires time and patience (Nel 2005:136; 2015:249; cf Easum 2001:152).

Phase 2: Congregational analysis

Congregational analysis is a form of social investigating or social diagnosis about its identity (Nel 2005:177). Whereas in the motivational phase the congregation’s identity is explored theologically, in this phase the congregation’s identity is explored empirically. The congregation has the opportunity to look at itself in the mirror and evaluate itself, i.e. identify who the congregation is, why it exists, how the congregation sees itself, and how it functions.

Congregational analysis is a process in which it analyses and evaluates the “who-question” (who is this congregation at a given time and place?) and the “how-question” (how does this given number of believers operate in this specific society?) (Nel 2005:177; 2015:255-256; see Hendriks 1992:128-182). Carroll (2000:61-63) talks about traditions that need to be renewed and reinterpreted (or “retraditioned”) lest the church dies. Congregational analysis then contains at least three elements, which Nel (2005:178) defines as such:

1. Congregational profile:

The congregational profile is about the facts or relevant details of the congregation. Their age groups, income groups, vocational groups, the sizes of the families, their qualifications and how long they have been in the congregation are the kind of facts taken into consideration.

2. Community profile:

The community profile (also known as a situational and societal diagnosis) is much like the congregational profile except that it gathers facts or relevant details of the community. Details like the community’s political, economical, sociological, ecclesiastical and ecumenical views are taken into account (cf Easum 2001:55).

3. Congregational diagnosis and evaluation – by the congregation itself:

This is the process whereby the congregation itself analyses and evaluates its functioning in the light of what it understands about its nature and purpose. This is done as honestly, objectively and responsibly as possible. The congregation takes careful note of its strong points, weak points and problem areas both within the congregation and its ministries (see Nel 2005:176-214; also Nel 2015:257-279).

Phase 3: Congregational strategic planning

Planning for orderly progress in life, whether it is planning your daily schedule or a family holiday or even an exam timetable, is essential. Without it life degenerates into chaos. If that is so, why should it be any different when it comes to building up the local church? If building up

the local church is God's will, then strategic planning is even more essential. Congregational strategic planning (planning done by the congregation and not merely its leaders) entails the following, as listed by Hendriks (1992:122-123, 182-185) and supported by Nel (2005:219; 2015:308):

- it follows a careful congregational analysis;
- it begins with pinpointing the congregation's strong and weak points;
- it includes the drafting of an overall target (specifying a mission);
- it includes the drafting of objectives en route to reaching the overall target;
- it includes the choosing of strategic steps to reach the objectives;
- it includes the drafting of a strategic program with schedules, methods, resources, and responsible persons.

Phase 4: Implementing and executing the strategic plan

Once the objectives in the strategic planning phase have been established, how does the congregation now attain these objectives? "Objectives are not attained simply of their own accord" (Nel 2005:233; 2015:332), and therefore Nel (2005:233; 2015:332), quoting Ten Have, has suggested that a few important questions be taken into consideration.

- What avenues are available?
- What methods are best and quickest?
- What procedure should be followed?
- What resources, aids and human materials are available?

It is imperative that the implementing of the strategic plan needs to be executed by motivated members in an organised way (cf Hendriks 1992:125-128). Church leaders should avoid the danger of "planning everything, up to and including the drafting of objectives and schedules, as well as listing the people responsible" (Nel 2005:233). It's a congregational effort and it requires congregational participation. Carroll (2000:82-86) appeals for strong, shared leadership – a leadership that includes gifted lay people, which Miller (1997:138-140) supports.

Phase 5: Evaluating, stabilising, and repetition

In this phase the congregation (not merely the leaders) seeks to correctly evaluate their progress in terms of their operation and objectives. Has the plan of action that was formulated in Phase 4 been implemented? Is this objective or that objective being seen to? Is everyone doing what they are meant to be doing? The purpose of the evaluation phase then is to ascertain just how effective the program of action is. Where the congregation is failing, necessary adjustments have to be made. While this phase needs to be constantly evaluated (every three, to six months, to a year), it must also however have an annual or formal evaluation (see Nel 2005:237-239; also Nel 2105:342-346).

Once one or more of the objectives have been attained, the congregation needs to stabilise these objectives so that they can take root and become firmly established within the congregation: “The congregation has to make certain that any effective ministry that has been planned and that is now coming to function well, is secure, has a stable existence, and is still developing” (Nel 2005:240).

The process of building up the local church never comes to an end. It is dynamic, in constant search of renewal (or rebirth, or revitalisation, or reforming, or re-traditionalising) and growing effectiveness, and therefore these processes are to be repeated. The congregation needs to decide that it will regularly repeat the analysis and all the consequent phases in order for the church to be built up. In a compelling article, Nel (2009b) has revisited the whole issue of congregational analysis and has made a stronger case for its necessity in helping congregations find their identity and for them to be more effective in mission.

2.1.5 THE PURPOSE OF/IN BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH

Nel (2005:8) identifies 3 purposes in building up the local church:

1. It is for the glory of God.

The ultimate purpose of building up the local church is to make God known to the world, or to bring him glory (Hendriks 1992:83; Nel 2005:8). As the church is built up and becomes what

God has both designed and called it to be, it reveals to the world who God is and what kind of God he is. The church shows the world that God is the only one true God and that he has revealed Himself to the world through His word. When the church showcases or displays who God is and the world sees it, glory is brought to his name; God is exalted; God is glorified. 1 Peter 2:9 puts it like this: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (NIV).

2. It is to become a mature organism.

Ephesians 4:12-15 puts it thus: “... [S]o that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants... Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (NIV). Maturity in the local church has to do with the burgeoning of healthy personal and communal relationships, a self-reliant spiritual functioning. When the local church becomes mature, it not only shows a growing love toward each other and to the world, but it shows a unity in our faith and an unshakeable hope (Hendriks 1992:84; Nel 2005:8; see Hendriksen 1981:197-200; Stott 1989:159-171). It is this display that not only reveals the nature of the one true God, but which again puts his glory on display and brings him praise.

3. It is for the benefit of others.

It is of benefit to the local church that it becomes a mature organism, and yet it is also of benefit to others, namely the world. While God builds up the church, he does not merely build it up for its own sake, but so that it can be the church in the world that will reach the world and build the world into Christ’s church/body. Building up the local church incorporates a qualitative and quantitative element or it incorporates an ecclesiological and soteriological element (Nel 2005:9; cf Hendriks 1992:71-72). “The whole image of the building metaphor is that of a wall in the process of being built and not yet finished” (Nel 2005:9). God cares for those who are already a part of the local church and he adds those who are not yet in the wall” (see Bosch 1991:28-31, 168-169, 376-378; Hendriks 1992:83; Tripp 2000:105-122). We can put it this way in the case of

1 Peter 2:4-5: “As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (NIV). As a priest in the Old Testament reflects the holiness of God, offers sacrifices, intercedes for man before God and represents God to man, so we now as a priesthood of believers do the same for each other and the world, to the glory of God. (These three points will be explored more fully in the next section pertaining to the identity and purpose of the church.)

According to Nel (2005:10; 2015:21), God’s purpose in building his church can be summarised as follows:

- shaping an enthusiastic community of disciples of Jesus Christ,
- in which the believers together and individually use their gifts for mutual service and salvation, and
- as equipped and trained people, reveal God in such a way that the world will get to know him through Jesus Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit, and so
- be built into (attached to) God’s building, his church.

Concluding remark:

Having explored the theory of “building up the local church” and having looked at, both the process and purpose thereof, the researcher will now explore the theory of the “identity and purpose” of the local church, looking in particular at its identity or nature and its purpose or mission in the world.

2.2 IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Our generation is busy developing a philosophy of meaninglessness. It is fashionable nowadays to believe (or to say you believe) that life has no meaning, no purpose. There are many who admit that they have nothing to live for. They do not feel that they belong anywhere, or, if they belong, it is to the group known as ‘the unattached’. They class themselves as ‘outsiders’, ‘misfits’. They are without anchor, security or home. In biblical language, they are ‘lost’. To such people comes the promise that in Christ we find ourselves. The unattached become attached. They find their place in eternity (related first and foremost to God as his sons and daughters), in society (related to each other as brothers and sisters in the same family) and in history (related also to the succession of God’s people down the ages).

(Stott 1995:138-139).

Before the researcher looks at the issue of identity and purpose – “finding ourselves in Christ”, as has been suggested above – the researcher states at the outset that:

1. We will examine the term *theological identity* as opposed to say cultural, ethnic, social, philosophical or even self-identity. The study or context is theological in nature – the building up of the local church or congregational development – and so the examination will be confined to that parameter.

2. We will make a distinction between what could be termed *corporate identity* (the identity of the local church) as opposed to *individual identity* (the identity of an individual believer).

An individual or personal identity is often foremost in the minds of many Christians. What we need to recover is the corporate sense of identity, the corporate self-image of the church (Nel 2005:367; 2015:53; cf Dick 2007:17). Many Christians in local churches know precisely who

they are, and whose they are, and what they are required to do in a personal and individualistic sense, but not in a corporate sense. The purpose of the study is to discover to what extent the local church understands and knows about its corporate identity; to what extent it understands and knows that together, corporately as a church, they are a new humanity, a distinctive people, a holy nation, a chosen people, a royal priesthood of believers who exist to declare the praises of Him who called them out of darkness and into His wonderful light (NIV, 1 Peter 1:9-10).

3. We will not be exploring the term “purpose” as such since “identity and purpose” in the theological sense are closely related, the latter arising out of the former. They are linked (Bullock 2008:111).

2.2.2 IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

i-den-ti-ty:

The Oxford and US English Dictionaries define identity as i) The fact of being who or what a person is; ii) The characteristics determining this (2011)

The World English Dictionary defines identity as i) The state of having unique identifying characteristics held by no other person or thing; ii) The individual characteristics by which a person or thing is recognised. (2011)

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines personal identity as i) The questions that arise about oneself by virtue of being a person. The kinds of questions that arise about self are questions like: “Who am I?”; “What makes me the person I am?”; “How do I define myself?”; “What is the network of values and convictions that makes me unique and different from others?” (Olson 2010). While we may be speaking about personal or individual identity, this may apply equally to corporate identity. The same questions can be asked about a group of people like the local church: “Who are we?”; “What makes us the body of believers that we are?”; “How do we define ourselves?”; “What is the network of values and convictions that make us unique and different from everyone else?” (Noonan and Curtis 1997).

According to Stott (1992:242), the church must understand itself – its identity and its vocation. Many churches are said to be sick because they have a false self-image: “They have grasped neither who they are (their identity) nor what they are called to be (their vocation)” (Stott 1992:242). At least two false images are entertained in the church today.

1. The church is a religious club:

The church more or less resembles the local golf or bridge club except that their interest is God and not golf or bridge. The church views itself as a group of religious people who enjoy doing religious things together. While they pay their membership to the club, or church, and insist on their benefits and privileges from belonging to this “club”, they fail to realise that they are the only club in the world that exists for the benefits of their non-members. This Church is therefore totally introverted (see Stott 1992:242-245). Easum (2001:88-89, 2007:6, 76) purports that the vast majority of congregations are little more than hospices or hospitals, if not clubs. He suggests that they have a genetic code that is addicted to some form of cultural religion, which is far from biblical or spiritual.

2. The church is a secular mission:

This view is in reaction to and therefore opposite to the first view that the church is a religious club. In reaction to the totally introverted nature of the church as a religious club, the church now becomes totally extroverted. The emphasis now falls on worship *service* rather than worship *services*. Worship is reinterpreted as mission, while love for God is reinterpreted as love for your neighbour and prayer is reinterpreted as encounter with people. What it results in however is a church that is involved in secular mission – what Stott calls religionless (sic) Christianity (see Stott 1992:242-245).

According to Heitink (1999:311), the term identity really refers to a sense of personal wholeness. In determining this sense of personal wholeness, two questions of paramount importance arise, namely: Who am I? What am I supposed to do? Again, while these two fundamental questions pertain to personal or individual identity, it pertains equally to corporate identity – the identity of the local church. The identity of the local church is discovered by asking these very questions:

who they are and what are they supposed to do. It is imperative that the congregation be helped to understand this in an ever-increasing and continuous manner so that it might know its reason for existence and its mission here on earth (Nel 2005:367).

According to Nel (2005:17; 2015:27), the identity of the church has to do with the church's understanding of its own nature and reason for existence. While the church becomes consciously aware of its identity through the guidance of God and his Word, it also has to ask certain questions though. For example, it has to ask the 'who-question' (who is this congregation at a given time and place?), and it has to ask the 'how-question' (how does this congregation operate in society?) (Nel 2005:177). "Who and what the congregation is, what it believes, what its inward and outward relationships are, are essential questions of identity" (Nel 2005:152; see Barret et al 2004:33-56).

Guder (2000:119), as far as the identity of the church is concerned, suggests that we ask the questions that have been formulated by Coalter, Mulder and Weeks in their theological agenda for reforming the church. Questions like: Who is Jesus Christ? What is the authority for the Christian life? What can we hope for in a world that is increasingly paralysed by both personal and communal despair? Why, after all, is there a church – an ordered community of Christians?

Dick (2007:17) suggests that the most important criterion for a church to discover its identity is to ask the question: Who are we as a congregation of God's people? Who we are as a church rests at the heart of our entire walk of faith. While it is suggested that one can talk about the self-image of the church, it needs to be borne in mind that the self-image of the church is not moulded by achievements, but is a conferred status granted to it by none other than the triune God (Nel 2005:152).

According to Branson (2007:102-104), the identity of the church is to be found in the term "church" or its Greek equivalent, *ekklēsia*. This word occurs some 114 times in the New Testament and on the vast majority of occasions the word refers to a local community of believers. The word *ekklēsia* belongs in a word group that is concerned with call and voice. In

classic Greek Literature the word referred to a political assembly of citizens whose task was to decide about laws, officials, policies and judicial rulings, i.e. it was an assembly who was gathered (called) for the purpose of having a specific influence on a larger social environment (voice). Similarly, the church or *ekklēsia* in the New Testament is an assembly of believers who are called to have a voice in the world. The church is both called and sent by God to voice or participate in God's initiatives in Christ Jesus for the sake of the world. Bullock (2008:106) says that the term *ekklēsia* means "to be called out of", and it implies that the church is called out for a definite purpose. Bullock (2008:106) consequently translates it as the "called-out purposive assembly".

According to Van Gelder (2007a:1-30), the identity of the church is to be found when one keeps returning to the foundations of what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ in the world. He suggests that we constantly engage in the study of the church so as to explore its nature, understand its creation and continuing formation, and discover its purpose and ministry. According to Rouse and Van Gelder (2008:31), one of the most important things a congregation can do in seeking to find its identity is to ask itself the *right* questions. Questions like "Why does God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, bring congregations into existence?" and, a more important question, "Why did God bring our particular congregation into existence?"

Arising out of the "missional church conversation" that has taken place over the past several decades, it has emerged that the identity and purpose of the church is missional in nature, i.e. the church is "missionary by its very nature, and this missionary nature is expressed as the church is sent by the Spirit into the world to participate in God's mission" (Van Gelder 2007b:28). A key proponent of this idea is the late Lesslie Newbigin. His formulation and focus was on the sending work of God: "God's sending the Son into the world to accomplish redemption, and the Father and Son's sending the Spirit into the world to create the church and lead it into participation in God's mission" (Van Gelder 2007a:30; also Van Gelder 2008:2-6). It is suffice just to mention it at this point.

According to Roxburgh (2008:76-77), churches today are struggling with the question of identity: identity at their very core. He says that the identity of a church is not to be found primarily in the definition that someone has given it, but it is to be found primarily in answering the questions of “who the church is” or “who the church is not.” There are several dynamics that contribute to who the church is. For example: There is a *content narrative* – the church having a most basic conviction of its meaning and existence. There is a *shared history* – where the group came from and some of their historical events. There is a *common memory* – memories which inform the group of who they are based on what they have gone through. There is a *structural side* – the group creates organisational forms and roles to give substance to its identity.

All the above leads the researcher to ask the question:

2.2.3 WHAT IS THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH?

As the groundwork for understanding and formulating the identity of the church, Stott (1992:243) talks of the double identity of the church. What he means by double identity is that the church is called both to worship God and serve the world: “[T]he church is a people who have been both called out of the world to worship God and sent back into the world to witness and serve” (Stott 1992:243). These are two marks of the church. In the first instance the church is called out of the world to belong to God and worship him, called to be holy (NIV, 1 Peter 1:15-16), and in the second instance the church is sent back into the world to be on its mission with God and for God, called to be apostolic (NIV, John 17:18, 20:21). We may say that the church is called by God to be both holy (distinct from the world) and yet also worldly (in the sense of being immersed in the life of the world for God’s glory and the good of mankind).

Rouse and Van Gelder (2008:31) talk not of the double identity of the church but of the dual identity or dual nature of the church – an identity or nature that is both human and holy. The human identity or nature of the church is that it is comprised of a particular geographical location, a particular cultural context, a particular language, a particular faith perspective within the Christian tradition, a church building, a congregation of believers, a worship attendance and a style of worship, all of which contribute to its human identity. The holy identity or nature of the

church is that God has created this congregation through the Holy Spirit, and he now requires them to live by a set of values – a redeemed set of values. Scripture is clear as to why these congregations are created. Rouse and Van Gelder (2008:33-34) point out that three essential truths stand out in the Bible, and these truths inform the congregation of its holy identity and purpose.

1. *God is a creating God who has a plan for the world:* God reveals this plan in the Bible, beginning with the creation of the world in Genesis and ending with the New Heaven and New Earth in Revelation. His plan is clear, namely that he created the world and has a plan for all life in this world, and that is that life flourishes.
2. *God is a redeeming God who seeks to bring all of life into a reconciled relationship with himself.* The intrusion of sin into this world has profoundly disrupted God's intent for all creation, and in order to redeem creation, a radical solution is required – nothing less than the incarnation, death and resurrection of his Son by which God deals with sin and reconciles creation to himself.
3. *God works out this reconciliation in this world through people.* In all time God has used people to bear witness to his reconciling power and presence in this world. He has used many different people to serve his plan. He still does and he does it through the church today. This is the church's holy identity.

Nel (2005:24; 2015:27) purports that to determine the identity of the church you really have to determine the church's reason for being (its *raison d'être*), and to determine the church's reason for being is really to determine its mission. Identity and purpose therefore exists side by side (cf Bullock 2008:111). Once the church has discovered and knows its identity, it has its reason for existence; it has its purpose; it has its mission. So what is the church's identity and reason for existence, its purpose, its mission? Or, to express it differently, what sets the church apart from all other organisations in terms of its identity and purpose? Since we are dealing with theological identity and purpose, Scripture is what provides insight into the church's identity and purpose.

Based on scripture, Nel (2005:25-37; 2015:90-117) expresses the church's identity and purpose in these theological terms:

1. The congregation from the perspective of the Kingdom:

“The church exists for the sake of the one who brought it into being” (Nel 2005:25; 2015:90). The church exists for the glory of God. When Jesus walked on the earth, one of his primary concerns was to bring glory to the Father (John 17:4). And the way that Jesus brought glory to the Father was by completing the work that was given to him. As a church, we are to do similar works to bring glory to God. Richards (1987:66-68) talks of the kind of works we can do to bring glory to God – being a witness to Jesus, evangelising, worship, good works, the communication of hope, the demonstration of holiness in our lives, justice for all, reconciliation and the provision of a counterculture. The church exists to glorify God. It exists to glorify, emulate, declare God, indeed to be a sign of the Kingdom. It exists to be instrumental in bringing change, indeed conversion to the world. The church exists to help people acknowledge not only the existence of God, but the Kingship of God, to accept the gift of his Son, to bow before him and serve him as King (Nel 2005:26; cf Bosch 1991:391). Cilliers (2004:226-227) expresses it in these simple terms: The church exists to point toward Him, to proclaim and celebrate Him, and him alone. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing we should have a finger pointing, saying: “There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Collectively, it is expressed like this: “The *raison d'être* of the church is and always will be the glory of the Creator, the search for his Kingdom, and the responsible proclamation of this King and his will in and for the world” (Nel 2005:28). Christians should be jealous for the glory of God – “troubled when it remains unknown, hurt when it is ignored...” (Stott 1995:318). In fact, Stott (1995:318) goes on to say that “the highest of all missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission (important as that is), nor love for sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God), but rather zeal – burning and passionate zeal for the glory of God.”

The church is God's creation. God brought it into being through his Son Jesus Christ. He loved it and gave himself for it (NIV, Ephesians 5:25). God created a new humanity – a humanity

recreated in the image of God – and called this new humanity into a relationship with himself, which he calls his family, the body, his church, a distinctive people. 1 Peter 2:9 says “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...” (NIV, 1 Peter 2:9). In Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:8 and 1:24, the author refers to this body of believers not only as the church, the body of Christ, but that Christ is the Saviour and head of this body. The church therefore is a new humanity of people who accept God’s redemption in Christ, who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, who is a dwelling for God in the Spirit, who expresses God’s rule over its thoughts, attitudes, life, words and works (Nel 2005:26; cf Nel 2015:98). The church may do this imperfectly (in fact it does), yet it does it sincerely.

What happens when a new humanity is created? What are some of the signs of that new humanity within the church or body of Christ? There are a few things that stand out: “[P]eople love him as the only true God; people bring more than offerings, out of gratitude they give themselves; people live in peace with one another in a community built on fairness and justice; people show to one another and to God the love, devotion, and concern that God first showed them” (Nel 2005:27).

The researcher submits: It is this new humanity of the church that glorifies God and is meant to glorify God. Herein lays its identity and purpose or reason for being.

1 Peter 2:9-12 expresses it this way: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (*identity*), that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light... Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God... (*purpose or reason for being*)” (NIV)(italics mine).

Ephesians 3:10-11 expresses it this way: “His [Christ’s] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (NIV).

So the church exists for the glory of God. It exists to glorify, emulate, declare God, indeed to be a sign of the Kingdom (NIV) (see Nel 2005:25-28).

2. The congregation as system and centre of communication:

The church is “a system, a centre and network of communication” (Nel 2005:29; 2015:99). The church exists to communicate – to communicate the gospel by word and deed. From history we see how God has communicated with his creation, despite the fact that mankind by nature is apostate, sinful, stubborn. God has not only communicated to his creation through creation itself (NIV, Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:19-20), but God has also communicated to his creation through the ancient nation of Israel. Ancient Israel was his chosen vehicle through which salvation would come to the world, or through which light would come to the Gentiles (NIV, Isaiah 49:6). This promise was made to Abraham (NIV, Genesis 12:1-4), the father of the nation Israel. God then communicated to his creation through the incarnation of his Son Jesus Christ, and thereafter he communicated to his church particularly through the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Jesus Christ. God still communicates to his creation today, and the vehicle through which he does it is the church, the local church: “God still speaks (through his Word) to the congregation and through the congregation to the world” (Nel 2005:28). Nel (2005:30) makes an interesting comment: “When the congregation does not understand itself in this way (existing to communicate the gospel), there is little Christian joy and little reason to enjoy its own existence.” In fact the church would be prone to superficiality and even degeneracy if it were to forget that it exists for the sake of communication with God, with the world and with one another (Nel 2005:29). The church exists to communicate the gospel to the world through word and deed. This is its identity and purpose.

In communicating the gospel, eight different styles, or modes, or acts of ministry, have been identified (Nel 2005:30). They are preaching, witnessing, teaching, worship, community, care, service and administration (Nel 2005:111; 2015:78). Each mode of ministry ought to be three-dimensional in nature, i.e. each mode of ministry should always be of “service to the triune God, service to one another, and service to the world” (Nel 2005:30). It should also be noted that all eight modes of communicating the gospel are important, and that they are to be exercised in an

integrated and co-ordinated manner for true and effective communication of the gospel to take place.

The identity and purpose of the church up to this point can be illustrated through a modified schematic diagram taken from Nel (2005:30; 2015:106). The Church exists for:

The Glorification of the Father, Son and Spirit							
by the communication of the gospel							
through the communicative acts that serve the gospel, namely							
preaching	witnessing	teaching	worship	community	care	service	administration

3. *The congregation defined by and aimed at mission:*

“Mission is the mother of theology”, as Martin Khäler said, and mission was the overriding identity and purpose of the first-century Christian communities.

(Guder 2000:186).

Bosch (1991:390) says that “God is a missionary God”. Mission is God’s attribute, his initiative and activity. Mission is derived from the very nature of God. It originates in the very heart of God. The God of the Bible is a sending God, which is what “mission” means. Mission is derived from the Latin word *missio*, which means “sending” (Guder 2000:13). “Mission is therefore seen as a movement from God to the world. He sent the prophets to Israel. He sent His Son into the world. His son sent out the apostles, and the seventy, and the church. He also sent the Spirit to the church and sends him into our hearts today” (Bosch 1991:390; cf Stott 1995:315; also Gibbs & Bolger 2006:50-51; Guder 1998:4, 2000:20; Hirsch 2006:127-128; Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011:1-16). God is a missionary God, a sending God.

To substantiate this, Stott (1992:325-336) has a helpful, broad overview of scripture.

The God of the Old Testament is a God of/on mission.

The Old Testament begins with the creation of Adam and Eve and their subsequent “fall” or disobedience to God with its resultant promise of death. No sooner had man fallen however that God promised a way of salvation (NIV, Genesis 3:15). God called Abraham who was told to leave his own country to be shown another, and who was told to leave his own people by which he would be made into another. God promised not only to bless Abraham, but to make him a blessing, not only to give him posterity, but through him to bless all the nations of the earth (Genesis 12:1-4; cf Guder 2000:50-51). This text is viewed as one of the most unifying texts of the Old Testament since it encapsulates God’s saving purpose for mankind – saving man through Christ who is Abraham’s seed. The rest of the Old Testament and New Testament is an unfolding of this plan, which is also known as *Heilgeschichte* (Browning 2009).

The Christ of the gospels is a Christ of/on mission.

From the beginning of the gospels already it becomes clear that Christ is the promised Messiah who would usher in God’s salvation plan for mankind. Matthew’s gospel, for one, begins with the genealogy of Jesus, which is traced to Abraham. Surely this is to indicate that the promise of a Messiah/salvation to the world has, at last, been fulfilled. Matthew records Jesus’ remarkable predictions that “many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (NIV, Matthew 8:11). Matthew’s gospel ends with the so-called “Great Commission” where the followers of Jesus are to go and make disciples of all nations by welcoming them into the family of God through baptism, and by teaching them to obey their master’s instruction (NIV, Matthew 28:19-20).

The Holy Spirit of the Acts is a Spirit of/on mission.

The book begins with one hundred and twenty disciples waiting, in the upper room, for the promise of the Holy Spirit, who would empower them to be witnesses for Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth. This happened on the day of Pentecost, and Pentecost has become known as a missionary event. It was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all peoples, prophesied by the prophet Joel (NIV, Joel 2:28), and the Holy Spirit from then on would bear witness to the Messiah’s kingdom which he had come to establish. The rest of Acts is a logical, enthralling,

exciting unfolding of that beginning as the Holy Spirit creates a missionary people and thrusts them on their missionary task (cf Guder 2000:51; Van Gelder 2007b:30-31). Throughout Acts, Luke makes it clear that the impetus for mission comes from the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit who is on mission. Van Gelder (2007b:30) suggests that The Acts of the Apostles might be better titled “The Acts of the Spirit.”

The church of the Letters is a church of/on mission.

The twenty-one Letters of the New Testament are intended, in their different ways, to give instruction on how to build up the church, making it mature and complete. It does so by addressing the domestic affairs of the church: its doctrine, worship, ministry, unity and holiness. And yet throughout, the Letters also assume that the church lives in the world and is responsible to reach out in compassion towards it. Paul, in his Letters, assumes that the church shares in his missionary endeavour for Christ. The apostles assume that the church will itself be involved in spreading the gospel (cf Guder 2000:51-52). The author of 1 Peter puts it this succinctly: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (NIV, 1 Peter 2:9).

The climax of the Revelation is a climax of mission.

As the writer peeped through the door that stood open in heaven (NIV, Revelation 4:1), he was met with a great crowd of people who were standing before God’s throne. In their white robes, while holding and waving palm branches, they joined in a mighty chorus of worship to God, attributing their salvation to God and to the Lamb (NIV, Revelation 7:9-10). We have here a stunning picture of the climax of God’s mission. What is interesting about this great crowd of people is that as the mission extended to the whole earth, they were multi-racial and multi-national – “from every nation, tribe, people and language” (NIV, Revelation 7:9).

From this brief, broad overview we can see that the religion of the Bible is indeed a religion of mission, God’s mission. It arises from the heart of God himself and is communicated from his heart to ours, to the church, and to the world (see Stott 1992:321-326).

The development of “the mission of God” over the last decades

Guder (2000:19) informs us that the theologian Karl Barth, in an address delivered at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference of 1932, was really the first to propose the idea that the scriptures are a record of God’s mission or God’s sending to the world, i.e. rather than seeing the church as having a mission or having an obligation to fulfil the Great Commission, it is really God who has a mission in the world and it is God who calls and sends the church to participate in this mission (see Guder 1998:3-4). Mission therefore began to be viewed as an essential theological characteristic of God (Guder 1998:4; 2000:19). In the ensuing years (1950-1970), at the International Missionary Council conferences, a Trinitarian understanding of mission was born. Three “movements” were identified in the Scriptures (Bosch 1991:390). God the Father has sent the Son (NIV, John 3:16); the Father and the Son has sent the Holy Spirit (NIV, John 14:15); the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has sent the church into the world (NIV, John 20:21) (Nel 2005:31). This understanding, in time, was formulated into what has become known as the *missio Dei* (mission of God) by Karl Hartenstein, and later still it was given a fuller expression by Johannes Blauw. Others, particularly the late Lesslie Newbigin, developed the idea. Central to Newbigin’s understanding is that mission is the work of a triune God who calls and sends the church, through the agent of the Holy Spirit, into the world so as to participate fully in God’s mission within the world (Newbigin 2006b; Van Gelder 2007b:2-3; see Guder 1998:81-83; Simpson 2007:75-77; also Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011:26-46).

The *missio Dei* which is widely known and embraced by virtually all Christian persuasions, is seen as a movement from God – a movement of God’s love toward people since he is the fountain of sending love (Bosch 1991:390; cf Guder 2000:49). The church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. Bosch (1991:390), quoting Moltmann says: “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.” The church has the privilege of participating in the activity of God’s mission or the sending of God. The church has the honour of being on mission with God. The church is a movement of God’s love toward people, which embraces both the body of Christ (the church) and the world. To be a Christian, and to be a part of the body of Christ then, is to be someone who is *sent*, a missionary (Bosch 1991:8-11; cf Guder 2000:49-50).

This development has resulted in what is called the “missional church conversation” (Van Gelder 2008:2; see Guder 1998:7-12). Since the discussion revolves around that word *missional*, an important distinction or explanation needs to be made. Van Gelder (2008:preface) notes that the word *missional* means different things to different groups. According to Roxburgh and Boren (2009:34) the word *missional* is misunderstood. There is no clear definition of the word, they argue, and where there is no clear definition of the word, confusion tends to reign. Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011:1-16) have actually categorised the various branches of those who have participated in the missional conversation. The most common problem with that word is the tendency to assume that it is a new word or new way of viewing the historical understanding of missions in the life of the church – a new word and/or a new way of what the church *does* (cf Roxburgh and Boren 2009:34). Roxburgh and Boren (2009:31-34) are adamant however that the word *missional* does not describe, for example, a church that emphasises cross-cultural missions, or a church that is using outreach programs to be externally focused, or a church that is effective at evangelism, or a church that has a well-defined mission statement with a vision and purpose for their existence (see Nel 2015:94-95). These are historical understandings of mission in the life of the church. The word *missional* in the missional church conversation has something much more basic in mind. It revolves around the very nature or essence of what it means to *be* the church. It is not so much a matter of church polity (what the church *does*) as much as it is a matter of church ecclesiology (what the church *is*). Alternatively, the term “being missionary” is not what the church *does*, functionally, but more of what the church *is* in its very essence (Van Gelder 2008:42). In the missional church conversation then the focus shifts from the church doing mission for God, to God being on mission in the world, performing his redemptive work in which the church participates.

The problem stated differently is that groups within the missional conversation focus too readily on the purpose/mission of the church before seeking to understand and attend to the reality of God’s being and agency. God’s being and agency require us to attend first to the identity or nature of the church (what it *is*) before seeking to address its purpose or mission (what it *does*). The confusion lies in the fact that the focus is not on God as the acting subject doing something in the world in which the church participates, but the focus is on the human agency doing

something on behalf of God in the world. Remembering that the identity or nature concerns what the church *is* and the purpose or mission concerns what the church *does*, the crux of the matter therefore lies in whether one starts with the identity or nature of the church or with the purpose or mission of the church. The missional church conversation presents an alternative way to think about the church. It directs one to focus on *God's mission* as determinative for understanding the mission of the church (Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011:9). The key premise in the missional conversation is this: What the church is must deeply inform what the church does. Human agency is fully implicated in the doing, but such doing is always deeply informed and empowered by the agency of God working through the Spirit. Getting the sequence right is crucial for allowing God to become fully operative within the life and ministry of the church. That sequence is as follows: The church *is*. The church *does* what it is. The church organises what it does (Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011:64; see Van Gelder 2000:30-32). One thing is certain: a conversation centring on *missional* language and what it means to be a *missional* church, has exploded around us. While there may be much misunderstanding about these words, what is important is that it is being discussed and new ways of being the church is being explored. (It is interesting that the word *missional* was first employed by Callahan (1983:2), as far back as 1983. It did not have the contemporary emphasis).

So, the church exists for mission, for participating in God's mission (Bosch 1991:390; cf Keifert 2006:63-64). The core of the church's mission, the heart of its ministry, its identity, is rooted in the mission of God (Guder 2000:71; cf Bullock 2008:104; Keifert 2006:37). Frederickson (2007:46) says that the life and being, the very heart and flaming centre of a congregation is mission. Simpson (2007:67) defines the mission of the church as being "called, centred and sent to promote Christ for the world." Easum (2001:9) acknowledges that the heart and soul of any authentic Christian community is to be found in Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19 (NIV), i.e. in our going we are to make disciples of all nations. It is Christ's last will and Testament. The church's basic reason for existence, its mission, is to be with Jesus on the mission field for the purpose of making disciples, who will in turn make a difference in the world, he says. Expressed in the language of the missional church conversation, Easum (2001:110) suggests that the church exists for "redemptive missional opportunities" (also Easum 2007:6, 25). (Researcher's note: In

Easum's writings it appears that the emphasis sometimes falls on what the church *does* rather than what the church *is*, thus contributing to the misunderstanding of the word missional.)

In the preface to a document by the World Council of Churches, entitled "Mission and Evangelism", the church's mission is defined in this way: "The church is sent into the world to call people and nations to repentance, to announce forgiveness of sin and a new beginning in relations with God and with neighbours through Jesus Christ" (Geneva 1982). (Note: The emphasis again is on what the church *does* as opposed to what the church *is*.)

Gibbs and Bolger (2006:58) report that for "emerging churches", mission is their existence. Although their mission may be characterised by spreading the "Gospel of the Kingdom" as opposed to the "Gospel of Salvation", mission is nevertheless at the core of their identity (see Gibbs and Bolger 2006:58-63). Branson (2007:125) submits that when the church participates in the *missio Dei*, it learns the essence (*esse*) of its identity and agency.

Bullock (2008:104-105) has summed up the identity of the church in this way:

The church's identity is given to it by a triune, sending God. This sending God is also relational and is reconciling the world to God through Jesus Christ. The church's identity is always understood through its relationship with God. This gift of identity includes being sent into the world to participate in the *missio Dei*. In "Called Out of Our Comfort Zone," I argue this way: "Congregations are the creation of the Triune God and find their identity and purpose in their relationship with God." The identity of God's called-out people (*ecclesia*) is found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that the church has its being. The church's *being-ness* is inextricably tied to its *being sent* into the world. The Holy Spirit empowers the church for living out its "sent-ness." This being sent into the world is the church's calling and vocation, its assignment and its purpose.

Rouse and Van Gelder (2008:34, 41) has summed up the identity of the church in this way: A congregation is the primary way in which God's people exist within this world, and therefore the congregation is central not only to God's plan but to God's work in this world. A congregation is a group of God's people who are called, formed and sent to participate in God's mission in the world. The congregation, through the Holy Spirit, bears witness to the reconciling power of God in their midst simply by living as a reconciled community. But it is more than that. The congregation also, through the Holy Spirit, bears witness to the reconciling power of God to the larger community in which they minister. This perspective is the core of the congregation's identity.

Roxburgh and Boren (2009:54) has summed up the identity of the church in this way: The identity of the church lies in the recognition that it has been called and sent by God to be his peculiar people in the midst of life – to join with the Spirit who makes all things new. They are to live out God's life, or demonstrate God, or be a sign to the world of who God is, and they are to be or do that where they live. The church's identity lies in the fact it has been called and sent on a journey bigger than and other than itself, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the world. Their identity lies in *pitching their tent* beside the people in the neighbourhood (as Jesus did – NIV, John 1:1-14), not as a program, but as a way of being the church. This is a radically different way of being the church (see Roxburgh and Boren 2009:32-59).

Interestingly, Keifert (2006:28) makes the connection between the missional identity of the church today and the (missional) identity of the church in the Apostolic Era. When Jesus spoke the words "As the father has sent me, I am sending you" (NIV, John 20:21), did not these believers immediately find themselves caught up in God's movement and life? Did they, could they imagine mission as anything else other than being involved in the primal activity to which they were called and sent? For these believers, being church was being called and sent within the movement and life of God for the sake of God's mission in the world.

So, everything about the church is to be focused on mission in all it says and does. This is the church's theological motivation for its existence, its reason for being: "Christianity is missionary

by its very nature or it denies its very *raison d'être*” (Bosch 1991:9; cf Van Gelder 2007b:27). “A church without a mission is no longer a church. It is contradicting an essential part of its identity. The church *is* mission.” (Stott 1995:315-316).

As the church *is* mission, a distinction needs to be made between mission (singular) and missions (plural). The *missions* of the church (or the missionary activities of the church) may include the planting of new churches, the saving of souls, and the growing of the local church. The *mission* of the church however must reflect and serve the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* is “representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the feast of Epiphany. In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God’s reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil” (Bosch 1991:391). Mission is primary. “Missions” is that which serves the mission, the *missio Dei*. Guder (2000:30-32) notes the difference between the two by talking of “missions” as a function of the Church and “mission” as the Church’s inherent nature.

In the church’s mission, it is necessary to note two things:

1. The pivotal nature of the communication of the gospel.

The church either stands or falls on the basis of its proclamation or communication of the gospel (Nel 2005:32). The gospel of Jesus Christ is the essential and indispensable element of communicating to the church and the church communicating to the world: “[T]he communication of the good news about Jesus Christ the Lord is essential and primary to the *missio Dei*. The ministry to and the ministry of the congregation falls short of its mark if the gospel is not communicated, heard, believed, accepted and lived” (Nel 2005:33).

The communication of the gospel is about ministering the good words and works of Christ to people. Nel (2009:5) talks of the church’s need to be both a “confessing community” and a “servant community”. Later, Nel (2011) suggests that the church undergo a paradigm shift in this regard: ‘Word dissipels *met diens as kernwaarde*’, he urges. Become disciples of the Word with service as the core value. There is no priority of the one above the other. Both are equal and

important and they must be held in creative tension. In the New Testament we see the creative tension between Christ's words and works when communicating the gospel. We also see the creative tension between the church's words and works when communicating the gospel. Similarly, in the church today, there ought to be a creative tension between our words and works when communicating the gospel, thereby safeguarding the church from proclaiming the Word without the corresponding works (social action), or by proclaiming works (social action) without the corresponding proclamation of the Word. Another way of putting this:

In the ministry of Jesus words and works, gospel preaching and compassionate service went hand in hand. His works expressed his words, and his words explained his works. It should be the same for us. Words are abstract; they need to be embodied in deeds of love. Works are ambiguous; they need to be interpreted by the proclamation of the gospel. Keep words and works together in the service and witness of the church.

(Stott 1995:343)

2. The outward focus of its mission must be maintained.

It is of course true to say that the mission of the church is, both inward and outward, intensive and extensive (Nel 2005:34-35). The mission of the church is both a matter of preservation and propagation; it should breathe in and out with equal force (Nel 2005:36-37). The inward shaping and care of the church is essential. It is vital that the church should live and enjoy its existence to the full; that it experiences and grows in the experience of true biblical love and fellowship with each other and with the head of the church, Christ. Yet it must not end there. The outward focus of the church must always be maintained. It is essential to emphasise that the mission of the church is outward, focused on the world. The outward focus of the church is the built in dimension of mission. God reaches out to the world, and his church, in whom his Spirit resides, must also reach out to the world (see Bosch 1991:390-393; cf Easum 2001:10; also Easum 2007:25). "The hallmark of the true church is a deep empathy with those who are still outside"

(Nel 2005:35): If the church fails in its mission to reach out to the world with the gospel, it fails in its mission. It fails in its own nature and it loses its identity, its reason for being.

To express this outward focus somewhat differently, can the church not take its nature and reason for existence from the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ himself? It is believed we can: “As our head, Jesus has called us into a relationship in which we identify with him and in which he identifies Himself with us” (Richards 1980:32; see Nel 2005:71-75). If we identify with him and he identifies with us, surely we can, and must, take our nature and reason for existence from Him? The Bible teaches us that the nature of Jesus Christ is that of a servant – “Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a *servant*, being made in human likeness (NIV, Philippians 2:6-7). The Bible also teaches us that the reason for Christ’s being was to serve – “[J]ust as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to *serve*, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (NIV, Matthew 20:28), and, “But I am among you as one who serves”(NIV, Luke 22:27). Because the Lord Jesus Christ desires us to identify with him by being like him, is it not true to say that his nature and reason for being becomes the church’s nature and reason for being? Yes. Just as Christ is a servant who came to serve, so too should his body (the church) be a servant who is willing to serve (Stott 1995:245). Christ himself is our servant par excellence, and he calls us, the church, to be servants too. This much is certain: if we are Christians, then we must spend our lives in the service of God and of man (Stott 1995:247). In our outward focus, the Bible would encourage us with these words: “Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave” (NIV, Matthew 20:27).

With this in mind, the researcher digresses briefly to look at the model of Christian mission which Stott (1992:242) and Hirsch (2006:133), among many, identify as “Incarnational Christianity.”

2.2.4 THE MODEL OF CHRISTIAN MISSION – INCARNATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

In his incarnation Jesus Christ became *worldly*, i.e. he came to us in our world and fully identified with us in our humanity by making himself like us, or as one of us, or one with us. Christ did not stay in the safe confines of heaven, remote from human sin and tragedy. He actually entered our world. He emptied himself of his glory and humbled himself to serve. He took on our nature, lived our life and penetrated deeply into our humanness. He exposed himself to our frailty, trials and temptations. He identified himself with our sorrows, felt our hurts, bore our sins and died our death. He freely intermingled with everyone, particularly the poor world and those whom the Pharisees and religious leaders considered “sinners”. He embraced people whom he may have been expected to avoid. He ate and drank and became friends with dropouts. He even touched the untouchables. And yet in his incarnation he remained perfectly holy. Christ did not in any way surrender or alter his identity. Even in becoming a human, he remained himself. He became a human but without ceasing to be God. He did not for one moment compromise his unique identity. Having accomplished his mission, he now sends us into the world just as he was sent into the world by his Father – “As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (NIV, John 17:18); “As the father has sent me, I am sending you” (NIV, John 20:21). Frederickson (2007:50-51) says that in the brief phrase “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (NIV, John 1:14), we see how God accomplished his goal. If the missional church adopts this incarnational approach to being on mission with God, it opens a world of possibility and hope.

The Incarnation then not only qualifies God’s acts in the world, but it must also qualify ours. If the central way of God reaching his world was to incarnate himself in Christ, then our way of reaching the world should be the same – incarnational (Hirsch 2006:133; cf Gibbs and Bolger 2006:16; Pieterse 1987:21-22). For emerging churches, this is not only exemplary, but that which they strongly embrace (Gibbs and Bolger 2006:235-236). In a similar way then, as Christ had a mission to incarnate himself in the world for the glory of God and the good of mankind, so do we as believers have a mission to incarnate ourselves into the world for the glory of God and the good of mankind. Our mission is to be modelled on his: “[A]ll authentic mission is incarnational mission” (Stott 1992:358; cf Guder 2000:191-192). We are to incarnate ourselves into “the world

of their thinking (as we struggle to understand their misunderstandings of the gospel), the world of their feeling (as we try to empathise with their pain), and the world of their living (as we sense the humiliation of their social situation, whether poverty, homelessness, unemployment or discrimination)” (Stott 1992:244). Stott (1992:360) furthermore says that we need to enter other people’s heart world, the world of their angst and their alienation, and to weep with those who weep. This is what is called ‘incarnational Christianity’ (Stott 1992:242, 244) as opposed to introverted Christianity or religionless Christianity (cf Bosch 1991:512-513; Richards 1980:61-72; see Guder 1998:104-106, 1999:1-21, 2000:148; also Hirsch 2006:133-139; Hirsch & Hirsch 2010:194-198).

Biblical examples of incarnational Christianity:

1. The Apostle Paul: While it may be argued (as some have) that the apostle Paul did not personally enter into the lives of those whom he sought to evangelise, that he essentially preached to anonymous people either in the synagogue or the open air, that he kept his distance from his hearers whom he was addressing, that is not what the scriptures say or how Paul himself viewed his ministry. Although he was free, belonging to no man, he made himself everybody’s slave.

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the Law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

(NIV, 1 Corinthians 9:20-22)

2. Job’s Comforters: When Job’s comforters heard about Job’s troubles, they left their homes to go and visit him. Upon arriving they hardly recognised Job because of his disfiguring sores. And

so they wept, tore their robes, sprinkled dust on their heads and sat beside Job on the ground for seven whole days without saying a word. Indeed, there was simply nothing to say. Seeing Job's great sufferings, they kept silent. Better put, they identified with Job, an incarnational identifying. The blot on this recorded episode in Job however is that his comforters failed to continue as they began.

Christ's model of incarnational Christianity is to be our model. Fresh Expressions (2014) refers to it as "incarnational mission". It is identification with people where they are. Stott (1992:357), quoting from the *Willowbank Report* on "Gospel and culture" (1978), says that the Incarnation was "the most spectacular instance of cultural identification in the history of mankind". There is no question that we as believers are expected to live in the world as Jesus did: "[O]ur lives, values, behaviour, attitudes, choices, even feelings, are to be in a deep and real way His" (Richards 1980:65). 1 John 2:6 puts it this way: "[W]alk as Jesus did" (NIV). Richards (1980:69) puts it like this:

But the greatest wonder of all is that in us Jesus Himself walks the world. In us Jesus speaks the Good News. In us Jesus clothes the fatherless and feeds the hungry. (In those of us who are destitute Jesus also *receives* the gifts of clothing and food that are given in His name.) In us Jesus exalts the Father in prayer and worship. In us Jesus continues to do good works. In us, Jesus, who knew a joy untouched by circumstances, brings hope to the hopeless. In us Jesus reveals the Father and brings glory to God. In us Jesus reveals a positive and attractive holiness that exposes the darkness of sin. In us Jesus continues to show God's deep concern for justice. In us Jesus' reconciling touch is felt wherever there is division and pain. In us Jesus is shaping a new lifestyle, a kingdom of God, a beachhead of the divine rule in the world of men. In us, Jesus, the great physician, bends low to heal. In our flesh our Lord Jesus takes contemporary shape and form.

Guder (1998:11) sums up how the missional church is to be the church in the world in these words: “There is but one way to be the church, and that is incarnationally...”

2.2.5 FINDING IDENTITY THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF PREACHING

For practical purposes an eight-fold ministry has been identified which serves to build up the local church. These ministries are worship, pastoral care, administration, teaching, fellowship, deeds of mercy, witnessing, and preaching (Nel 2005:111; 2015:78). It needs to be emphasised though that the whole of this eight-fold ministry, and more, serves to build up the church for God comes to his people in more than one way (Nel 2005:369). A number of dangers exist:

Danger 1: While it is obvious that preaching adds to or serves to build up the local church, yet preaching alone does not equate to building up the local church (Nel 2005:11, 299). It is the same with worship or pastoral care. While they may add to or serve to build up the local church, they do not alone or in themselves equate to building up the local church. To think that preaching alone is the ministry that builds up the local church is a danger to be avoided.

Danger 2: The building up of the local church is not simply the sum total of the eight-fold ministry. It would be easy to argue that worship + pastoral care + administration + teaching + fellowship + deeds of mercy + witnessing + preaching = building up the local church (Nel 2005:11). It is true that building up the local church cannot succeed without each of these ministries, yet it is more than the sum of them. Nel (2005:369) suggests that the whole of the eight-fold ministry and more builds up the local church since God comes to his church in many ways.

Danger 3: The danger also exists that one may choose, often subjectively, the essential ingredients of building up the local church and then elevate only these ingredients to the level of building up the local church (Nel 2005:11). Expressed differently, this danger involves the subtraction of what we perceive to be minor ministries thinking that they don't matter that much or are not crucial. Starve a plant of just one ingredient – either water or sun or oxygen or soil –

and the plant will die. Similarly, to starve a congregation of just one of these eight-fold ministries will cause the congregation to die (Nel 2005:12).

Building up the local church then is a comprehensive and inclusive approach. We lead the congregation to find its identity and understanding in Christ through the eight-fold ministry and more (Nel 2005:369). For study and research purposes however the researcher will confine himself to building up the local church through preaching.

2.3 PREACHING

2.3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING

Biblical preaching happens when a preacher prayerfully goes to listen to the Bible on behalf of the people and then speaks on Christ's behalf what he or she hears there.

(Long 1989:48)

What is biblical preaching? It is preaching that not only faithfully interprets the Bible, but it is preaching that is patterned after Synagogue preaching. Synagogue preaching is found in Luke 4 where Jesus spoke from a text. Hence biblical preaching not only has its roots in the exposition of a biblical text, but biblical preaching is normative for the church of Christ (Long 1989:49; McClure 1991:15). Biblical preaching is important.

Cilliers (2004:20) is firm in his belief that preaching is one of, if not the most crucial event, that can take place in our world and time. Why? Preaching is the primary way in which the church discerns the will of God for its life, the primary way in which God uniquely addresses his church and gives it its identity (Long 1989:50). The scriptures reveal our identity at a profoundly deep level and therefore it is essential that preaching take place for us to discover our identity (Thompson 1981:17).

Preaching is indispensable to Christianity says Stott (1995:271; cf Pieterse 2001:22) and without preaching a necessary part of its authenticity has been lost. Christianity in its very essence is a religion about the Word of God, not only God as the Word, but God's word to us. God has taken the initiative to reveal himself to us in his Son, Jesus Christ, who is the Word: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (NIV, John 1:14). And it is this Word (Jesus Christ) who has spoken to us: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (NIV, Hebrews 1:1-2). It is also this Word, Jesus Christ, who continues to speak to us today by His Spirit through the Word of God, the Bible. What is fundamental to the Christian religion is that God, the Word, became flesh and spoke to us, and continues to speak to us (Pieterse 1987:5). We are now called upon to speak it to others. It is God's speech which makes our speech or preaching necessary: "We must speak what he has spoken" (Stott 1995:272). Should we then preach? Pieterse (1987:10) responds with a resounding yes. He offers us various reasons from the Articles of Faith, Confessions and Catechisms as to why we should preach, and by which he declares that the Church cannot exist without preaching (see Pieterse 1987:10-11; cf Cilliers 2004:20). Packer (1986:15-29), on the other hand, offers us four theological reasons as to why we must preach.

- *Preaching is God's revealed way of making Himself known to us.*

In God's word we discover that God is a communicator. God has spoken and speaks to us through his word. God has revealed himself to us through his word. That's his nature – to speak, to reveal himself to mankind through his word. In communicating with mankind, God's desire is that mankind may have a life-giving relationship with himself. When a person repents and comes to faith in Christ, God not only establishes a relationship with that person, but deepens that relationship through God continually speaking to them, i.e. a person's relationship with God is both initiated and sustained through God's personal communication with them. And how does God communicate with them? The Bible makes it clear: it is through his word or through preaching. God's standard way of communicating to his people is through people preaching, through those whom he sends as his messengers. That was the case with the Old Testament prophets, the New

Testament apostles, and today with the preachers of his word. Preaching is God’s way of making Himself known to us.

- *Preaching communicates the force of the Bible in an extraordinary way.*

According to Packer “Holy Scripture is, in and of itself, preaching” (1986:17). From one point of view, scripture is “a servant of God preaching”, but from another more profound point of view, scripture is God Himself preaching. As Cilliers (2004:31) puts it: In preaching there is “the mystery of God’s voice”. From whatever point of view, the scripture text is the real preacher. This text needs to be proclaimed, or preached, or taught so that its hearer can derive the full benefit thereof. The role of the preacher is to simply let the text or passage preach itself through them. That is a difficult task as the preacher may well hinder or obstruct the text from preaching its message. The task of the preacher though is to let the text preach or say what it is meant to say. When it does, because of its divine origin, it comes with a thrust, a force, and with an appreciable understanding in an extraordinary way. Preaching communicates the force of the Bible in an extraordinary way.

- *Preaching clarifies the identity or calling of the church in an extraordinary way.*

“In every age the church has an identity problem, and in some ages an identity crisis” (Packer 1986:19). In many western churches today the church has an extremely weak sense of its identity and calling (Packer 1986:19). Long (2009c:9) says that we are living in a “theologically amnesiac culture”, in a time where Christians are confused about their identity and desperately need crisp clarity and definition, content or information about the gospel. Many churches view themselves as social clubs or as interest groups. They are unable to articulate their reason for existence. They are unable to give substance to the biblical idea that the church is meant to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a worldwide supernatural force that is called to usher in the kingdom of God – a kingdom diametrically opposed to the kingdom of this world. Why does the church have this weak awareness of its God-given identity and calling? It is because “the world always wants to assimilate the church to itself and thereby swallow it up” (Packer 1986:19).

Preaching however holds out hope to the church that it won't bow to this kind of pressure. Preaching proclaims the Bible, its gospel, its Christ, and its ethics. Preaching reminds and challenges the church concerning its God-given identity and calling. In fact, Guder (2000:162) says: "There must always be the ministry of the Word if there is to be a missional church". Preaching holds before the Christian mind God's requirements for his church – the requirement to be word, worship and witness orientated. Preaching dispels the weak view of the world. It clarifies the identity and calling of the church in an extraordinary way.

- *Preaching has some unique advantages as a mode of Christian instruction.*

While preaching is firstly and fore-mostly teaching, it is, however, more than teaching – it is teaching with the added component of application (Packer 1986:21). Preaching is always aimed at the hearer's heart and mind. Preaching is aimed at persuasion. It unashamedly aims at changing the way a person lives and thinks. Cilliers (2004:20, 95) advocates that preaching (preaching the Word of God) is the instrument through which God transforms people. If that is true, it stands to reason that preaching must be honest teaching otherwise it is fundamentally flawed and unworthy.

Preaching is often criticised for its monologue form and yet there are distinct advantages to it. For example, a preacher with great skill can use words to do what a person could not do in ordinary discussion or conversation. Simply by the use of words in a monologue form a preacher can educate people to the importance of matters by spending time building up a sense of greatness – whether it is the greatness of God or the greatness of God's grace. Or a preacher, in monologue form, can stack up a pile of reasons for believing in a particular truth or for behaving in a particular way. Or a preacher, in monologue form, can hold up to the hearers a mirror while exploring their state of mind or their conflicting thoughts. In short, the preacher will see it as their responsibility to make the message as clear, vivid, searching, 'home-coming', and as memorable as they can while using all the rhetorical resources and possibilities of monologue form to that end (Packer 1986:22).

Another example: Monologue preaching makes it possible for the preacher to explore human problems as problems of the community. The preacher then mentions these problems and subjects them to biblical analysis whereby the preacher then in effect counsels the hearers. Monologue preaching is effective counselling from the pulpit.

From these four theological reasons for preaching, we can see that no congregation can be healthy without a good, solid diet of biblical preaching. It is indispensable. It is the reason why we preach. In fact, it is the conviction of Stott (1982:109) that the Church is the creation of God by his Word. Furthermore, it is his conviction that the Church is dependent on God's Word. Not only has God brought the Church into being by his Word, but "[H]e maintains and sustains it, directs and sanctifies it, reforms and renews it through the same Word. The Word of God is the sceptre by which Christ rules the Church and the food with which he nourishes it" (Stott 1982:109; cf Cilliers 2004:18-19; Long 1989:50). Stott (1995:274) suggests that "the health of every congregation depends more than anything else on the quality of its preaching ministry" while Nel (2005:28) suggests that the quality of a congregation is really directly proportional to the quality of the communication that exists between God and that congregation (see Lloyd-Jones 1976:9-25). Stott (1992:208) is convinced that the low level of Christian living evident in many churches is as a result of the low level of Christian preaching in those churches. While it is the Holy Spirit who renews and grows the church, he uses the Word of God. So the life and growth, the health and depth of a church are really dependant on serious biblical preaching: "Churches live, grow and flourish by the Word of God; they wilt and wither without it" (Stott 1992:208; cf Pieterse 2001:17, 22). Preaching then is an essential, indispensable part to the life and health of the church. The existence and continuance of a congregation is in jeopardy without it: "If God ceases to speak [through preaching], the church [theologically speaking] ceases to exist..." (Nel 2005:28).

In "post-traditional" or "new style" or "postmodern" churches, preaching has taken on a new dimension which would be in conflict with what the researcher has already reported. Easum (2001:100-101), as an example, states that preaching should no longer try to communicate cognitive information or get people to consent to propositional truth, but that preaching today

should focus on creating an experience for the hearer – an experience of “the oral story, the beat of the sound, and visualisation of the metaphor.” He says: “Today’s preaching must include the paradox of both/and, the mystery of metaphor and symbol, the open-ended nature of visuals, the complexity of the multi-layered senses, and the pace of a race. If it doesn’t, worship will transform neither Christian nor non-Christian” (Easum 2001:101). While there certainly may be an element of truth in this, it appears as if Easum is elevating experience at the expense of propositional truth. This is debatable as Easum’s field is not Homiletics.

What is perhaps even more debatable is the emphasis that emerging churches place on the pulpit and the preached Word. In emerging churches, the central place is given, not to preaching, but to the altar or to the communion table. One emerging church leader says: “[P]reaching... is not the reason we gather... [W]e view preaching as an art form rather than the transformative transfer of correct information” (Gibbs and Bolger 2006:229). Some emerging churches leave preaching out altogether. One emerging leader states: “My blog is my pulpit. I rarely will preach in a church. It is on the blog where theological issues are discussed” (Gibbs and Bolger 2006:165). While preaching in these emerging churches may not be central to the service and in some cases even omitted, thereby raising worrying questions, the saving factor is that “theological issues” are being discussed and taken seriously in these emerging churches.

2.3.2 A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO PREACHING

When it comes to building up the local church, a theological premise is that God does it by means of his Spirit and Word (Nel 2005:166). It is argued that the Spirit, who builds the church through the Word, does not build the church from random texts that are preached and applied in a haphazard and loose way, but that it is built up through methodical, systematic, planned preaching either from a book or a theme of the Bible (Nel 2005:167, 299). Long (1989:62-63) mentions four ways in which the preacher can preach from the Bible:

- Lectio continua, which involves preaching through the Bible book by book and text by text.
- A lectionary, which is a list of biblical passages arranged to suit the various days in the church/Christian calendar.

- A local plan, which is in essence a local church lectionary and which is designed by the preachers themselves.
- The preacher's choice, which means that the preacher selects the texts based on the pressing need of the moment. This is usually referred to as topical preaching.

The “lectio continua” method is the method of preference. Why? If the preacher embarks on a systematic book study or even a theme in the Bible, it helps the congregation to understand both its identity and reason for existence. Topical preaching may have a place, but a limited place. Nel (2005:299) argues for inspiring and dynamic preaching – preaching that is based on an exegesis of the text, or a more thematic approach to scripture and the context (cf Lloyd-Jones 1976:188-189).

One of the greatest needs of the contemporary church is conscientious biblical exposition from the pulpit. Ignorance of even the rudiments of the faith is widespread. Many Christian people are immature and unstable. And the major reason for this sorry state of affairs is the paucity of responsible, thorough, balanced biblical preachers. The pulpit is not the place to ventilate your own opinions, but to unfold God's Word.

(Stott 1992:171)

Stott (1992:209-218) makes a case for thoroughly biblical or expository preaching. Biblical or expository preaching has six aspects – two convictions, two obligations and two expectations.

Two Convictions:

1. When we preach, we are preaching from an *inspired text* – a text that is unlike any other text. This text is unique in its origin, nature and authority; it has divine origin and authority (Pieterse 1987:15; cf Cilliers 2004:95-96). “Nothing undermines preaching more than scepticism about scripture” (Stott 1992:209) for if the text is not God-spoken, we would have nothing of worth to say except our own thin speculations. We would not be able to expound scripture, for we would have no scripture to expound. We would not

be able to speak, for we would have nothing to say. And yet, when a preacher enters the pulpit with the confidence that the text is God-spoken, “our heads begin to swim, our hearts [begin] to beat, our blood [begins] to flow, and our eyes [begin] to sparkle, with the sheer glory of having God’s word in our hands and on our lips” (Stott 1992:210).

2. When we preach, we *open up* this inspired text. This inspired text is at times partially closed or difficult to understand. Not all texts are clear and easy to understand. Certainly the central message of the Bible, namely the gospel of salvation, is clear and easy to understand. It is as plain as day, but there are texts that are not as clear and easy to understand. One apostle didn’t always understand another apostle. For example Peter found what Paul said “hard to understand” (NIV, 2 Peter 3:16). When we preach then, we *open up* the inspired text.

Two Obligations:

1. When we preach, we open up the text with *faithfulness* – faithfulness to the ancient world. (As preachers we ask ourselves the question: What did this text mean? What did it mean in the ancient world?). The world in which God first spoke the text is an ancient world, a world very different to our modern world. It has its own history, geography, culture and language. The call of the preacher is to be faithful to that text which was spoken in that setting. We call this *exegesis*: thinking ourselves back into the history, geography, culture and language of that text. So the preacher must be faithful to the ancient world – what does this text mean as it was spoken in the ancient world?

2. When we preach, we open up the text with *sensitivity* – sensitivity to the modern world (As preachers we ask ourselves the question: What does it say? What does it say to the modern world?). Although it is true to say that God essentially spoke his word to the ancient world, it is equally true to say that God intends his word for everybody, even those in the modern world. He speaks to the modern world through the Bible. The preacher has to be sensitive to this. The task of the preacher therefore is not only to

faithfully explain the original meaning of the text, but also to be sensitive to what this text says to the modern world, and then to apply it to the modern world.

Two Expectations:

1. When we open up the inspired text with faithfulness and sensitivity, we expect that God's voice will be heard to the point that it will "surprise us, even violate our expectations" (Long 1989:58). Our expectation is borne out of the belief that God, who has spoken in the past through his word, will speak today through that same word that he has spoken (Stott 1992:216; cf Cilliers 2004:50-51, 57-58). Cornelius the centurion characterises this expectation for us in Acts 10:33. When Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius, Cornelius, expectant, said: "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us" (NIV). This raises an interesting question: does this expectation characterise many a congregation today, or is it at a low ebb today in our modern world? Many would say it is at a low ebb.

2. When we open up the inspired text with faithfulness and sensitivity, we expect that God's people will obey him: "The Word of God always demands a response of obedience" (Stott 1992:217). How would we expect the people of God to respond? It would be determined, obviously, by the content of the word expounded, by what God says. If God speaks about the greatness and grandeur of his glory, we would expect the people to respond in worship and adoration. If God speaks about our sin and waywardness, we would expect the people to respond in penitence and confession. If God speaks about his commands, we would expect the people to determine to obey them. Our response is determined by what God says to us.

Stott (1982:315-320), Begg (1999:33-38) and K.R. Hughes (2001:85) argue for the grand advantages of expositional preaching. Expository preaching means:

- It gives glory to God alone
- It makes the preacher study God's word – it aids them in their growth as a theologian
- It helps the congregation by providing them with a balanced diet

- It demands treatment of the entire Bible
- It eliminates “Saturday night fever” – last minute preparation
- You will preach texts that you normally avoid and never preach
- You are kept subject to and focused on the text
- You have the confidence to preach with conviction: “This is what God says!”
- You have the confidence that when the word is opened, the Spirit speaks

A systematic approach to preaching therefore is highly desirable. To build up the local church the preacher must be prepared to unpack the Word of God in a planned, responsible and systematic way (Nel 2005:167; cf Ellsworth 2001:120). Expository preaching, as opposed to, say, the more popular form of preaching today (narrative preaching which is essentially storytelling), contributes to the church’s maturity, stability and identity. In fact Long (2009c:12-13) declares that narrative preaching is under serious scrutiny today as narrative preaching (“Always to tell stories”) means a failure at a doctrinal, ethical, and practical level. This does not mean that narrative preaching must be dismissed in an outright fashion. A case can be made for elements of narrative preaching, but it must be performed responsibly (see Long 2009c:17-19). He calls for “a chastened, revised, theologically more astute, and biblically engaged form of narrative preaching” (Long 2009c:26).

2.3.3 THE CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF PREACHING

Before the researcher looks at the character and quality of preaching, a brief word on the five-dimensional ministry of the word which Guder (2000:162-164) submits as necessary for equipping the church for its mission.

Ephesians 4:11: It was he who gave “some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers...” (NIV). It has been suggested that preaching needs to embrace these five dimensions for the church to be built up, or more specifically, for the church to be equipped for its mission.

Preaching must be *apostolic* in nature –Apostolic in the sense that it is faithful to the apostolic message (gospel proclamation) and apostolic mission of the church.

Preaching must be *prophetic* in nature – Prophetic in the sense that the gospel word is translated and proclaimed into the context of that mission community.

Preaching must be *evangelistic* in nature – Evangelistic in the sense that the church needs to be continually converting. The church needs continuous conversion.

Preaching must be *pastoral* and *instructive* in nature – Preaching must guide the church gently, firmly, persuasively, just as a shepherd guides its flock. Preaching must also faithfully teach the church every aspect of its faith (see Guder 2000:162-164).

Homileticians have identified four images or metaphors of those who seek to fulfil this five-dimensional ministry of the word. There is intense debate as to which of these images or metaphors are the most effective. Needless to say: each one has its strengths and weaknesses. Briefly mentioned they are:

The preacher as *herald*: Someone who attends to the message of scripture and who speaks it plainly, without any artistry. They preach as an ambassador with authority.

The preacher as *pastor*: Someone who develops a communication strategy that is designed to provoke change in a person. They are more endearing than a herald.

The preacher as *story-teller*: This word defines not who the preacher is but how they preach – by telling stories. Obviously the basis of their stories is from the scriptures.

The preacher as *witness*: Someone who has “seen” something (witnessed it) and is now willing to tell the truth about it (witness to it) (see Long 1989:24-47).

2.3.3.1 The Character of the Preacher

1. “*Now the overseer must be above reproach...*” (NIV, Timothy 3:2). No preacher can stand in front of a congregation without a deep sense of awe and responsibility, humility and fear (Long 1989:15), and yet also with exceptional joy for the preacher has been entrusted with the task of speaking the one word that humanity most desperately and urgently needs to hear (Long 1989:20). Preaching is not only an inestimable gift from God (Long 1989:20), but it is serious business, and therefore there must be congruence between the preacher’s personal life and their public persona. The preacher must be characterised by integrity and virtue. No masks – no hiding behind correct exegesis or quick solutions or awesome profundity (Cilliers 2004:184). Preaching

is serious business and preachers are called to be faithful. A preacher cannot be faithful unless the text has first of all addressed, touched, broken, wounded and consoled them as preachers (Cilliers 2004:185). Only then can a preacher appeal to others to participate in the text. There must be integrity in a preacher's relationships – integrity with God, integrity with themselves, and integrity toward those to whom they preach. As Cilliers (2004:185) puts it: “Those who do not have integrity in their relationships, may indeed be able to speak like angels, but will hardly attain entrance into people's hearts.” Integrity, virtue and sincerity is the bed in which true communication is born (Cilliers 2004:188; see Nel 2001:50-65). Pieterse (2001:25) says that listeners “should have a favourable image of the preacher,” and preachers have to earn this. They must be known by their congregations as people who are genuine, reliable, who are in solidarity with them, who care for them and have their interests at heart. At the same time the preacher should have a favourable disposition toward the congregation – without any feelings of ill-will or aggression toward them (Pieterse 2001:25; cf Day 2009:141; see Nel 2001:102-108).

2. *“Do your best to present yourself as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the truth”* (NIV, 2 Tim 2:15). “[P]reaching is not the proud ventilation of human opinions: it is the humble exposition of God's Word” (Stott 1995:272). A true preacher of God's Word faithfully and responsibly brings out of the scripture what is there, not what is not there. True preachers of God's Word do their utmost to interpret the scripture accurately and plainly. They have to pry open what appears to be closed, make plain what appears to be obscure, untie what appears to be knotted, unpack what appears to be tightly packed (Stott 1995:272). This requires effort, diligence, patience and preparation. There is no excuse for a preacher's lack of these characteristics. Craddock (2011:7) and Long (1989:58) propose that the key to consistently effective preaching is the discipline of daily work. It is sometimes argued that there is no need for a preacher to prepare his sermon “for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say” (NIV, Luke 12:12). That however is a misquotation of scripture. It was referring to the hour of persecution and not proclamation, to the prisoner's dock in a law court and not to the pulpit in the church. It is in the preacher's study, through due effort and diligence, patience and preparation, that the Spirit clarifies and directs the preacher's thinking and gives them the word or words to say.

2.3.3.2 The Quality of the Preaching

Word and Worship (or Preaching and Praise) are indissolubly linked (Stott 1995:275). The art of preaching is making known the name of the Lord while worship is praising the name of the Lord that is made known. Since worship is a loving and intelligent response to the preaching of the Word, for worship to be true, meaningful and acceptable, the preaching of the Word must be of a high quality. If the preaching is of a low quality, it stands to reason that the worship will be of a low quality. If the preaching is of a high quality – expounding the Word in its fullness so as to extol the virtues of God’s greatness and grandeur – then worship will be of a high quality. How do preachers achieve that high quality of preaching that would lead to the acceptable worship of God? The researcher submits some pointers for consideration:

1. Doctrine: What is the preacher’s view of God? If the preacher has a pygmy view of God, the preaching will be of pygmy proportion: “Behind the concept and the act of preaching there lies a doctrine of God, a conviction about his being, his action and his purpose. The kind of God we believe in determines the kind of sermons we preach” (Stott 1995:332). Cilliers (2004:45) proposes that just as the preacher’s view of God determines what kind of sermons the preacher will preach, so too the preacher’s view of preaching will determine what kind of sermons the preacher will preach. Piper (1990:20) pleads for the supremacy of God in preaching. The dominant note of preaching, he says, must be the freedom of God’s sovereign grace, and the unifying theme must be the zeal that God has for his glory, and the grand object of preaching must be the infinite and inexhaustible being of God, while the pervasive atmosphere of preaching must be the holiness of God. People *must* take away from worship “a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory, the grand object of God’s infinite Being” (Piper 1990:22).

Long (2009c:109) suggests that preachers need to take the theological plunge and claim the role as pulpit teachers of the Christian faith. Preachers need to publicly preach and teach on the great themes, ideas and claims of the Christian faith, and to do so with delight and persuasion, thereby challenging the shallow spiritualities of our time.

2. Preparation: “Building up the local church as a ministry is borne and guided by faithful preaching of the Word” (Nel 2005:167). Faithful preaching entails a careful and thorough preparation of the text, or, “just as the finest of cuisines in the grandest of restaurants begins in the kitchen with spices and vegetables and a raw chicken, the sermon in which the windy possibility of transcendence ruffles our hair begins with the day labour of biblical exegesis” (Long 2009c:42). Through a great deal of discipline, form the good habit of thorough preparation, encourages Craddock (2011:169-177). The preacher must dig deeply into the text while taking into account the biblical principles of interpretation and context. In the preparation of the text, the preacher must seek to isolate and unfold its dominant theme while using every available resource to remain true to the text. Thoroughly biblical, qualitative and faithful preparation is required (see Ellsworth 2001:114-121; Hansen 1994:91-102; Long 2009c:42-53; Mohler 2008:15-38; Piper 1990:47-63; Stott 1988:15-47).

While preachers need to prepare their sermons, they also need to prepare their hearts. What the preacher needs is not so much homiletical technique, as a close personal walk with God. There is no greater need for a preacher than for them to know God, to have spent time with God, to have their heart prepared before and by God. In the pulpit it must be evident that God is a reality to the preacher, that they have spent time in the presence of God for “the preparation of the heart is of far greater importance than the preparation of the sermon” (Stott 1995:273; cf Cilliers 2004:184-186).

On the matter of preparation, Killinger (2009:128) proposes that a preacher cannot preach until they themselves have *heard, seen, felt and known* the mysteries that they are given to declare. This is accomplished, he advocates, through waiting before God in silence, or, as he puts it, “waiting in the void” (Killinger 2009:132; cf Day 2009:140-141, 142; cf Long 1989:72). Silence does three things for the preacher.

- Silence allows the preacher to discover reality – the reality of what they are to describe to their hearer’s.

- Silence shapes the character of the preacher – in silence the Word or the Spirit forms and shapes the preacher so as to allow them to carry God to their hearers.
- Silence bestows form and meaning upon language. Where there is no silence, language runs the risk of becoming weightless, slippery and elusive. Whereas language is one of the great delights of the human species, yet if it is deprived of silence, it becomes tormenting (see Killinger 2009:128-131).

For these reasons it has been suggested that preachers become people of prayer and meditation – setting time aside where they can become all ears and listen to the silence of God, for, “there is no preaching without presence, no speaking without listening, no talking without silence” (Killinger 2009:128).

3. Prayer: Prayerful preparation is essential. Preaching is synonymous with prayer, admits Cilliers (2004:187). Those who cannot pray, cannot preach (Cilliers 2004:188; cf Craddock 2011:x). Capill (2003:57) talks of preaching as “the ministry of prayer and the Word”. Our example would come from the apostles, especially the apostle Paul, who repeatedly assures the churches of his constant prayers for them. He prayed night and day, ceaselessly giving thanks for them and interceding for their spiritual growth and advancement. Baxter (1974:61) talks of the preacher’s need to be “much in prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices” for “Christians who are much in secret prayer and in meditation and contemplation, are the men of greatest life and joy, because they are nearer the source of the fountain, and have all more immediately from God himself” (Baxter 1974:62; cf Pieterse 1987:15).

There must be prayerful preparation of the sermon. Prayer must be entered into *during* sermon preparation, *before* the preacher leaves for the church, *in* the pulpit before preaching and *after* the sermon: “It is on our knees before the Lord that we make the message our own, possess or re-possess it until it possesses us. Then, when we preach it, it will come neither from our notes, nor from our memory, but out of the depths of our personal conviction, as an authentic utterance of our heart” (Stott 1982:257).

4. The presence of God in our speech: While there is plenty of God-talk and religious chatter in the pulpit, what appears to be absent is the vibrant sense of the living divine reality (Long 2009b:34). Sincere words about God are being spoken in the pulpit, but it lacks the wild, undomesticated presence of God, so that sermons have the hollow sound of an old oak whose living centre has died and rotted away. This is due, says Long (2009b:34), not to a lack of faith or wilful neglect on the part of the preacher, but perhaps more because of a habit of speech, a cultural conditioning of how religious language is to be used. Preachers need to recover not only the sense of God's holy presence in the pulpit, but the Spirit's willingness and desire to transmit the words being preached with power and conviction. God uses the preacher to do this.

The preacher ought to read and expound the text with great seriousness of purpose, feeling deeply about what they are preaching. Craddock (2011:120) talks of the need for preachers to preach with passion – with an intensity of spirit and personal engagement in the message. Feel it, hear it, taste it, touch it, know it and say it is what he advocates (Craddock 2011:192). He also talks of the need to preach with a view to generating “the shock of recognition” within a hearer – a cutting and prophetic intrusion into their life (Craddock 2011:128). He also talks of the need to preach with emotion that is almost magical – emotion that is appropriate to the material, he cautions (Craddock 2011:180). To preach with a seriousness of purpose however does not mean a “heaviness of manner”, looking like a “sad dork”, admits Craddock (2011:8). Remaining what he calls “light on your feet”, or being pleasant, cheerful, and full of good humour is a sure sign of the presence of God in the pulpit. In possessing a good sense of humour does not mean that you are glib, adds Craddock (2011:56), it is simply being free to accept one's place in the grace of God. Coupled to this idea of preaching with seriousness, passion, “the shock of recognition” and emotion, is the idea of possessing a knowledge of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art of oratory and dates back to the 5th Century BC. Biblical rhetoric seeks to deliver the truth in such a way so as to persuade listeners – gripping them, carrying them along, convincing them and allowing them to experience the truth themselves (Pieterse 2001:25; cf Day 2009:4).

Added to this, the apostle Paul reminds us that his preaching was not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power (NIV, 1 Corinthians 2:4). Olyott (2007:149) says: “[T]he best preaching in the world, without the Spirit's touch, is nothing”. In the delivery of a sermon then, there is and ought to be a close link between the preacher and the Holy Spirit (see Olyott 2007:149-163; also Cilliers 2004:190-191). Without the work Holy Spirit in the pulpit, we are just making speeches (Craddock 2011:x). Sproul (1986:125) says, and I quote:

The Spirit is the energiser, the dynamite of powerful preaching. We need the unction, the anointing of the Spirit, lest our words, eloquent or otherwise, bounce off recalcitrant hearts and evaporate. Ours is a commitment to word (*verbum*) and spirit (*spiritus*). The Spirit comes through the word (*per verbum*) and with the word (*cum verbo*), but not apart from or without the word (*sine verbo*). The balance of word and spirit is ours to maintain.

5. Dialogue: The preacher must be able to create a silent dialogue between the congregation and the Word whereby the meaning and significance of the Word can not only be contemplated, understood and become their own, but by which the congregation can become enthused (Nel 2005:168; cf Pieterse 1987:7-8). Pieterse (1987:126) and Browning (2010:85) refer to this as the “silent conversation” between the preacher and the congregation. “Dialogical preaching” (Stott 1988:60) is the silent dialogue which develops between the preacher and the hearer. What the preacher says provokes questions in the hearer's mind which the preacher then proceeds to answer. The preacher's answer raises further questions to which the preacher again replies. A preacher needs the indispensable gift of a sensitive understanding of people and their problems, so that the preacher can anticipate the hearer's reaction to their sermon, and respond appropriately (Stott 1988:61; cf Johnston 2001:150; Rueter 2009:136). Both Jesus and the apostle Paul are masters of dialogical preaching when they posed

questions to their hearers and then proceeded to answer them (NIV, John 13:12; Romans 3:1-6).

This silent dialogue is not to be confused with a more formal dialogue or discussion that takes place between the preacher and the congregation. Pieterse (2001:24) talks of preaching, and sermons, as essentially dialogical in nature. The idea comes from the word *homilia*, from where we get our English word homiletics, which basically means “discussion” (see Pieterse 2001:23-24). A more formal dialogue or discussion then can be encouraged between preacher and congregation so as to allow the congregation to think through and grasp what they have heard preached. In this case, sermon work groups, discussion groups or evaluation groups are a helpful tool (see Pieterse 2001:86).

6. Good News! Preaching has to do with the gospel which is Good News (Pieterse 1987:6). Some preaching lacks this foundational conviction of the Christian faith. Too often preachers have turned “grace into law, good news into judgement, and love into legalism” (Callahan 1983:28). It is true that judgement, sin and law have an appropriate place in the Christian faith and preaching, but it must be held in tension with, or at least balanced with, the gospel, grace and love. For someone to dwell, week after week, on judgement, sin and law is unbalanced – they are telling only a part of the message. The church or congregation needs to hear that God loves us – “that hope is stronger than memory, that the open tomb is stronger than the bloody cross, that the risen Lord is stronger than the dead Jesus” (Callahan 1983:28). People need to hear the eschatological hope that reverberates through the gospel (Long 2009c:110; cf Cilliers 2004:51-52). People come to church to be helped, loved, comforted, challenged, inspired to live everyday life more fully and richly and therefore, preaching that focuses primarily on judgement, law and sin is unhelpful, let alone difficult to sit through. It is important that the quality of preaching be that of love and grace and that the character of the preaching is genuinely helpful to people (see Callahan 1983:28). In encouraging preachers to speak caringly to the church, Simpson (2007:70) suggests that when preachers speak Christ Jesus, they should speak him in such a way as to communicate God’s

unconditional freeing promise into the reality of their lives and into the reality of the world.

Long (2009c:125-130) proposes 3 ways to accomplish this under the title of “The Eschatological Pulpit”.

1. To preach eschatologically is to remind people of the promise of God’s peace (*shalom*) which flows into the present and future.
2. To preach eschatologically is to remind the hearer that their present is being shaped by their future hope / consummation.
3. To preach eschatologically is to help people understand that eschatological and apocalyptic language in the Bible is not about predicting the future, but it is primarily about seeing the present in the light of hope.

7. Reflection: It is important that a preacher reflect on their craft of preaching (Craddock 2011:20). While a preacher needs to hear other preachers tell their stories of preaching if they are to maintain balance and perspective, yet they also need to “take walks along the back roads and rivers of the mind – to crawl away into the monastery of one’s own solitude and reflect” (Craddock 2011:20).

2.3.4 WORDS HAVE VALUE

Words matter. They are the building blocks of sentences by which we communicate with one another. And the gospel has a specific content. That is why it must be articulated, verbalised. Of course it can and must be dramatized too. For images are sometimes more powerful than words. Yet images also have to be interpreted by words. So in all our evangelism, whether in public

preaching or in private witnessing, we need to take trouble with our choice of words.

(Stott 1995:333)

Words, apart from having meaning, are powerful, important, significant, particularly the words of God. Moses' view of the words of God is that "they are not just idle words for you – they are your life" (NIV, Deuteronomy 32:47). And Jesus confirms this when he quotes Moses by saying: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (NIV, Matthew 4:4). The writer to the Hebrews extols the potency of God's word when he declares it to be "living and active." It is sharper than any double-edged sword, and it has the ability to penetrate even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joint and marrow (NIV, Hebrews 4:12). Paul reminds Timothy of the potency of God's word when he says: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (NIV, 2 Timothy 3:16). The words that we use then with which to communicate the gospel are important, or as Pieterse (1987:33) says: "It is important to choose words carefully...". Craddock (2011:6) suggests that unless there is a profound respect for words and what happens when the preacher speaks, they will not understand that speaking is the fundamental human sacrament. What we say makes a difference for words are not cheap; they are deeds (Craddock 2011:106). To show how important words are, the researcher refers to Linden (2011:23-24), quoted:

To understand the significance of words and the way that we communicate them, we need to understand that the first words that human ears ever heard were not the words of another human being, but the words of God (Tripp 2000:8). God spoke. God communicated to us in words. In creation, in the Garden of Eden, God chose to reveal himself, his character, his will, his plan, his purpose through words. He even defined the identity and purpose of Adam and Eve through words. God spoke in a powerful, comprehensive, clear and understanding way. The words spoken by God were words of peace, love, life,

truth... words that were intended to build, construct, establish. In the Garden of Eden words were never used as weapons to tear down, destroy, undermine, manipulate or cause death. The fall of man changed that though. With the intrusion of sin into the world, communication was corrupted and words were suddenly used in a way never intended. There was a consequent struggle and war being waged with words, not on the part of God but on the part of man. Today we communicate or speak words of lies, hate, impatience, murder and condemnation. Words are often spoken out of pride, selfishness, deception and manipulation. Words are spoken to tear down, uproot, destroy and rob a person of life. In preaching then special care needs to be given to the way we communicate, to the choice of words. Words must ultimately define, shape and build a local church (cf Peterson 1989:87-94; see Long 2009c:41-42; Olyott 2007:132-136; Pieterse 1987:123-125; Tripp 2000:6-15).

2.3.5 IMAGES, AND IMAGINATIVE PREACHING HAS VALUE

An added dimension to words which define, shape and build up the local church is the dimension of images and imaginative preaching. Just as words matter and have value, so too do images and imaginative preaching.

- Images: Concerning the use of images in preaching, the Bible is not merely a book or compilation of historical facts, but an ancient source, indeed a wealth of images – vital, life-giving images or metaphors embodied in the Word and texts (Cilliers 2004:210-211). These images must be claimed and translated to the hearer's if we as preachers want to be imaginative theologians and preachers. Preachers ought to associate imaginatively with the images in scripture just as Jesus used images and his imagination when he often declared: 'The kingdom of God is like ...!' Preachers ought to take their hearers on guided tour, based on a text, through the art gallery of life (see Cilliers 2004:210-217).
- Imaginative Preaching: To take the image idea a step further, Long (2009b:38) talks of imaginative preaching. One of the recent discoveries in biblical interpretation is the role

of the human imagination – the imagination of the author who composed the biblical text and the imagination of the interpreter who is required both to read and interpret that text. It is proposed that between the biblical text and the contemporary application of that text stands an act of the interpreter’s imagination. Texts are no longer being viewed simply as inert containers or as jars with theological ideas, but as poetic expressions which display rhetorical and literary artistry. The connection between the text and the contemporary world is not merely procedural, but poetic, not merely mechanical, but metaphorical, and it is the task of the interpreter or preacher to enter imaginatively into the text. After all, there is imagination all along the line – the author of the text used his imagination in formulating the text; the interpreter, or preacher, employs their imagination in relating that text to the present situation; and the hearer employs their imagination in receiving it (see Long 2009b:35-41; also Lischer 2009:179-184).

2.3.6 PREACHING IN VARIOUS MODES

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (NIV, Romans 10:17). The way we come to understand and live our faith comes from hearing the message, the preached word of Christ. If that is so, then *what* we preach and the *way* that we preach it must make a difference to the way that we understand and live faith. Ford (2007:45-50) argues that there are various modes of preaching (“moods of faith”) all of which contribute to the way we understand and live faith. A mention of them:

1. Indicative mode of preaching – affirming and affirmed

Throughout Jesus’ life on earth, he was surrounded by cries of affirmation. Jesus was affirmed by God at his baptism – “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (NIV, Matthew 3:17). Jesus was affirmed by God at his transfiguration – “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (NIV, Matthew 17:2). Even at his death, Jesus was affirmed by the centurion who exclaimed: “Surely he was the Son of God!” (NIV, Matthew 27:54).

Jesus’ ministry was one of affirmation. Positive affirmation – “Blessed are you...”, but also negative affirmation – “Woe to you...” (NIV, Luke 6:20). The greatest affirmation of Jesus’

ministry was his indicative preaching or his proclamation of the Kingdom of God – The Kingdom of God is at hand, or near, or here, evidenced in his words: “Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (NIV, Luke 4:21). In Luke 10, Jesus himself rejoices in this fact when he sees what God is doing through him and his disciples. When we preach the message of Christ, particularly the narrative of the gospel story, we affirm. When we tell the gospel story and someone hears it, it is one of the most basic ways of opening up the possibility of a person developing faith (Ford 2007:46). This is what we commonly call “the indicative mode of preaching”.

2. Imperative mode of preaching – obedience in the Kingdom of God

Jesus lived a life of radical obedience to the Father. It is seen, for example, in his response to the temptations he faced in the wilderness. Quoting and adhering to the commands of God, Jesus said: “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’”; “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’”; “For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (NIV, Matthew 4:3-10). It is evident throughout Jesus’ life that he was radically obedient to the Father and it culminates at, for instance, Gethsemane where Jesus says: “Yet not as I will, but as you will” (NIV, Matthew 26:39). Or, more pointedly, it culminates at the cross where Jesus “...became obedient to death – even death on a cross!” (NIV, Philippians 2:8).

Jesus’ obedience to the Father is the basis for the Gospels call for a life of obedience to God. Among the core imperatives to obey is Jesus’ call to “Follow me” (NIV, Luke 5:27), or the Father’s call to “Listen to him” (NIV, Luke 9:35). The call to obedience culminates in the commission that Christ left to his disciples: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (NIV, Matthew 27:19-20). So the Gospel then invites us into an obedience of faith rooted in Jesus’ own obedience (Ford 2007:46). Through Christ’s obedience, we are called to obey. A call to obey is the imperative mode of preaching.

The researcher has taken point 3 - 5 from previous research, Linden 2011:29-30.

3. Interrogative mode of preaching – questioning and being questioned

The life and ministry of Jesus, from the annunciation of his birth, to his teachings, to his ministry of healings, absolutions, exorcisms, raising the dead and finally to his trial and death, generated a huge amount of questioning, perplexity, doubt, conflict and even amazement. Aspects of interrogation, testing, critique and astonishment run all through the gospel stories. For example: “Is this not Joseph’s son?” (NIV, Luke 4:22); “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” (NIV, John 1:46); “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (NIV, Luke 5:21); “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him” (NIV, Luke 8:25). The people were more often than not filled with awe and astonishment at the actions of Jesus while being amazed at his teachings.

This interrogation, testing, critique applies not only to Jesus himself but also to his hearers. When we hear the gospel story preached in the interrogative mode, we not only interrogate the person of Jesus Christ but we ourselves are being interrogated, often resulting in astonishment. Through questioning and being questioned our faith develops and the believer is built up (see Ford 2007:47).

4. Subjunctive mode of preaching – possibilities and surprises

Preaching in the subjunctive mode raises possibilities and evokes decisions while presenting us with surprises (Ford 2007:48). If we look for example at the parables of Jesus, these vividly present us with a different view of God and a different view of reality. They open up to us new vistas, new possibilities while inviting us into fundamental decisions and a reorientation of our life. To illustrate the point: in the parable of the Sower, a mirror is held up to us, confronting us with different options of what to do with Jesus’ message (NIV, Luke 8:5-15). In the parable of the Good Samaritan we are faced with the option of how we will treat our neighbour – as the priest, as the Levite, or as the Samaritan did (NIV, Luke 10:29-37). In the parable of the wedding banquet we are forced to consider our priorities in the light of those who refused the invitation to the banquet (NIV, Luke 14:145-24). All these parables open up to us different, bewildering and larger possibilities.

If we look at the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as another example, this generates a superabundance of new possibilities and surprises. The Spirit is said to be a spirit of

new possibilities while being inexhaustibly surprising. Preaching in the subjunctive mode appeals to these possibilities and surprises, thereby causing growth in the church and in our lives (see Ford 2007:48).

5. Optative mode of preaching – desiring and being desired

In the opening two chapters of Luke we have a symphony of desires, both implicit and explicit. For example: Zechariah and Elizabeth desire a child but have been suffering the disgrace of barrenness. Mary, in her Magnificat, displays a passionate desire for God's blessing to rest on the truly wise, the lowly, the hungry and a desire for the fulfilment of the promise that God made to his people, Israel. Both Simeon and Anna, in the Temple, reveal their desire for the "consolation of Israel" and the "redemption of Jerusalem." Later in the gospel, since the kingdom of God is portrayed both in terms of Christ ruling in the hearts of men with justice, peace and righteousness, and also in terms of feasting, love and sheer joy, surely it is reasonable to assume that this is enough to cause desire in the hearts of men? Every person has desires – the desire for fullness, meaning, purpose and reason for existence since sin robbed man of that. Among these desires is the desire to be desired – the desire to have value, worth, to be known and loved by God. Surely this is part of eternity that God has set in the hearts of men as cited by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:11? Everyone has desires.

Preaching in the optative mode then is appealing to the desires of a person. As we come to know "the desire of nations" more, our desire to know Him more and to be known more by Him grows (see Ford 2007:49-50).

Pieterse (1987:36; 2001:25) also notes that there are different forms of preaching or different forms of sermons and I mention them briefly:

1. The Biblically Thematic Sermon: A largely argumentative sermon which expounds the truth and tries to persuade the listener of the truth through arguments.
2. The Homily: This sermon essentially communicates through dialogue and can quite easily lead to a discussion after the sermon.

3. The Narrative Sermon: This sermon draws the listener into the world of the story being related and invites the listener to identify with one of the characters or aspects in the story thereby absorbing a certain truth.

4. The Poetic Sermon and Meditation: This sermon normally communicates through mood and atmosphere which is usually created by meditation.

Essentially, “faith comes from hearing the message...” (NIV, Romans 10:17). The way we come to understand and live our faith comes from hearing the message, the preached word of God. Not only is what we hear therefore vitally important, but also *what* we preach and the *way* we preach it. The researcher submits that the various modes and forms of preaching need to be embraced and preached in a balanced way as there is never one correct mode or form of preaching (Pieterse 1987:37).

2.3.7 A CONCLUDING REMARK

Stott (1992:183) advocates that the church is insecure. It is uncertain of its identity, mission and message. While churches live, grow and flourish by the Word of God, they also wilt and wither without it, he contends (Stott 1992:208; cf Craddock 2011:17). Nothing then, it appears, is more important for the life and growth, for the health and depth of the contemporary church, than a recovery of serious biblical preaching. Serious biblical preaching or truly effective and dynamic preaching would not only build up the local church by providing it with its core identity, but also provide it with its reason for existence, thereby making it effective in its calling and mission to the world. Serious biblical preaching therefore must contain the elements we have discussed – a systematic approach to preaching, a character and quality of preaching, an understanding of the value of words and images and imaginative preaching, and a balanced embracing of the various modes of preaching.

2.4 HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

2.4.1 WHAT DOES THE RESEARCHER MEAN BY “HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING”?

In employing the phrase “hermeneutical preaching”, the researcher has something specific in mind. Since all biblical preaching is an interpretation of the sermon’s text and of scripture (Pieterse 1987:9), hermeneutical preaching has to do with the interpretation of those texts or scriptures. In the conceptualising of the problem statement (Chapter 1:3.4) the researcher defined hermeneutical preaching as: “[P]reaching that takes serious account of the principles of interpreting the texts of the Bible. It is preaching that honestly seeks to understand and correctly interpret all the linguistic and non-linguistic expressions of the text.” In hermeneutical preaching then, the researcher would be concerned that adequate and serious consideration be given to the accurate and honest interpretation of the text. Hermeneutical preaching would focus on the *text* at hand.

The researcher contrasts “hermeneutical preaching” with what emerging churches would call “spiritual hermeneutics” (Gibbs and Bolger 2006:222). Preaching in some emerging churches is not the focal point of a service, and hence there would be no need for biblical hermeneutics concerning a text. They would practice spiritual hermeneutics whereby they take into serious consideration spiritual elements like ancient traditions, liturgy, incense, chanting and candles in order to determine the mind of God for that church (see Gibbs and Bolger 2006:219-226). Biblical hermeneutics focuses on the text.

2.4.2 A DEFINITION OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

We derive the word “hermeneutic” from the Greek word ἐρμηνεύω or ἐρμηνεία. This is derived from Hermes, the messenger of the gods. This word or its derivative is used nineteen times in the New Testament and it typically means “to explain or to translate” (Wofford 2009). It is used in Luke 24:27 for example, where Jesus explains to his disciples how the Old Testament considered him: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he *explained (hermeneuo)* to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (NIV). A word that is associated with *hermeneia* is the word *exegeomai* (exegesis) which appears several times in the New Testament and which means “to tell, or to recount” (Thompson 1981:14).

Coverdale Bible of 1535: Perhaps one of the oldest definitions of Hermeneutics is to be found in the Prologue to the Coverdale Bible of 1535: “It will greatly help you to understand Scripture, if you mark, not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows after.”

P. Ricoeur: “Hermeneutics is the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts” (Ricoeur 1999:53).

B. Ramm: “Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation” (Ramm 1970:1).

A. Thiselton: “Hermeneutics explores how we read, understand, and handle texts, especially those written in another time or in a context of life different from our own. Biblical hermeneutics investigates more specifically how we read, understand, apply, and respond to biblical texts” (Thiselton 2009:1).

R. Wofford: Biblical hermeneutics is the science that has to do with the proper interpreting of scripture (Wofford 2009). The goal of biblical hermeneutics is to understand scripture in the same way that the author intended it to be understood, i.e. getting the meaning of what the author intended.

In order to arrive at the proper interpretation of scripture, theologians resort to an Exegetical Triad. Simply put, the meaning of the biblical text is arrived at through Literary Exegesis (analysing the literature of the text); Historical Exegesis (analysing the historical background to the text, or its *Sitz im Leben* – its setting in life); and Theological Exegesis (analysing the nature and activity of God) (see Thompson 1981:23-35). Pieterse (2001:89), referring to Müller, puts it so succinctly when he says that in hermeneutics the preacher seeks the voice of the living God in the text.

2.4.3 PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

While scholars have offered many and varied principles of interpretation, some, like Thompson (1981:46-77), have offered ten principles of interpretation. There are three fundamental principles that summarise them all. When interpreting the scriptures, we ought to look for:

1. The natural meaning of the text.

God intended his Word to be plain and simple, readily intelligible and able to be understood by ordinary human beings (Stott 1995:108). The Word of God is so plainly stated that even the most unlearned of people who have eyes to see and ears to hear would be able to understand God's revealed truth (Packer 1958). The Psalmist puts it like this: "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (NIV, Psalm 119:130). When interpreting the scriptures then, we look for simplicity (or perspicuity) – the clear, simple and most natural explanation of the text (see Thompson 1981:46-48).

2. The original meaning of the text.

When God originally spoke his Word, it was spoken to an original, historical audience. The Word was, originally and primarily, meant for them, in that historical context. It was meant, secondarily, for subsequent generations. For subsequent generations then to receive and understand the scriptures, it would need to be understood in its original and historical context (Stott 1995:109). When interpreting the scriptures then, we look for or we focus on its original and historical meaning. We take into account the original and historical audience.

3. The general meaning of the text.

God and his Word is self-consistent, meaning that God and his Word is not self-contradictory (Stott 1995:109; cf Packer 1958). God and his Word is an organic unity. It has an internal consistency or an inner harmony. Therefore, when God speaks his Word, given his harmonious and consistent nature, his Word is not going to be contradictory or disharmonious. Any disharmony or inconsistency in the scriptures is only apparent, not

real (Packer 1958). When interpreting the scriptures then, we look for harmony and consistency in the general meaning of the text (see Pieterse 2009).

2.4.4 PURPOSE OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The purpose of biblical interpretation is to arrive at the full meaning and significance of the biblical text. It is to get at the heart and essence of the biblical text. To arrive at the full meaning and significance of the text, we need to understand the nature of the biblical text. Based on what Krabbendam (1986:212-245) says, the researcher makes two assumptions about the biblical text and raises two fundamental issues about the biblical text.

2.4.4.1 The First Assumption:

The biblical text displays the imprint of the divine (Krabbendam 1986:213; cf Cilliers 2004:94-95). In other words, the biblical text originates with God. It is God's truth revealed. It is spoken by God, through human agents, and God has a very specific purpose or intention for humanity through that text.

2.4.4.2 The Second Assumption:

The biblical text displays the imprint of humanity (Krabbendam 1986:214; cf Cilliers 2004:93). That is, it was spoken in certain historical and cultural settings while being presented in various languages and literary genres. It consists of data from oral traditions, information from various written sources and insights from interviews. So while the biblical text is thoroughly divine, it is also thoroughly human: "[I]t arises from historical situations, is embedded in the human environment, and addresses the human predicament" (Krabbendam 1986:214).

2.4.4.3 The first fundamental issue of the biblical text relates to meaning.

The biblical text has meaning. It has been suggested that the biblical text has only one, single, unchangeable meaning or truth which the author has determined and expressed through various linguistic symbols (Krabbendam 1986:215). This has been challenged however. Thompson (1981:72), Pieterse (2001:74-75) and Cilliers (2004:35, 108-109) object to the idea of a text having only one eternal meaning or truth. This, it is said, comes from modernism. A closer

analysis however indicates that while there is one eternal truth, this truth has a multidimensional panorama of possibilities. It is polyvalent, as Day (2009:3) says. It is much like the compound eye of a fly – a single eye that is multi-dimensional. Or it is like a diamond that is multifaceted or multidimensional. The meaning of the text therefore depends on the angle from which you approach it. It is in this multiplicity of meanings (truth from different angles) where the richness and challenge of biblical interpretation lies.

When interpreting the text, it should never be necessary to depend on criterion that is outside or beyond the text. Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholic interpreters have sometimes seen more in the text that is not present (seen a mystery?) and they therefore rely on *revelation* (the Jewish and Protestant order), or on *Ecclesiastical Authority* (as in the case of Roman Catholics) for the interpretation and meaning of the text. This is not necessary as it goes outside or beyond the text. It should also never be necessary to search the hidden recesses of the author's mind as if the meaning of the text has been purposefully hidden from the interpreter. The intent of the author, as has been mentioned, is expressed in the text, plainly and simply, clearly and unambiguously.

What is required of the interpreter is that they must resort to what we call exegesis or a thorough exposition of the text. Craddock (2011:41) advocates that the first step in the exegesis of a text is to open the faculties of the mind, open the emotions of the heart, and open direction to the movement of the Spirit. The biblical text is to be uncovered, or discovered, by various means. Craddock (2011:36-37) suggests that we *listen to the voice of the text*. We do that when we read the text, read the text, and read the text. We do that when we read the text, read it out loud, read it several times, and read it carefully, respectfully. Furthermore, we do it by means of studying the grammar, syntax and semantics of the text. To complement that, the text also needs to be studied in its historical, geographical and cultural setting. Lastly, for the uncovering and discovering process to be complete, the interpreter also needs to make a study of the genre and context of the biblical text. This amounts to time-consuming and hard work (Cilliers 2004:97; cf Craddock 2011:7; Thompson 1981:38). The search for the meaning of the text will often appear tedious, at times it may appear to be never-ending, and at other times it may appear to be a dead-

end, but if the study is embarked on properly and thoroughly, it will ultimately yield an exciting understanding of the text (see Krabbendam 1986:214-228).

The first fundamental issue of the biblical text then is that the text has meaning that is to be uncovered or discovered through exegesis.

2.4.4.4 The second fundamental issue of the biblical text relates to significance

The biblical text has significance. Stott (1982:266), quoting Phillips Brooks, says that preaching is the communication of God's truth by man to man. The truth, according to Gadamer and Ricoeur (Pieterse 2001:73), is derived by a three-fold hermeneutical process of: i) understanding the text (*intelligendi*); ii) explaining the text (*explicatio*); iii) applying the text (*applicatio*) (Pieterse 2001:73). Krabbendam (1986:229) suggests that the communication of the truth is not a lecture whereby the preacher simply presents the meaning or the data of the text without an application. It must go further. It must result in application, in significance, in a "message for today". In fact, Pieterse (1987:16) stresses that exegesis and application are one process in sermon preparation and may never be seen as two separate entities. Stott (1995:333) suggests that it would only be of academic interest if we simply discover the meaning of a text and then present that data without appropriate application. It must go further; it must result in "significance" for the hearer. Krabbendam (1986:229) says that communication of God's truth by man to man implies that the hearer has an encounter with God. The hearer encounters God in the preaching, and as such the sermon is compelling, demanding, directing, promising, engaging, electrifying. The hearer responds – they submit, conform, rebel, obey, ignore. In other words: "[I]n preaching, God's truth is integrally brought to bear upon the life of the believer" (Krabbendam 1986:229). In essence, the meaning of the text (exposition or *explicatio*) and the significance of the text (application or *applicatio*) are transmitted to the hearer. To clarify this position, the researcher looks at:

- The relationship between the meaning and the significance of the biblical text:
Just as the meaning of the text is defined by an eternal truth that has a multi-dimensional panorama of possibilities (a multiplicity of meanings) that is uncovered through a

hermeneutical procedure, so too the significance of the text can be discovered and applied in manifold and constantly changing ways. Why? Because the people, situations and predicaments that relate to the text are manifold and constantly changing. Since the significance of the text is based squarely upon the derived meaning of the text, it stands to reason that if the interpretation of the text is incorrect, the significance of the text will also be incorrect (Krabbendam 1986:230; cf Logan 1986:139).

- How we arrive at the significance of the text:

There are different methods of arriving at the significance of the text. Three have been offered by Krabbendam (1986:230-245). One has been offered by Cilliers (2004:110-124) which is in response to Krabbendam. Briefly mentioned, they are:

1. The Exemplary method: In this method, scripture is viewed as a massive collection of examples that are intended to fit or make a contribution to every life-situation and human predicament. When you look at the text, you will discover an example from that text from which you may derive a “life-lesson” or a “timely truth”. While this method is motivated by the desire to show that the text contains a lesson or truth that makes a difference to everyday life, it is open to the danger or abuse of moralising, spiritualising, “psychologising” and even allegorising (Krabbendam 1986:231).
2. The Redemptive-Historical method: In this method, scripture is viewed Christ-centrally. The person and work of Jesus Christ, both before and after his incarnation, takes the centre stage in scripture. Christ is the compendium of all the activity of God, the content of all revelation, the scope of all the scripture and the reference point of all interpretation (Krabbendam 1986:232). All interpretation of scripture therefore is Christ-centred. The problem with this method, however, is that it is restrictive and reductionist in nature – it narrows the approach and scope of the text to Christ alone.

3. The Covenantal-Historical method: In this method, scripture is viewed as biblical texts that contain universal principles and patterns. These universal principles and patterns however only emerge when thorough biblical exegesis is conducted upon the text. All pertinent studies like the historical, linguistic, cultural and contextual study must be embarked upon to get to the true meaning of the text. Once that has been achieved, universal principles and patterns emerge from the text. A full-orbed application or significance of the text can only be derived at from a proper and full-orbed exposition of the text (Krabbendam 1986:236).

4. Cilliers' Response: Cilliers' (2004:110) response to the traditional concept of an interpreter correctly explaining a text (*explicatio*) and then applying the text (*applicatio*) is that it is stereotypical in nature and that it contains the seed of legalism or moralism. He argues that we need a better paradigm than simply the three steps of the explanation of a text (reduction of the text's meaning to a general truth), the application of a text (applying the truth to human lives), and the admonition of the text (therefore we should or must do this in the light of that truth.) While there is this element in arriving at the significance of the text, there is, and should be, more to it than that. Cilliers (2004:123) calls for "theodicy". Theodicy is the sense that God is present in the text or that God himself bridges the distance between the text and the hearer. He says that the objective in preaching is to open the eyes of the hearer so that they can distinguish the reality of God's work in the world, and thereby invite them to participate therein. The emphasis is on leading the hearer to a new vision of God in the present, or to a new dream that can be dreamt of him in the present reality. God is indeed present in the text and the hearer must be presented with "God in the text" not only for their joy but for the new possibilities that exist therein (see Cilliers 2004:110-124).

2.4.5 PROBLEMS IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

To understand and interpret scripture correctly, or to gain a proper understanding of what the author intended, is a problem. These are some reasons why scripture is misinterpreted:

1. A failure to recognise the cultural gap:

The problem of misinterpretation arises because of “the extreme cultural particularities of the ancient text and the modern interpreter” (Stott 1992:187; cf Long 1989:53). Both the author of the ancient text and the modern interpreter is culturally conditioned. We are all creatures of culture and our culture conditions us to the way we think, judge, act, talk, dress, eat and work (Stott 1992:189). The culture of the ancient author and the modern interpreter is different, and the problem arises when the modern interpreter attempts to interpret the ancient text in the light of their own modern culture. This opens the scripture to misinterpretation. In order to correctly interpret the ancient text in its cultural setting, the modern interpreter must follow two steps:

1. They must “distance” themselves from the text. They must acknowledge the “pastness” of the past, or the cultural gap between the past and the present. They must disengage themselves from the text and practice careful exegesis by studying it in its own cultural and linguistic terms and allowing it its own historical integrity. The interpreter must not prematurely decide what the text says (see Stott 1992:187-188).

2. The interpreter must seek to “enter” the text. They must seek to engage it, or be open to it, or practice historical exegesis upon the text. Branson (2007:101) makes an interesting comment when he suggests that we should allow the text to interpret us. This requires a great deal of imagination and empathy. As the interpreter seeks to both *distance* themselves from the text and *enter* the text, it leads to an active interaction between the ancient text and the interpreter, and this yields progress toward the correct interpretation of the scriptures (see Stott 1992:187-188). The interpreter should work with the text, as Cilliers (2004:99) suggests.

2. A failure to recognise the context:

What is a context? Thompson (1981:57) answers this question by saying that: “A context consists of all the forces in motion around and upon the text”. A text is not a static entity. Rather, it is dynamic, moving, pulsating with life. When interpreting the scriptures the context of those scriptures must be taken into account. The historical, political, proximate, theological and cultural contexts, to mention a few, must be explored (see Thompson 1981:56-61). Interpreters must seek to answer questions like: i) What is the background to the text? ii) What is the time, date, place, people, setting and circumstances that surround the text? iii) Who is the author and what is the reason or purpose for writing? (This will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapter on “contextual preaching”.)

3. A failure to consider the literary style:

The Bible contains and uses diverse literary styles and genres to communicate God’s truth (Long 2009a:11; see Pieterse 1987:109). It is the preachers duty to discover, or know, what the “author’s voice” is or what their style of writing is. Some of these styles of writing are i) prose – plain speech which may consist of narration, exposition, argumentation and description; ii) poetry – there are different forms of poetry found in the Psalms and in the Proverbs; iii) history – this is historical narrative which is a true story; iv) prophecy – these are special revelations which specially called men (called prophets) received and by which they explained the past, elucidated the present, and disclosed the future (Kaiser 1989:42). Biblical prophecy also uses symbolic imagery which is called apocalyptic or allegory.

4. A failure to consider all that scripture has to say on a given subject:

In biblical interpretation, situations arise where there is a lack of understanding about a particular text, or ambiguity about that text, or a lack of clarity concerning that text. In that case we must allow scripture to interpret scripture (Wofford 2009). We must allow a comparison of all the scriptures on that subject to qualify, give clarity and confirm what

you think is being said. One of the safest and surest ways of biblical interpretation is to allow scripture to explain scripture (Stott 1995:109).

5. A failure to recognise different covenants:

In dealing with Old Testament interpretation particularly we need to recognise that there are different covenants. Covenants that deal with God's promises and covenants that deal with God's people. There are, for example, Conditional covenants – a bilateral covenant between God and people in which we find the formula “if you do this, then I will do that”. In this covenant God promises special blessings upon people providing that these people fulfil certain conditions. There are also non-Conditional or Unconditional covenants – a unilateral covenant by which God in a sovereign act unilaterally obligates himself to bless the people with whom he has entered into a covenant. These covenants were made with Israel and with mankind in general. Among the covenants were the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, the Land Covenant, Davidic and the New Covenant (cf Krabbendam 1986; see Fruchtenbaum 2005). When interpreting the text, the different covenants must be taken into account.

6. A failure to distinguish between the dispensations of time:

In the Bible there are different periods of time (known as “dispensations”) where God administered his will over a certain period of time, to a certain group of people, in a certain way (McGee 1998). God's rules or commands were different, for different groups of people, in different time periods, or, God dealt with specific groups of people, at specific times, in specific ways. These periods of time are more commonly known as the period of Innocence, the period of Conscience, the period of Human Government, the period of Promise, the period of Law, the period of Grace and the period of Kingdom (Divine Government) (McGee 1998). To properly understand a Bible passage, it is necessary to know both the period of time to which it refers and the group of people to which it is addressed. We may argue: “But is the Bible not written for us? If so why do we need to be conscious of these different periods of time?” The answer is: “Yes, the Bible is written *for us*, for our learning, but it not always addressed *to us*.” It is important

to take these various dispensations into account in order to accurately interpret the passage (see McGee 1998).

2.4.6 THE PRODUCT OF HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

Olyott (2007:55-71) makes a number of negative assertions as to what happens when there is a neglect of good “hermeneutical preaching” (good “hermeneutical preaching” is expository preaching that has doctrinal substance). To state a few of these assertions more positively, the researcher submits that good hermeneutical preaching will result in:

1. God being worshipped and loved as he should be

Good hermeneutical preaching will reveal and help the hearer understand who God is and what he is like in his nature and character, essence and being. When God is revealed and understood for whom he is and what he is like, God will be worshipped and loved (Olyott 2007:55-56; cf Piper 1990:22-25).

2. The nature of our salvation being admired

To state it in the words of Galatians 2:20, good hermeneutical preaching will enable the hearer to understand and admire the fact that the Son of God loved them and gave himself for them and that it is no longer they who live, but Christ who lives in them (Olyott 2007:57-58).

3. Believers being aware of their privileges

Good hermeneutical preaching will highlight and embellish, for example, the great doctrines of justification, adoption, and sanctification. It will highlight and embellish, for example, the privileges of the believer when it comes to peace with God, personal assurance, and the joy of the Holy Spirit who lives in the believer (Olyott 2007:59-61).

4. Believers knowing how to live

Good hermeneutical preaching will make believers aware of the principles that ought to govern their daily life and behaviour. In particular, they will be made aware of the two

great principles (or commands) of loving God with all their heart, mind and soul; and loving their neighbour as themselves (Olyott 2007:62-64).

5. Personal witness and mission for God

Good hermeneutical preaching will expose the believer to their three-fold calling of bringing glory to God, building up the church and being on mission with and for God, which was discussed in Chapter 2, point 2.2.3. It will expose the believer not only to their personal identity and reason for existence, but more importantly, it will expose them to their corporate identity as the church and its reason for existence (Olyott 2007:64-66; cf Mohler 2008:65). Branson (2007:94) suggests that hermeneutical preaching of the rich and profound texts we have in the scriptures serve to shape us as messianic communities.

6. Church life that is ordered

Good hermeneutical preaching creates an environment where believers are provided with love, understanding, support, practical help, clear teaching, and restorative discipline. In fact, it provides us with everything that a believer needs. The benefits of this is that the church becomes strong, mature, healthy and ordered (Olyott 2007:69-71).

Taken a step further, what happens if there is not good hermeneutical preaching?

2.4.7 THE NECESSITY OF GOOD HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

When preachers fail to give adequate and serious consideration to the accurate and honest interpretation of the text, they fall prey to being unfaithful to God's Word, they fail God's Word. Guder (2000:188) suggests that we fail in the equipping of God's people for mission – "When that interpretive key is missing in our biblical study, then every aspect of our ministry is reductionist, that is, captive to a reduced and diluted version of the gospel." The Church of Jesus Christ has a dismal record of these failures. It is not uncommon for preachers to have approached the Bible with their own agendas formed unilaterally, their own expectations pre-set, their minds made up, having decided beforehand what they want God to say to them rather than have the scripture text speak to them (Stott 1992:191). It is not uncommon for preachers to have been

more influenced by the world than the Word. They have acquiesced to the world instead of challenging it. They have surrendered to secularism rather than resisting it. They have assimilated the value system and lifestyle of the world instead of rejecting it. They have read the Word through the eyes of the world with disastrous consequences (Stott 1995:108). Here are some tragic examples:

How was it that the Christian conscience not only approved but actually glamourised those terrible Crusades to recover the holy places from Islam – an unholy blunder which Muslims have never forgotten and which continues to obstruct the evangelisation of the Muslim world? How is it that torture could ever have been employed in the name of Jesus Christ to combat heresy and promote orthodoxy? How is it that for centuries Protestant churches were so inward-looking and so disobedient to Christ’s Great Commission that William Carey’s proposal of a mission to India was greeted with the patronising retort, ‘Sit down, young man. When God wants to convert the heathen, he’ll do it without your help’? How is it that the cruel degradations of slavery and of the slave trade were not abolished in the so-called Christian West until eighteen hundred years after Christ? How is it that racial discrimination and environmental pollution have become widely recognised as the evils they are only since World War 2?

(Stott 1995:108)

None of these terrible blunders can be defended from scripture. All of these tragic examples are due to a misreading of scripture, an unwillingness to engage in “hermeneutical preaching” or to sit under scriptures authority. Hermeneutical preaching is essential in order to be faithful to God’s Word.

2.5 CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

2.5.1 WHAT DOES THE RESEARCHER MEAN BY CONTEXTUAL PREACHING?

When employing the phrase “contextual preaching”, the researcher has something very specific in mind. In the conceptualising of the problem statement (Chapter 1.3.5) the researcher defined contextual preaching as: “[P]reaching that takes into account the context of the text, the context of the passage, the context of the letter/book from which it comes, and the context of the hearer or listener. Contextual preaching would give adequate and serious consideration to these various contexts understanding that these various contexts have a direct bearing on the understanding of the text and the application or significance thereof.” Craddock (2011:85), referring to Browning (2010) and others, purports that there are at least three conversations or dialogues that take place in a sermon: A conversation between the preacher and the text, a conversation between the preacher and the congregation, and a conversation between the text and the congregation. Contextual preaching takes these three conversations into account. Gibbs and Bolger (2006:133) suggest that a preacher embark on what they call “the art of critical contextualisation”, i.e. a critical analysis of the entire context. To put it more succinctly and in contrast to the previous section: whereas “hermeneutical preaching” would focus on the *text* at hand, “contextual preaching” would focus on the *context* at hand. Let us look at these various contexts then.

2.5.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE TEXT

Although there are, strictly speaking, no prophets or apostles today, I fear there are false prophets and false apostles. They speak their own words instead of God’s Word. Their message originates in their own mind. These are men who like to ventilate their own opinions on religion, ethics, theology or politics. They may be conventional enough to introduce their sermon with a text, but the text bears little or no relation to the sermon which follows, nor is any attempt

made to interpret the text within its context. It has been truly said that such a text without a context is a pretext.

(Stott 1995:274)

Contextual preaching would purposefully avoid the danger of a “pretext” – a text without a context. The text needs to be looked at within its context. The text must be interpreted in its context using the established principles of hermeneutics (Hughes 2001:85). Or, the text has a world of its own and the preacher needs to discover the world behind the text (Pieterse 2001:18). In order to do this, these kinds of questions must be taken into account: “What is the background to the text? What is the time, date, place, people, setting and circumstances that surround the text? Who is the author and what is the reason, or purpose, for writing?” (Hughes 2001:85). Cilliers (2004:106) suggests that serious preaching pays attention to the *Sitz im Leben*, i.e. its particular historical, literary, geographical and socio-economic context.

By examining the context of the text we arrive at, not only an understanding of the text, but more importantly, at its intended meaning. The text starts addressing us. It takes over and illumines our existence says Pieterse (2001:20). To arrive at this point requires a great deal of time and work, and to assist us in this work, certain kinds of “contextual questions” should be asked, as in the examples above. Long (1989:67, 71) suggests that we be creative and imaginative as we bombard the text with questions. Using Olyott (2007:38-48) and Long (1989:66-77) as an aid, the researcher has formulated some questions. To arrive at an understanding and the intended meaning of the text, one needs to ask:

- What am I to expect as I approach the text?

I am to expect that the text has meaning. The text is not only revelation, but divine revelation, and the author intended it to have meaning. The author was aware that he was writing to address a particular situation in order to convey a particular message (Olyott 2007:38-39). To discover that meaning, or message, it is prudent that we approach it recognising that we have certain limitations.

For example:

- The limitation of preconceived ideas, notions, bias. We are all “conditioned” in that we all have traditions, culture, practices and beliefs that we hold to (Foshaugen 2002:82; cf Pieterse 1987:109).
- The limitation of a finite mind. We all have limited understanding and even that limited understanding has been spoiled by sin (Olyott 2007:48).

Knowing these limitations would make us more cautious as we approach the text to discover its meaning.

- What is the grammatical meaning of the words in the text?

The text is made up of many words and these words differ in their function. For example, some words are nouns, some are verbs, some are adjectives and some are articles. Furthermore, these nouns may be singular or plural, and the verbs may be in a variety of different tenses, moods, voices. Now all these words are arranged into a sentence and the way that these words are arranged is what gives the sentence meaning. If we were to use the same words in a different arrangement, we would have a different meaning. Similarly, if we used different words in the sentence, we would have a different meaning. To arrive at an understanding and meaning of the text therefore, we must be grammatically correct. Grammar matters. We must respect the basic grammatical sense of the words and phrases, and we must give careful attention to the individual words and the way they are arranged in the sentence (Olyott 2007:39-40; cf Pieterse 1987:108-109).

- What is the literary style, or genre, of the text?

The sentences of the text are written in a particular literary style, or genre, and in order to arrive at an understanding and meaning of the text, we need to give careful attention to the literary style in which it has been written. Is the literary style plain prose or historical record, poetry or wisdom literature, apocalyptic or gospel? The various literary styles make a difference to the understanding and meaning of the text. If we were to read these various forms of literature in the same way, it would lead to confusion. For example: “[A]ll the trees of the field will clap their hands (NIV, Isaiah 55:12b)” is not plain prose and therefore it is

not meant to be taken literally. The author intended a more symbolic meaning and therefore the literal meaning of that text is not the intended meaning. We must grasp what kind of literary style has been employed to arrive at the meaning of the text (Olyott 2007:40-42; cf Pieterse 1987:114; see Long 1989:73-75).

- What is the historical background to the text?

When an artist draws a picture, they will commence with an outline drawing. Thereafter they will move on to a more detailed sketch and finally complete it with a full shade of colours. An artist's drawing is progressive. There is a vast difference from the commencement of the drawing to the completion thereof, from the first stage to the last. The Bible, similarly, is progressive in its revelation and redemption story. It commences with an "outline", moves on to a more "detailed sketch", where after it is completed with a full shade of colours. God revealed his plan of redemption *over centuries* (Olyott 2007:45). In order for us to arrive at an understanding and meaning of the text, we do well to understand a few things:

1. Its historical setting

We need to be clear about what happened and when. We need to be able to stop at any point along the line of redemption history and say what had been revealed up to that point and what was going to be revealed later (Olyott 2007:44). An example: Job, in Job 19:25-27, makes the comment: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another" (NIV). If we know where Job fits into the salvation story, what an extraordinary statement this is, but if it were said after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15, there is nothing special about it. We must know the historical setting of the text.

2. Its authors and their temperaments

Each author of the Bible is unique. Amos was the prophet of God's justice, Isaiah the prophet of God's sovereignty, Hosea the prophet of God's love, Paul the apostle of God's grace, John the apostle of God's love and Peter the apostle of God's hope.

Each author is distinct in that they each have their own background, their own temperament, their own God-given responsibility and their own emphasis (Stott 1995:105). We do well to take these facts into account when interpreting the text.

3. The culture of the day

“No word of the Bible was spoken in a cultural vacuum. Every part of it was culturally conditioned” (Stott 1995:106). The local culture was the medium through which the word was expressed and we do well to take that into account. We need to be particularly aware and careful that we don’t approach the text in the belief that we are innocent, objective, impartial and culture-free investigators for we all have cultural prejudices and bias (Stott 1995:106; cf Thompson 1981:39; Pieterse 1987:109).

- What light do the other parts of scripture shed on the text?

The Bible is a self-interpreting book and should we find any part thereof unclear, the other parts will enable us to understand it (Olyott 2007:46). When there is doubt or lack of clarity on a particular text, allow scripture to interpret scripture (Stott 1995:109). For example: Matthew 12:15-21 (NIV) makes it clear that the person whom Isaiah is referring to is the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 15:15-17 (NIV) makes it clear that what Amos is referring to in Amos 9:11-15 (NIV) is the conversion of the Gentiles. Hebrews 5:5-11 (NIV) sheds light on the person of Melchizedek spoken about in Genesis 14:18-24 (NIV). John 6 (NIV), which talks of Christ as the bread of heaven, sheds light on the manna from heaven recorded for us in Exodus 16 (NIV). To avoid confusion and error in interpreting a text, allow scripture to interpret scripture, or compare scripture with scripture.

There is a need to focus on the context of the text, or as Craddock (2011:92; 94; 95) puts it, live with the text, live with the text, live with the text. Live long with the text until you can say: “Yes, now that is the way it is.”

2.5.3 THE CONTEXT OF THE PASSAGE

Words form part of phrases and sentences. Sentences form part of paragraphs and passages. Passages form part of chapters and books (Olyott 2007:42). No text in the Bible – phrase or sentence – is spoken in isolation. It is spoken in a context – in a passage, which forms part of a chapter, which forms part of a book in the Bible. To arrive at a proper understanding and meaning of that spoken text, it is essential that one look at not only the context of the text, but also the context of the passage, the chapter and indeed the book. Craddock (2011:81) suggests that a preacher get a wide-angle view or “sweep” of the whole passage. This point deals with the need for the preacher to take into consideration the context of the passage (and indeed the chapter and book) in which the text is spoken (see Long 1989:64; Pieterse 1987:109).

In my Masters Studies, this problem of failing to take the context of the passage into account became apparent. In the research I looked at what kind of texts the preacher focused on in the Bible. Were they imperative texts or indicative texts? The research showed that a preacher would focus on an imperative text of the Bible without taking into consideration that the text arose out of a wider context, namely an indicative context. By failing to take the wider context into account, or by focusing solely on the imperative text, the sermon degenerated into moralising, leaving the hearer defeated, deflated and quietly desperate. The sermons became unbearable resulting in nothing more than what Long (2009c:48) calls a scriptural or sermon heavy handedness which only fostered rebellion (Linden 2011:53).

Or, the preacher would focus on an indicative text of the Bible without taking into consideration that it has a wider context, namely an imperative context. By failing to take the wider context into account, or by focusing solely on the indicative text, the church marvelled and became excited at the greatness of God, yet the church also became frustrated for there was now no imperative on how they ought to live (Linden 2011:62). James 2:17 (NIV) puts it this way – faith without works (action) is dead.

One of the findings of the study therefore was that there was a need to look at a text in the context of a passage, or a need to look at the context of the passage.

The researcher looks at two examples from scripture, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, and proposes as to what needs to happen when the context of the passage is taken into account.

1. An example from the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Hirsch (2006:84) suggests that the Hebraic understanding of life starts with Israel's basic confession contained in Deuteronomy 6 which is more commonly known as the Shema Yisrael: "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (NIV, Deuteronomy 6:4). This has become known as the epicentre for the biblical consciousness of God, the heart of biblical faith, particularly for the Jewish people (Lundbom 2013:309). To fully understand this claim, one needs to have it set in its religious context – a context of religious pluralism, polytheism, innumerable deities, a god for literally everything in the world and for literally every aspect of life, together with the fact that these gods were often not pleasant characters. It is in this environment of religious pluralism that God makes his claim: There is but one God, or, there is no God but one – Jahweh (Lundbom 2013:310). It is Jahweh alone who is the one God and who rules over the world and over every aspect of life. Jahweh is Lord of home, field, politics, work, life, everything (Hirsch 2006:90-91). Romans 11:35 puts it in these terms: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (NIV).

Arising out of this "indicative", this basic confession and understanding of life, we now receive the imperative to "[l]ove the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts" (NIV, Deuteronomy 6:5-6). The injunction would be for Israel to bring every aspect of their lives, both communal and individual, under this one God. Israel was to make God the Lord of every aspect of their lives, whether it had to do with their donkey that had fallen into a pit, or mildew in the kitchen, or the woman's menstrual cycle, or the way they approached God in worship. It is important to note that the imperative to love and obey God arises out of the indicative that Jahweh alone is the one who rules over the world and over every aspect of life (Lundbom 2013:310; see Hirsch 2006:83-91).

These two texts complement each other. They form a whole, an organic unity. The one leads to an understanding of the other. If the preacher were to focus on the one text to the exclusion of the other, it would no longer form a whole, an organic unity, and would this not lead to a serious deficiency of understanding? To preach from only the indicative text (verse 4) would result in “faith without action”. To preach from only the imperative text (verse 5) would give the imperative no basis for obedience. Hence, there is a need to look at the text in the broader context of the passage, or simply to look at the context of the passage.

2. An example from the New Testament: The book of Romans

Looking at the whole or the organic unity of the book of Romans we find that Romans 1:18-3:20 focuses on the righteous indignation of God against the sin of mankind (see Hultgren 2011:85-148). Romans 3:22-31 and Romans 4:23, mercifully focuses on God’s declaration of man’s righteousness or man’s justification, not by any works that he could do, but by faith in God alone (see Hultgren 2011:166-177). Romans chapter 5 to Romans chapter 7 speaks of our peace, joy, life, hope and indeed eternal life that has been given to mankind through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross (NIV, 5:2-5, 6:4-8). Romans chapter 7 however also speaks of mankind’s struggle with sin and the old nature, or self (see Hultgren 2011:200-283). Romans chapter 8 speaks of man’s security – that there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (NIV, 8:1). It speaks of our ability to overcome – being more than conquerors through Christ who loved us (NIV, 8:37). And it speaks of our future glory through the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives (NIV, 8:18-23). Romans chapter 9 to chapter 11 speaks of God’s sovereign choice of our lives and of God’s kindness in grafting us into the vine or the family of God. To summarise: Romans chapter 1 to chapter 11 is essentially about the mercy of God toward man. These chapters proclaim the wrath of God, the righteousness of God and the explanation of the Christian life (Hultgren 2011:24). It is written in what we can call the indicative mode.

Romans chapter 12 to chapter 16 focuses on man’s reasonable response to God. It can be summed up in the injunction to love God, love your neighbour, love the church, love the world, love the weak, and live for God (see Hultgren 2011:435-528). More specifically,

mankind are to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God, holy and pleasing to Him (12:1). Any number of injunctions arise out of this one imperative: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world (12:2); do not think of yourself more highly than you ought (12:3); think of yourself with sober judgement while exercising your God-given gift (12:4-8); you must hate what is evil and cling to what is good (12:9); be devoted to one another and honour one another above yourself (12:10)”. The injunctions continue throughout. Believers are commanded to submit to the authorities instituted among men (13:1-7); to let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another (13:8-14); to accept and bear with the failings of the weak (chapter 14 to chapter 15). Believers are enjoined to do this in view of God’s mercy toward them (chapters 1 to 11). Chapters 12 to chapter 16 then are written in what we can call the imperative mode since these chapters consist of various exhortations to a Christian life (Hultgren 2011:24).

These two sections of the book of Romans (chapter 1 to chapter 11 and chapter 12 to chapter 16) complement each other. They form a whole, an organic unity. The one leads to an understanding of the other. If the preacher were to focus on the one section of the book to the exclusion of the other, it would no longer form a whole, an organic unity, and would this not lead to a serious deficiency of understanding? To preach from only the indicative section of the book (chapters 1 through 11) would result in “faith without action”. To preach from only the imperative section of the book (chapters 12 through 16) would give the imperatives no basis for obedience. There is a need to look at the text in the broader context of the passage, or simply to look at the context of the passage.

To sum up: the preacher needs to take into account the context of the *text* as well as the context of the *passage*. Next, the context of the *hearer* must also be considered.

2.5.4 THE CONTEXT OF THE HEARER

Gibbs and Bolger (2006:16) admit that there is a growing realisation that the church in the West faces a missional challenge that is increasingly cross-cultural in nature. Mainstream culture has diverted from its spiritual heritage and society has become increasingly pluralistic in nature. For

that reason, they encourage pastoral leaders to listen carefully to culture and to understand the cultural change that has taken place outside its doors (see Gibbs and Bolger 2006:16-23). Carrol (2000:81) would refer to this as the “process of reflective discernment.” The researcher suggests that if we are to take the context of the hearer seriously, then the hearer needs to be taken into consideration. They need to be taken into consideration when it comes to, generally, the modern world in which they live, but also when it comes to, more specifically, the immediate situation or environment in which they find themselves (see Dingemans 1991:51-57).

1. The hearer in the context of the modern world

The hearer lives in the modern world and “biblical preaching demands sensitivity to the modern world” (Stott 1995:333). God has spoken to the ancient world in its own languages and cultures, yet God intends for his Word to be for all peoples, at all times, even and especially the present moment. He furthermore intends for it to be relevant. While the preacher then has to exegete the original meaning of the text, they have to go further and apply it to the modern world (Stott 1995:333). The question the preacher has to wrestle with is: “How do you make it relevant to the modern world?” If Christianity was borne some two thousand years ago in a first century Palestine, what can that ancient religion possibly say to those who live in the twenty-first century? This present century is a century of super-technology, transplant surgery, genetic engineering, a century that is far removed from the first century. What possible relevance can an ancient religion of the Middle East have for us today? (Stott 1982:138-139).

Stott (1982:137-150) and Stetzer (2009) employ a bridge-building metaphor to help the preacher accomplish relevance. A bridge is spanned between two places that would otherwise be cut off. In between these two places is a ravine. What would these two places, the ravine and the bridge represent? The two places are the ancient world and the modern world. The ravine is the gulf or the chasm between these two places and the bridge is the means by which the preacher connects these two places so as to enable the ancient Word to cross over into the life of the hearer in the modern world. It has been suggested that the bridge must be firmly anchored in these two places – the ancient and the modern. The

preacher must refuse to compromise either on the divine content of the message or the human context in which it is to be spoken. Preachers must plunge themselves fearlessly into both worlds, ancient and modern, biblical and contemporary and listen attentively to both. Pieterse (1987:14-15) refers to this as a “fusion of horizons”. Only then will the preacher be able to understand what each is saying and so discern the message for the hearer in the modern world (Stott 1982:145; cf Francis 2009:75; cf Gibbs and Bolger 2006:26).

2. The hearer in the context of their own immediate environment or situation.

The hearer of God’s Word lives not only in a modern world, but in a world of their own thoughts and feelings, their own unique environment or situation. To effectively communicate God’s Word, the preacher would do well to “connect with the hearer”, “get onto their frequency”, incarnate themselves into the world of the hearer’s thoughts and feelings. Cilliers (2004:132) says that the preacher should listen to the hearer’s voice. Barth (1964:97) and Long (1989:55-56) agree. Immink and Verweij (2007:141-154) seek to do this when communicating the suffering of Jesus in the context of a suffering world. Cilliers (2007:155-176) seeks to do this when communicating hope in a context of HIV and AIDS. De Klerk (2007:177-202) seeks to do this when communicating hope in a context of hunger and affluence. Easum (2001:53-55) suggests that preachers tune themselves into the culture of their community. He advocates that they should spend at least a fourth of their time with the non-Christians and unconnected people of their community. They should explore their world, make a sociological study of their world, analyse the demographics of the area and thereby become “contextual leaders” who understand the prevailing culture but who are also able to see beyond the sacredness of any cultural form (see Nel 2011; cf Day 2009:5). When analysing the demographics of an area, Frederickson (2007:54) advocates that leaders should not only take into account race and ethnicity, but also the moral and spiritual values of the community. He also warns against the danger of what he calls an “overcontextualised” and an “undercontextualised” environment which would be of no assistance to “contextual leaders” (Frederickson 2007:44). The key is where the communication begins (Stetzer 2009). The preacher needs to *connect*, or *get onto the same frequency* as the hearer, or become a *contextual leader*, or simply *incarnate themselves* into the hearer’s immediate environment.

They must listen to the community's voice. Craddock (2011:95) puts it succinctly when he encourages the preacher to "live closely with the people." Pieterse (2001:17) advises that preachers become thoroughly acquainted with their listeners – with their circumstances, experiences, needs and problems. Long (2009a:14) advises preachers to "keep in view the real persons who hear the sermon." They must know these things existentially, experientially and internally. Nel (2005:135) expresses this holistically when he says that it is equally important to exegete the Bible, the congregation and the community (cf Pieterse 1987:12-13, 17, 2001:86).

The apostle Paul did this quite effectively. Here are some examples:

Example 1: For the Jews, Paul's connecting point was to start with Israel's ancient history rooted in the Old Testament scriptures. Paul begins by giving the Jews a summary of their history: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert, he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. All this took about 450 years" (NIV, Acts 13:16-20). Note: Only after Paul has connected with his hearers, does he then present them with the gospel.

Example 2: When Paul preached to the less educated people at Lystra (NIV, Acts 14), his connecting point was appealing to the examples from nature, sea and crops. These people were agrarian people, and so Paul begins by speaking "to an agrarian people with agrarian metaphors" (Stetzer 2009) and only thereafter does he present them with the gospel.

Example 3: When Paul stood before a very different audience in the Areopagus of Athens, his connecting point was this: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you" (NIV, Acts 17:22-23). Having connected with his religious hearers through an unknown god, Paul only then presents them with the gospel.

2.5.5 A CONCLUDING REMARK REGARDING CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

Contextual preaching would give adequate and serious consideration to the various contexts discussed above, understanding that these various contexts have a direct bearing on the understanding of the text and the application or significance thereof.

2.5.6 A CONCLUDING REMARK REGARDING HERMENEUTICAL AND CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

In aspiring to be true preachers of the Word, a preacher can take encouragement from a number of authors. For example, Cilliers (2004:99) would encourage the preacher to discover the secret of preaching with a simple injunction: since the text has a voice, listen to the voice of the text. Metaphorically, the preacher is to drink deeply from the new wine of the text. They are to take meticulous note of each movement, each intonation, and each punctuation mark of the text. They are to hold the Word of God up to the light until the Spirit makes it transparent. If it is not transparent, there is nothing to say (see Cilliers 2004:99).

Barth (1964:84-92) would encourage us with these wise words:

- Put your trust in scripture! The preacher needs to be convinced that the Bible has enough to offer the listener so that one does not need to seek elsewhere for answers to life's questions. If the preacher does seek elsewhere for answers, then their trust in scripture is deficient.
- Respect Scripture! Respect scripture in the sense that in the Bible you will find all the answers to life's questions. When you respect scripture in this way, the preacher will be sure to read scripture in awe – slowly, deliberately, audibly, with all eyes and ears, expectant of making great discoveries.
- Read scripture with concentrated and conscientious attention! The preacher must find its meaning through exegetical, historical and linguistic work on the text. The preacher must find its theology, its nucleus of grace, and its message from the heart of God to society.
- Allow your own preconceived ideas to be corrected repeatedly by the text! In each preacher there is the natural (or sinful) tendency to advocate their own ideas, ideologies and idiosyncrasies.

- Allow yourself to be moved by the movement of God’s Word! God, by his Spirit, through his Word, invites the listener to participate in life with Him. The Bible (text) is not a lifeless letter that is only meant to convey knowledge. It is alive with the Spirit working through it inviting us to participate with God.

Cilliers (2004:100) once again would encourage modern preachers to adopt the principle that he says Martin Luther himself adopted, namely to meditate on the Word of God – to ingest, to chew on and to re-chew the Word. The Psalmist (NIV, Psalm 1:2) advocates that meditating on the law day and night is a blessing to a person. Meditation is the practice of ingesting the Word both cognitively and emotionally until the preacher is “in the text” and the text “is in the preacher”. The argument is: “If the preacher does not eat and ingest the Word, then not only are they not fed and blessed, but then they cannot feed and bless others” (Cilliers 2004:100).

CHAPTER 3

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The aim of this chapter is:

- To define quantitative research.
- To set out the various aspects that pertains to this quantitative research – the extent, approach, procedure and various categories of questions and statements.
- To present and evaluate the data gleaned from the quantitative survey.
- To reflect on the data of the various categories of questions and statements.
- To perform an analysis on the data as it relates to the problem statement.

3.1. WHAT IS QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH?

Quantitative research is research that gathers and analyses numeric data in order to explore relationships between variables (Osmer 2008:49). These variables are defined as empirical indicators of the concepts that the researcher is studying. The variables are given two or more values. An example: the statement “God loves the world” is given four variables, or values. On the Likert-type scale (Struwig & Stead 2001:94) the respondent can strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. The choice becomes an empirical indicator of the statement.

3.2 A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

In approaching this survey, the research leader (Professor Malan Nel), advised the researcher to approach the Statistical Department of the University of Pretoria for assistance. Application for assistance was made and Ms. Joyce Jordaan, the research consultant, and Dr Karien Adamski, the research statistician, were assigned to assist with the research. At the first consultation, of which all four – the research leader, research consultant, research statistician and researcher – were present, two items were discussed: i) The extent of the survey; ii) The survey-questionnaire itself.

3.2.1 THE EXTENT OF THE SURVEY

Since the researcher is an accredited minister of the Baptist Union of South Africa, the researcher chose to focus the study on the Baptist Union of South Africa. According to the statistics of the Baptist Union Handbook of 2012/2013, the Union is made up of 487 churches with a membership of 42 029. The Baptist Union has a considerable number of what is called “Church Fellowships”, i.e. churches in fellowship with the Baptist Union. Each of these church fellowships has a number of members, or attendees, but they are not included either in the number of Union churches or in the Union’s membership number.

Since the task of conducting a survey among 487 churches was simply too large, it was decided to adopt “stratified random sampling” of these churches (Struwig & Stead 2001:113). The research was narrowed to what can be termed an *urban*, or a *city*, or a *metropolitan* church. A total of 108 city churches were identified from all the major cities of South Africa. These major cities were Kimberley, East London, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, Durban and Cape Town. The total membership of these churches was 17 884.

3.2.1.1 The approach: A survey was conducted on a sample of these 108 city churches and their members. To ensure the integrity of the survey, the statistical department *randomly* selected 40 of these churches (see Appendix A). Furthermore, a proportional representation of members in these randomly selected churches were *randomly* selected and approached to participate in the survey. The emphasis was on *random selection* in order to ensure the integrity of the survey.

3.2.1.2 The procedure: The researcher then approached (telephonically) each minister of these 40 randomly selected churches. The researcher introduced himself, obtained permission from the resident minister to conduct such a survey in the church, and then the researcher explained the entire procedure.

Each minister was personally contacted in the way described above. This was followed up by a personal letter expressing appreciation for participating in the survey. The procedure was once again set out in the letter. Importance was placed on the random selection of respondents to ensure the integrity of the survey. The best method of conducting the survey, together with the time-constraints on the survey, was also highlighted (see Appendix B). Furthermore, to ensure that no unnecessary

burden be placed upon these ministers and their church members, self-addressed envelopes, with postage already paid, were included with the correspondence.

3.2.2 THE SURVEY - QUESTIONNAIRE

In compiling the survey-questionnaire, the contents of Chapter 2 particularly was transformed into statements. These statements conveyed one idea, while they were expressed concisely, clearly and positively. It was important that no confusion or ambiguity exist within these statements.

Using Chapter 2 as the basis of the survey-questionnaire then, the researcher developed six categories of questions and statements that were in need of being explored. The categories are as follows:

Category 1 – Variables: In this category of questions the researcher sought to establish the age, gender, the name of the church, the city in which that church is to be found and the period of time that the respondents have attended that church. As much as the researcher would have liked / hoped for the respondents to be fairly represented in terms of age, gender, language, race and culture, the random selection of churches however and the random selection of the respondents did not permit this. If the researcher engineered a fair representation of respondents, the integrity of the survey would have been compromised.

Category 2 – The Church: In this category of statements the researcher sought to determine to what extent the respondents understood the Church of Jesus Christ. Questions of this nature were then developed and explored: “Who does the church consist of? What does the Bible liken believers to? Is the church meant to grow or develop or be built up? Is it meant to grow in quality and quantity, in maturity and numbers? If so, who grows or who builds up the church? Do believers view themselves as a beautiful, living building in progress?”

Category 3 – Church Identity: In this category of statements the researcher sought to establish to what extent the respondents understood the identity of the local church. The whole question of the church’s reason for existence was explored. Questions that were probed therefore were questions like: What is the church’s core identity? Is the local church aware of its core identity? A crucial question was: “What does the church actually exist for?”

Category 4 – Preaching: In this category of statements the researcher sought to explore how the respondents understood preaching. Key elements that were probed were:

Firstly: What importance is given to preaching in the local church? Is preaching in the local church viewed as invaluable and essential? Is preaching one of the primary ways in which God speaks to his church and affords it its identity? Can the church be healthy and grow without a solid diet of biblical preaching?

Secondly: What kind of preaching prevails in the local church? Is the preaching a methodical, systematic exposition either of a book or a theme or a series, or is it topical in nature? Are the sermons based on a loose, haphazard, random selection of texts or are they based on a step-by-step walk through the Bible?

Thirdly: These statements related to the quality of preaching in the local church. Is preaching viewed as both “serious business” and a “joyful privilege”? Is there evidence that the preacher has prepared both the sermon and their heart? Are the sermons full of God’s greatness and presence? Are they up-building and truly inspirational to the hearer’s life?

Category 5 – Hermeneutical Preaching: In this category of statements the researcher sought to determine whether the preacher approaches the verse or passage on which they are preaching with ‘hermeneutical eyes’. Does the preacher uncover the true meaning of the verse? Among other things, does the preacher delve into the background, the history, the grammar, the occasion, the recipients of the verse or passage? Does the preacher delve into the reason for that verse or passage?

Category 6 – Contextual Preaching: In this category of statements the researcher sought to determine whether the preacher approaches the verse or passage on which they are preaching with “contextual eyes”. Does the preacher consciously study the context of the verse or passage? (Some of the above aspects in Category 5 relate to this). Does the preacher consciously take into account the context of the hearer, or listener? Does the preacher consciously take into account both the modern and personal world in which the hearer finds themselves?

With the guidance of the research leader, consultant and statistician, the researcher drew up the survey-questionnaire and revised it on a number of occasions. Once it was considered acceptable, the survey-questionnaire was then formatted and thereafter subjected to a pilot study. After the pilot study, the survey-questionnaire was then submitted to the Statistical Department for final approval. After approval, a covering letter to assist the respondents in the completion of the survey was drafted and this was attached to each survey-questionnaire. (For the covering letter and survey-questionnaire, see Appendix C and D).

The survey, thus having been formulated, formatted and approved, was now sent to 450 randomly selected respondents in the 40 randomly selected churches. 82.2% of the surveys (370) were duly completed and returned. Two churches were unable to return their surveys. The surveys were then collated and submitted to the statistical department of the University of Pretoria for data capturing. Thereafter a consultation ensued regarding the approach to evaluating and interpreting the data.

3.3 EVALUATING AND INTERPRETING THE SURVEY

The researcher has adopted both a descriptive and explorative research on the data. Descriptive research is usually the first phase in the process of research followed by explorative research (Heitink 1999:229). While descriptive research is the systematic description of the data (Heitink 1999:229), explorative research places the emphasis on the explanation and interpretation of the data (Heitink 1999:230). The researcher has therefore sought to describe and explain the data (see Struwig & Stead 2001:168). The researcher has also used various forms of reasoning, namely: i) inductive reasoning – general conclusions being drawn from the data; ii) deductive reasoning – specific conclusions being drawn from the data; and iii) abductive reasoning – a reflection on the data, the people and the process.

Using the words of Osmer (2008:82), the researcher has sought to apply *sagely wisdom* in evaluating and/or interpreting the survey. Sagely wisdom is characterised by three qualities (Osmer 2008:82-86):

- **Thoughtfulness:** Thoughtfulness in interpreting data strives for insight into the data. It calls for proper consideration and well-founded judgment.

- **Theoretical Interpretation:** In theoretical interpretation, the researcher must resort to drawing on the theories of both the arts and sciences to understand and respond to the data. Caution needs to be exercised as theories formulated by human reason are fallible. They offer an approximation of the truth and not the truth itself.
- **Wise Judgment:** Wise judgment requires an ability to sift through and evaluate particulars. It is a complex intellectual activity that not only requires one to recognise the relevant particulars, but to discern the moral end at stake, and then to determine the effective means to achieve those ends. Wise judgment goes hand in glove with good character. Clearly, it is far more than practical theological reflection.

3.4 PRESENTING THE INFORMATION/DATA

The researcher's approach to presenting the data follows this format.

- The category of questions
- The question or statement
- The data
- The evaluation of the data
- Reflections on the category of questions or statements
- An analysis and evaluation of the data as it relates to the problem statement

The reliability of the survey:

Before the researcher commences with the presentation of the data and the interpretation thereof, it would be helpful to place on record the reliability of the survey. The Cronbach Alpha averages recorded below indicate that they are well within their limit and that the survey is therefore reliable.

- .549 for the category of questions that relate to the nature of the church.
- .753 for the category of questions that relate to the identity of the local church.
- .821 for the category of questions that relate to preaching in the local church.
- .879 for the category of questions that relate to hermeneutical preaching.
- .846 for the category of questions that relate to contextual preaching.

3.4.1 CATEGORY 1 – VARIABLES

This category of questions relates to the age and gender of the respondents together with the name of the church, the city in which that church is to be found, and the period of time that the respondents have attended that church.

3.4.1.1 The question and data – V1:

Gender: What is your gender – Male or female?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Female	192	51.9	52.3	52.3
2. Male	175	47.3	47.7	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

As the survey was conducted through random sampling, there was no determination beforehand as to what proportion of male and female respondents there needed to be. Ideally the researcher would have hoped for an equal representation of male and female respondents. As it happened, there was almost an equal amount of male and female respondents. The female respondents amounted to 52.3% whereas the male respondents amounted to 47.7%.

3.4.1.2 The question and data – V2:

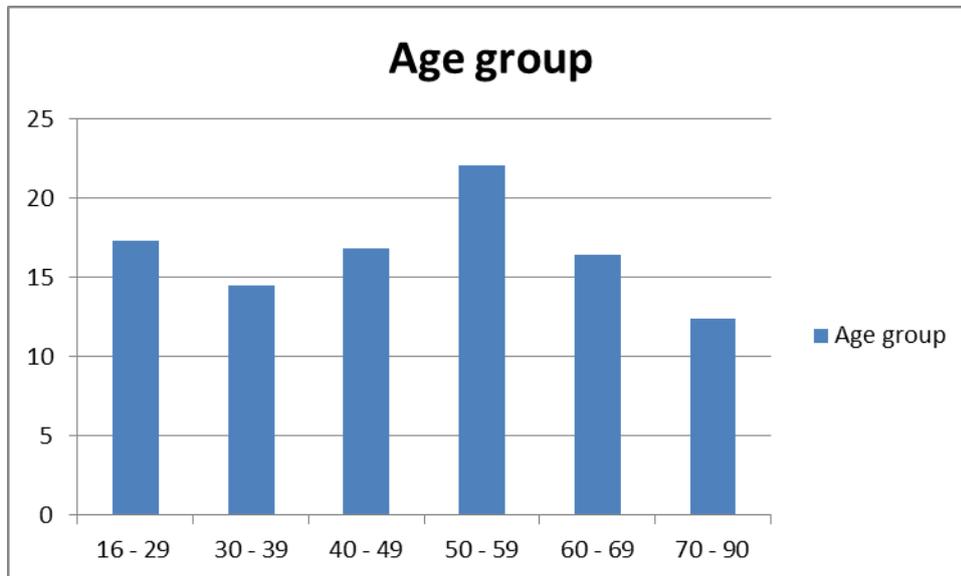
How old are you?

The researcher divided the respondents into different age groups as indicated below:

Age group 16-29 – 17.3% of respondents fell into this category or age group.

Age group 30-39 – 14.5% of respondents fell into this category or age group.

Age group 40-49 – 16.8% of respondents fell into this category or age group.
 Age group 50-59 – 22.5% of respondents fell into this category or age group.
 Age group 60-69 – 16.5% of respondents fell into this category or age group.
 Age group 70-90 – 12.4% of respondents fell into this category or age group.



The evaluation of the data:

The survey was conducted on the basis of random sampling, and the only limitation set on the survey was to limit the age of the respondents to an age of understanding and accountability. Discretion would therefore have to be applied by the pastor of the respondent’s church. Ideally, the researcher would have hoped for respondents that spanned the whole gamut of the age spectrum. The data is interesting.

Broadly speaking, more than half of the respondents (51.4%) were over the age of fifty, whereas less than half of the respondents (48.6%) were under the age of fifty. The “teenage” and “young adult” component of the respondents (up to the age of 29) constituted a mere 17.3%, while the more mature adult component (age 30-49), presumably married with children, constituted 31.3% of the respondents. What is revealing is that 68.2% of respondents (more than two thirds of respondents) were forty years and above. There is an indication that the churches of the denomination, in the metropolitan areas in any case, are of an older or more mature nature or disposition.

3.4.1.3 The question and data – V3:

For how many years have you been attending this Baptist Church?

The researcher divided the respondents into different year groups as indicated:

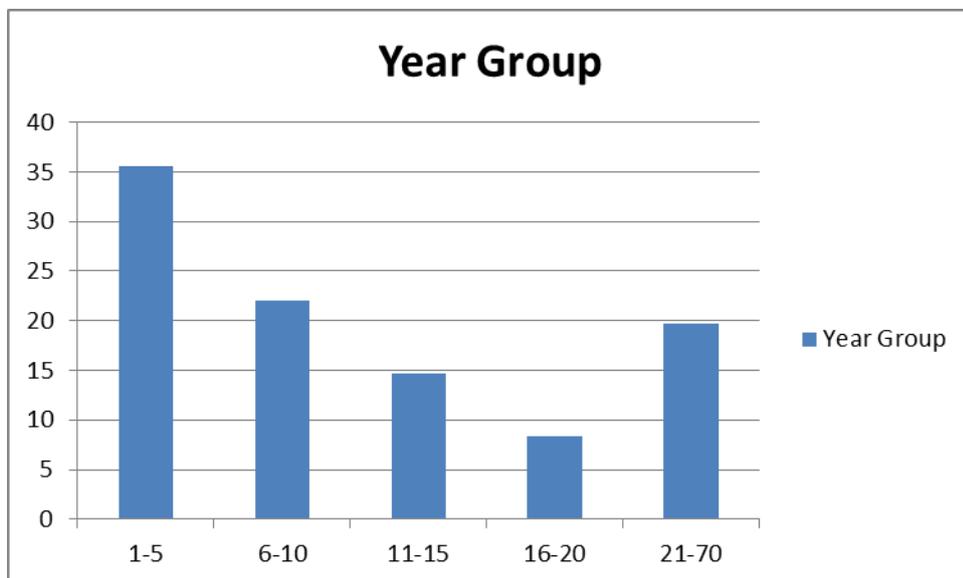
Year group 01-05 years – 35.6% of respondents fell into this category or year group.

Year group 06-10 years – 22.0% of respondents fell into this category or year group.

Year group 11-15 years – 14.7% of respondents fell into this category or year group.

Year group 16-20 years – 8.40% of respondents fell into this category or year group.

Year group 20-70 years – 19.7% of respondents fell into this category or year group.



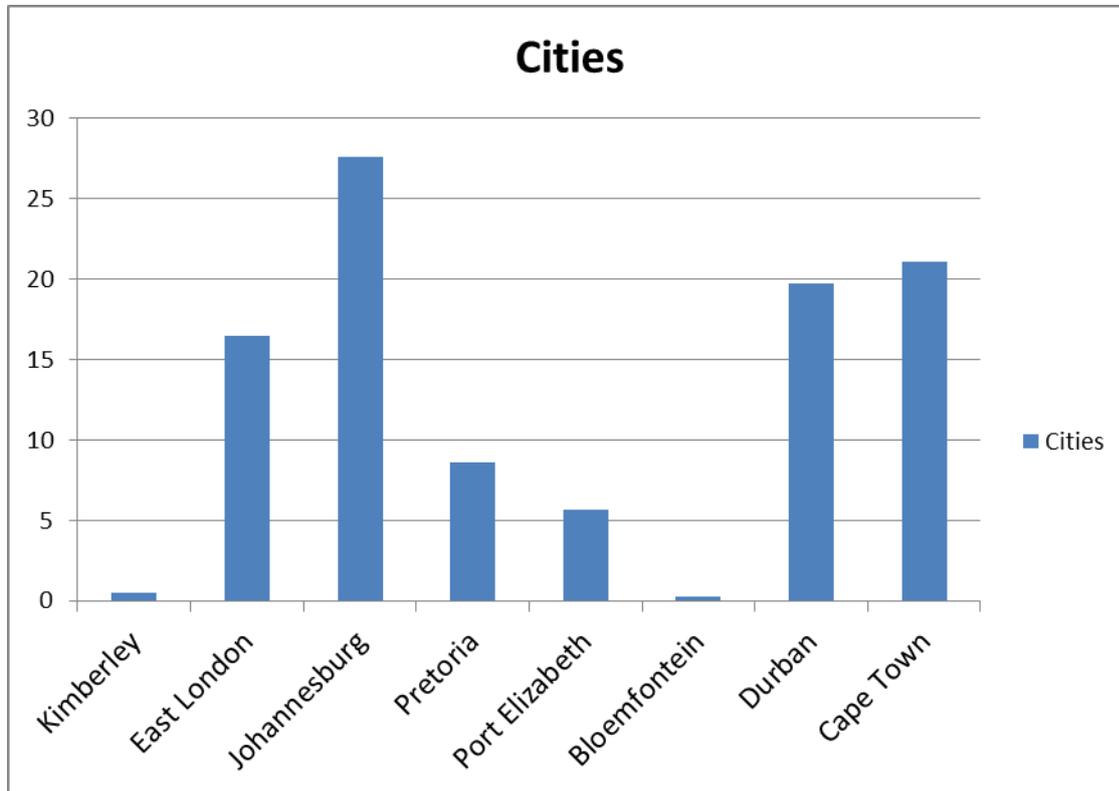
The evaluation of the data:

Question: Should a pastor preach consistently on the church’s identity and reason for being, how long would it take for a congregation to understand their identity and reason for being?

To re-traditionalise, renew, reform, reshape or unfreeze a church from its present identity, is an ongoing, long-term process which requires time and patience (Easum 2001:152; Nel 2005:138). Should the process of helping believers understand their identity take ten years or more, then according to the data, only 42.8% or respondents would have some idea of their identity and reason for being. What is of concern is that 57.6% of the respondents have been at their present church for less than ten years (35.6% for five years and less). Is this enough time for a congregation to truly understand and embrace their identity and reason for being?

3.4.1.4 The question and data – V4:

In which city, or town, is this church?



The evaluation of the data:

In consultation with the research leader and research consultants it was decided that the research would be narrowed to what we called the urban, city, or metropolitan church. These are churches in the urban, or city, or metropolitan areas. The major areas where these urban, or city, or metropolitan churches were to be found were in the major cities of South Africa, namely, Kimberley, East London, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, Durban and Cape Town. Each city is represented in proportion to the number of Union Churches in that city. The greater representation is Johannesburg and the least representation is Bloemfontein where only one Baptist Union church is to be found. With the exception of Cape Town (where two churches failed to respond), all the other churches responded positively.

3.4.1.5 The question and data – V5:

What is the name of this church?

The evaluation of the data:

A total of 108 city churches were identified from all the major cities in South Africa. As discussed, a survey would be conducted on a sample of these 108 city churches. To ensure the integrity of the survey, the statistical department randomly selected 40 of these churches. A list of these churches, together with the name of the pastor of that church, and the number of surveys that were sent to that church, as well as the number of respondents from that church can be found in Appendix A. Suffice to mention that only two of the participating churches failed to respond for their own reasons. The researcher was graciously persistent.

3.4.1.6 Reflections on this category of questions:

1. As this survey was conducted on the basis of random sampling, the gender and age of the respondents would not be predetermined as this would compromise the integrity of the survey. The results however showed:

- Gender: An almost equal amount of male and female respondents.

- Age:
 - More than half of the respondents were fifty years of age and over.
 - Two thirds of the respondents were forty years of age and over.
 - The younger adults (age 16-29) were in a distinct minority.

2. The greater percentage of respondents, 35.6%, attended their church for five years and less, while 57.6% of respondents attended their church for ten years and less. Ten years, let alone five years, is hardly sufficient time for a pastor to develop and instil a sense of identity and reason for being in their congregation members.

3. The survey was conducted on the basis of stratified random sampling of churches within the major cities or metropolitan areas of South Africa. As far as the churches and cities were concerned:

- Cities: Each city or metropolitan area that was selected for the survey was represented in the survey.
- Churches: Thirty-eight of the forty randomly selected churches participated in the survey.

4. The category of questions was answered more than satisfactorily.

(Researchers' Note: Each category of questions in this chapter will commence on a new page not only for clear demarcation purposes, but for the information to be able to be presented in an acceptable manner.)

3.4.2 CATEGORY 2 – THE CHURCH

This category of statements relates to the respondents understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ. Do the respondents understand: “Who the church consists of? What the Bible likens believers to? Is the church meant to grow or develop or be built up? Is the church meant to grow in quality and quantity, in maturity and numbers? Who grows or builds up the church? Do believers view themselves as a beautiful, living building in progress?”

3.4.2.1 The statement and data – V6:

As believers we are 'living stones' who are built into a 'spiritual house'.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
2. Mildly disagree	7	1.9	1.9	3.0
3. Mildly agree	49	13.2	13.5	16.5
4. Strongly agree	304	82.2	83.5	100.0
Total	364	98.4	100.0	
Missing System	6	1.6		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

To liken the Church of Jesus Christ to a “spiritual house” that is comprised of “living stones” is a distinct biblical metaphor (NIV, 1 Peter 2:5). This is one metaphor among many. It would be anticipated then that the respondents would not only have heard of this biblical metaphor (or similar) in the course of listening to sermons, but that it would be a metaphor that believers would strongly agree with, which 83.5% of the respondents do. The remaining 13.5% of those respondents who mildly agree with the metaphor and the 3% of respondents who either mildly disagree or strongly disagree with the metaphor is understandable if they are relatively new believers who have not yet been exposed to this biblical metaphor and others on the Church. It would be surprising, and cause for concern, if the data were different.

3.4.2.2 The statement and data – V7:

The church is meant to grow in quantity - in numbers.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	21	5.7	5.7	5.7
2. Mildly disagree	34	9.2	9.3	15.0
3. Mildly agree	130	35.1	35.4	50.4
4. Strongly agree	182	49.2	49.6	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Based on God’s promise to Abram that all nations of the earth will be blessed through him (NIV, Genesis 12:3), and based on Jesus’ promise to Peter, “...I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (NIV, Matthew 16:18), and based on the broad testimony of scripture concerning God’s mission in this world to save fallen mankind (point 2.2.3 3), and based on the Christ’s commission to his disciples to make disciples of all nations (NIV, Matthew 28:19), it is safe to assume that the Church of Christ is meant to grow numerically, in quantity.

49.6% of the respondents strongly agree with this while 35.4% of respondents mildly agree and a further 15% of respondents either mildly disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. Clearly, there is an apparent lack of certainty and conviction concerning this statement. Possible reasons why: i) a reaction to the church growth movement of recent times; ii) a reaction to their own church not growing numerically; iii) a reaction to an emphasis on or playing “the numbers game”; iv) because these believers are immature and have perhaps not as yet been exposed to the full extent and teaching of the scriptures.

3.4.2.3 The statement and data – V8:

The church is meant to grow in quality - in maturity.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
2. Mildly disagree	3	.8	.8	1.1
3. Mildly agree	15	4.1	4.1	5.2
4. Strongly agree	346	93.5	94.8	100.0
Total	365	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	5	1.4		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Based on the promise of Christ that he will build his church and that the gates of Hades will not overcome it (NIV, Matthew 16:18), and based on passages of scripture like Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 and Ephesians 4 which speak of the Church of Christ being “built up”, it is safe to assume that the Lord of the Church intends for the church to grow in quality – to mature or to be built up in the faith.

Here, unlike the previous statement, there is no lack of certainty or conviction among the respondents that this is what Christ intends for his church. 94.8% of respondents strongly agree with this statement and 4.1% mildly agree. Significantly, only 1.1% of respondents either mildly or strongly disagree with the statement. The data suggests that the respondents seem to be saying: “We are convinced that the church is meant to grow in quality, but we are not so sure that it is meant to grow in quantity.”

3.4.2.4 The statements and data of V9-V13 will be evaluated collectively:

The statement and data – V9:

God builds a congregation of believers.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
2. Mildly disagree	9	2.4	2.5	2.7
3. Mildly agree	55	14.9	15.0	17.8
4. Strongly agree	301	81.4	82.2	100.0
Total	366	98.9	100.0	
Missing System	4	1.1		
Total	370	100.0		

The statement and data – V10:

God lives among a congregation of believers.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
2. Mildly disagree	12	3.2	3.3	4.6
3. Mildly agree	33	8.9	9.0	13.7
4. Strongly agree	316	85.4	86.3	100.0
Total	366	98.9	100.0	
Missing System	4	1.1		
Total	370	100.0		

The statement and data – V11:

God works through a congregation of believers.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	2	.5	.5	.5
2. Mildly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.6
3. Mildly agree	40	10.8	10.9	12.5
4. Strongly agree	322	87.0	87.5	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The statement and data – V12:

The church is built up by God - by what God does for the church.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	11	3.0	3.1	3.1
2. Mildly disagree	36	9.7	10.0	13.1
3. Mildly agree	92	24.9	25.6	38.6
4. Strongly agree	221	59.7	61.4	100.0
Total	360	97.3	100.0	
Missing System	10	2.7		
Total	370	100.0		

The statement and data – V13:

The church is built up by believers as they exercise their spiritual gifts.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
2. Mildly disagree	8	2.2	2.2	3.3
3. Mildly agree	96	25.9	26.2	29.5
4. Strongly agree	258	69.7	70.5	100.0
Total	366	98.9	100.0	
Missing System	4	1.1		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data for statements V9-V13:

97.2% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that God builds a congregation of believers. The question arises: is it the view of the respondents that God, and God alone, builds a congregation of believers since it is his church and since he is the head and Lord of that church? Or, is it the view of the respondents that while God builds a congregation of believers, his children also have a role to play in the building up of that congregation? In Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.3) the point has been made that there is a dual emphasis in the building up of the local church – while God builds, so do his children. His children are co-workers with Him in the building up of the local church. Now, is this dual emphasis in the mind of the respondents or is the building up of a congregation of believers purely God’s work?

Note: 97.2% of the respondents agree that God *builds* a congregation of believers. 95.3% of the respondents agree that God *lives* among a congregation of believers. 98.4% of the respondents agree that God *works* through a congregation of believers. 87% of the respondents agree that the church is built up *by God*, by what he does. This is a strong indication that God is involved in the building process. Interestingly, 96.7% of respondents agree that the church is built up by believers as they exercise their spiritual gifts. In other

words, there appears to be a dual emphasis in the minds of the respondents: an emphasis that both God and his children are involved in the building up of a local church, or congregation of believers.

Comment on V12 – *The church is built up by God – by what God does for the church.*

13.1% of respondents disagree (either strongly or mildly) with this statement. Why would that be? It is noteworthy that this statement is in contrast with the next statement, V13 – *The church is built up by believers as they exercise their spiritual gifts.* The researcher wanted to determine whether the respondents recognised and agreed with the dual emphasis in scripture that both God and his children (as co-workers) are involved in the building up of a congregation of believers. While there appears to be no doubt that God is involved in the building process, there appears to be doubt or uncertainty as to what God actually does to build up the local church. It is almost as if the respondents are saying: “Believers can practically exercise their spiritual gifts in building up the church, but what does God practically do in the building up of the church?”

3.4.2.5 Reflections on this category of questions:

1. The vast majority of respondents (97%) identify with the biblical metaphor that they are “living stones” who have been built into a “spiritual house” which the Bible calls the church.
2. There is an overwhelming conviction that the Church of Christ is meant to grow in *quality* (or maturity), but a far less conviction that the Church of Christ is meant to grow in *quantity* (or numbers).
3. Most respondents appear to agree with the dual emphasis in scripture that both God and his children (as co-workers) are involved in building up the Church of Christ. However, there appears to be uncertainty as to what God might practically do in order to build up the church. Believers can practically exercise their spiritual gifts to build up the church, but what does God practically do to build up the church?
4. The researcher conducted a comparison test between genders and various age groups on this category of questions. Please refer to page 196-198 for the difference of opinion that exist between various age groups concerning the nature of the local church.

3.4.3 CATEGORY 3 – CHURCH IDENTITY

This category of statements relates to the respondents understanding of the identity of the local church. The whole question of the church’s core identity and its reason for being was explored. The crucial question to be explored was: “What does the church actually exist for?”

3.4.3.1 The statement and data – V14:

God has a plan to save the world.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
2. Mildly disagree	11	3.0	3.0	4.3
3. Mildly agree	31	8.4	8.4	12.8
4. Strongly agree	321	86.8	87.2	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

The data is somewhat surprising! Only 87.2% of respondents strongly agree with the statement that God has a plan to save the world. One would have anticipated that almost 100% of respondents would strongly agree since God’s plan to save the world is not only their personal experience (if they have been truly saved), but since God’s plan to save the world is the Good News of the gospels and indeed God’s word.

How does one interpret the 8.4% of respondents who mildly agree with this statement? This indicates some uncertainty on their part. Either they have not been exposed to the scriptural evidence of God’s plan to save the world, or perhaps they are disillusioned for they see no or little evidence of God’s plan being fulfilled.

How does one interpret the 4.4% of respondents who disagree (either mildly or strongly) with this statement? Either these respondents have never been exposed to God’s plan to save the

world, or perhaps their theological conviction does not allow them to agree. Perhaps their conviction is that God has a plan to save, not the world, but only the elect of God.

3.4.3.2 The statement and data – V15:

The church is central in fulfilling God's plan to save the world.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
2. Mildly disagree	14	3.8	3.8	5.2
3. Mildly agree	71	19.2	19.5	24.7
4. Strongly agree	274	74.1	75.3	100.0
Total	364	98.4	100.0	
Missing System	6	1.6		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

75.3% of the respondents strongly agree that the church is central in fulfilling God’s plan to save the world which indicates an understanding and an appreciation of what the Church of Christ represents – a new humanity, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a distinctive people who are not only created and called by God, but who are there to declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light (NIV, 1 Peter 2:9-12).

It’s a matter of concern however that just over 19% of respondents only mildly agree with this statement. Why? Is it because the concept of the church and its reason for being is not taught and preached? Is it due to an influence of the “postmodern” or the “emerging church movement” which generally challenges the traditions of the church and are a lot more open to other ways in which God may fulfil his plan to save the world? The 5.2% of respondents who disagree (either mildly or strongly) that the church is central in fulfilling God’s plan to save the world may well be influenced by the emerging church movement.

3.4.3.3 The statement and data – V16:

The church exists to serve God - it is for his glory.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
3. Mildly agree	26	7.0	7.0	8.1
4. Strongly agree	340	91.9	91.9	100.0
Total	370	100.0	100.0	

The evaluation of the data;

The data is not surprising, unlike V14. Just as one would have anticipated that almost 100% of respondents would agree that God has a plan to save the world, so too one would anticipate that almost 100% of respondents would not only agree, but strongly agree, that the church exists to serve God – it is for his glory. The researcher submits that these two themes – God has a plan to save the world and the church exists for the glory of God – are predominant themes in the church. It is not surprising therefore that 98.9% of respondents agree that the church exists to serve God – it is for his glory. The 1.1% of respondents who disagree is negligible since they only *mildly disagree*.

3.4.3.4 The statement and data – V17:

The church exists to serve its members - to build up its members.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	21	5.7	5.7	5.7
2. Mildly disagree	48	13.0	13.0	18.8
3. Mildly agree	120	32.4	32.6	51.4
4. Strongly agree	179	48.4	48.6	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

The data is encouraging. Both Hendriks (1992:71-72) and Nel (2005:9) advocate that there is a qualitative (ecclesiological) *and* quantitative (soteriological) element to the church. While the church is meant to become a mature organism (the church exists to serve and build up its members), it is also meant however to be of benefit to the world (the church exists to serve the world). What is noticeable in the data is that, contrary to the responses of the previous statements, the proportions of respondents are more spread across all 4 categories – they strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree and strongly disagree with the statement that the church exists to serve (or to build up) its members. It appears there is no consensus on the matter, which indicates that the respondents are aware that while the church may exist to serve and build up its members, it does not exist solely to serve and build up its members. Perhaps the idea that Stott (1992:242-245) and Easum (2001:88-89) put forward that the church is a “religious club” which exists for the benefit and service of its members, finds good soil in the 48.6% of respondents who strongly agree with the statement that the church exists to serve its members.

3.4.3.5 The statement and data – V18:

The church exists to serve the world - it is for the benefit, or salvation, of mankind.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	14	3.8	3.9	3.9
2. Mildly disagree	27	7.3	7.4	11.3
3. Mildly agree	82	22.2	22.6	33.9
4. Strongly agree	240	64.9	66.1	100.0
Total	363	98.1	100.0	
Missing System	7	1.9		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Nel (2005:25-37) has defined the identity and purpose of the church as consisting in these three elements: i) the church exists for the glory and the sake of the one who brought it into being (the church exists to serve God); ii) the church exists as a system and centre of communication, communicating the gospel by word and deed. Part of that communication is that the church exists to serve its members; iii) the church exists for mission (the church exists to serve the world).

Scripture seems to indicate that all three elements are equally important and are not meant to be categorised either in order of priority or order of importance. It appears, however, as if the respondents are prone to doing this, i.e. categorising the purpose of the church into an order of priority, or importance. The 30% of respondents who mildly disagree or mildly agree with the statement that the church exists to serve the world, seem to be saying: “Yes, we agree with the statement, but serving the world is not the church’s primary purpose. The church’s primary purpose is to serve God and bring glory to God.” There appears to be a categorising of priorities.

On the contrary, the 66.1% of respondents who strongly agree with the statement that the

church exists to serve the world seem to form part of the 91.9% of respondents who strongly agree with the statement that the church exists to serve God. It indicates that the respondents recognise that the church exists for numerous purposes, all of which are important.

A matter of concern however is the 3.9% of respondents who strongly disagree that the church exists to serve the world. Is this strong disagreement as a result of a consuming passion for the glory of God and to serve God alone, or is it an indication that there is a lack of understanding as to what the church exists for?

3.4.3.6 The statement and data – V19:

The story of the Bible is a story of God's saving mission to the world.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
2. Mildly disagree	12	3.2	3.3	3.5
3. Mildly agree	65	17.6	17.7	21.2
4. Strongly agree	290	78.4	78.8	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Stott (1992:325-336) has given us a very helpful, broad overview of scripture – the story of God's saving mission to the world. It begins in the Old Testament with God who is on mission in this world. It moves to the New Testament, to the Christ of the Gospels, to the Holy Spirit of the Acts, to the Church of the Letters and it climaxes in the Revelation – a wondrous story of God's saving mission to the world. Since “we all love a good story” (a quote from Brian Greene in his novel *The Elegant Universe*), the statement is designed to determine whether the church has understood the story of the Bible, and just how effectively

that story has been conveyed to the church. 96.5% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that the story of the Bible is a story of God’s saving mission to the world, indicating that the story of the Bible has not only been understood by the church but that the story has been effectively conveyed to the church.

3.4.3.7 The statement and data – V20:

The church is mission - its soul is rooted in the mission of God to save the world.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
2. Mildly disagree	10	2.7	2.8	3.9
3. Mildly agree	80	21.6	22.3	26.2
4. Strongly agree	265	71.6	73.8	100.0
Total	359	97.0	100.0	
Missing System	11	3.0		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Whereas the previous statement (V19) seeks to determine whether the church has in fact understood the story of the Bible, and whether the story of the Bible has been effectively communicated to the church, this statement seeks to determine whether the church has understood that it is now an integral part of God’s mission to save the world, that it is called and sent by God to participate with him in his mission to save the world, that God’s mission to save the world is the “soul” purpose of the church. The statement moves from *understanding* the story of the Bible to becoming a *part of* the story of the Bible. 96.1% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that the church is mission, that the church is an integral part of God’s mission to save the world.

3.4.3.8 The statements and data of V21-V22 will be evaluated collectively:

The statement and data – V21:

The church is sent by God to be on mission *for* God in the world.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	8	2.2	2.2	2.2
2. Mildly disagree	23	6.2	6.4	8.6
3. Mildly agree	83	22.4	23.0	31.6
4. Strongly agree	247	66.8	68.4	100.0
Total	361	97.6	100.0	
Missing System	9	2.4		
Total	370	100.0		

The statement and data – V22:

The church is sent by God to be on mission *with* God in the world.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	2	.5	.5	.5
2. Mildly disagree	7	1.9	1.9	2.5
3. Mildly agree	63	17.0	17.2	19.7
4. Strongly agree	294	79.5	80.3	100.0
Total	366	98.9	100.0	
Missing System	4	1.1		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data from statement V21 and V22:

Statements V21 and V22 are very similar, yet vastly different. Only the prepositions in the

statements change. “The church is sent by God to be on mission *for* God...” as opposed to “The church is sent by God to be on mission *with* God...”. Arising out of the “missional church conversation” (Van Gelder 2008:2), a distinction has been made between the historical view of missions in the church as opposed to the more contemporary view of missions in the church. The historical view of missions in the church is characterised by what the church *does* for God. It is more functional; the emphasis is on *doing*. The contemporary view of the church is characterised by what the church *is* for God. It revolves around the essence of the church; the emphasis is on *being*. The focus shifts from church polity to church ecclesiology, from *doing* mission for God to God *being* on mission in the world and God inviting us to participate with him in his mission to the world (see Van Gelder 2008:42).

In these statements the researcher has sought to establish whether the respondents understand, or are at least aware of, the distinction between these two views. Are the respondents locked into the more historical view of missions in the church (the church is on mission *for* God), or are the respondents open to the more contemporary view of missions in the church (the church is on mission *with* God). 91.4% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that the church is on mission *for* God in the world whereas 97.5% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that the church is on mission *with* God in the world. The latter result may appear heartening, but the fact that there are such a high percentage of respondents who agree with both statements may indicate that they have not understood the distinction between the two statements. The fact that 8.6% of respondents disagree (either strongly or mildly) with the statement that the church is called and sent by God to be on mission for God in the world may indicate that they are in favour of the second statement (contemporary view), or it may indicate a reaction to the pressure and hard work of being on mission for God in the world.

To be fair, since the “missional church conversation” is relatively new, is it reasonable to assume that respondents would be informed about this conversation, and more than that, that they would know the meaning of the word *missional* as defined by Roxburgh and Boren (2009:34)? The researcher believes that it is asking a great deal from them.

3.4.3.9 Reflections on this category of questions:

1. Since the overriding theme and “Good News” of the Bible is that God has a plan to save the world, it is somewhat surprising that only 87.2% of respondents strongly agree with this.

Equally surprising is the 4.4% of respondents who disagree with this.

2. Since the theme of the New Testament is that the Church or the Body of Christ is central in fulfilling God's plan of salvation (NIV, John 20:21; Matthew 28:19), it is furthermore surprising that 21.3% of respondents do not strongly agree with this. It appears that something else could be central to God fulfilling his salvation plan for the world.

3. Almost *all* respondents agree that the church exists to serve God – it is for His glory.

4. Considerably *fewer* respondents agree that the church exists to serve its members.

5. Almost two thirds of respondents strongly agree that the church exists to serve the world – it is for the benefit of mankind.

6. 96.5% of respondents agree that the story of the Bible is a story of God's saving mission to the world.

7. 96.1% of respondents agree that the church is mission; that it is an integral part of God's mission to save the world.

8. The overwhelming majority of respondents agree with the more historic view to missions – the emphasis being on *doing*, or what the church *does for* God. And yet the overwhelming majority of respondents also agree with the more contemporary view of missions – the emphasis being on *being*, or what the church *is for* God. What is clear is that there is confusion about the two views.

9. The researcher has conducted a comparison test between genders and various age groups on this category of questions. Please refer to page 198-200 for the difference of opinion that exists between various age groups concerning the identity of the local church.

3.4.4 CATEGORY 4 – PREACHING

This category of statements relates to the respondents understanding and experience of preaching. Is preaching in the local church viewed as invaluable, essential and primary to the church's identity? What kind of preaching prevails in the local church? What is the quality of preaching in the local church?

3.4.4.1 The statement and data – V23:

Preaching is one of the primary ways in which God speaks to his church.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
2. Mildly disagree	19	5.1	5.2	6.3
3. Mildly agree	95	25.7	26.0	32.3
4. Strongly agree	247	66.8	67.7	100.0
Total	365	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	5	1.4		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Preaching is certainly not the only way in which God speaks to or communicates with his church. Nel (2005:111; 2015:71) identifies at least eight forms of ministry in which God speaks to or communicates with his church in order to build it up – worship, pastoral care, administration, teaching, fellowship, deeds of mercy, witnessing and preaching. Nel (2005:369; 2015:78) also emphasises that the whole of this eight-fold ministry, and more, serves to build up God's church.

While preaching then is not the only way in which God communicates to his church, surely it is one of the primary ways? Stott (1995:271) and Pieterse (2001:22) say that it is – preaching is indispensable to the church. What the researcher therefore has hoped to ascertain in the statement "Preaching is one of the primary ways in which God speaks to the church", is

whether the respondents recognise that one of the primary ways in which Gods speaks to his church is through preaching, or that preaching is indispensable in the church. Going a little further, the researcher has hoped to ascertain whether the respondents recognise that preaching is crucial for God building up the church. Long (1989:49) and Cilliers (2004:20) and Nel (2014) agree that it is.

67.7% of respondents strongly agree with this statement while 32.3% of respondents either mildly agree or disagree in one way or another. 1.4% of respondents failed to respond to the statement for reasons unknown. What is of concern is that only two thirds of respondents (two in three) agree with what the five abovementioned theologians have proposed and are convinced of, and that is that preaching is one of the primary ways in which God speaks to or communicates with his church. Could it be that the 32.3% of respondents who did not strongly agree with the statement that preaching is one of the primary ways in which God speaks to the church, are influenced by the emerging church movement? Preaching may not be central to their service and in some cases even omitted, as one emerging leader states: “My blog is my pulpit. I rarely will preach in a church. It is on the blog where theological issues are discussed” (Gibbs and Bolger 2006:165).

3.4.4.2 The statement and data – V24:

Preaching is one of the primary ways in which God gives the church its identity.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	18	4.9	5.0	5.0
2. Mildly disagree	57	15.4	15.9	20.9
3. Mildly agree	139	37.6	38.7	59.6
4. Strongly agree	145	39.2	40.4	100.0
Total	359	97.0	100.0	
Missing System	11	3.0		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

In this statement the researcher has shifted the emphasis from preaching as one of the primary ways in which God communicates to the church, to preaching as one of the primary ways in which God gives the church its identity, thereby building it up. The logic of the researcher is that if preaching is one of the primary ways in which God communicates to his church, does it not stand to reason that preaching is one of the primary ways in which God gives the church its identity, and builds it up?

If the researcher's logic is correct, then this data should be similar to the data of the previous statement, and yet it is vastly different. Whereas in the previous statement 67.7% of respondents strongly agreed, now only 40.4% of respondents strongly agree. Whereas in the previous statement 32.3% of respondents either mildly agreed or disagreed in one way or the other, now 59.6% of respondents either mildly agree or disagree in one way or another. This is a significant shift.

The question to be answered is: how does the church receive or get its identity? Is it through preaching or is it through other recognised forms of ministry? Forms like fellowship, pastoral care, worship, teaching and deeds of mercy. Identity can be obtained from all these forms of

ministry, but for the researcher, the primary way in which the church receives its identity is through preaching. Is this true for the respondents though? For most of the respondents, the primary way in which the church receives its identity seems to be through other forms of ministry like fellowship, pastoral care, worship, teaching and deeds of mercy.

3.4.4.3 The statement and data – V25:

No church can be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
2. Mildly disagree	11	3.0	3.0	4.1
3. Mildly agree	37	10.0	10.0	14.1
4. Strongly agree	318	85.9	85.9	100.0
Total	370	100.0	100.0	

The evaluation of the data:

Stott (1982:109) advocates that God has not only brought the church into being through his Word (Christ and the Bible), but that he maintains and sustains the church, directs and sanctifies the church, reforms and renews the church through that same Word. In fact, the Word is the food by which God nourishes the church (cf Cilliers 2004:18-19; Long 1989:50). To express this in no uncertain terms: “Churches live, grow and flourish by the Word of God; they wilt and wither without it” (Stott 1992:208; cf Pieterse 2001:17, 22).

No church can be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching. It is heartening to note that 95.9% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) with this statement, while 4.1% of respondents disagree (either mildly or strongly) with the statement.

3.4.4.4 The statement and data – V26:

The church is built up through a 'step-by-step' walk through the Bible.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	15	4.1	4.1	4.1
2. Mildly disagree	43	11.6	11.8	15.9
3. Mildly agree	122	33.0	33.4	49.3
4. Strongly agree	185	50.0	50.7	100.0
Total	365	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	5	1.4		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

A theological premise in building up the church is that God does it by means of his Spirit through the Word, the Bible (Nel 2005:166). It is argued that the Spirit, who builds the church through the Word, does not build the church from random texts that are preached and applied in a haphazard and loose way, but that the church is built up through methodical, systematic and planned preaching either from a book of the Bible or a theme in the Bible (Nel 2005:167, 299). The researcher argues that for anyone to learn to walk, or to mature, they have to learn, or mature, step-by-step. A step-by-step walk through the Bible will help the church to mature, to be built up.

Only 50.7% of the respondents strongly agree with this principle. Is the researcher to assume that the 33.43% of respondents who mildly agree with the statement, and the 15.9% of respondents who disagree (either mildly or strongly) with the statement, believe that there is an alternate way that the church can be built up other than through a step-by-step walk through the Bible? Or is the researcher to conclude that the 49.3% of respondents who do not strongly agree with this principle are both immature and unstable in their faith, or are at least destined to be immature and unstable in their faith? Stott (1992:171) unashamedly advocates this. He purports that many believers are immature and unstable, ignorant of even the

rudiments of the faith, and the reason why, he says, is because there is a lack of conscientious biblical exposition. There is no step-by-step walk through and preaching of the Bible.

3.4.4.5 The statement and data – V27:

The church is built up through focusing on relevant, contemporary topics.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	48	13.0	13.1	13.1
2. Mildly disagree	74	20.0	20.2	33.2
3. Mildly agree	157	42.4	42.8	76.0
4. Strongly agree	88	23.8	24.0	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

What is the purpose of these two statements – ‘*The church is built up through a step-by-step walk through the Bible*’, and, ‘*The church is built up by focusing on relevant, contemporary topics*’? The researcher would like to understand how the respondents view the building up of the church. In the mind of the respondent, how is the church built up? Or to make it more personal: in the mind of the respondent, how are their lives built up in the faith? Is it through a step-by-step walk through the Bible (through expositional preaching), or is it through focusing on relevant, contemporary topics (through topical preaching)?

While 50.7% of respondents strongly agree that the church is built up through a step-by-step walk through the Bible (expositional preaching), only 24% of respondents strongly agree that the church is built up through a focus on relevant, contemporary topics (topical preaching). Interesting to note that while 33.4% of respondents mildly agree that the church is built up through a step-by-step walk through the Bible, 33.3% of respondents disagree (mildly and strongly) that the church is built up through a focus on relevant, contemporary topics. While

there appears to be a clear leaning toward expositional preaching as the means toward building up the church, 66.8% of respondents still agree (strongly or mildly) that the church is built up through topical preaching. Perhaps the quandary can be resolved by saying that respondents see the need for preaching and sermons to be relevant and contemporary. There is a difference between sermons being relevant and contemporary as compared to sermons that focus on relevant, contemporary topics (topical preaching). The former is certainly desirable, but the latter may need to be limited. While there is a place for topical preaching, the contention is that a systematic approach or expositional preaching is more desirable.

Having analysed these two statements, it is encouraging that a greater percentage of respondents agree that the church is built up through expositional preaching rather than through topical preaching, but it is not satisfying. It would be an area of concern especially when both Ellsworth (2001:120) and Nel (2005:167) agree that to build up the church, the preacher must be prepared to unpack the Word of God in a planned, responsible and systematic way. A systematic approach to preaching, or expositional preaching, or a step-by-step walk through the Bible, remains highly desirable.

3.4.4.6 The statement and data – V28:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she recognise that preaching is "serious business".

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	6	1.6	1.6	1.6
3. Mildly agree	43	11.6	11.7	13.4
4. Strongly agree	318	85.9	86.6	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Long (1989:15) states that no preacher can stand in front of a congregation without a deep sense of awe, responsibility, humility and fear. Preaching is serious business. To represent God and his word with integrity, virtue and sincerity requires that the preacher take the responsibility of preaching seriously. In fact, the preachers themselves must be people of integrity, virtue and sincerity, for that is the bed in which true communication of God is born (Cilliers 2004:188). 86.6% of respondents see that strongly in their pastors while 11.7% see that it in a milder form.

3.4.4.7 The statement and data – V29:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she recognise that preaching is a "joyful privilege".

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	7	1.9	1.9	1.9
3. Mildly agree	64	17.3	17.5	19.4
4. Strongly agree	295	79.7	80.6	100.0
Total	366	98.9	100.0	
Missing System	4	1.1		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Yes, preaching is “serious business”, but it is equally a “joyful privilege”. Preaching is an inestimable gift from God (Long 1989:20). It is a gift that has been entrusted to a preacher and who now has the joyous honour and privilege of speaking that one word which humanity so desperately and urgently needs. 80.6% of respondents see that strongly in their pastors while 17.5% see that in a milder form in their pastors. It is noteworthy that those respondents who fail to see that peaching is either a “serious business” or a “joyful privilege” for their pastor are negligible. 1.6% of respondents mildly disagree with the former statement and 1.9% of respondents mildly disagree with the latter statement. No respondent strongly disagrees with either statement.

3.4.4.8 The statement and data – V30:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has thoroughly prepared the sermon.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
3. Mildly agree	37	10.0	10.1	10.4
4. Strongly agree	329	88.9	89.6	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

The building up of the local church is borne and guided by the faithful preaching of God’s Word (Nel 2005:167), and the faithful preaching of God’s Word is borne and guided by a careful and thorough preparation of the text. There is no substitute or excuse for thoroughly biblical, qualitative and faithful preparation of God’s Word (see Mohler 2008:15-38; Piper 1990:47-63; Stott 1988:15-47).

What is significant is that for 99.7% of the respondents, it is evident (either strongly or mildly) that their pastors have thoroughly prepared their sermons. For a mere .3% of the respondents (one person) it is not that evident. The researcher however needs to be cautious. How do the respondents define *thorough preparation*? Would they define it as the preacher doing their utmost to interpret the scripture accurately and plainly, prying open what appears to be closed, untying what appears to be knotted, making plain what appears to be obscure, unpacking what appears to be compactly packed while remaining true to the biblical principles of interpretation and context? Some respondents may well define *thorough preparation* in those terms, but some may not.

3.4.4.9 The statement and data – V31:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has thoroughly prepared his/her heart before preaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
2. Mildly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.4
3. Mildly agree	35	9.5	9.5	10.9
4. Strongly agree	327	88.4	89.1	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

“[T]he preparation of the heart is of far greater importance than the preparation of the sermon” (Stott 1995:273; cf Cilliers 2004:184-186). For the sermon to display a presence of God, for it to be believable, preachers need to be people of prayer and meditation. They need to have spent time with God and to have their hearts prepared by God. Preachers need to be those who, in the words of Killinger (2009:132), “wait in the void” – who wait in silence before God and who wait on God to speak to them before they speak to their hearers. A staggering 98.6% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that their pastors have spent time thoroughly preparing their hearts before preaching.

From the viewpoint of the preacher, (the researcher himself being a preacher), these statistics are difficult to digest for preachers often feel not only inadequate, but wishing they had spent more time in sermon and heart preparation. The constraints on a preachers time militates against this.

3.4.4.10 The statement and data – V32:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, I notice that the sermon is full of God's greatness.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	3	.8	.8	.8
3. Mildly agree	52	14.1	14.2	15.1
4. Strongly agree	310	83.8	84.9	100.0
Total	365	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	5	1.4		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Piper (1990:22) pleads for preachers to preach about the greatness and grandeur of God with such conviction and power that people take away from worship “a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory, [and] the grand object of God’s infinite being.” But is this the greatness and grandeur that the respondents have in mind when answering this statement? How do they define God’s greatness? At least one can surmise that when the respondents listen to their pastor’s sermons, that the sermons are not full of psychological pep talks, self-help, self-improvement and messages of personal comfort, although there may be an element of that in their pastor’s sermons. 99.1% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that their pastor’s sermons are full of God’s greatness – an encouraging sign.

3.4.4.11 The statement and data – V33:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, I notice that the sermon is full of God's vibrant presence.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
2. Mildly disagree	9	2.4	2.5	2.7
3. Mildly agree	87	23.5	23.8	26.6
4. Strongly agree	268	72.4	73.4	100.0
Total	365	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	5	1.4		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data;

A wild, undomesticated, vibrant and living presence of God needs to be present in the pulpit (Long 2009b:34). Preaching with passion – a passion where the preacher and the hearer feels, hears, touches and tastes the living Word of God – must be present (Craddock 2011:120). Whether this is what 97.2% of respondents actually experience when listening to sermons from their pastor is debatable. There is no reason to doubt however that they notice God’s vibrant presence in the pulpit. This may appear in the form of cutting and prophetic intrusion into their life from the preaching of their pastor (Craddock 2011:128). It may appear with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power (NIV, 1 Corinthians 2:4) upon the life of their pastor in the pulpit. Whatever the case be, a remarkable percentage of respondents notice that their pastor’s sermons are full of God’s vibrant presence.

3.4.4.12 The statement and data – V34:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, I notice that my pastor stimulates or creates a silent conversation with me in the sermon.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	7	1.9	1.9	1.9
2. Mildly disagree	25	6.8	6.9	8.9
3. Mildly agree	121	32.7	33.6	42.5
4. Strongly agree	207	55.9	57.5	100.0
Total	360	97.3	100.0	
Missing System	10	2.7		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

The purpose of a preacher stimulating a silent conversation (a dialogue or discussion) with their hearers in the sermon, is to “carry them along” in the sermon. If preachers can create a silent conversation with their hearers, it indicates that the hearers are not only listening to the sermon, but that they are contemplating, understanding, or at least interacting with what the preacher is saying. In all probability, they are also being enthused by what the preacher is saying and hence applying the sermon will follow naturally and easily.

The data is somewhat disturbing. 8.8% of respondents confess (either mildly or strongly) that their pastor does not create a silent conversation with them in the sermon. A further 33.6% only mildly agree that their pastor creates a silent conversation with them in the sermon. Does the researcher detect a sense of frustration or perhaps dissatisfaction in this area? Only 57.5% of respondents strongly agree that their pastor stimulates or creates a silent conversation with them in the sermon.

This prompts two questions:

1. Are only 57.5% of the respondents being “carried along” in the sermon?
2. If only 57.5% of the respondents are contemplating, understanding, interacting with the preacher, what does it say or do for the remaining 42.5% of respondents?

Ultimately, this has implications for the hearer understanding their identity in the church and their reason for being. Without understanding by being carried along in the sermon, how can they understand their sense of calling and being sent by God?

3.4.4.13 The statement and data – V35:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, I notice that my pastor's message is Good News, even if the 'hard truth' be told.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	3	.8	.8	.8
3. Mildly agree	47	12.7	12.8	13.6
4. Strongly agree	317	85.7	86.4	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

What is noteworthy about this statement is that almost *all* of the respondents agree (only .8% of respondents disagree, and mildly at that) that their pastor’s preaching is characterised by Good News, even if the “hard truth” be told. This, at least, indicates that there is a balance in the pastor’s preaching, i.e. while their pastors preach on judgement, law and sin, yet their pastors balance that with preaching on the gospel, grace and love. These preachers have avoided the danger of turning “grace into law, good news into judgement, and love into legalism” (Callahan 1983:28). At most, this indicates that their pastors preach an eschatological hope; a hope that reverberates through the gospels (Long 2009c:110); or, “that hope is stronger than memory, that the open tomb is stronger than the bloody cross, that the

risen Lord is stronger than the dead Jesus” (Callahan 1983:28).

3.4.4.14 The statement and data – V36:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, I notice that my pastor's sermons are up-building - they shape my life and build me up.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	3	.8	.8	.8
2. Mildly disagree	14	3.8	3.8	4.6
3. Mildly agree	69	18.6	18.8	23.4
4. Strongly agree	282	76.2	76.6	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data;

In preaching, it is the words of a preacher that ultimately define, shape and build up the hearer (see Long 2009b:41-42; Olyott 2007:132-136; Peterson 1989:87-94; Tripp 2000:6-15). This is especially true of the “words of God” for as Deuteronomy 32:47 reminds us: “They are not just idle words for you – they are your life” (NIV). Or as 2 Timothy 3:16 reminds us: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (NIV). Tripp (2000:6-15) informs us that the “words of God” are intended to build, construct and establish the hearer.

95.4% of respondents acknowledge (either strongly or mildly) that the words of their pastors are words that essentially shape their lives and build them up. Their pastor’s words are not words that are used as weapons to tear down, destroy, manipulate or cause death. Only for a small percentage of respondents (4.6%), their pastor’s sermons hardly shape their lives and build them up.

3.4.4.15 The statement and data – V37:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, I notice that my pastor's sermons inspire me to rejoice in my salvation.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	10	2.7	2.7	2.7
3. Mildly agree	66	17.8	18.0	20.7
4. Strongly agree	291	78.6	79.3	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

What precisely would inspire a hearer to rejoice in their salvation? There could be a number of contributing factors. For example: A hearer would be inspired to rejoice in their salvation:

- When a preacher expounds the Word of God in its fullness, extolling the virtues of God's greatness and grandeur, and the hearer is truly illumined to this truth (Stott 1995:275).
- When a preacher does their utmost to interpret the scripture accurately and plainly – prying open what appears to be closed, unpacking what appears to be tightly packed, making plain what appears to be obscure – so that the hearer “comes out of the darkness and into the wonderful light of God” (Stott 1995:272).
- When a preacher enthusiastically promotes among their hearers a “sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory, [and] the grand object of God's infinite being” (Piper 1990:22).

These aspects would inspire a hearer to rejoice in their salvation. 97.3% of respondents appear to be suggesting that this is the kind of preaching and truth that they are being exposed to. Whether this is actually the case is open to debate.

3.4.4.16 The statement and data – V38:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, I notice that my pastor's sermons inspire me to live more fully for God every day.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	1	.3	.3	.3
2. Mildly disagree	11	3.0	3.0	3.3
3. Mildly agree	48	13.0	13.0	16.3
4. Strongly agree	308	83.2	83.7	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

What precisely constitutes a life that is lived more fully for God every day? What do the respondents have in mind when they confess that their pastor's sermons inspire them to live more fully for God every day? Their thoughts would be varied. For them, to live more fully for God every day could mean that they are more willing to yield, to obey, to submit, to please, to be more conscious of God every day. In the mind of the researcher however, to live more fully for God every day means to live out one's salvation. And what is living out one's salvation other than being *called* by God to be a part of his family and being *sent* by God to be in active mission with him in this world? Using Nel (2005:8) as a basis, the researcher loosely defines living out one's salvation in these concepts:

1. As believers we are called to bring glory to God in our lives.
2. As believers we are called to build up the body of Christ.
3. As believers we are called and sent by God to be in active mission with God in fulfilling his mission to the world.

While the respondents may not be able to articulate what they mean by living more fully for

God every day, yet to yield, to obey and to submit to God would surely entail the researcher's definition? It is heartening to note that 96.7% of respondents are inspired (to greater or lesser extents) by their pastor's sermons to live more fully for God every day.

3.4.4.17 Reflections on this category of questions:

1. Only two thirds of the respondents unequivocally recognise that preaching is one of the primary ways in which God communicates to his church.

2. Just over a third of the respondents unequivocally recognise that preaching is one of the primary ways in which God communicates to, or gives, the church its identity.

3. The overwhelming majority of respondents agree that no church can be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching.

4. Only half of the respondents strongly agree that the church is built up (or matures) through a step-by-step walk through the Bible (through expositional preaching.)

5. For the vast majority of respondents it is clear that preaching, for their pastor, is both "serious business" and a "joyful privilege".

6. For the overwhelming majority of respondents it is clear that their pastors have thoroughly prepared both their sermons and their hearts before preaching.

7. Almost all of the respondents agree that their pastor's sermons are full of God's greatness and full of God's vibrant presence.

8. Only 57.5% of respondents seem to be "carried along" with the pastor's sermon. The rest appear to suffer from a lack of meaningful understanding, contemplation and interaction with the pastor's sermon.

9. The preaching for almost all the respondents is "Good News", even if the "hard truth" be told.

10. For most respondents, their pastor's sermons shape their lives and build them up.

11. For the majority of respondents, their pastor's sermons inspire them not only to rejoice in their salvation, but to live more fully (in humble submission and obedience) to God, every day.

12. The researcher has conducted a comparison test between genders and various age groups on this category of questions. Please refer to page 193-195 for the difference of opinion that exists between the genders concerning preaching (and hermeneutical preaching) in the local church, and page 201-204 for the difference of opinion that exist between various age groups concerning preaching (and hermeneutical preaching) in the local church.

3.4.5 CATEGORY 5 – HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

This category of statements relates to whether the preachers have approached their sermon preparation with “hermeneutical eyes”, or with the clear principles of biblical interpretation in mind.

3.4.5.1 The statement and data – V39:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has spent time uncovering the true meaning of the passage.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	3	.8	.8	.8
3. Mildly agree	34	9.2	9.2	10.0
4. Strongly agree	332	89.7	90.0	100.0
Total	369	99.7	100.0	
Missing System	1	.3		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Biblical hermeneutics is a science in which a scholar (in this case the preacher) takes into account the principles of interpreting the texts of the Bible. There are many of these principles (discussed in Chapter 3.) In biblical hermeneutics the scholar (in this case the preacher) would honestly seek to understand and correctly interpret all the linguistic and non-linguistic expressions of the text. The preacher would seek to give adequate and serious consideration to the accurate and honest interpretation of the text. It is an art and daunting task – a task that requires an extraordinary amount of time, patience, diligence, insight, knowledge, hard work and perseverance (Cilliers 2004:97; Craddock 2011:7). It is a task that perhaps most respondents, generally speaking, would not be aware of nor fully appreciate, and yet the fruit of this task would be evident to the hearer.

It is remarkable that for 99.2% of the respondents, it is clear (and for 90% of these respondents it is *abundantly* clear) that their pastor has spent time uncovering the true meaning of the text. A mere .8% of respondents only mildly disagree with this.

Question: While the vast majority of respondents report that their pastors have spent time uncovering the true meaning of the passage, are the respondents aware, not only of the immensity of the task, but of the many principles of interpretation that their pastors need to adhere to? Are they aware of the time and patience needed to satisfactorily fulfil this task? If they are not aware of the immensity of the task and the time and patience needed to accurately and fully interpret the text, would it not be reasonable to question their understanding of what it means to “spend time uncovering the true meaning of the passage”? This will be explored later in the reflection on and analysis of the hypothesis.

3.4.5.2 The statement and data – V40:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has spent time uncovering to whom the verse, or passage, was written.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	9	2.4	2.5	2.5
3. Mildly agree	74	20.0	20.2	22.6
4. Strongly agree	284	76.8	77.4	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Part of biblical interpretation is uncovering to whom the passage was addressed, and perhaps more importantly, why it was addressed to them. To correctly interpret the passage, the preacher takes into consideration the fact that the passage was addressed to an ancient person (or an ancient group of people) who had a particular background, history, culture and even

idiosyncrasies. More than that, the preacher takes into consideration that the passage was first addressed to the ancient person (or an ancient group of people), for a specific reason, before it is addressed to the modern hearer. Failure to do that not only leads to misinterpretation of the passage, but the preacher is in danger of furnishing the hearer with either a life-lesson, or a timely-truth, or worse still, a moralistic-message.

This data is in conflict with the former statement. Only 77.4% of respondents strongly agree (as opposed to 90% in the previous statement) that their pastor has spent time uncovering to whom the passage was written. 20.2% mildly agree (as opposed to 9.2% in the previous statement) that their pastor has spent time uncovering to whom the passage was written. The data raises questions as to whether the respondents understand what hermeneutics entails.

3.4.5.3 The statement and data – V41:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has spent time uncovering the background or history of the verse, or passage.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	8	2.2	2.2	2.2
3. Mildly agree	79	21.4	21.5	23.6
4. Strongly agree	281	75.9	76.4	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data;

As mentioned above, part of biblical interpretation is uncovering not only to whom the passage was addressed and the reason therefore, but part of biblical interpretation also seeks to uncover the background and the history of the passage. All these aspects belong together – all part of biblical interpretation. The background, the history and even the events that relate to that period, play a vital role in both the understanding and interpreting of that passage.

It is interesting that the data of this statement is somewhat similar to the data of the previous statement. 76.4% of respondents (as opposed to 77.4% in the previous statement) strongly agree that their pastors have spent time uncovering the background and history of the passage. 21.5% of respondents (as opposed to 20.2% in the previous statement) mildly agree that their pastors have spent time uncovering the background and history of the passage. 2.2% of respondents (as opposed to 2.5% in the previous statement) mildly disagree that their pastors have spent time uncovering the background and history of the passage. The data is similar in these two statements, yet significantly different to the data of the first statement which, once again, raises questions as to whether the respondents understand what hermeneutics or biblical interpretation entails.

3.4.5.4 The statement and data – V42:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has spent time uncovering the grammar of the verse or passage.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
2. Mildly disagree	26	7.0	7.1	8.2
3. Mildly agree	110	29.7	30.0	38.1
4. Strongly agree	227	61.4	61.9	100.0
Total	367	99.2	100.0	
Missing System	3	.8		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

A further aspect of biblical interpretation is uncovering not only to whom the verse or passage was addressed, the background and history of the passage, but it also entails uncovering the grammar of the passage. In determining the meaning of the passage, the preacher takes into account the meaning or semantics, the syntax or structure, the genre or literary style of the verse, or passage. All of these aspects help the preacher determine the

natural, original and general meaning of the verse, or passage (see 2.4.3).

Clearly, when it comes to the preacher spending time uncovering the grammar of the passage, the data is somewhat different to the previous two statements. Here only 61.9% of respondents strongly agree that their pastors have spent time uncovering the grammar of the passage, while 30% of respondents mildly agree and 8.2% of respondents disagree (either mildly or strongly) with the statement. It appears as if this is a relatively weak point in the matter of biblical interpretation.

3.4.5.5 The statement and data – V43:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has spent time uncovering the purpose, or reason, of the verse, or passage.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	2	.5	.5	.5
2. Mildly disagree	8	2.2	2.2	2.7
3. Mildly agree	47	12.7	12.8	15.5
4. Strongly agree	311	84.1	84.5	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

The purpose of biblical interpretation is to get at the heart and essence of the biblical text; the full meaning and significance thereof. This is accomplished through exegesis, exegesis being a thorough exposition of the text. Exegesis involves, as the previous three statements suggest, uncovering to whom the passage was written, the history and background of the text, and the grammar of the text. This is complimented by a study of the text in its cultural setting, and by uncovering the natural meaning of the text (the clear and simple meaning), the original meaning of the text (the original and historical meaning) and the general meaning of the text (the Bible’s consistent and harmonious meaning). It is further complimented by uncovering

the significance of the text, and the way that we uncover the significance is by understanding the text, explaining the text, and applying the text (Pieterse 2001:73). All of this leads to a full meaning of the text, or to uncovering the purpose, or reason, of the text. All of this entails hard and time-consuming work (Cilliers 2004:97; Craddock 2011:7).

Whether the respondents are aware of the hard and time-consuming work that is involved is unknown, but they do confess that it is clear that their pastors have spent time uncovering the purpose, or reason of the text. 97.3% of respondents agree with the statement.

3.4.5.6 The statement and data – V44:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has spent time uncovering what goes before and what comes after the verse, or passage.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	19	5.1	5.2	5.2
3. Mildly agree	70	18.9	19.1	24.3
4. Strongly agree	277	74.9	75.7	100.0
Total	366	98.9	100.0	
Missing System	4	1.1		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Words form part of phrases and sentences. Sentences form part of paragraphs and passages. Passages form part of chapters and books (Olyott 2007:42). No verse in the Bible is spoken in isolation. It is spoken in a context – in a passage, which forms part of a chapter, which forms part of a book in the bible. In order to arrive at a proper understanding and meaning of that verse, it is essential that one look at not only the context of the verse, but also at the context of the passage, the chapter and indeed the book. It has been suggested that a preacher get a wide-angle view or “sweep” of the whole passage (Craddock 2011:81). There is inherent danger in failing to do so.

94.8% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that it is clear to them that their pastor has spent time uncovering the context of the verse, or passage, from which they are preaching, i.e. what goes before and what comes after the verse, or passage.

3.4.5.7 The statement and data – V45:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has spent time listening to the 'voice of God' in the verse, or passage.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	2	.5	.5	.5
2. Mildly disagree	10	2.7	2.7	3.3
3. Mildly agree	63	17.0	17.3	20.5
4. Strongly agree	290	78.4	79.5	100.0
Total	365	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	5	1.4		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Apart from the hard and time-consuming work of exegesis – a thorough exposition of a passage – biblical interpretation entails listening to the voice of God in the passage (Craddock 2011:36-37). An interpreter does that by reading the text, reading the text and reading the text. It entails reading the text out aloud, several times, with care, thought, and respect. It entails opening the emotions of the heart and being open to the movement of the Spirit (Craddock 2011:41), or a case of letting the voice of God in the text permeate the preacher. It involves more than an academic study of the text; it is the art of listening to and listening for the voice of God in the text. It could be defined more appropriately as a spiritual discipline.

96.8% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that their pastors have spent time listening to the voice of God in the text – that they have exercised a spiritual discipline.

3.4.5.8 Reflections on this category of questions:

1. While it is clear for the overwhelming majority of respondents that their pastors have spent time uncovering the true meaning of the passage, there are indications that they are not fully aware of what it entails precisely for a pastor to uncover the true meaning of a passage. An example of this is in 2 and 3 below.
2. Considerably fewer respondents strongly agree that their pastors have spent time uncovering to whom the passage was initially addressed. Uncovering to whom the passage was initially written is part of uncovering the true meaning of the passage.
3. Similarly, considerably fewer respondents strongly agree that their pastors have spent time uncovering the background of the passage, and even fewer respondents agree that their pastors have spent time uncovering the grammar of the passage, and yet this is part of uncovering the true meaning of the passage.
4. In contrast to 2 and 3 above, considerably more respondents strongly agree that their pastors have spent time uncovering the reason, or purpose, of the passage, but it reverts back to considerably fewer respondents strongly agreeing that their pastors have spent time uncovering what goes before and what comes after the passage.
5. Most respondents agree that their pastor has spent time exercising the spiritual discipline of listening to and listening for the “voice of God” in the passage.
6. It appears that the respondents respond more positively to general terms like their pastor uncovering the true meaning of a passage, their pastor uncovering the reason or purpose of a passage, and their pastor listening to the voice of God in the passage. The respondents appear to respond less positively to more specific terms like their pastor uncovering the background of the passage, their pastor uncovering the grammar of the passage, and their pastor uncovering the context of the passage.
7. The question is raised as to whether the respondents truly understand what hermeneutics or biblical interpretation actually entails.

3.4.6 CATEGORY 6 – CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

This category of statements relates to whether the preachers have approached their sermon preparation with “contextual eyes”. Have the preachers consciously taken into account the context of the verse, the passage, and the context of the hearer? As far as the hearer’s context is concerned: Has the preacher taken into account the hearer’s modern and personal world?

Note: The researcher recognises that an aspect of biblical hermeneutics is exploring the context of the verse or passage of scripture under consideration. This aspect may have been dealt with under hermeneutical preaching, but the researcher wanted to deal with it in this section, together with the context of the hearer.

3.4.6.1 The statement and data – V46:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has understood the verse, or passage - *ah-ah, this is God's truth!*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	6	1.6	1.6	1.6
3. Mildly agree	44	11.9	12.0	13.6
4. Strongly agree	318	85.9	86.4	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

The idea in the statement is not only whether the preacher has resorted to an honest and serious study of the verse (having taken into consideration, for example, the history, background, culture, grammar, genre, context), but whether the preacher has lived long with the verse, or passage. In other words, has the preacher allowed the verse to address them personally? Has the preacher allowed the verse to illumine and take over their existence (Pieterse 2001:20)? Has the preacher creatively and imaginatively bombarded the verse with

questions (Long 1989:67, 71)? Have they “lived with the text, lived with the text, lived with the text” (Craddock 2011:92, 94-95), until they can say: “*Ah-Ah, this is God’s truth!*”, or, “*Yes, now that is the way it is!*”?

Significantly, 98.4% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that it is clear to them that their pastor has understood the verse – *ah-ah, this is God’s truth!*

3.4.6.2 The statement and data – V47:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has sought to explain the verse, or passage - *clearly and simply.*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
3. Mildly agree	49	13.2	13.4	14.8
4. Strongly agree	312	84.3	85.2	100.0
Total	366	98.9	100.0	
Missing System	4	1.1		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Preaching is the communication of God’s truth by man to man (Stott 1982:266). The truth is derived by an understanding of the text. In order to understand the text, the preacher must resort to the hermeneutical process that has already been discussed. But then the preacher must convey or explain the text. To convey or explain the text is not a lecture whereby the preacher simply presents the meaning or the data of the text. It is doing so with understanding, with clarity and simplicity, and also with application (Krabbendam 1986:229).

98.6% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that their pastor has sought to convey or explain the verse with clarity and simplicity, with understanding.

3.4.6.3 The statement and data – V48:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has sought to apply the verse, or passage - *a message for today*.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2. Mildly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
3. Mildly agree	48	13.0	13.0	14.1
4. Strongly agree	316	85.4	85.9	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Krabbendam (1986:229) says that the communication of truth is not a lecture where the preacher simply presents the meaning or data of the text without application. It must go further. It must result in application, in significance, or in a “message for today”. Stott (1995:333) says that it would only be of academic interest if we simply discover the meaning of a text and then present that data without appropriate application. It must go further; it must result in “significance” for the hearer. Communication of God’s truth by man to man implies that the hearer has an encounter with God, i.e. “...God’s truth is integrally brought to bear upon the life of the believer” (Krabbendam 1986:229). Cilliers (2004:123) calls for “theodicy”. Theodicy in the sense that God is present in the text or that God himself bridges the distance between the text and the hearer. He says that the objective in preaching is to open the eyes of the hearer so that they can distinguish the reality of God’s work in the world, and thereby invite them to participate therein. The emphasis is on leading the hearer to a new vision of God in the present; a new dream that can be dreamt of him in the present reality. God is indeed present in the text and the hearer must be presented with “God in the text”, not only for their joy but for the new possibilities that exist therein (see Cilliers 2004:110-124).

Significantly, 98.9% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that their pastors have

sought to apply the verse, or passage – present *a message for today*. Whether the respondents understand the message as just an admonition of what they are to do in response to the verse, or whether they have encountered “God in the text” that would open the way for new possibilities for them, is a matter of debate. It remains open to interpretation.

3.4.6.4 The statement and data – V49:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has understood the *big picture* of the passage, chapter and book from which he/she is preaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	2	.5	.5	.5
2. Mildly disagree	10	2.7	2.7	3.3
3. Mildly agree	37	10.0	10.1	13.4
4. Strongly agree	317	85.7	86.6	100.0
Total	366	98.9	100.0	
Missing System	4	1.1		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

Words, phrases, verses, passages, pericopes, chapters and even letters or books of the Bible form an integral part of the Bible – they form part of the whole, an organic unity. The Bible can be viewed as a line or continuum of redemption, or as progressive revelation. To look at a word, phrase, verse, passage, pericope, chapter, or even a book of the Bible in isolation (without reference to the continuum of redemption or progressive revelation or without looking at the *big picture*), one runs the risk of a serious deficiency of understanding. A wide-angle view or wide-angle sweep of the Bible must be maintained (Craddock 2011:81).

96.7% of respondents maintain (either strongly or mildly) that their pastors have understood the *big picture*. They have maintained a wide-angle view or sweep of the passage, chapter and book from which they are preaching.

3.4.6.5 The statement and data – V50:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has studied the people to whom he/she is preaching.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	6	1.6	1.6	1.6
2. Mildly disagree	33	8.9	9.0	10.6
3. Mildly agree	98	26.5	26.6	37.2
4. Strongly agree	231	62.4	62.8	100.0
Total	368	99.5	100.0	
Missing System	2	.5		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

If the preacher hopes to be effective in their preaching, they would do well to study, know, and understand the people to whom they are preaching. The reason for this, according to Gibbs and Bolger (2006:16), is that there is a growing awareness that the church in the West faces a missional challenge that is increasingly cross-cultural in nature. Mainstream culture has diverted from its spiritual heritage and society has become increasingly pluralistic in nature. Therefore pastoral leaders are encouraged to listen carefully to culture and to understand the cultural change that has taken place outside its doors (see Gibbs and Bolger 2006:16-23). Carroll (2000:81) would refer to this as the “process of reflective discernment.” “Studying the people to whom you are preaching” (or “reflective discernment”) does not feature highly among these pastors. Only 62.8% of respondents strongly agree that their pastors engage in this process, while a further 26.6% of respondents only mildly agree and a further 10.6% of respondents disagree (either mildly or strongly) that their pastors engage in this process.

3.4.6.6 The statement and data – V51:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she is conscious of the *modern world in which his/her hearers live.*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 Strongly disagree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
2 Mildly disagree	14	3.8	3.8	4.9
3 Mildly agree	71	19.2	19.2	24.1
4 Strongly agree	280	75.7	75.9	100.0
Total	369	99.7	100.0	
Missing System	1	.3		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

The hearer lives in a modern world – a 21st century world of super-technology, transplant surgery and genetic engineering. It is a world that is far removed from the biblical world of the 1st century, and hence biblical preaching demands sensitivity to this modern world (Stott 1995:333). The questions preachers have to wrestle with are: i) How do you make it relevant to the modern world?; ii) If Christianity was borne some two thousand years ago in a 1st century Palestine, what can that ancient religion possibly say to those who live in the 21st century?; iii) “What possible relevance can an ancient religion of the Middle East have for us today” (Stott 1982:138-139)?

95.1% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that their pastors are at least conscious of, if not sensitive and relevant to the modern world in which their hearers live. They make the transition from the ancient world to the modern.

3.4.6.7 The statement and data – V52:

When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she is conscious of the *personal world in which his/her hearers live.*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1. Strongly disagree	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
2. Mildly disagree	17	4.6	4.6	6.0
3. Mildly agree	88	23.8	23.8	29.8
4. Strongly agree	259	70.0	70.2	100.0
Total	369	99.7	100.0	
Missing System	1	.3		
Total	370	100.0		

The evaluation of the data:

The hearer of God’s Word lives not only in a modern world, but in a world of their own thoughts and feelings, their own unique environment and situation. To effectively communicate God’s Word, the preacher would do well to *connect with the hearer; get onto their frequency and incarnate themselves into the world of the hearer’s thoughts and feelings.* Cilliers (2004:132) says that the preacher should listen to the hearer’s voice. Craddock (2011:95) encourages the preacher to “live closely with the people.” Pieterse (2001:17) advises that preachers become thoroughly acquainted with their listeners – with their circumstances, experiences, needs and problems. Long (2009a:14) advises us to “keep in view the real persons who hear the sermon.” They must know these things existentially, experientially and internally. Nel (2005:135) expresses this holistically when he says that it is equally important to exegete the Bible, the congregation and the community (cf Pieterse 1987:12-13, 17; also Pieterse 2001:86).

While 70.2% of respondents strongly agree that their pastors are conscious of their personal world in which they live and move, 23.8% only mildly agree with this and a further 6% of the respondents disagree (either mildly or strongly) with this. There is a significant percentage of

respondents to suggest that pastors are, for one reason or another, unaware of the personal world in which their hearer's live and move. There is an apparent lack of connectivity, of incarnation, and living closely with their people.

3.4.6.8 Reflections on this category of questions:

1. For the overwhelming majority of respondents, their pastors have lived long with the text; they have been illumed by it; they have understood it perfectly well.
2. For the overwhelming majority of respondents, their pastors have conveyed the message or word of God with clarity, simplicity and understanding.
3. For the overwhelming majority of respondents, their pastors have significantly and competently applied their message. They have presented *a message for today*.
4. For the overwhelming majority of respondents, their pastors have maintained a wide-angle view or sweep of the passage. They have understood the *big picture*.
5. Studying, knowing, understanding and being aware of the people to whom you are preaching, appears to be a shortfall among these pastors.
6. The greater majority of respondents agree that their pastors are at least conscious of, if not sensitive and relevant to the modern world in which they live.
7. The greater majority of respondents agree that their pastors are conscious of their personal world in which they live and move.

3.4.7 COMPARISON TESTS

The researcher sought to determine whether there was a difference in response to the survey across gender, various age groups and various provinces in which the survey was conducted. These comparisons were made by performing t-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs) or its non-parametric equivalent Kruskal-Wallis tests so as to compare the means of certain groups or constructs across gender, age group and province. The statistical analysis was done with the aid of the IBM SPSS Statistics computer package.

3.4.7.1 The Constructs:

The survey, comprising of forty-seven statements, was divided into five groups or constructs of which each group or construct deals with a certain aspect of the church.

- a) Construct 1: Statements V6 to V13 which deal with the nature of the church.
- b) Construct 2: Statements V14 to V22 which deal with the identity of the church.
- c) Construct 3: Statements V23 to V38 which deal with preaching in the church.
- d) Construct 4: Statements V39 to V45 which focus on hermeneutical preaching.
- e) Construct 5: Statements V46 to V52 which focus on contextual preaching.

For each of the five constructs, scores were calculated by computing the mean or average of the responses to the statements that covered the particular construct. The mean scores of these constructs were then compared across some of the demographical questions.

3.4.7.2 The Comparisons:

- a) A t-test across the male and female gender.
- b) A Kruskal-Wallis test across age groups. The age groups were divided accordingly:
 - 16-20 years of age
 - 21-30 years of age
 - 31-50 years of age
 - Over 50 years of age.

c) An Analysis of Variance test across the provinces in which the survey was conducted. Four provinces were selected namely the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Western Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal. The number of responses from the Free State and Northern Cape were too small hence they were not included in the analysis.

3.4.7.3 Comparison across gender: (t-test)

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
The Nature of the Church	Equal variances assumed	1.781	.183	-.178	365	.859	-.00542	.03043	-.06527	.05443
The Identity of the Church	Equal variances assumed	.299	.585	.422	365	.673	.01600	.03792	-.05858	.09057
Preaching in the Church	Equal variances assumed	.151	.698	2.266	365	.024	.07148	.03155	.00944	.13353
Hermeneutical Preaching	Equal variances assumed	10.141	.002	3.053	331.054	.002	.12525	.04102	.04455	.20595
	Equal variances not assumed									
Contextual Preaching	Equal variances assumed	2.890	.090	1.595	364	.112	.06454	.04046	-.01503	.14411

The data:

The p-values (shaded areas) of Preaching and Hermeneutical Preaching indicate that there are statistical significant differences in the mean scores of these two constructs. This implies that between the male and female gender, there are differences of opinion when it comes to both preaching generally and hermeneutical preaching in particular.

The evaluation:

1. On the issue of preaching (generally) in the local church, there appears to be no significant statistical differences between the male and female gender when it comes to statements like: preaching is one of the primary ways in which God speaks to the church, no church can be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching, preaching appears to be both serious business and a joyful privilege for the preacher, the preacher has thoroughly prepared both the sermon and their heart, the sermons are full of God's greatness and vibrant presence, and the sermons are good news (even if the hard truth be told), up-building, inspirational and motivational in living more fully for God every day. The data indicates that there is strong agreement between the male and female gender when it comes to these statements. Yet, there appears to be significant statistical differences in the male and female gender when it comes to statements like: (i) preaching is one of the primary ways in which God gives the church its identity, (ii) the church is built up through a step-by-step walk through the Bible, and (iii) my pastor stimulates or creates a silent conversation with me in the sermon. Why would there be these differences?

i) Preaching, a primary way in which God gives the church identity:

Could it be that one gender is more aware of and perhaps more open to God giving identity to the local church other than through preaching? It's not that they would negate God giving identity through preaching, but that they would view God as being more creative and exhaustive in the way he provides identity to the local church.

ii) The church is built up through a step-by-step walk through the Bible:

A step-by-step walk through the Bible has a linear, logical, rational connotation to it. While both genders appear to be disposed toward this element, yet the one gender may appear to have a more open, meandering and exploring element to their step-by-step walk through the Bible.

iii) My pastor stimulates or creates a silent conversation with me in the sermon:

Could it be that the one gender may be more enquiring than the other gender and that their thoughts are not being stimulated in a silent conversation with the preacher? Or could it be that the preacher is simply not creating and sustaining a silent conversation between themselves and their hearers?

These possibilities would need to be explored lest it be left to speculation. It would suffice at this point to say that there is a difference of opinion between genders.

2. On the issue of hermeneutical preaching in the local church, there appears to be no significant statistical differences between the male and female gender when it comes to the statements like: the preacher uncovers the true meaning of the passage, the preacher uncovers to whom the passage was written, the background and history of the passage; the purpose of the passage and what goes before and what come after the passage; and the preacher listens to the voice of God in the passage. The data indicates that there is strong agreement between the male and female gender when it comes to these statements. Yet, there appears to be a significant statistical difference in the male and female gender when it comes to the statement: the preacher uncovers the grammar of the verse or passage. Why would that be?

Could it be that the one gender has a more comprehensive way with words? Do they perhaps an affinity with vocabulary and concepts, a disposition toward grammar? It appears so. For them, words and the construction of sentences matter.

Again, these possibilities would need to be explored lest it be left to speculation. It would suffice at this point to say however that there is a difference of opinion between genders when it comes to uncovering the grammar of the passage being preached on.

3.4.7.4 Comparison across age-groups: (Kruskal-Wallis test)

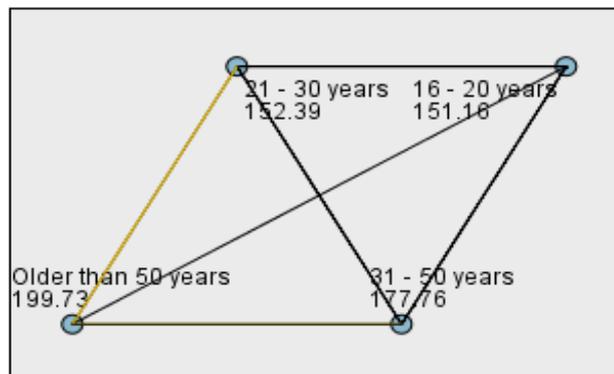
Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Mean6to13 is the same across categories of VV2b: Age groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.013	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Mean14to22 is the same across categories of VV2b: Age groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.013	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Mean23to38 is the same across categories of VV2b: Age groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Mean39to45 is the same across categories of VV2b: Age groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.015	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Mean46to52 is the same across categories of VV2b: Age groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.024	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there were statistically significant differences for four constructs across at least two age groups. In order to determine where these differences occurred, post hoc pairwise comparisons were performed for all five constructs. The results are given below.

Pairwise Comparisons of VV2b: Age groups



Each node shows the sample average rank of VV2b: Age groups.

Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
16 - 20 years-21 - 30 years	-1.238	29.823	-.042	.967	1.000
16 - 20 years-31 - 50 years	-26.604	27.724	-.960	.337	1.000
16 - 20 years-Older than 50 years	-48.578	27.245	-1.783	.075	.448
21 - 30 years-31 - 50 years	-25.366	17.255	-1.470	.142	.849
21 - 30 years-Older than 50 years	-47.340	16.476	-2.873	.004	.024
31 - 50 years-Older than 50 years	-21.974	12.274	-1.790	.073	.440

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is .05.

The data:

The p-value (the shaded area in the table above) of the age-group 21-30 years and Older than 50 years indicates that there is a difference of opinion between these two age-groups when it comes to the nature of the church.

The evaluation:

On the issue of the nature of the local church, there appears to be no significant statistical differences between these two age-groups when it comes to statements like: as believers we

are “living stones” who are built into a “spiritual house”, the church is meant to grow in quality, God builds a congregation of believers, God works through a congregation of believers, and the church is built up by believers as they exercise their spiritual gifts. The data indicates that there is strong agreement between these two age-groups when it comes to these statements. Yet, there appears to be a significant statistical difference in these two age-groups when it comes to the statements: (i) the church is meant to grow in quantity – in numbers, and (ii) the church is built up by God – by what God does for the church. Why would that be?

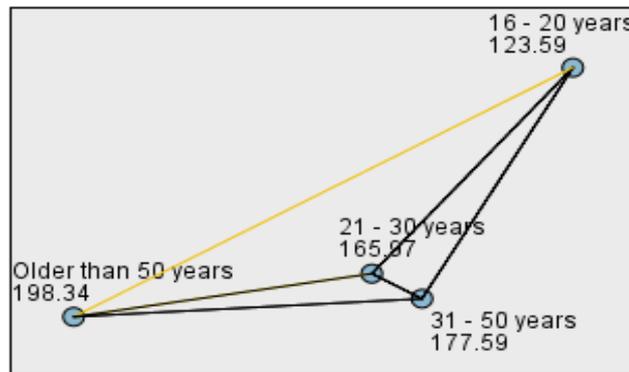
i) The church is meant to grow in quantity – in numbers: Reasons why the one group disagrees with the statement that the church is meant to grow in quantity may be because there is an immaturity or a lack in understanding Christ’s claim that he will build his church, or perhaps because there is an aversion to the modern church growth movement which tends to focus on and almost *worship* numerical growth, or perhaps because there is a pessimism at not having seeing the church grow in numbers. On the other hand, reasons why the other group agrees with the statement that the church is meant to grow in quantity may be because there is a maturity and an understanding of Christ’s claim that he will build his church, or perhaps because there is an optimism, an expectancy, an energy because they have presently experienced the church growing in numbers.

ii) The church is built up by God – by what he does for the church: Reasons why the one group disagrees with the statement that the church is built up by God – by what God does for the church – may be because they have come to understand themselves as co-workers with God who have been called to join God in this work of building and are consequently seen as vital cogs in God’s work of building up his church. Reasons why the one group agrees with the statement that the church is built up by God – by what God does for the church – may be because they have a high view of God, believing that the work of building up the church belongs to God alone. It may also be because they have a low view of man, believing that apart from God, man cannot do anything. A verse that is often misquoted in support of this is Psalm 127:1: “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain” (NIV).

All these possibilities would need to be explored lest it be left to pure speculation. It would suffice at this point however to say that there is a difference of opinion between these two

age-groups (21-30 years and older than 50 years) when it comes to the nature of the church. In particular, there is a difference of opinion when it comes to the church growing in quantity and God building the church by what he does for the church.

Pairwise Comparisons of VV2b: Age groups



Each node shows the sample average rank of VV2b: Age groups.

Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
16 - 20 years-21 - 30 years	-42.377	29.798	-1.422	.155	.930
16 - 20 years-31 - 50 years	-53.992	27.700	-1.949	.051	.308
16 - 20 years-Older than 50 years	-74.749	27.223	-2.746	.006	.036
21 - 30 years-31 - 50 years	-11.614	17.241	-.674	.501	1.000
21 - 30 years-Older than 50 years	-32.372	16.462	-1.966	.049	.295
31 - 50 years-Older than 50 years	-20.757	12.264	-1.693	.091	.543

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is .05.

The data:

The p-value (the shaded area in the table above) of the age-group 16-20 years and Older than 50 years indicates that there is a difference of opinion between these two age-groups when it comes to the identity of the local church.

The evaluation:

On the issue of the identity of the local church, there appears to be no significant statistical differences between these two age-groups when it comes to statements like: God has a plan to save the world, the church is central in fulfilling God's plan to save the world, the church exists to serve God – it is for his glory, the story of the Bible is a story of God's saving mission to the world, the church is mission – its soul is rooted in the mission of God to save the world, and the church is sent by God to be on mission with God in the world. However, there appears to be a significant statistical difference in these two age-groups when it comes to the statements: (i) the church exists to serve its members - to build up its members, (ii) the church exists to serve the world – it is for the benefit, or salvation, of mankind, and (iii) the church is sent by God to be on mission for God in the world.

The researcher will combine statement (ii) and (iii) and since they basically express the same idea but expressed in a different way or with different terminology. Both have to do with being of service to mankind or being on mission for God in service to mankind (iv).

The church exists to serve its members (i) versus the church exists to serve the world (iv):

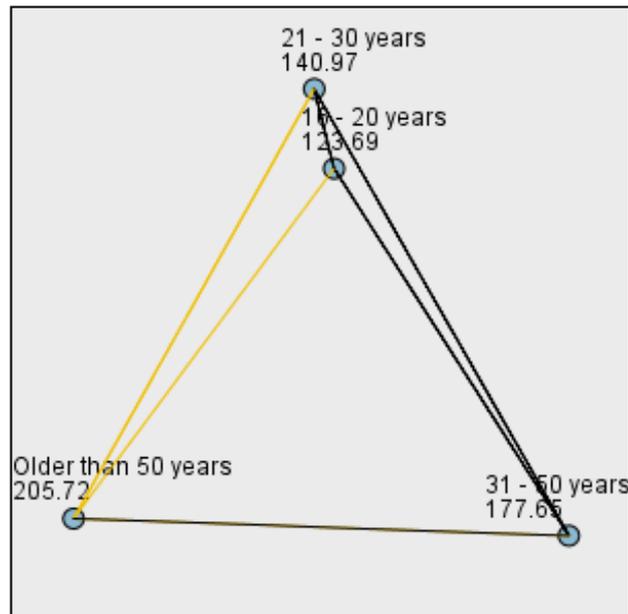
The researcher assumes that the group who disagrees with the statement that the church exists to serve its members, would, by converse, agree that the church exists to serve the world. The researcher also assumes that the one group who agrees with the statement that the church exists to serve its members, would, by converse, disagree with the statement that the church exists to serve the world. It is essential to point out that both groups were not in total agreement with one statement to the exclusion of the other, but rather that there was some agreement with the other statement, albeit mildly. It was a matter of focus or emphasis for these two groups. It was not a choice between one statement and the other, but rather what they perceived as more important.

One group felt that it was more important to serve the church members – build them up – than to serve the world – be on mission for God, and the other group felt that it was more important to serve the world – be on mission for God – than to serve the church members – build them up. That is where their focus or emphasis lay.

The reasons why they felt this way? The researcher can only speculate. Perhaps because that is what they were schooled in within the local church or perhaps because that is what they

perceive is lacking, or missing, in the local church. Whatever the reasons may be, the fact is that there are significant statistical differences between these two age-groups when it comes to some of the statements that pertain to the identity of the local church.

Pairwise Comparisons of VV2b: Age groups



Each node shows the sample average rank of VV2b: Age groups.

Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
16 - 20 years-21 - 30 years	-17.284	30.159	-.573	.567	1.000
16 - 20 years-31 - 50 years	-53.963	28.036	-1.925	.054	.326
16 - 20 years-Older than 50 years	-82.030	27.552	-2.977	.003	.017
21 - 30 years-31 - 50 years	-36.679	17.450	-2.102	.036	.213
21 - 30 years-Older than 50 years	-64.746	16.661	-3.886	.000	.001
31 - 50 years-Older than 50 years	-28.067	12.412	-2.261	.024	.142

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is .05.

The data:

The p-value (the shaded areas in the table above) of the age-group 16-20 years and Older than 50 years together with the age-group 21-30 years and Older than 50 years indicates that there is a difference of opinion between these age-groups when it comes to preaching in the local church.

The evaluation:

The researcher will combine the two age-groups, 16-20 years and 21-30 years, together since the response of the “Older than 50 years” age-group remains the same within the construct of preaching in the local church. The comparison therefore will be between the age group 16-30 years and the age group of those over 50 years.

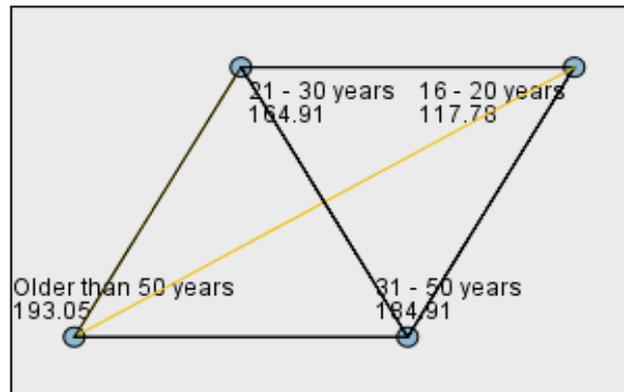
On the issue of preaching in the local church, there appears to be no significant statistical differences between the age-groups 16-30 years and Older than 50 years when it comes to statements like: preaching is one of the primary ways in which God speaks to the church, no church can be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching, preaching appears to be both serious business and a joyful privilege for the preacher, the preacher has thoroughly prepared both the sermon and their heart, the sermons are full of God’s greatness and vibrant presence, and the sermons are good news (even if the hard truth be told), up-building, inspirational and motivational in living more fully for God every day. The data indicates that there is strong agreement between these two age groups when it comes to these statements. However, there appears to be significant statistical differences in these two age-groups when it comes to statements like: preaching is one of the primary ways in which God gives the church its identity, the church is built up through a step-by-step walk through the Bible, and my pastor stimulates or creates a silent conversation with me in the sermon. How would one explain these differences in these three statements?

There is an age gap of at least twenty years in these two age-groups. In *post-traditional* or *new style* or *postmodern* churches, preaching has taken on new dimensions. As an example, Easum (2001:100-101) states that preaching should no longer try to communicate cognitive information or get people to consent to propositional truth, but that preaching today should focus on creating an experience for the hearer – an experience of “...the oral story, the beat of the sound, and visualisation of the metaphor... Today’s preaching must include the paradox

of both/and, the mystery of metaphor and symbol, the open-ended nature of visuals, the complexity of the multi-layered senses, and the pace of a race” (Easum 2001:100-101). In emerging churches, the central place is given, not to preaching, but to the altar or to the communion table. One emerging church leader says: “[P]reaching... is not the reason we gather... [W]e view preaching as an art form rather than the transformative transfer of correct information” (Gibbs and Bolger 2006:229). Some emerging churches leave preaching out altogether. An emerging leader states: “My blog is my pulpit. I rarely will preach in a church. It is on the blog where theological issues are discussed” (Gibbs and Bolger 2006:165).

If preaching has taken on such dimensions, would it not be reasonable to expect that there would be a difference of opinion between these two vastly different age groups?

Pairwise Comparisons of VV2b: Age groups



Each node shows the sample average rank of VV2b: Age groups.

Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
16 - 20 years-21 - 30 years	-47.132	28.286	-1.666	.096	.574
16 - 20 years-31 - 50 years	-67.133	26.295	-2.553	.011	.064
16 - 20 years-Older than 50 years	-75.268	25.847	-2.912	.004	.022
21 - 30 years-31 - 50 years	-20.001	16.366	-1.222	.222	1.000
21 - 30 years-Older than 50 years	-28.135	15.637	-1.799	.072	.432
31 - 50 years-Older than 50 years	-8.134	11.655	-.698	.485	1.000

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is .05.

The data:

The p-value (the shaded area in the table above) of the age-group 16-20 years and Older than 50 years indicates that there is a difference of opinion between these two age-groups when it comes to hermeneutical preaching in the local church.

The evaluation:

On the issue of hermeneutical preaching in the local church, there appears to be no significant statistical differences between these two age-groups when it comes to statements like: the preacher uncovers the true meaning of the passage; the preacher uncovers to whom the passage was written, the background and history of the passage, the purpose of the passage and what goes before and what come after the passage; and the preacher listens to the “voice of God” in the passage. The data indicates that there is strong agreement between these two age-groups when it comes to these statements. Yet, there appears to be a significant statistical difference when it comes to the statement: the preacher uncovers the grammar of the verse or passage. What is the reason therefore?

The reason therefore is not clear although it is clear that the one age-group needs more of an in-depth analysis and dealing with the grammar. One would expect this especially if the age gap between these two groups is no less than thirty years.

The post hoc pairwise comparison for Contextual Preaching:

Since there were no significant statistical differences between the age-groups for contextual preaching, the researcher has therefore not commented on this.

3.4.7.5 Comparison across provinces: (Analysis of Variance)

A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the mean scores of each construct across four provinces. The results indicated that the mean scores for Hermeneutical Preaching differed significantly across at least two provinces (p-value = 0.041). There was weak evidence that the mean scores for the identity of the local church differed across at least two provinces (p-value = .060).

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Nature of the Church	Between Groups	.360	3	.120	1.422	.236
	Within Groups	30.603	363	.084		
	Total	30.962	366			
Identity of the Church	Between Groups	.973	3	.324	2.489	.060
	Within Groups	47.281	363	.130		
	Total	48.254	366			
Preaching in the Church	Between Groups	.410	3	.137	1.529	.207
	Within Groups	32.432	363	.089		
	Total	32.842	366			
Hermeneutical Preaching	Between Groups	1.221	3	.407	2.789	.041
	Within Groups	52.842	362	.146		
	Total	54.064	365			
Contextual Preaching	Between Groups	.695	3	.232	1.613	.186
	Within Groups	52.005	362	.144		
	Total	52.700	365			

Post hoc pairwise comparisons were performed to determine exactly where the differences in the mean scores for the identity of the church and hermeneutical preaching occurred.

Multiple Comparisons

LSD

Dependent Variable	(I) Province	(J) Province	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The Identity of the Church	Eastern Cape	Gauteng	.09985*	.05060	.049	.0003	.1994
		Western Cape	-.02627	.05708	.646	-.1385	.0860
		KZN	.02032	.05807	.727	-.0939	.1345
	Gauteng	Eastern Cape	-.09985*	.05060	.049	-.1994	-.0003
		Western Cape	-.12612*	.05140	.015	-.2272	-.0250
		KZN	-.07953	.05250	.131	-.1828	.0237
	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	.02627	.05708	.646	-.0860	.1385
		Gauteng	.12612*	.05140	.015	.0250	.2272
		KZN	.04659	.05877	.428	-.0690	.1622
	KZN	Eastern Cape	-.02032	.05807	.727	-.1345	.0939
		Gauteng	.07953	.05250	.131	-.0237	.1828
		Western Cape	-.04659	.05877	.428	-.1622	.0690
		Western Cape	.01168	.04868	.811	-.0840	.1074

The data:

The shaded area in the table above indicates a difference of response between the province of Gauteng and Western Cape when it comes to the identity of the church. Since the evidence of the mean scores across the two provinces is weak, the researcher will not comment on this.

Hermeneutical Preaching.	Eastern Cape	Gauteng	.00015	.05357	.998	-.1052	.1055
	Cape	Western Cape	.12571*	.06063	.039	.0065	.2449
		KZN	.10775	.06148	.081	-.0132	.2287
		Eastern Cape	-.00015	.05357	.998	-.1055	.1052
	Gauteng	Western Cape	.12556*	.05464	.022	.0181	.2330
		KZN	.10761	.05558	.054	-.0017	.2169
		Eastern Cape	-.12571*	.06063	.039	-.2449	-.0065
	Western Cape	Gauteng	-.12556*	.05464	.022	-.2330	-.0181
		KZN	-.01796	.06241	.774	-.1407	.1048
		Eastern Cape	-.10775	.06148	.081	-.2287	.0132
	KZN	Gauteng	-.10761	.05558	.054	-.2169	.0017
		Western Cape	.01796	.06241	.774	-.1048	.1407

The data:

The shaded areas in the table above indicate a difference of response between some provinces when it comes to hermeneutical preaching in the local church.

The evaluation:

The results indicate that the mean scores for hermeneutical preaching differ significantly across at least two provinces (Eastern Cape and Western Cape; Gauteng and Western Cape). It is significant to note that there are two theological training institutions of the Baptist Union of South Africa. One institution is situated in Gauteng while the other is situated in the Western Cape. It would be *generally* true to say that many pastors who train at these institutions would find themselves in the province where the institution is located. A possible reason for there being significant differences in hermeneutical preaching across the Gauteng and Western Cape in particular may be due to the approach and emphasis of the subject of Hermeneutics in these institutions.

3.5 AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA AS IT RELATES TO THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

3.5.1 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT:

“In building up a local church, is the finding of core identity and purpose impaired due to a neglect of hermeneutical and contextual preaching?”

3.5.2 THE HYPOTHESIS:

The researcher’s presupposition is that the local church will find and live up to its core identity and reason for existence when there is hermeneutical and contextual preaching. In other words, when pastors in their local church exercise preaching of the highest order – what the researcher refers to as hermeneutical and contextual preaching, preaching that takes into account biblical hermeneutics and the context of the hearer – then the local church will begin to find and understand its core identity and reason for being. It will begin to find and understand its unique calling within this world – a calling to be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. More than that however, it will begin to find and understand its unique mission – its missional vocation, not only to bring glory to God in its life and build up the body of believers, but more pointedly, as it is sent by God to join with Him in his saving mission to the world. When the local church finds and understands this, it is built up; it develops; it grows, not only in quality but in quantity; it prevails; it accomplishes its purpose for which it has been called.

3.5.3 THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY:

3.5.3.1 As regards the survey:

The survey was conducted on the basis of stratified random sampling in the urban or metropolitan cities of South Africa. Each city or metropolitan area that was selected for the survey was represented in the survey while thirty-eight of the forty randomly selected churches participated in the survey. An almost equal amount of male and female respondents participated. While more than half of the respondents were fifty years of age and over, two thirds of the respondents were forty years of age and over while the younger adults (age 16-29) were in a distinct minority. The greater percentage of respondents (35.6%) attended their church for five years and less, while 57.6% of respondents attended their church for ten years

and less. The researcher mentions this as it is questionable whether ten years, let alone five years, is sufficient time for a pastor to develop and instil a sense of identity and reason for being in their congregation members.

3.5.3.2 As regards the church:

The vast majority of respondents identified with one of the most common metaphors of the church which is found in 1 Peter 2:5. The respondents acknowledge that believers are *living stones* who have been built into a *spiritual house*. They furthermore acknowledge that the Church of Christ is meant to grow both in quality (or maturity) and in quantity (in numbers). It must be noted though that they hold to the latter statement with less conviction than the first and that there are various age-groups that differ in opinion on this matter. Furthermore, most respondents agree with the dual emphasis in scripture that both God and his children are involved in the building up the local church although there are various age-groups that differ in opinion on this matter. While there may appear to be uncertainty as to what God precisely does in order to build up the church, the respondents nevertheless see themselves as co-workers with God in the building up of the church.

3.5.3.3 As regards church identity:

Almost all of the respondents agree that the church exists to serve God – the church exists for the glory of God! Fewer respondents agree that the church exists to serve its members – the church exists to build up the body of Christ as each believer exercises their God-given spiritual gifts. Only about two thirds of respondents agree that the church exists to serve the world – the church exists for the benefit of the world, or mankind. This is somewhat surprising since:

- 95.6% of respondents agree (either strongly or mildly) that God has a plan to save the world.
- 96.5% of respondents agree that the story of the Bible is a story of God’s saving mission to the world.
- 94.8% of respondents agree that the Church is central in fulfilling God’s plan to save the world.
- 96.1% of respondents agree that the church is mission or that it is an integral part of God’s mission to save the world.

While there appears to be confusion about the two views of mission (the historic view of mission – the emphasis being on *doing*, or what the church *does for* God – and the more contemporary view of mission – the emphasis being on *being*, or what the church *is for* God), the overwhelming majority of respondents agree that the church exists for mission. They agree that the church is mission, and that the church is an integral part of God’s mission to save the world.

3.5.3.4 As regards preaching:

While most of the respondents (93.7%) agree that preaching is one of the primary ways in which God communicates to his church, fewer respondents (79.1%) agree that preaching is one of the primary ways in which God communicates or conveys to the church its identity. As discussed, this is not a problem as preaching is not the only way in which God communicates or conveys to the church its identity.

The overwhelming majority of respondents however agree that:

- No church can be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching.
- The church is built up, or matures, through a step-by-step walk through the Bible.
- Preaching, for their pastor, is both serious business and a joyful privilege.
- Their pastors are thoroughly prepared, in mind and heart, before preaching.
- Their pastor’s sermons are full of God’s greatness and God’s vibrant presence.
- Their pastor’s preaching is “Good News”, even if the “hard truth” be told.
- Their pastor’s sermons shape their lives and build them up.
- Their pastor’s sermons inspire them to rejoice in their salvation.
- Their pastor’s sermons inspire them to live more fully for God, every day.

The only concern is that a mere 57.5% of respondents seem to be *carried along* with their pastor’s sermon. The rest appear to suffer from a lack of meaningful understanding, contemplation and interaction with their pastor’s sermon.

3.5.3.5 As regards hermeneutical preaching:

Pastors in these various churches appear to have taken hermeneutical preaching, or following the principles of biblical interpretation, to heart. In each case, more than 90% of the respondents agree that their pastors have spent time uncovering:

- The true meaning, reason and purpose of the passage from which they are preaching. They have even listened to and for the *voice of God* in the passage.
- To whom the passage was initially addressed, the history, the background, the culture and the context of the passage.
- The grammar, syntax and the literary style of the passage.

All indications are that pastors are giving serious and time-consuming consideration to biblical hermeneutics. What is interesting is that respondents appear to respond more positively to general terms like their pastor uncovering the true meaning of a passage, their pastor uncovering the reason or purpose of a passage, their pastor listening to the voice of God in the passage, as opposed to more specific terms like their pastor uncovering the background of the passage, their pastor uncovering the grammar of the passage, and their pastor uncovering the context of the passage.

3.5.3.6 As regards contextual preaching:

For the overwhelming majority of respondents, their pastors have *lived long* not only with the text, with the context of the text, with the context of the passage, but also with the context of their hearers and the world they live in, to the point that their pastors:

- Have been illumed by and understood the Word of God consummately well.
- Convey the message or word of God with clarity, simplicity and understanding.
- Significantly and competently apply their message to their hearers who live in a modern world with their own unique thoughts and problems.

A summary of the findings:

Within the 38 randomly selected churches in the major metropolitan areas of South Africa, we have respondents or churches:

- Who have a keen understanding of the church's identity, its nature
They see themselves in terms of the biblical metaphor – a spiritual house into which they, as living stones have been built, and into which other living stones will be built. A process that is not yet complete.
- Who have a keen understanding of the church's reason for being
They acknowledge their 3-fold purpose of bringing glory to God, building up the body of Christ, and being on mission with God to a lost world. This, inevitably, will result in the church being built up in quality and quantity.
- Who are the privileged recipients of preaching that is of the highest order
The respondents enjoy preachers who are serious, joyful, committed, and who exercise qualitative, solid, biblical preaching that not only builds up the church, but inspires them to rejoice in and live for God every day.
- Whose pastors give serious consideration to hermeneutical and contextual preaching
The respondents see pastors who are serious about and who take into account not only the principles of biblical interpretation, but also the people to whom they are preaching.

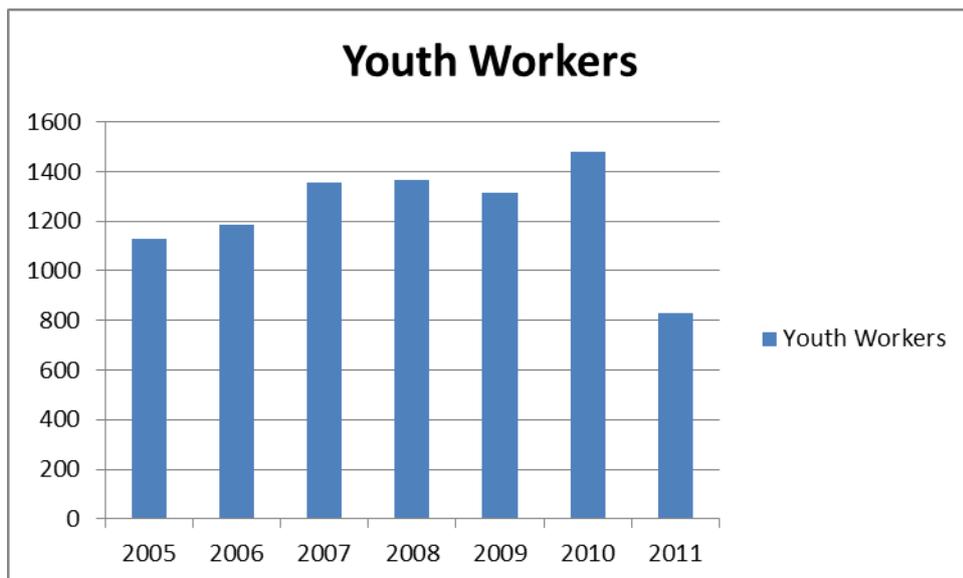
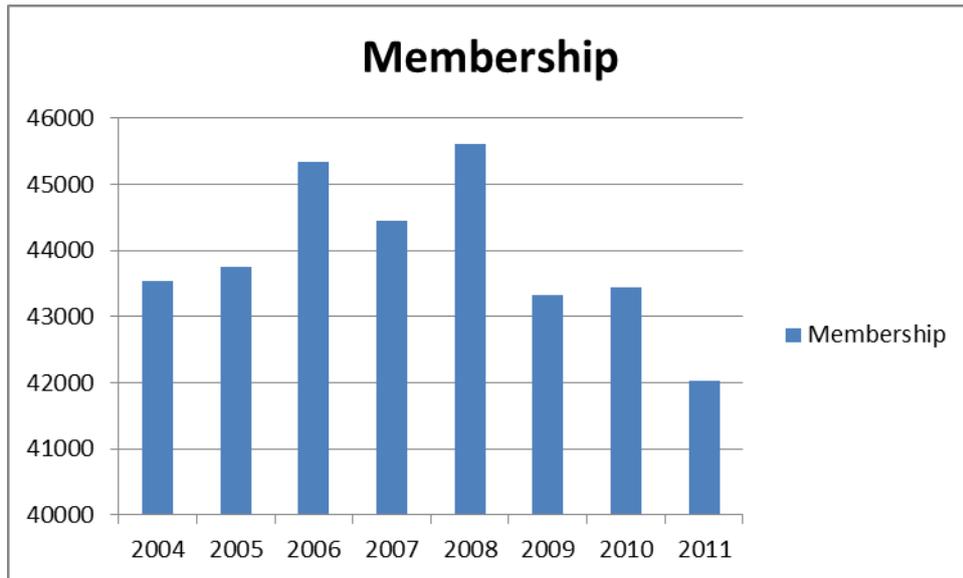
3.5.3.7 The Assumption

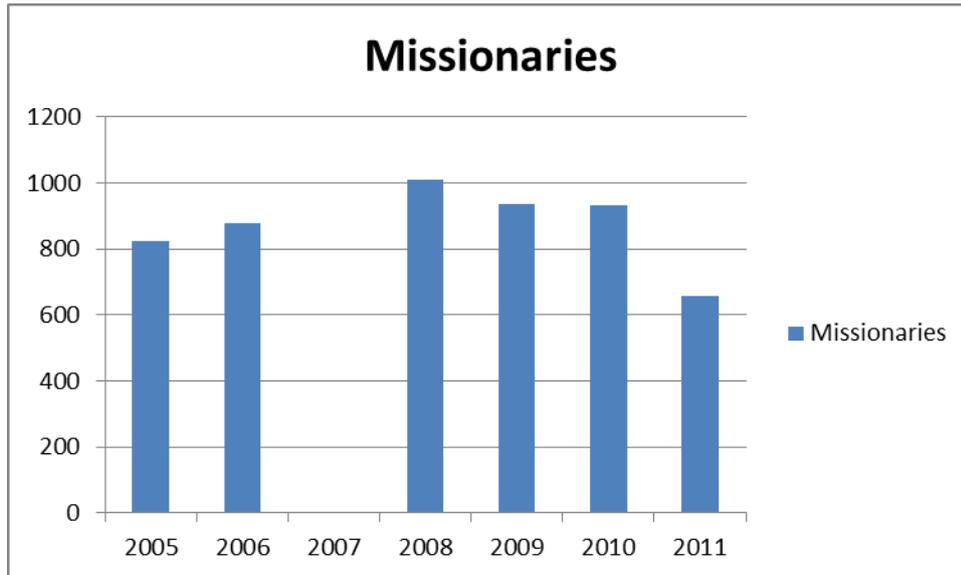
The researcher's presupposition is that if there is preaching of the highest order in the local church – hermeneutical and contextual preaching – then it is this that will help the church find its core identity and reason for being. It is this that will build up the local church, causing it to develop and grow both in quality and quantity.

Note: The researcher puts the two aspects of quality and quantity together. If a local church grows in quantity, it does not necessarily follow that it will grow in quality. If a local church however grows in quality (through its members bringing glory to God, its members building themselves up, and its members being on active mission with God) it follows that the local church may/will inevitably grow in quantity.

Based on the findings of the survey, would it not be safe to assume that these local churches

are in fact being built up? That they are developing and growing both in quality and quantity? There is every indication that this ought to be the case, and yet the facts are different. Admittedly, while it is difficult to measure quality, it is not too difficult to measure quantity. The researcher has taken the liberty to consult the Baptist Union statistics expressed in graph form below.





Using the membership statistics of the Baptist Union for the last eight years, there has in fact been a decline in membership (from 43 542 in 2004 to 41 573 in 2011). This applies to youth workers as well as missionaries that have been supported from these Baptist Union churches. Overall, there has been a worrying decline.

3.5.3.8 The Reason:

The Baptist Union in South Africa may have its own valid reasons for this decline, but the researcher would like to submit two possible reasons for this.

Reason 1 - A Misunderstanding:

1. Do the respondents truly understand their core identity and purpose as a church? Do the respondents truly understand their *calling* and their being *sent* as the Church of Christ? Do the respondents truly understand that they are called to be a part of the spiritual house and household of God, and that their reason for being or that their purpose and commission in life is to participate with God in his saving mission to the world? There are indications in the findings that this may not be the case. It is rather a case of mistaken identity. The researcher mentions a few of these indications:

- The researcher has questioned whether ten years, let alone five years, is sufficient time for a pastor to instil a sense of core identity and purpose in their

congregation members. Yet 35.6% of the respondents have attended their church for five years and less, while 57.6% of respondents have attended their church for ten years and less. It is the researcher's contention that this is not enough time to develop core identity and purpose in the local church.

- While 93-95% of respondents agree that God has a plan to save the world, that the story of the Bible is a story of God's saving mission to the world, that the Church is central in fulfilling God's plan to save the world, and that the church is mission or that it is an integral part of God's mission to save the world, only two thirds of respondents agree that the church exists to serve the world. It is a case of saying one thing but believing/practicing another. The respondent's data contradicts itself.
- Confusion about the two views of mission (the historic view of mission – the emphasis being on *doing*, or what the church *does for* God – and the contemporary view of mission – the emphasis being on *being*, or what the church *is for* God) seems to exist among the correspondents.
- There is a concern that only 57.5% of respondents seem to be *carried along* with their pastor's sermon while the rest appear to suffer from a lack of meaningful understanding, contemplation and interaction with their pastor's sermon. This is a problem when it comes to identity finding.
- While it is clear for the overwhelming majority of respondents that their pastors have resorted to hermeneutical preaching, there are indications that the respondents are not fully aware of or do not fully understand as to what constitutes hermeneutical preaching. The general terms that relate to hermeneutical preaching are understandable to them, but the more specific terms that relate to hermeneutical preaching they seem to have a problem with.

It is for these reasons the researcher submits that there may be a measure of misunderstanding among the respondents when it comes to their core identity and purpose. Keifert (2006:68) makes this observation which supports this submission:

“In most of our research, we find that most local churches have little or no sense of their future or of God’s claim on that future. Indeed, most do not imagine that God cares enough about their particular local church or the people within its service area to have a preferred future into which God is calling and sending them... [L]ocal churches revealed that they have little or no sense of their future as anything but a continuation of their present. They surely do not imagine God calling and sending them into a specific future.”

2. It is one thing to ask whether the respondents truly understand their core identity and purpose as a church, but it is another thing to ask whether the pastor, or preacher, truly understands the church’s core identity and purpose. What happens if the pastor, or preacher, has failed to read scripture from a “missional hermeneutic” viewpoint (Guder 1998:11)? It can be argued that if the pastor, or preacher, fails to understand the church’s identity and purpose (its missional vocation) then the pastor or preacher, can hardly be expected to convey this truth to their local congregation.

Nel (2014) in his article, in which he explores what kind of preaching and preachers will help the local congregation discover its missional identity (its core identity and reason for being), reminds us that the word missional and the *missional conversation* is a relatively new concept. The fact that Nel (2014) is exploring as to what kind of preaching and preachers will help the local congregation make sense of its missional identity, is indicative of the fact that the concept of missional identity is not only relatively new, but that pastors, or preachers, in general have not yet fully come to terms with the relatively new concept. Perhaps the misunderstanding lies not so much with the respondents, but with the pastor, or preacher.

The researcher would be cautious to lay blame on the pastors, or preachers. Just as it is a long, slow, painstaking and patient process of helping a congregation understand its missional vocation (Nel 2005:372-375; cf Haokip 2004:283), so it is a long, slow, painstaking and patient process for a pastor, or preacher, not only to come to terms with a new concept, but to come to terms with change. Change is never easy.

Reason 2 – A Missing Aspect:

Thompson (1981:75) may well suggest that true biblical preaching is to announce the recovery of our identity as sons and daughters of God, and Branson (2007:94) may suggest that hermeneutical preaching serves to shape us as messianic communities, but does that necessarily mean that the church will be built up or that it would grow in quality and quantity? What would happen for example if:

- The Holy Spirit was missing from the preaching? What would happen if the word was preached in the absence of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit? Olyott (2007:149) contends that “[T]he best preaching in the world, without the Spirit’s touch, is nothing”. Craddock (2011:x) maintains that without the work of the Holy Spirit in the pulpit, we are just making speeches. Olyott (2007:149-163) and Cilliers (2004:190-1910) advocate that there must be a close link between the preacher and the Holy Spirit. Without it, or without the “demonstration of the Spirit’s power” (NIV, 1 Corinthians 2:4), nothing can be accomplished.
- There was an exciting, imaginative and inflaming aspect that was missing from the preaching? What would happen if the Word was not being taught in a way that excited the imagination and inflamed the heart; if the Word was being taught pedantically and not delightfully; if the Word was being taught without enchantment and persuasion? According to Long (2005:5), “If the gospel is taught delightfully, then it will be persuasive... [I]t will open up ways of being and living ethically in the world.” According to Piper (1990:22), what people need to take away from preaching is “a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory, the grand object of God’s infinite being.”
- There was a breakdown in communication, i.e. the missing aspect was effective communication? Pieterse (1987:13-132) argues that there are at least seven phases in the preacher’s communication process with the listener or hearer. There is the *transmission* phase where the preacher conveys their message to the hearer. Then there is the *contact* phase where the hearer hears the message, and thereafter the *feedback* phase where the hearer provides the preacher with feedback or

information as to what they've heard. The fourth phase is the *comprehension* phase where the hearer understands the preacher's intention, and thereafter is the *acceptance* phase where the hearer accepts rather than rejects what the preacher is saying. The sixth phase is the *internalisation* phase where the hearer internalises what has been said and that leads to the seventh phase where the hearer actually acts upon what has been heard – the *action* phase. Pieterse (1987:131) makes the point that the communication can break down at any one of these points, thereby not only rendering the message ineffective, but failing to bring about authentic change. What happens if the missing aspect is “effective communication”?

If the above aspects were in fact missing from the preaching, would it not impede the growth of the local church?

Concluding remark: The presupposition is that the local church will find and live up to its core identity and reason for existence when there is hermeneutical and contextual preaching. Despite the fact that this appears to be transpiring in the local church, the local church however appears not to be living up to their core identity and reason for being. This may be as a result of a misunderstanding of their identity and reason for being or it may be due to missing aspects like the person of the Holy Spirit, or imaginative and inflamed preaching, or even effective communication. This will be further explored in the following chapter where the researcher will conduct a qualitative interview with the pastors and preachers.

CHAPTER 4

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The aim of this chapter is:

- To define qualitative research.
- To set out the aspects that pertain to this qualitative research – the strategy and method of research together with the approach, procedure and questions.
- To present and evaluate the data gleaned from the qualitative survey.
- To reflect on the data of the various categories of questions.
- To perform an analysis of the data as it relates to the problem statement.

4.1 A QUALITATIVE SURVEY

It is said that good empirical research should be a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research. This is known either as the mixed method of inquiry (Osmer 2008:50; see Creswell 2003:2-11) or as the triangular method of inquiry (Marshall 1999:110). While quantitative research is often criticised for its failure, “to capture the meanings that inform human action and the diversity of life-worlds” (Osmer 2008:50), qualitative research is often criticised for it, “being soft, subjective and unscientific” (Osmer 2008:50). The researcher wanted to avoid the criticism of both and therefore, to add quality and integrity to the study, the researcher resolved to embark on both a quantitative and qualitative survey.

4.1.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH:

4.1.1.1 What is qualitative research?

Qualitative research is research that seeks to understand and attribute meaning to the everyday actions and practices of an individual or group (Osmer 2008:49; cf Heitink 1999:239; Leedy & Ormrod 2010:135). In the words of Marshall (1999:2): “[Q]ualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people”. Based on Marshall (1999:2), some of the characteristics that define qualitative research is that it happens in natural settings rather than in, say, a laboratory. It resorts to multiple methods of research while respecting the humanity of the participants in the study. The research is emergent, evolving and interpretive.

Some of the characteristics of the qualitative researcher are that they view the social world as holistic or seamless. Qualitative researchers systematically reflect on their own roles in the research (Maxwell 2012:72) while being sensitive to their personal biographies and how these may shape the study. The researchers rely on a complex form of both deductive and inductive reasoning, the one constantly being informed by the other. In practical terms, researchers immerse themselves in the participant's presence and engage with them in interactive enquiry in order to discover the participant's perspective on their world. The researcher does this by listening to the participant's words and observing their behaviour, where-after the researcher describes, reflects, interprets and analyses the data (Marshall 1999:7). Qualitative research is participatory in the sense that the researcher and participant work together in order to generate knowledge that would be useful not only to the researcher and the participant, but to society as well (Maxwell 2012:101).

4.1.1.2 The strategies and methods of research

- Strategies of research: Various strategies of research have been propounded by Osmer (2008:49-53). Examples among them are life history or life narrative research, case study research, ethnographic research, grounded theory research, phenomenological research, and advocacy research (cf Leedy & Ormrod 2010:137-143; Marshall 1999:61-78).
- Methods of research: Osmer (2008:54) advocates a number of methods of research. They are, for example, interviews, participation observation, artefact analysis, spatial analysis, demographic analysis, and focus groups. Marshall (1999:106-117), Leedy and Ormrod (2010:146-148), and Struwig and Stead (2001:98-101), however, talk of more primary methods of research, among them being: participation, observation, in-depth interviewing, elite-interviewing, and review of documents, just to mention a few. There are also secondary methods of research which Marshall (1999:120-132) speaks of.

4.1.1.3 The researcher's strategy and method of research

According to Maxwell (2012:76-77), designing qualitative research is more of a "do-it-yourself" process than an "off-the shelf" process. The researcher has not followed a prescribed pattern or

sequence of design, but has constructed his own design. In brief, the researcher has approached individual pastors, or preachers, in order to focus on their “individual lived experience” (Marshall 1999:60). The researcher has sought to obtain a deeper understanding of the participants lived experience, and this was executed through an in-depth interview with the participants. Maxwell (2012:84) refers to this as the researcher’s *intellectual goal*. This is sometimes described or known as a “conversation with a purpose” (Marshall 1999:108).

4.1.1.3.1 The approach: In the quantitative survey, only the members of the forty congregations were approached to participate in the survey. To ensure a comprehensive and adequate survey, both the congregation members and the pastors, or preachers, needed to be approached. The perspective of both was vital. Since the pastors of these forty churches were approached for their approval in regard to the survey, and since they were privy both to the survey and the explanation thereof, the researcher felt that it would be unwise to approach them to participate in this survey. To ensure the integrity of the survey, pastors, or preachers, who were unfamiliar with the survey would need to be approached. Adopting the method of stratified random sampling (Struwig & Stead 2001:113), a random sample of ten pastors, or preachers, within the Baptist Union were selected and approached to participate in the survey. Some qualitative researchers prefer to use the term “selection” rather than “sampling” when it comes to selecting the participants for the survey or study (Maxwell 2012:93).

4.1.1.3.2 The procedure: The researcher approached each minister, but only once the pastors, or preachers, had been randomly selected by the Statistical Department of the University of Pretoria. The approach was intended to be in person, but due to distance and other constraints, each pastor, or preacher, was approached telephonically. In each instance the researcher introduced himself, explained the reason for the contact, obtained permission from the resident minister to conduct a survey with them, and then decided on a suitable day and time for the survey to be conducted.

4.1.1.3.3 The questions: The interview and the questions were semi-structured. While a pre-determined set of questions were formulated (see Appendix E) and posed in a certain order, the researcher was flexible and willing not only to depart from this order when the interviewee spontaneously moved into an area that was to be covered later, but the researcher/interviewer also probed with further sub-questions (Maxwell 2012:89) to gain a better understanding on the issue at hand (also Osmer 2008:62-63). The researcher/interviewer strove for a natural conversation, attending to it with openness, attentiveness and prayerfulness within the presence of God (Osmer 2008:64).

4.2 THE SURVEY-QUESTIONNAIRE

The survey-questionnaire was, as in Chapter 3, based on the content of Chapter 2. Since a survey-questionnaire had already been formulated in Chapter 3, the survey of Chapter 3 was now used to form the basis of the qualitative survey.

In designing a survey, Maxwell (2012:104) makes a distinction between what he calls “research questions” and “interview questions”. Research questions are what you as a researcher want or seek to understand, while interview questions are what you ask participants in order to gain that understanding. In order to gain that understanding, “real questions” (Maxwell 2012:105) must be asked. Contrived questions that are designed to elicit a particular response would be out of order, but questions which would provide you with an answer in which you would be genuinely interested in, is in order. *Real, interview* questions then were designed in consultation with the research leader, Professor Malan Nel. Furthermore, the researcher by putting himself in the place of the interviewee, sought to anticipate how particular questions would actually work in practice; how the interviewee would understand them and how they were likely to respond (Maxwell 2012:105). After the design of the questionnaire, the researcher once again resorted to a pilot study (Maxwell 2012:87, 105) to ensure that the questions that had been formulated would be understood by the interviewees so that they contribute meaningfully to the study.

Five main categories of questions were designed (see Maxwell 2012:111-112).

Category 1 – The Church: In this category of questions the researcher would probe what the interviewee understood about the Church of Christ. The researcher would probe the building metaphor of the church particularly, i.e. the church as a “spiritual house, or building” (NIV, 1 Peter 2:4-5). The researcher would also probe as to whether the church is meant to grow, develop, be built up; built up both in quality and in quantity. The questions posed therefore were:

1. Please comment on the statement: The church is a spiritual house which is made up of ‘living stones’ that have been built into this house.
2. Please comment on these statements: i) The church is meant to grow in quality; ii) The church is meant to grow in quantity.

Category 2 – Identity of the Church: In this category of questions, the researcher would seek to establish what the interviewee understood about the identity of the local church. What is the church’s core identity? What is the church’s reason for existence? The questions posed therefore were:

1. What, in your understanding, is the (core) identity of the local church?
Sub-question: Who are we as the church?
2. What, in your understanding, is the reason(s) for the church’s existence?
Sub-question: Could you comment on these statements: i) The church exists to serve God; ii) The church exists to serve its members; iii) The church exists to serve the world. Have you heard of and what do you understand by the term *missional*?

Category 3 – The Issue of Preaching: In this category of questions, the researcher would seek to explore the interviewee’s relationship (their view and approach) to preaching. Some key elements would be explored. For example: What importance is given to preaching in the local church? Is preaching in the local church viewed as invaluable and essential, the primary way in which God speaks to his church today and affords it its identity? Can the church be healthy and grow without a solid diet of biblical preaching? What kind of preaching does the interviewee

practice? Is it a methodical, systematic exposition of a book, or is it topical in nature? Is it a loose, random selection of texts? The questions posed therefore were:

1. Concerning your view of preaching:

- i) Is it important to you?
- ii) Is it invaluable and essential to the church?
- iii) Is preaching one of the primary ways that God speaks to his church?
- iv) Could a church be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching?

2. Concerning your time and energy that you devote to preaching:

- i) Do you struggle with the amount of time and energy you are able to devote to sermon preparation?

3. Concerning your approach to preaching:

- i) Do you preach methodically and systematically through the Bible?
- ii) Do you preach topically, focusing on contemporary relevant issues?

Category 4 – Hermeneutical Preaching: In this category of questions, the researcher would seek to determine whether the interviewee approached sermon preparation with *hermeneutical eyes*. In sermon preparation, was the preacher faithful to hermeneutical principles? Did the preacher deliberately seek to uncover the true meaning of the text? Did the preacher deliberately delve into, for example, aspects like background, history, grammar, occasion, and genre while preparing sermons? The questions posed therefore were:

1. What role, if any, do the principles of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) play in your sermon preparation?
2. Do you have time to dig deep into aspects like the occasion, background, history, grammar and genre of the text from which you are preaching?

Category 5 – Contextual Preaching: In this category of questions, the researcher would seek to determine whether the interviewee approached sermon preparation with *contextual eyes*. In sermon preparation, did the preacher consciously seek to be faithful to the context – the context of scripture and the context of the hearer? In other words, did the preacher consciously study the context of the scriptures, but more than that, did the preacher consciously study the context of the hearer (both their modern and personal worlds in which they live)? The questions posed therefore were:

1. In sermon preparation, are you able to consciously take note of the context of the text or passage from which you are preaching?
2. In sermon preparation, are you consciously aware of the context of your hearers, or listeners – their modern and personal world in which they live?

Having designed the five categories of semi-structured questions and sub-questions, the researcher then interviewed the 10 randomly selected pastors, or preachers, within the designated metropolitan area of study.

4.3 THE RECORDING AND EVALUATING OF THE DATA

4.3.1 RECORDING THE DATA

Since the primary data for the research relies on people's words and their observable behaviour (Marshall 1999:7), the researcher not only needed to hear the words of the interviewee, but also to be able to observe the interviewee. Due to distance and financial constraints, a personal interview was not possible, and so the researcher resorted to a telephonic interview with the interviewees. In the interview the researcher sought to be an active listener who carefully attended to both the verbal and non-verbal responses of the interviewee (Osmer 2008:62). With the consent of the interviewee, a recording device was used not only for review purposes, but to be able to transcribe the conversation for accuracy purposes. Maxwell (2012:102-103) warns against the researcher romanticising the relationship with the interviewee while advising that the researcher be constantly aware of the fact that their own views may be wrong or inadequately developed. The researcher took heed.

4.3.2 EVALUATING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA

The researcher, as in the quantitative research (Chapter 3.3), has adopted both a descriptive and explorative research on the data. The researcher has, first of all, described the data with its sequence of events, emotions and other related details of the interview, and then the researcher has sought to explain, or interpret, the data. Marshall (1999:164) recommends that the researcher be reflective about the nature of the enquiry and the substantive questions at hand, while at the same time being tolerant of some of the ambiguity that may arise in the conduct of the survey. The researcher took heed.

While Leedy and Ormrod (2010:152-153) resort to the “data analysis spiral” method of evaluating and interpreting the data, the researcher resorted to Osmer’s (2008:82-86) “sagely wisdom” method of interpreting the data. It is to be noted that there is an overlap between these two methods. The latter has been characterised as follows:

- Thoughtfulness: Thoughtfulness in interpreting data strives for insight into the data. It calls for proper consideration and well-founded judgment.
- Theoretical interpretation: In theoretical interpretation, the researcher must resort to drawing on the theories of both the arts and sciences to understand and respond to the data. Caution needs to be exercised as theories formulated by human reason are fallible. They offer an approximation of the truth and not the truth itself.
- Wise judgment: Wise judgment requires an ability to sift through and evaluate particulars. It is a complex intellectual activity that not only requires one to recognise the relevant particulars, but to discern the moral end at stake, and then to determine the effective means to achieve those ends. Wise judgment goes hand in glove with good character. Clearly, it is far more than practical theological reflection.

A note on the researcher's subjectivity:

There has been much debate on the need for the researcher to be objective when it comes to the survey. The subjectivity of the researcher is often treated as a bias that is either to be eliminated, or at best, avoided (see Maxwell 2012:97-98). A refreshing approach however is instead of treating the researcher's subjectivity as a variable that needs to be controlled, preferably reduced to zero, the researcher's subjectivity needs to be viewed as a component to the actual process of understanding (Maxwell 2012:98). The researcher is encouraged to take into account their actual beliefs, values and dispositions that they bring to the study which may serve as a possible source of distortion, but will also serve as valuable resources to the researcher (Maxwell 2012:97). The researcher took note.

4.4 PRESENTING THE INFORMATION AND DATA

The researcher's approach to presenting the data will follow this format.

- The category of questions
- The question or statement
- The data
- The evaluation of the data
- Reflections on the category of questions and statements
- An analysis and evaluation of the data as it relates to the problem statement

(Researchers' Note: i) All ten interviews are recorded on an electronic device *and* transcribed. The electronic copy *and* transcriptions are in the possession of the researcher and are available for perusal. These will be held in safekeeping for the prescribed period.

ii) Please note that each category of questions in this chapter will commence, as before, on a new page not only for clear demarcation purposes, but for the information to be able to be presented in an acceptable manner.)

4.4.1 CATEGORY 1 – THE CHURCH

4.4.1.1 The question:

Please comment on the statement: The church is a spiritual house which is made up of ‘living stones’ that have been built into this house.

The data:

In most instances, the statement was contemplatively repeated. In each case a silence followed as the interviewees clearly pondered and internalised the statement. All ten interviewees agreed with the statement and most of them, unequivocally: “I agree”; “Yes, I agree”; “Absolutely, I would agree with that”; “Certainly, I would agree with that.” Five interviewees spontaneously recognised the statement as an almost verbatim quote from the first epistle of Peter (1 Peter 2:5) while the same five interviewees correctly referred to the statement as a biblical metaphor, image or picture of the church. While the other five interviewees agreed with the statement, they neither referred to it as coming from the first epistle of Peter nor did they refer to it as a biblical metaphor, image or picture of the church. In fact, one of the interviewees, while agreeing with the statement, appeared to be either unsure or unconvinced of its truth. Their response was: “The comment is fine. Not given it much thought. Sounds fine. Quite truthful.”

The evaluation:

While all the interviewees agree with this statement, it is disappointing that 50% of the interviewees did not refer to the statement as coming directly from the Bible (an almost verbatim quote from the first epistle of Peter – 1 Peter 2:5), nor did they refer to it as a biblical metaphor, image or picture of the church. The researcher would have anticipated that the interviewees would have done so, seeing that it is a biblical metaphor and image of the church?

It is one thing to agree with a statement, but another thing to be convinced thereof and to convey its truth. Would it be unreasonable to assume that 50% of the interviewees, while agreeing with the statement, were not convinced thereof since they did not identify it as a biblical metaphor or image? The concern it raises is this: if they are not convinced of its truth, how can they convey

its truth? And if they do not convey its truth, how can the congregation members know of the church's nature and be convinced thereof? It is said that many churches are sick because they have a false image of themselves: "They have grasped neither who they are (their identity) nor what they are called to be (their vocation)" (Stott 1992:242). They do not understand their own nature and reason for existence (Nel 2005:17). Could this be as a result of the interviewees' failure to properly grasp the nature of the church and to convey its truth?

4.4.1.2 The question:

Please comment on these statements: i) The church is meant to grow in quality; ii) The church is meant to grow in quantity.

The data:

i) The church is meant to grow in quality (or in maturity):

From the ten interviewees, there appeared to be a wholehearted and unequivocal agreement that the local church is meant to grow in quality or maturity. The words quality and maturity however were qualified by most of the interviewees. The church is instructed to build one another up until it reaches maturity, said one. It is meant to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and also in discipleship, said another. It is important that every member contribute to the kingdom of God and therefore it is necessary to focus on quality, said another. One interviewee mentioned that he is not used to the term quality and noted that there is a danger in the use of that word. The church, he argued, may be qualitative in terms of its sound system, seating arrangements and decorative beauty, but it may not necessarily be qualitative in its spirit and its commitment to the Lord. One interviewee qualified the word *quality* in terms of the church membership being stable and strong in the Lord, which is what God desires, he said. You must go from the milk of the word to the meat of the word, he added. The interviewee perceived that this is a problem in many churches as many believers were not willing to pay the price or to sacrifice themselves for the meat of the word. Yet another interviewee remarked that "living things grow", and because the church is a living organism, it must of necessity grow, grow in Christ-likeness. And yet another interviewee commented that apart from the need for believers to be well grounded in the faith, he would rather have five churches of two-hundred members each than one church of a thousand

members. He felt that it would be easier to facilitate spiritual growth in smaller churches. All ten interviewees however strongly agreed with the statement: The church is meant to grow in quality or maturity.

ii) The church is meant to grow in quantity (or in numbers):

While all ten interviewees ultimately agreed with this statement, there was a good deal of nervous explanation by what they meant. One interviewee categorically stated: “No, I don’t agree with that [statement]”. However, he went on to qualify that only God can make the church grow, and we as members of his church are meant to “sow the seeds of righteousness” whereafter we leave it up to God to grow the church. Our main aim, he contended, was to make disciples. He conceded however that the church is meant to grow numerically, but God would do the growing if we did the planting, watering and nurturing of the spiritual seed. One interviewee appealed to God’s compassion for the lost, and if we are believers he said, then we will have that same compassion, and therefore it is “beholden on us to seek and save”. One interviewee, with brutal honesty, declared that every minister of the word has an inherent desire to see the church grow in numbers, because that, in the minds of many, is a “reflection of whether you are a success or not”. He cautioned however against growth in quantity or numbers at the expense of quality. His painful experience is that when there is an unashamed emphasis on teaching, Bible study, prayer and doing away with “entertainment in the church”, then many believers fade away or are no longer committed – the cost of discipleship becomes too costly for them. Another interviewee agreed and even empathised with this position. “It’s a tough one,” he said. He believed that the church is meant to grow in quantity, or numbers, but posed the question: If the church did not grow, was it because God was displeased with that church? Is “no growth” of a church a sign of God’s displeasure? Clearly he was perturbed at the inference or conclusion one tends to draw when the church fails to grow in numbers. Yet another interviewee was perhaps not as sympathetic to this position. If we are not doing what God has called us to do, i.e. fulfil the great commission, then how can the church grow? His view is that the church will grow if we only do what God requires of us. While all ten interviewees then ultimately agreed with this statement – the church is meant to grow in quantity – there was a good deal of nervous

explanation and uncertainty about it. The researcher perceives that this is so because a lack of numerical growth in the church appears to reflect badly on them.

The evaluation:

All ten interviewees strongly, unequivocally agree that the church is meant to grow in quality (or in maturity). While all ten interviewees agree that the church is meant to grow in quantity (or in numbers), most of them do so hesitantly, with qualification. If they agree with this statement, and their own church is not growing, does it not imply that there is something wrong in the church or worse still, that they are failing?

What is so puzzling about this data?

Jesus' words, "...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (NIV, Matthew 16:18), carries with it the connotation that the church is destined to grow both in quality, or maturity, and in quantity, or numbers. After all, it is his church and he will build it. If that is so, then why are these interviewees so ready to qualify numerical growth, and why is church membership in the Baptist Union in decline? The researcher suggests that there are a number of questions that would need to be probed. For example:

- Is there an emphasis on the need for qualitative growth in the churches above that of the need for quantitative growth in the churches?
- If there is an overemphasis on the need for qualitative growth in the churches – i.e. a commitment to biblical teaching, Bible study, prayer, cell groups, doing away with entertainment in the church – that is perhaps driving believers away from these churches?
- Yet if there is an emphasis on qualitative growth in the churches, and the churches are indeed qualitative in nature, will not the quality of the church be a catalyst for quantitative growth?
- Is God somehow displeased with the Baptist Union churches that the Union is not growing?
- Is there something else at work behind the scenes that the researcher is not aware of?
- Why are the interviewees so strong on growth in quality but hesitant on growth in quantity? Is it because of a belief that if their church does not grow numerically, it is a poor reflection

on them? Or are there negative perceptions about the modern emphasis on numerical church growth that is preventing them from embracing quantitative growth?

4.4.1.3 Reflections on this category of questions:

- a) While all the interviewees agree with the statement that the church is a spiritual house which is made up of ‘living stones’ that have been built into this house, it appears however that at least 50% of the interviewees are either not convinced thereof or that they have failed to properly grasp the nature of the church. Failure to do so has repercussions for endorsing and conveying the truth about the church’s identity and its vocation.
- b) All ten interviewees strongly and unequivocally agree that the church is meant to grow in quality (or in maturity).
- c) While all ten interviewees agree that the church is meant to grow in quantity (or in numbers), most of them do so hesitantly, with qualification.

4.4.2 CATEGORY 2 – THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

4.4.2.1 The question:

What, in your understanding, is the (core) identity of the local church?

Sub-question: Who are we as the church?

The data:

What the researcher hoped to achieve in this question, and sub-question if necessary, was to solicit from each interviewee their personal understanding of the core identity of the local church. Did they have a view, or thoughts, or an understanding of the identity of the local church and could they express or crystalize it in their own words? It was important for the researcher not to offer any ideas or suggestions regarding the identity of the church. What was important was: What did *they* have to say about the identity of the church? What was *their* understanding of the church? The sub-question was hardly necessary as the response was in line with the research.

Most of the interviewees (with the exception of two) identified the local church as the body of Christ. Many terms and phrases were used to elaborate on this: “We are the sons and daughters of the most high God”, “children of God”, “the family of God” or “part of the family of God”, “those who are born-again”, “a union of spirit-filled believers under the Lordship of Christ”, “a regenerate, redeemed body of people brought together for fellowship and mission”, “a called people redeemed by Christ”. One interviewee used the word *ekklēsia* to describe the identity of the local church. The church is the “called out ones... separate from the world... identified with Christ”. Another interviewee identified the church as a “group of people gathered together in Christ’s name to do what Christ has told us to do”. Most, if not all interviewees, recognised that the church draws its identity from its relationship with God the Father. In this way then the interviewees answered the critical question of who they were as the local church.

But then the interviewees also identified the local church in terms of what the church has been called to be and do. Here too the response was in keeping with the research. Once again, many terms and phrases were employed to describe or qualify what the local church is called to be and

do. We are to “reflect Christ” and “all we do must redound to his glory”. “To this we were called”, said one interviewee, “to follow Christ... to follow his example”. His contention is that the church is to be an example of Christ or to model Christ so as to present Christ as the answer to the world. One interviewee defined the purpose of the church by using three words – *glorifying*, *growing*, and *going*. Their mission statement as the local church is to “*glorify* God, *grow* spiritually, and *go* into all the world and make disciples”. Yet another interviewee emphatically stated that the church does not exist solely for itself, but for the world, not for its own members, but for the non-members. His emphasis, as he put it, is on “kingdom growth”. Still another interviewee said that the church must produce growth; it must motivate discipleship so that the church can bring people to God. “The church must go beyond Sunday services”, he insisted. “It must be an organism of functionability (sic) every day – to bring more people to the Lord”. Another interviewee stated that the church exists “to glorify God by spreading his fame and honour to the ends of the earth”.

The evaluation:

According to Heitink (1999:311) and Nel (2005:25), two fundamental questions that pertain to the identity of the local church are: “Who are we?” and “What are we supposed to do?” Most of the interviewees, without any prompting from the researcher, answered these questions much in line with the research. The answers were encouraging. The interviewees appear to have an understanding of the identity of the local church, both in terms of who they are and what they are supposed to be and do (this is explored further in the following question and sub-questions.)

What is of interest to the researcher however is that while the interviewees have an understanding of the core identity of the local church, and, judging from the response of the respondents to the quantitative survey, while they too appear to have an understanding of the core identity of the local church, why is the membership in the Baptist Union not growing in numbers? If these interviewees have understood the identity of the local church – who they are and what they are called to be – then one would surely anticipate that this would be the case; the churches would grow numerically. Why is there a decline in membership then? The possible reasons for this could be:

- The core identity of the local church is preached as a concept (intellectually) rather than an intrinsically motivated drive (this is what the church is about and should be).
- The core identity of the local church is not preached on or held up consistently before the local congregation. In previous studies by the researcher (see Linden 2011:61-62), the researcher explored the thesis whereby a balanced form of preaching is preaching from both the indicative and imperative texts of the Bible, and in particular where the imperative texts naturally and logically arise out of the indicative texts. This has not only been mooted as the biblical form of preaching, but the form of preaching that allows the hearer to find their core identity in Christ and their reason for existence. The researcher discovered that while 59.64% of respondents were exposed to preaching mainly from indicative texts and while 30.72% of respondents were exposed to preaching mainly from imperative texts, only 9.64% of respondents were exposed to a balanced form of preaching – i.e. preaching from both the indicative *and* imperative texts, the imperative texts arising out of the indicative texts. If there is such a low form of balanced preaching, could one reasonably expect the local church to find its identity and reason for being?
- That the dictum “familiarity breeds contempt” could apply here?

4.4.2.2 The question:

What, in your understanding, is the reason(s) for the church’s existence?

Sub-questions: Could you comment on these statements: i) The church exists to serve God; ii) The church exists to serve its members; iii) The church exists to serve the world. Then:

Have you heard of and what do you understand by the term *missional*?

Question: What in your understanding is the reason(s) for the church’s existence?

The data:

The researcher was well aware of the fact that this question may well have been answered in the previous question that related to the identity of the local church since the identity of the local church is expressed not only in who they are, but also in what they are supposed to be and do. It

was important however to ask this question, and some sub-questions, not only to probe the matter fully, but to extract from each interviewee their personal understanding of the reason(s) for the church's existence. Did they have a view, or thoughts, or an understanding of the reason(s) for the church's existence and could they express or crystalize it in their own words? They could.

One interviewee remarked that the local church is called to be a royal priesthood under the high priest, Jesus Christ. The joy, privilege and responsibility of the local church is essentially that of service – speaking to God on behalf of the world and speaking to the world about God. In his own mind, intercession (speaking to God on behalf of the world) and evangelism (speaking to the world about God) were the core values or reason for the church's existence. Another interviewee chose biblical terms to define the reason for the church's being. The church exists to reach out, “to be fishers of men, to go and make disciples”, he declared. He emphasised though that in order for the local church to do this effectively, it must first be equipped. Most of the interviewees referred to the concept of glorifying God as the church's reason for being. “The fundamental reason is to glorify God”, said one. “The church exists for the glory of God by demonstrating his grace”, said another. Still another: “The church exists to declare the manifold wisdom of God.” Most of the interviewees also referred to the concept of being on mission *for* God as the reason for the church's existence. “We exist to preach Christ to the world”, said one, “and what a privilege”, he added. “We exist to go... to display the glory of God to the world”, said another. And still another remarked: “We exist for mission... [W]e are co-labourers with Christ.” One interviewee chose biblical images to define the church's reason for being: “[T]o be light, salt... those who go out to bring others in”. One interviewee summed up the reason for the church's existence in these words: “Glorify [God] first, evangelism second.” Another summed it up succinctly in these words: “Bring God to people. Bring people to God.”

The evaluation:

The interviewees certainly did have a view, thoughts, and an understanding of the reason(s) for the church's existence and they could express and crystalize it in their own words. The interviewees did so in a variety of biblical and refreshing ways.

Sub-question 1: Could you comment on these statements: i) The church exists to serve God; ii) The church exists to serve its members; iii) The church exists to serve the world.

The data:

All the interviewees agreed, some more strongly than others, that the church exists to serve God, or that the church exists to glorify God. It became apparent that, “man’s chief end in life is to glorify God...” (Westminster Shorter Catechism). Similarly, all the interviewees agreed that the church exists to serve its members, or to build up its members, although this was not expressed as strongly as the previous point. In the same manner, all the interviewees agreed that the church exists to serve the world, or to use their terms: to “evangelise the world; take the gospel to the world; spread the rule of Christ in the world”. Without exception, all the interviewees agreed with these three statements – the church exists to serve God, its members and the world.

The evaluation:

An interesting point of discussion however ensued as to whether these three statements carried an equal amount of importance or whether one statement was more important than another. Scripture seems to indicate that all three elements are equally important and are not meant to be categorised either in order of priority or importance. Unlike the respondents in the quantitative survey (page 151-153) most of the interviewees agreed that these statements were co-equal in importance, or to use their terms, they were “inter-related, interconnected and inseparable”. It was suggested that these three statements are like a three-legged chair – if one leg was missing, the chair would collapse. It was also suggested that the one statement either leads to or flows out of the other – glorifying God leads to growing and growing leads to going and going leads to glorifying God. One interviewee encapsulated the discussion in these words: “God is most glorified when his people are enriched and people are reached.” While the interviewees agreed that all three statements were co-equal in importance, most however were inclined to think that if there were to be an order of priority, then the first priority would be to glorify God.

Sub-question 2: Have you heard of and what do you understand by the term *missional*?

The data:

All the interviewees have heard the term *missional*. While their understanding of the term is similar, the terminology to express it differs widely. One interviewee defined the term *missional* as a mind-set that governs the church's attitude toward the world thereby driving it to take the gospel to the world. Some defined it as fulfilling God's mission on earth by keeping the great commission as expressed in Matthew 28:16-20. This should be a priority, they emphasised. They stressed the need to be more missions-minded, missions-involved, taking the church outside its building and even the need to be involved, vigorously, in church planting. Some were more personal in their interpretation of that term expressing it as intentional living or intentional ministry for Christ or even as living your life with gospel intention. The emphasis here was that their life must represent Christ wherever they are. Every aspect of their life should present Christ to the world or that their life should reflect the glory of God in everything they do.

The evaluation:

As we have come to see in the "missional church conversation" (Van Gelder 2008:2; see Guder 1998:7-12), the word *missional* has something basic in mind. The *missional church conversation* presents an alternative way to think about the church. It directs one to focus on God's mission as determinative for understanding the mission of the church (Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011:9). It revolves around the very nature or essence of what it means to *be* the church. Expressed differently: is the focus of the church on God as the acting subject doing something in the world in which the church participates, or is the focus of the church on man as the human agency doing something on behalf of God in the world? A church being *missional* therefore is not so much a matter of church polity (what the church *does*) as much as it is a matter of church ecclesiology (what the church *is*). Alternatively, the term "being missionary" is not what the church *does*, functionally, but more of what the church *is* in its very essence (Van Gelder 2008:42).

The researcher, in this sub-question was eager to discover whether the interviewees have heard the term *missional*, and if so, what was their understanding thereof. This would reveal something

of their understanding of the church's reason for existence. For the interviewees, does the term missional mean that the focus of the church is on God as the acting subject doing something in the world in which the church participates, or does the term missional mean that the focus of the church is on man as the human agency doing something on behalf of God in the world? Unfortunately, for all the interviewees, the focus of the church was all too readily on what the church does rather than on what the church is; the church as the human agency doing something on behalf of God in the world rather than on God as the acting subject doing something in the world in which the church participates. One feels for the interviewees for the missional church conversation is a relatively new conversation, one they may not have participated in yet. One also bears in mind that the word missional, according to Van Gelder (2008:preface), means different things to different groups, and according to Roxburgh and Boren (2009:34), is often misunderstood. This becomes apparent among these interviewees. And yet there is hope, for one interviewee, while wrestling with this whole saga, made a profound statement: "Once people truly understand the glory of God, people respond automatically to what their calling is."

4.4.2.3 Reflections on this category of questions:

- a) The interviewees appear to have an understanding of the identity of the local church, both in terms of who they are and what they are supposed to be and do.
- b) Without exception, all the interviewees agreed with these three statements – the church exists to serve God, its members and the world. Most however were inclined to think that if there were to be an order of priority, then the first priority would be to serve God or to glorify God.
- c) All the interviewees have heard the term missional. Their understanding of that term missional however would not be in keeping with the missional church conversation. Their emphasis is on what the church is meant to do for God – an agency on mission *for* God – rather than on what the church is and is meant to be for God – a church on mission *with* God in the world.
- d) One interviewee, while wrestling with this whole saga, made a profound statement: "Once people truly understand the glory of God, people respond automatically to what their calling is." The researcher would be inclined to strongly agree with this statement.

4.4.3 CATEGORY 3 – THE ISSUE OF PREACHING

4.4.3.1 The question:

Concerning your view of preaching:

- i) Is it important to you?**
- ii) Is it invaluable and essential to the church?**
- iii) Is preaching one of the primary ways that God speaks to his church?**
- iv) Could a church be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching?**

The data:

Without exception, all the interviewees were unanimous in their answers to these four questions. All ten interviewees answered the first three questions with the affirmative while all ten interviewees answered the fourth question with the negative. All ten interviewees agreed that preaching is important to them. Some were more emphatic in their affirmative than others either by stressing their answer “yes” or by using adjectives like “vitality” or “very” to describe just how important preaching was to them. All ten interviewees agreed that preaching is invaluable and essential to the local church. Once again, some were more emphatic in their affirmative than others either by emphasising their answer “yes” or by using adjectives like “very much” and “absolutely” to describe the invaluable and essential nature of preaching in the church. All ten interviewees agreed that preaching is one of the primary ways in which God speaks to his church today, although some were quick to qualify what they meant. Yes, one of the primary ways that God speaks to his church today is through preaching, *but through the preaching of his Word; through preaching that is Bible based.* Preaching was qualified as that which contains and is founded upon the Word of God. All ten interviewees agreed that the local church could not be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching. Yet again, some were more emphatic in the answer than others, using an adjective like “absolutely not” to describe how the church cannot be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching. Others however were not as emphatic using phrases like: “No, I don’t believe so” or “I don’t think so.” What is significant though is that all the interviewees were unanimous in their answers to the four questions.

The evaluation:

It is the researchers contention that preaching is: vitally important to the local church, invaluable and essential to the local church, one of the primary ways that God addresses the local church, and that the local church cannot be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching. The researcher's contention is supported by modern theologians. Both Stott (1995:271) and Pieterse (2001:22) advocate that preaching is indispensable to Christianity. Both Pieterse (1987:10-11) and Cilliers (2004:20) suggest that the Church cannot exist without preaching. Preaching is the primary way in which the church discerns the will of God for its life, the primary way in which God uniquely addresses his church and gives it its identity (Long 1989:50). It is the conviction of Stott (1982:109) that the local church is the creation of God by his Word. Furthermore, it is his conviction that the church is dependent on God's Word. Not only has God brought the Church into being by his Word, but, "[H]e maintains and sustains it, directs and sanctifies it, reforms and renews it through the same Word. The Word of God is the sceptre by which Christ rules the Church and the food with which he nourishes it" (Stott 1982:109; cf Cilliers 2004:18-19; Long 1989:50). Stott (1995:274) furthermore suggests that, "the health of every congregation depends more than anything else on the quality of its preaching ministry".

If all the interviewees espouse these views, would it not be safe to assume that most of the pastors, or preachers, within the Baptist Union hold to the same or similar view? On the basis of the data from the quantitative survey, this appears to be true for the vast majority of the respondents espouse at least two of these views: preaching is one of the primary ways that God speaks to his church and a church cannot be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching. The first two views cannot be commented on for they were not tested among the respondents. The researcher is assuming that if the respondents hold to this conviction, it is because their pastor, or preacher, has instilled this conviction in them. The perplexing question remains: If these views are generally espoused by both the pastor, or preacher, and congregation members within the Baptist Union, then why is there a decline in Baptist Union membership? All four views are four solid ingredients that would make for healthy and growing churches.

4.4.3.2 The question:

Concerning your time and energy that you devote to preaching: Do you struggle with the amount of time and energy you are able to devote to sermon preparation?

The data:

The answer to this question varied among the interviewees. Four of the interviewees said that they do not struggle with the amount of time and energy they devoted to sermon preparation, but for various reasons. One interviewee admitted that he does not struggle with sermon preparation for he is different to others – he only takes 2-3 hours to prepare a sermon. (The researcher takes cognisance of the fact that some people are different to others). Two of the interviewees said that they do not struggle with the time and energy they devote to sermon preparation for they are quite deliberate in the structure of their week and quite disciplined in the time they allocate to themselves for sermon preparation. One interviewee is in the fortunate position that he only has one sermon to prepare a week, and therefore is grateful that he has enough time. To prepare two sermons a week, according to him, would not only be taxing but sermon preparation would suffer for he would have a lack of time to prepare. Two of the interviewees acknowledged that pastoral pressure or ministry pressure may, from time to time, infringe on sermon preparation. Six of the interviewees, however, acknowledged that they do struggle with the amount of time and energy they devote to sermon preparation. One interviewee believes that every preacher struggles with this. Another interviewee admitted that he struggles with this issue all the time. Time is his worst enemy! Most of the interviewees offered a plain and simple “Yes” – Yes, they struggle with the amount of time and energy they devote to preaching.

The evaluation:

Why would this question be important? The researcher submits that if preachers struggle with the amount of time and energy they devote to sermon preparation, not only would the quality of the sermon be compromised, but so too would the preacher and hearer. If a preacher cannot offer his best in sermon preparation, does it not affect the quality of the sermon, and would that not affect the preacher, and would that not in turn affect the hearer of the sermon? The researcher believes that if a preacher cannot offer of his best, the sermon, preacher and hearer are compromised.

Craddock (2011:92; 94; 95) advocates that the preacher, “live with the text, live with the text, live with the text.” Only when the preacher has lived long with the text can they say: “Yes, now that is the way it is.” If devotion to sermon preparation is compromised, can the preacher admit to this truth, and more importantly, can the preacher convey this truth to their hearers?

Barth (1964:84-92) alternatively encourages preachers to read the scriptures with concentrated and conscientious attention. The preacher must find its meaning through exegetical, historical and linguistic work on the text, he says. The preacher must find its theology, its nucleus of grace, and its message from the heart of God to society. Furthermore, he encourages preachers to allow themselves to be moved by the movement of God’s Word. God, by his Spirit, through his Word, invites the listener to participate in life with Him. The Bible, or text, is not a lifeless letter that is only meant to convey knowledge. It is alive with the Spirit working through it inviting mankind to participate with God. If the preacher however struggles with the amount of time and energy they devote to sermon preparation, could the preacher effectively do what Barth encourages?

Time and energy that a preacher devotes to sermon preparation will have an effect not only on the sermon, but also the preacher and the hearer.

4.4.3.3 The question:

Concerning your approach to preaching:

- i) Do you preach methodically and systematically through the Bible?**
- ii) Do you preach topically, focusing on contemporary relevant issues?**

The data:

All the interviewees claimed that they engaged in a combination of both forms of preaching, i.e. a methodical and systematic preaching through the Bible as well as topical preaching. For all the interviewees, a combination of both forms of preaching appeared to be beneficial for the church and something that they were not averse to.

All the interviewees (perhaps with the exception of one) preferred a methodical and systematic approach to preaching. They preach from a book of the Bible, beginning at the beginning and ending at the end. While some choose to preach verse by verse, others prefer stanza by stanza (passage by passage), while still others choose to preach chapter by chapter. This is undoubtedly the most popular form of preaching engaged in most of the time. What was significant about the interviews was the repetition of the word “expository”. Clearly, expository preaching was taking place, whether it was verse by verse, stanza by stanza, or chapter by chapter.

When it came to topical preaching, the emphasis was not on relevant and contemporary topics, but on “where the Lord was leading them”, or “where the church was at during that moment in time”, or “what the needs of the church were at that moment”, or “as the occasion demanded”. The percentage of topical preaching among the interviewees ranged from 10% to 30% to 60% in one instance. If thematic preaching, character studies, and preaching according to the Christian calendar (Easter and Christmas) falls into the category of topical preaching, then the percentage could be even higher. The emphasis however, even in topical preaching, was on expository preaching.

The evaluation:

When it comes to building up the local church, a theological premise is that God does it by means of his Spirit and Word (Nel 2005:166). It is argued that the Spirit who builds the church, through the Word, does not build the church from random texts that are preached and applied in a haphazard and loose way, but that it is built up through methodical, systematic, planned preaching either from a book or a theme of the Bible (Nel 2005:167, 299). The “*lectio continua*” method, which involves preaching through the Bible book by book and text by text (Long 1989:62-63), is the method of preference. Why? If the preacher embarks on a systematic book study or even a theme in the Bible, it helps the congregation to understand both its identity and reason for existence. Topical preaching may have a place, but a limited place. Nel (2005:299) argues for inspiring and dynamic preaching – preaching that is based on an exegesis of the text or a more thematic approach to scripture and the context (cf Lloyd-Jones 1976:188-189). To unpack the Word of God in a planned, responsible and systematic way then is highly desirable

(see Nel 2005:167; cf Ellsworth 2001:120) for it contributes to the church's maturity, stability and identity. The perplexing question continues however. If preachers of the Baptist Union give themselves to planned, systematic, methodical preaching (which is meant to contribute to the church's maturity, stability, identity, and growth) then why does it not appear to be happening within the Baptist Union, particularly in its numerical growth?

4.4.3.4 Reflections on this category of questions:

- a) All the interviewees were unanimous in their belief or conviction that preaching is vitally important to the local church, that preaching is invaluable and essential to the local church, that preaching is one of the primary ways that God addresses the local church, and that the local church cannot be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching.
- b) 60% of the interviewees acknowledged that they struggle with the amount of time and energy they devote to sermon preparation. The researcher suggests that the time and energy devoted to sermon preparation will have an effect not only on the sermon, but on the preacher and the hearer – a deficiency in time and energy devoted to sermon preparation compromises quality.
- c) All the interviewees engaged in a combination of two forms of preaching – a methodical and systematic preaching through the Bible *and* topical preaching. All the interviewees (perhaps with the exception of one) prefer a methodical and systematic approach to preaching

4.4.4 CATEGORY 4 – HERMENEUTICAL PREACHING

4.4.4.1 The question:

What role, if any, do the principles of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) play in your sermon preparation?

The data:

By asking this question, the researcher was hoping to ascertain whether the interviewees, firstly, were aware of the principles of biblical interpretation (or of the concept of biblical hermeneutics) and, secondly, whether the principles of biblical interpretation played an important role in their sermon preparation. With the exception of one interviewee, all the interviewees appeared not only to be familiar with the principles of biblical interpretation, but that these principles played a very definite role in their sermon preparation. Eight of the interviewees openly conceded that that this played an “important role”, a “very important role”, a “key role”, a “large role”, a “big role” in understanding the text at hand. There was a general consensus that a preacher needs to understand the true meaning of a text, and that the true meaning of a text can only be discovered by applying the principles of biblical interpretation, by resorting to biblical hermeneutics. A key principle that appeared to stand out above the others was, as one man said, “Context! Context! Context!” Most of the interviewees, because they have practiced these principles so often in sermon preparation and thereby have become deeply embedded within them, appeared to do this automatically without even realising it. It was second nature to them.

The evaluation:

Since the purpose of biblical interpretation is to arrive at the full meaning and significance of the biblical text, i.e. to get at the heart and essence of the biblical text, preachers must give adequate and serious consideration to the accurate and honest interpretation of the text. Failure to do so would lead the preacher to being unfaithful to God’s Word. Since the researcher’s presupposition is that good hermeneutical preaching will expose the believer not only to their own personal identity and reason for existence, but more importantly, to their corporate identity and its reason for existence as a church, it therefore makes it doubly important for preachers to give adequate

and serious consideration to the accurate and honest interpretation of the text. It is encouraging to note that the principles of biblical interpretation play a significant and important role for the overwhelming majority of these interviewees.

4.4.4.2 The question:

Do you have time to dig deep into aspects like the occasion, background, history, grammar and genre of the text from which you are preaching?

The data:

It is one thing to acknowledge that the principles of biblical interpretation play an important role in sermon preparation, but it is another thing to actually practice it. The purpose of the question was to ascertain whether the interviewees actually employed and engaged in the principles of biblical interpretation in sermon preparation, and whether they had sufficient time to do that. The researcher appealed for honesty in answering this particular question as it appears that many pastors, or preachers, struggle with time allocated to sermon preparation.

Two of the interviewees failed to answer the question apart from acknowledging that employing the principles of biblical interpretation in sermon preparation was important. Two of the interviewees quite rightly argued that if a preacher were to preach systematically through a book of the bible, then a great deal of common ground would not only be uncovered but covered in a number of sermons, thereby lessening the amount of time spent in engaging in the principles of biblical interpretation. They did concede however that if the text was “veiled” to them, they would spend a lot more time uncovering the true and accurate meaning of that text.

Five of the ten interviewees conceded that while they employed and engaged in the principles of biblical interpretation in sermon preparation, they did not have sufficient time to do this. The desire and preference was expressed to have more time.

The evaluation:

According to the Prologue to the Coverdale Bible of 1535, “it will greatly help you to understand Scripture, if you mark, not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes

before and what follows after”. The purpose of biblical interpretation may be to arrive at the full meaning and significance of the biblical text, but more is required. Cilliers (2004:123), for instance, calls for “theodicy”. Theodicy is the sense that God is present in the text or that God himself bridges the distance between the text and the hearer. He says that the objective in preaching is to, “open the eyes of the hearer so that they can distinguish the reality of God’s work in the world, and thereby invite them to participate therein” (Cilliers 2004:123). The emphasis is on leading the hearer to a new vision of God in the present, a new dream that can be dreamt of him in the present reality. God is indeed present in the text and the hearer must be presented with “God in the text”, not only for their joy but for the new possibilities that exist therein (see Cilliers 2004:110-124). If 50% of the interviewees conceded that they did not have sufficient time to properly engage in textual interpretation, could they arrive at what is called “theodicy – presenting God in the text”? Surely failure to give adequate, serious consideration to the accurate and honest interpretation of the text due to time constraints, would hamper the ability of the interviewee to, “open the eyes of the hearer so that they can distinguish the reality of God’s work in the world, and thereby invite them to participate therein” (Cilliers 2004:123)?

It is one thing to subscribe to the principles of biblical interpretation and acknowledge that they play an important role in sermon preparation, but it is another thing to actually practice it. Failing to engage in the hermeneutical principles, or failing to engage the hermeneutical principles without proper consideration due to time constraints must surely lead to a failure in interpretation and ultimately to a failure of God’s word?

4.4.4.3 Reflections on this category of questions:

- a) 90% the interviewees appeared to be acquainted with the principles of biblical interpretation.
- b) 90% of the interviewees view the principles of biblical interpretation as playing a very definite and significant role in sermon preparation.
- c) While there is an acknowledgement of the importance of engaging in the principles of biblical interpretation, there appears however to be an inadequacy of proper engagement.

d) 50% of the interviewees conceded that they did not have adequate time to properly engage in textual interpretation which is essential for the accurate and honest interpretation of the text.

e) Inadequate time to properly engage in textual interpretation poses its own problems – a failure to present “God in the text” as one example and a failure of God’s word as another example.

4.4.5 CATEGORY 5 – CONTEXTUAL PREACHING

4.4.5.1 The question:

In sermon preparation, are you able to consciously take note of the context of the text or passage from which you are preaching?

The data:

This question has been partly dealt with in the question: “What role, if any, do the principles of biblical interpretation play in your sermon preparation?” The researcher however needed to focus on whether the interviewees were consciously aware of whether the text or passage from they were preaching coincided with the broader passage, the chapter, the book, and indeed the Bible. In other words, when the interviewees dealt with their text or passage, did they understand where that text or passage found its significance in the wider context or in the greater scheme of things? This is important, for contexts have a direct bearing on the understanding of the text and the application or significance thereof.

All ten interviewees acknowledged that they consciously took note of the context of the text or passage from which they were preaching. For 70% of the interviewees this was “very”, or “vitality”, or “absolutely” important for them lest they make a text mean what it is not intended to mean or lest they lead people astray. The researcher sensed that all the interviewees desired to do justice to the text while being very cautious not to take the verse out of context.

The evaluation:

This point deals with the need for preachers to take into consideration the context of the passage (and indeed the chapter, book and Bible) in which the text is spoken (see Long 1989:64; Pieterse 1987:109). Words form part of phrases and sentences. Sentences form part of paragraphs and passages. Passages form part of chapters and books (Olyott 2007:42). No text in the Bible – phrase or sentence – is spoken in isolation. It is spoken in a context – in a passage, which forms part of a chapter, which forms part of a book in the Bible. To arrive at a proper understanding and meaning of that spoken text, it is essential that one look at not only the context of the text, but also at the context of the passage, the chapter and indeed the book. It has been said that such

a text without a context is a pretext (Stott 1995:274). Contextual preaching would purposefully avoid the danger of a “pretext” – a text without a context (J. Hughes 2001:85). By all accounts, the interviewees sought to consciously take note of the context of the text or passage from which they were preaching.

4.4.5.2 The question:

In sermon preparation, are you consciously aware of the context of your hearers, or listeners – their modern and personal world in which they live?

The data:

The hearer lives in the modern world and, “biblical preaching demands sensitivity to the modern world” (Stott 1995:333). While God has spoken to the ancient world in its own languages and cultures, God intends for his Word to be for all peoples, at all times, even and especially for the present moment. He furthermore intends for it to be relevant. While the preacher then has to exegete the original meaning of the text, they have to go further and apply it to the hearer living in the modern world (Stott 1995:333). The hearer of God’s Word also lives in their own personal world – a world of their own thoughts and feelings, their own unique environment and situation. To effectively communicate God’s Word, the preacher would do well to *connect with the hearer; get onto their frequency*; incarnate themselves into the world of the hearer’s thoughts and feelings, or as Cilliers (2004:132) says, the preacher should listen to the hearer’s voice. That is what this question is designed to ascertain. Are the interviewees consciously aware of both the modern and personal world in which their hearers find themselves?

The answer to this question was wide ranging. It ranged from expressions of: “Not always... and that is the most truthful answer”, to “I try”, to “Probably not as much as I should”, to “Yes, all the time.” Perhaps the most significant answers were from two interviewees. One remarked that he tries to follow the example of a well-known preacher who, when he prepares, has a Bible in the one hand and a newspaper in the other. This way he ensures that his sermons are relevant by being up to date and *au fait* with the world in which we live. The other remarked that when he has finished with his sermon preparation, he sits down with a blank sheet of paper and then

consciously thinks about the people he will be preaching to while taking into account their lives, the culture and the important issues of the day. Then he “marries” the two – his sermon preparation with his thoughts of the people and the world they find themselves in at that moment.

The evaluation:

In sermon preparation the prospective hearer needs to be taken seriously. The hearer needs to be taken into consideration when it comes to, generally, the modern world in which they live, but also when it comes to, more specifically, the immediate environment and situation in which they find themselves (see Dingemans 1991:51-57). Nel (2005:135) suggests that it is equally important to exegete the Bible, the congregation and the community (cf Pieterse 1987:12-13, 17, 2001:86). Long (2009a:14) advises one to, “keep in view the real persons who hear the sermon.” As far as the interviewees are concerned, all the interviewees were honest; all the interviewees saw the need and vital importance for this; all the interviewees made an honest attempt to keep in view the real persons who hear the sermon. And yet, while consciously being aware of the context of their hearers, they felt that they could do more.

4.4.5.3 Reflections on this category of questions:

- a) By all accounts, the interviewees sought to consciously take note of the context of the text or passage from which they were preaching. They were most careful to avoid the danger of a “pretext” – a text without a context.
- b) For all the interviewees, the prospective hearers of their sermons are taken seriously. While they keep in view the real persons who hear the sermon, they feel, in most cases, that they can do more.

4.5 AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA AS IT RELATES TO THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

4.5.1 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT:

“In building up a local church, is the finding of core identity and purpose impaired due to a neglect of hermeneutical and contextual preaching?”

4.5.2 THE HYPOTHESIS:

The researcher’s presupposition is that the local church will find and live up to its core identity and reason for existence when there is hermeneutical and contextual preaching. In other words, when pastors in their local church exercise preaching of the highest order – what the researcher refers to as hermeneutical and contextual preaching, preaching that takes into account biblical hermeneutics and the context of the hearer – then the local church will begin to find and understand its core identity and reason for being. It will begin to find and understand its unique calling within this world – a calling to be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. More than that however, it will begin to find and understand its unique mission – its missional vocation, not only to bring glory to God in its life and build up the body of believers, but more pointedly, as it is sent by God to join with Him in his saving mission to the world. When the local church finds and understands this, it is built up; it develops; it grows, not only in quality but in quantity; it prevails; it accomplishes its purpose for which it has been called.

4.5.3 THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY:

4.5.3.1 As regards the survey:

All the goals that the researcher had set out to accomplish in the survey were more than satisfactorily accomplished. Adopting the method of stratified random sampling (Struwig & Stead 2001:113), a random sample of ten pastors, or preachers, within the Baptist Union were selected and approached to participate in the survey. The approach was intended to be in person, but due to distance and other constraints, each pastor, or preacher, was approached telephonically. In each instance, the researcher introduced himself, explained the reason for the

contact, obtained permission from the resident minister to conduct the survey with them, and then decided on a suitable day and time for the survey to be conducted. Each telephonic conversation was recorded, with the permission of the interviewees. The researcher then approached the individual pastors, or preachers, with the aim of focusing on their “individual lived experience” (Marshall 1999:60). This was accomplished through an in-depth interview, which gave the researcher a deeper understanding of the participants lived experience. The researcher strove for a natural conversation, attending to it with openness, attentiveness and prayerfulness (Osmer 2008:64). The researcher listened very carefully to the interviewee’s words and nuances, where-after the researcher described, reflected, interpreted and analysed the data (Marshall 1999:7).

4.5.3.2 As regards the church:

While all the interviewees agreed with the statement that the church is a *spiritual house* which is made up of *living stones* that have been built into this house, it appears however that at least 50% of the interviewees are perhaps unfamiliar that this is actually a metaphor or picture or image contained in the Bible (1 Peter 2:5). If they are indeed unfamiliar with this fact, the researcher surmises that these interviewees are not fully convinced of the *spiritual house with living stones* concept and that they have perhaps failed to properly grasp the nature of the church. Failure in this regard surely has implications for the interviewees endorsing and conveying the truth about the church’s identity and its vocation.

All ten interviewees strongly and unequivocally agree that the church is meant to grow in quality or in maturity. While all ten interviewees agree that the church is meant to grow in quantity or in numbers, most of them do so hesitantly, with qualification. It is interesting to note that there are strong similarities with the respondents of the quantitative survey who similarly agree that the church is meant to grow in quality, but hold with less conviction to the idea that the church is meant to grow in quantity. One reason for the lack of conviction that the church is meant to grow in quantity may be that a lack of quantitative growth in the church reflects poorly on both the pastor of the church and the church itself.

4.5.3.3 As regards church identity:

The researcher initially sought to obtain from the interviewees their personal view or conviction of the identity of the local church without any prompting or suggestions from the researcher/interviewer. The finding was encouraging as the interviewees not only appeared to have a clear understanding of the identity of the local church, both in terms of who they are and what they are supposed to be and do, but the finding was also in line with what the researcher was proposing in terms of the identity of the local church.

Without exception, all the interviewees agreed with the statements that the church exists to serve God, the church exists to serve its members and the church exists to serve the world. The three statements, they agreed, are intimately inter-related and interconnected. You cannot have the one without the other. In many senses the one flows out the other. However, most were inclined to think that if there were to be an order of priority, then the first priority would be to serve God.

When it came to the specific idea that the church exists to serve the world, for mission, unlike the respondents in the quantitative survey, all the interviewees wholeheartedly agreed – the church exists for mission; the church is mission; the church is an integral part of God’s mission to save the world. All the interviewees furthermore have heard the term missional though their understanding of that term missional would not be in keeping with the missional church conversation. Their emphasis is on what the church is meant to *do* for God – an agency on mission *for* God – rather than on what the church is meant to *be* for God – a church in mission *with* God. Their emphasis would be on church polity rather than on church ecclesiology. This, interestingly enough, is the same view held by the vast majority of respondents in the quantitative survey.

One interviewee, while wrestling with the saga of why the church does not fulfil its mission to serve the world, made a profound statement: “Once people truly understand the glory of God, people respond automatically to what their calling is.” Perhaps this is what is missing, what people need, what Piper (1990:22) calls, “a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of

panoramic glory, the grand object of God’s infinite being.” If people are taught and understand this, will it not open up ways for the church to fulfil its mission to serve the world?

4.5.3.4 As regards preaching:

All the interviewees were unanimous in espousing the view that preaching is vitally important to the local church, that preaching is invaluable and essential to the local church, that preaching is one of the primary ways that God addresses the local church, and that the local church cannot be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching. The majority of respondents to the quantitative survey espoused these views as well, with the exception that preaching is one of the primary ways that God addresses the local church. Among the interviewees however, preaching is held in the highest regard.

Concerning the amount of time and energy that the interviewees devote to sermon preparation, at least 60% of the interviewees acknowledged that they struggle with this. This is interesting for the overwhelming majority of respondents in the quantitative survey acknowledge that it is clear to them that their pastors have thoroughly prepared both their sermons and their hearts before preaching. This may well pose a problem for time and energy devoted to sermon preparation must surely have an effect not only on the sermon, but also on the preacher and the hearer. If there is a deficiency in time and energy devoted to sermon preparation, would it not compromise the quality of both the preacher and the sermon? Perhaps this is why only 57.5% of respondents in the quantitative survey seem to be “carried along” with the pastor’s sermon or why the rest appear to suffer from a lack of meaningful understanding, contemplation and interaction with the pastor’s sermon?

All the interviewees engaged in a combination of two forms of preaching – a methodical and systematic preaching through the Bible *and* topical preaching. All the interviewees (perhaps with the exception of one) preferred a methodical and systematic approach to preaching, and all the interviewees preferred expository preaching, whether it was verse by verse or stanza by stanza or chapter by chapter.

4.5.3.5 As regards hermeneutical preaching:

90% of the interviewees appeared to be acquainted with the principles of biblical interpretation. 90% of the interviewees also viewed the principles of biblical interpretation as playing a very definite and significant role in sermon preparation. Now, while there was an acknowledgement of the importance in engaging in the principles of biblical interpretation, there appeared however to be an inadequacy of proper engagement. 50% of the interviewees conceded that they did not have adequate time to properly engage in textual interpretation which, could be said, is essential for the accurate and honest interpretation of the text. Failure to properly engage in textual interpretation poses its own problems – a failure of God’s word, and perhaps more importantly, a failure to reveal and instruct the local church with regard to its core identity.

4.5.3.6 As regards contextual preaching:

By all accounts, all ten interviewees acknowledged that they consciously took note of the context of the text or passage from which they were preaching. They were most careful to avoid the danger of a “pretext” – a text without a context.

By all accounts, all ten interviewees took the prospective hearers of their sermons seriously. All the interviewees saw the need and vital importance for this. All the interviewees were honest saying that they kept in view the real persons who would be listening to their sermons, and yet, in most cases, they felt that they could do more.

A summary of the findings:

Of the ten randomly selected interviewees within the Baptist Union we have pastors, or preachers:

- Who have an understanding of the nature of the church.

While they are in agreement that the church is a *spiritual house* made up of *living stones* that have been built into this house, they have perhaps not fully grasped the nature of the church; they are perhaps not fully convinced nor passionate thereof.

- Who have an understanding of the growth of the church.
 All the pastors agree that the church is meant to grow both in quality and in quantity, in maturity and yet also numerically. Some may reluctantly agree to numerical growth, but they still recognize that the church is destined to grow for the Lord will build his church.

- Who have a keen understanding of the church's reason-for-being.
 They acknowledge that the church exists to serve God, to serve its members, and to serve the world (mission). In terms of serving the world however their concept of mission is more historic than contemporary – the church is more of an agency on mission *for* God, rather than a church that is in mission *with* God.

- Who have a high regard for preaching.
 Preaching is viewed as vitally important, invaluable and essential to the local church. It is one of the primary ways that God addresses the local church, and without a solid diet of biblical preaching the church cannot be healthy. Time available for sermon preparation though is an area of concern. It is a struggle for many of them.

- Who have a high regard for hermeneutical and contextual preaching.
 While being acquainted with and viewing the principles of biblical interpretation as being vital and significant in sermon preparation, there appeared however to be time constraints in properly applying these hermeneutical principles. This was not the case however with contextual preaching.

4.5.3.7 The assumption

The researcher's presupposition is that if there is preaching of the highest order in the local church – hermeneutical and contextual preaching – then it is this that will help the church find its core identity and reason for being. It is this that will build up the local church, causing it to develop and grow both in quality and quantity.

4.5.3.8 The researcher's conclusion

The positives:

There are significant positives among these pastors, or preachers. They have an understanding of the nature of the church – no disagreements among them. They have a keen understanding of the church's three-fold reason for being – its purpose in this world. They have an understanding and desire for the church to grow both in quality and in quantity. Preaching is an aspect of their ministry that they hold in high regard. They similarly hold in high regard what the researcher has termed *hermeneutical preaching* and *contextual preaching*.

The concerns:

a) If these pastors, or preachers, do not have a full grasp, a deep conviction and an abiding passion for the nature of the church (this appears to be the case among at least 50% of the pastors, or preachers), could the nature of the church then be effectively communicated to their congregation members? The researcher would be inclined to think that if a belief is not held with conviction and passion, then that belief could not be conveyed with conviction and passion.

b) If these pastors, or preachers, have a historic view of mission (the church is an agency on mission for God in this world) and not a contemporary view of mission (the church is in mission with God in the world), then would it not negatively impact of the motivation factor in the church? From the researcher's purely personal and subjective experience, it seems harder to motivate a church to be on mission *for* God rather than to be in mission *with* God.

c) If these pastors, or preachers, experience time constraints not only in general sermon preparation but more particularly in the interpretation of the texts, would this not negatively impact not only upon them and their hearers, but more importantly upon the true and accurate presentation of the Word? A failure in the true and accurate presentation of the Word would leave the hearers *sick*.

Taking these concerns into consideration, the researcher wonders whether these would not be contributing factors for the lack of numerical growth within the Baptist Union of South Africa.

Concluding remark:

The researcher assumed that if there was preaching of the highest order in the local church – hermeneutical and contextual preaching – then it is this that would help the church find its core identity and reason for being. It is this that would build up the local church, causing it to develop and grow both in quality and quantity. While there is undoubtedly a measure of high-order preaching amongst the pastors, or preachers, (hermeneutical and contextual preaching), and while the churches do have a sense of their core identity and reason for being, the churches, as we have seen within the Baptist Union, certainly do not appear not to be growing numerically.

The researcher suggests that the contributing factors to this phenomenon may be a lack of:

- A deep conviction of and an intrinsically motivated drive for the church.
- A contemporary view of mission (the church is *in mission with God*).
- Time devoted to sermon preparation, in particular, to hermeneutics.

CHAPTER 5

THE PRAGMATICS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this chapter is:

- To state the problem and the researcher's hypothesis.
- To test the problem statement and hypothesis.
- To draw conclusions as to the impact that this research might have for Practical Theology and embark on a practical strategy of action.
- To make concluding remarks.

5.1 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

“In building up a local church, is the finding of core identity and purpose impaired due to a neglect of hermeneutical and contextual preaching?”

5.2 THE HYPOTHESIS

The presupposition is that the local church will find and live up to its core identity and reason for being when there is hermeneutical and contextual preaching taking place within the local church. When that is happening, it is anticipated that the local church will be built up or develop both in quality and in quantity.

5.3 THE TEST

Having surveyed these various aspects then – the building up of the local church, the core identity and purpose of the local church, hermeneutical and contextual preaching – the researcher will now test it against the problem statement and thereafter make suggestions for consideration and remedial action.

5.3.1 IS THE LOCAL CHURCH BEING BUILT UP?

Nel (2015:20) states that the building up of the local church, “always implies further growth – in quality and, when God pleases, in quantity.” While the researcher agrees with this statement, the researcher also believes it is debatable. If a local church grows in quantity, it does not necessarily

follow that it will grow in quality, but if a local church grows in quality (through its members bringing glory to God, its members building up the local church, its members being on active mission with God), logically it must follow that the local church will inevitably grow in quantity, even if it is minimal numerical growth. Stated differently: Does not Jesus' statement in Matthew 16:18 that he will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it, imply that the church will grow, not only qualitatively but also quantitatively? Or, if the local church truly understands its core identity and reason for being – i.e. God's instrument for God's saving mission in this world (Guder 1998:8) – will it not of necessity grow both in quality and quantity? Or, as Nel (2015:38) so beautifully implies: if the local church is an expression of God's love for the world, his chosen vehicle to the world, his gift to their context, his search party for the lost and the broken in this world, then does this not imply that the church is destined to be built up both qualitatively and quantitatively?

While the researcher cannot comment on the qualitative growth in the local churches surveyed in the Baptist Union, the researcher can comment on the quantitative growth in the churches of the Baptist Union over the past eight years. There has been a worrying decline not only in the total membership of the Baptist Union, but also in youth workers and missionaries that have been supported from the Baptist Union. How would one answer and counter this worrying decline?

Strategy of action:

Since the researcher has focused on the core identity and purpose of the local church through the ministry of preaching, the strategy of action in building up the local church (both qualitatively and quantitatively) will be proposed and supported in the following three points.

5.3.2 DO WE KNOW WHO WE ARE – OUR CORE IDENTITY?

Nel (2015:26) states that building up the local church is not only about leading a congregation to understand and find their God-given identity, but helping the local church to understand, in an ever-increasing and continuous way, just who they are in Christ. It is essential, he says, that the local church find not their individual identity, but that they find their corporate identity since building up the local church is all about building a corporate sense of identity. "It is this that is so

often missing in the church”, says Nel (2015:26). While people may have a keen and enthusiastic sense of their personal and individual identity in Christ, they do not have this corporate sense of identity in Christ. Nel (2015:26) cites how ironic it is that biblical truths about the corporate identity of the church are so often interpreted in an individualistic way. He cautions that one must remember that many, if not all of the texts that are associated with growth and renewal and that are so easily applied in Bible studies and sermons to individuals, are really community texts, intended for the congregation as a whole (Nel 2015:53). Dick (2007:17) advises that while we regularly wrestle with the question of who we are individually, it is every bit as important that we wrestle with it corporately as well.

It doesn't help that the church today has been taken captive by the culture and ideals of the world – the culture and ideals of consumerism, pragmatism, self-sufficiency, individualism, positive thinking, personal prosperity and nationalism (see Long 2009c:117-120) – which tend to rob the church of its corporate identity. The Gospel today has become a message of moralism, personal comfort, self-help, and self-improvement – a message of “Good Advice” rather than a message of “Good News” (Horton 2009:11). The church's message and faith has become, according to Horton (2008:21), “trivial, sentimental, affirming, and irrelevant.” The church's faith has become an individualistic religion that trivialises God and makes him a means to our selfish ends. A spirit of individualism prevails. The pious believer is seen as a single, isolated, unattached entity, which is contrary to the way that scripture portrays the church. The church is a community of faith; a confessing community; a servant community; the body of Christ; a people cared for and for the sake of the world; a people of God, which are the six names by which Nel (2015:44-48) refers to the church. (Note the *plural* in those names and the emphasis which is on the corporate and the community.) Pietism has caused the Bible to be “decongregationalised” (Nel 2015:53).

Do we know, then, who we are? Individually we may, but corporately we don't. The researcher has found and argued that the churches surveyed may well be living with a case of mistaken identity (page 215). Furthermore, the researcher has also found and argued that the core identity of the local church is perhaps being preached purely as a concept, intellectually, rather than as an intrinsic motivating force of what the church is and should be. While pastors are in agreement

that the church, metaphorically speaking, is a spiritual house made up of living stones that have been built into this house, they have not fully grasped the missional nature of the church, and neither are they fully persuaded nor passionate thereof (page 258).

Strategy of action (Practical Theological):

- Van Gelder (2007a:1-30) suggests that theologians constantly engage in the study of the church in order to explore its nature, understand its creation and continuing formation, and discover its purpose and ministry. It has become apparent in the present research that there is not only a need for this constant study of the identity of the local church, but that the study should be conveyed through the various theological institutions to its students. (If this is adhered to, and it filters down to pastors and preachers, then, using the analogy of Jesus in Matthew 7:24-27, the local church would be built on solid ground or rock. Its foundation would be secure and whatever storms of life may prevail against it, it would stand. Based on the findings of the survey, it currently appears as if many local churches are being built on shifting sands. They are failing to understand their nature, their creation, their continuing formation and their purpose and ministry. Consequently, as the storms of life prevail against these churches, they appear unable to stand.)
- Theologians and theological institutions in their curriculum may do well to focus on the *corporate identity* of the church, or to emphasize, as Nel (2015:53) puts it, the *community texts* of the Bible since there is disturbing evidence of an overwhelming emphasis on individualism both in the local church and in society.
- There needs to be a consolidated and holistic approach to building up the local church. Preaching is only one form of ministry and while it is essential for building up the local church, the other seven forms of ministry like worship, pastoral care, administration, teaching, fellowship, deeds of mercy and witnessing are as important for building up the local church (Nel 2005:111; cf Nel 2015:70-71;78). It needs to be emphasised that the whole of this eight-fold ministry, and more, serves to build up the church for God comes to his people in more than one way (Nel 2005:369).

Strategy of action (Ministerial): The researcher would suggest that pastors/preachers resort to:

- A personal study and rediscovery of “who we are” as the local church.
- A personal study and rediscovery of the corporate identity of the church as opposed to the current emphasis on individualism in the church and in society.
- A concerted effort in preaching on the nature of the church, and in particular, preaching on “who we are” and our “corporate sense of identity.”
- Preaching on the nature of the church after the order of Thomas Long, John Piper, Jonathan Edwards and Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Long (2009c:5) advocates preaching with enchantment and persuasion, in a way that excites the imagination and inflames the heart. Piper (1990:22) advocates preaching with, “a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory and the grand object of His infinite being”. Edwards (Piper 1990:75-80) advocates preaching with a vision of a perfectly glorious God, absolutely sovereign, self-sufficient, all-sufficient, and infinite in holiness. Lloyd-Jones (Piper 1991) advocates preaching that is doctrinally sound and deep; crystal clear, logical and powerful. This would be a way to enlighten and inspire affection for the church.

5.3.3 DO WE KNOW OUR REASON FOR BEING – OUR PURPOSE?

It is clear, both from the quantitative and qualitative survey, that the church exists for a three-fold purpose – i) to serve God; ii) to serve its members; and iii) to serve the world (mission). All three of these purposes are valued and engaged in by both the respondents and interviewees of the two surveys. In terms of serving the world (mission) however, both the respondents and the interviewees concept of mission is more historic than contemporary – the church is more of an agency on mission *for* God than a church that is in mission *with* God. The idea of being on mission *for* God rather than being in mission *with* God is not only different in thinking, but may be less exciting, inspiring and motivating for the local church. From the researcher’s purely personal and subjective experience, it seems harder to motivate a church to be on mission *for* God than to motivate a church to be in mission *with* God. New thinking or a fresh approach to the purpose of the church is needed.

The missional church conversation (Van Gelder 2008:2; see Guder 1998:7-12) provides this new thinking or fresh approach to the purpose of the church. It presents an alternative way to thinking about the church. It directs one to focus on God's mission as determinative for understanding the mission of the church (Van Gelder and Zscheile 2011:9). Nel (2015:66) puts it like this: "The church is no casual reality; it originates in the will of the triune God, for the sake of the world." The conversation revolves around the very nature or essence of what it means to *be* the church. Expressed differently: Is the focus of the church on God as the acting subject doing something in the world in which the church participates, or is the focus of the church on man as the human agency doing something on behalf of God in the world? A church being missional therefore is not so much a matter of church polity (what the church *does*) as much as it is a matter of church ecclesiology (what the church *is*). Alternatively, the term "being missionary" is not what the church *does*, functionally, but more of what the church *is* in its very essence (Van Gelder 2008:42). Zscheile (2012:1) contends that, "at the heart of the missional church conversation there lies a challenge: to recover and deepen the church's Christian identity in a post-Christendom world in light of the triune God's mission in all of creation." It is the researcher's contention that this missional understanding of the church will in turn affect the church's mission or reason for being.

Unfortunately, for the respondents and interviewees of the surveys, the focus of the church was all too readily on what the church does rather than on what the church is; the church as the human agency doing something on behalf of God in the world rather than on God as the acting subject doing something in the world in which the church participates.

Strategy of action (Practical Theological):

- The missional church conversation is an important conversation in the recovery of the Church's missional identity. It is a conversation that needs to be pursued and debated not only amongst the theologians, but amongst the theological students of the various theological institutions as this is foundational to congregational development or the building up of a missional church.

- As remedial action, the researcher would suggest that theological institutions teach students to read scripture with a “missional hermeneutic” (Guder 1998:11).

Strategy of action (Ministerial): The researcher would suggest:

- That the various denominations create a forum where pastors and preachers of these denominations can actively engage in the missional church conversation.
- That pastors and preachers within these various denominations begin to redefine the church as God’s instrument for God’s mission. Guder (1998:8) defines the church in this way: “We have accepted the definition of the church as God’s instrument for God’s mission, convinced that this is scripturally warranted.”
- That pastors and preachers within these denominations preach on the essential nature and vocation of the church which is encapsulated in the term *missional*. Guder (1998:11) defines the term missional as such: “With the term missional we emphasise the essential nature and vocation of the church as God’s called and sent people.”
- That the pastors and preachers within these various denominations begin to read the Scriptures with a “missional hermeneutic” (Guder 1998:11).

5.3.4 IS THERE A NEGLECT OF HERMENEUTICAL AND CONTEXTUAL PREACHING?

In both the quantitative and qualitative survey, the pastors, or preachers, appear to have taken both hermeneutical preaching and contextual preaching to heart. All indications are that more than 90% of the pastors are giving serious and time-consuming consideration to hermeneutical and contextual preaching. The principles of biblical interpretation play a very definite and significant role in sermon preparation. Pastors, or preachers, have *lived long* not only with the text, with the context of the text, with the context of the passage, but also with the context of their hearers (the world in which they live). This to the extent that these pastors have understood the Word of God consummately well; to the extent that they convey the Word of God with clarity, simplicity and understanding; and to the extent that they significantly and competently apply their message to their hearers. And yet, as far as hermeneutical preaching is concerned, while these preachers certainly acknowledge the importance in engaging in the principles of

biblical interpretation, there appears however to be time constraints upon them (50% of the interviewees conceded that they did not have adequate time to properly engage in textual interpretation, which, as we have seen, causes its own problems). Similarly, as far as contextual preaching is concerned, while all the preachers take the prospective hearers of their sermons seriously, and see the need and vital importance for this, yet they feel that they could do more. Is there a neglect of hermeneutical and contextual preaching then? Generally speaking, no. These pastors, or preachers, are doing their best under the circumstances.

Strategy of action (Practical Theological):

- As there is a clear link between hermeneutical preaching and contextual preaching in building up the local church, the researcher would suggest that courses or studies in Hermeneutics not only emphasize this link, but that students would be encouraged to read and approach scripture with a missional hermeneutic.
- Amongst theologians and theological students, the ministry of preaching needs to be promoted as one of the primary ways in which God conveys his will for the church and thereby builds it up. The importance of preaching cannot be overstated. Preaching is indispensable to Christianity (Stott 1995:271; cf Pieterse 2001:22) and without preaching a necessary part of its authenticity is lost. What is fundamental to the Christian religion is that God, the Word, became flesh and spoke to us, and continues to speak to us (Pieterse 1987:5). We are now called upon to speak it to others. It is God's speech which makes our speech or preaching necessary: "We must speak what he has spoken" (Stott 1995:272). Preaching remains then one of the primary ways in which God communicates to his church and thereby builds it up (Long 1989:50).

Strategy of action (Ministerial): The researcher would suggest that pastors/preachers continue to:

- Diligently study the scriptures, or in the words of 2 Timothy 2:15: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be

ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (NIV). The subject field of hermeneutics increases in importance in the process.

- Trust the Scriptures which are, “...useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man (*and woman*) of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (NIV, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

5.3.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

“For a brief period of time when God created the world, perfect people walked through a perfect world in perfect union with God... But sadly, it didn’t last long. In the most significant rebellious act ever committed, man and woman stepped outside of God’s ordained plan. In a second it all came crashing down. All the amazing beauty of that world was deeply scarred...God now saw his world ravaged by sin. He was unwilling for it to stay this way, so he devised a plan... Into this world, at just the right moment, he sent his one and only Son.”

(Tripp 2002:1-3)

Colossians 1:15-20 tells us that God’s one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Not only were all things created by him, but all things were created for him. Not only is he before all things, but in him all things hold together. “And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross”, (NIV, Colossians 1:18-20). And just how was this good news of reconciliation and peace with God through Christ’s shed blood on the cross meant to be conveyed to the world? It is through Christ’s body, the church, of which he is the head. Nel (2015:76) states that the church is no casual reality for it originated in the will of the triune God. Hear in what affectionate terms he speaks about the church: “I confess that in essence the congregation is an expression of God’s love for the world. Congregations are indeed his chosen vehicles to the world, in any given context. They are his gifts to their context.

They are God's search parties for the lost and the broken, the victims of the accidents of life" (Nel 2015:38). The church is his plan for doing this (Nel 2015:43).

The church however has experienced many hurdles, obstacles and deformation in the course of its history. At times it has been completely oblivious to them. The church in the sixteenth century before the reformation is proof of this. What was worrying is that it saw no need for the necessity for reformation (Nel 2015:54).

There is a need for reformation today, or to use the title of Guder's (2000) book, there is a need for *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. There is a need to recover the core identity of the church, specifically its missional vocation. One of the primary ways to do this would be through preaching, and more specifically through hermeneutical and contextual preaching. In this way the church can be built up to fulfil its God-given role for creation, the whole of creation.

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Churches randomly Selected	Pastor	Amount of Questionnaire's	Returns Respondents number:	
City – Kimberley - 01				
01 Kimberley	Norman Schaefer	2	2	001-002
City – East London - 02				
02 First City	Barry Thomas	7	6	003-008
03 Gonubie	Marc Morrell	11	9	009-017
04 Quigney [City Life]	David Gernetzky	60	46	018-063
City – Johannesburg - 03				
05 Florida	Trent Eayrs	13	9	064-072
06 Boksburg	Andre Mathee	4	4	073-076
07 Glenvista	Brian Watts	5	5	077-081
08 Randburg	Gavin Johnston	10	10	082-091
09 Horison	Jamey Dykman	6	6	092-097
10 Krugerdorp	Sec: Jay-Jay Steyn	7	6	098-103
11 Germiston	Peter Sammons	4	4	104-107
12 Edenvale	Richard van Lieshout	37	37	108-144
13 Roosevelt Park	Wayne Hoedemaker	6	5	145-149
14 Word of Life	Byron Mans	10	10	150-159
15 Randfontein	Brett Smitsdorff	6	6	160-165
City – Pretoria - 04				
16 Central	Charles de Kiewiet	24	24	166-189
17 Constantia Park	Willem Bronkhorst	8	8	190-197
City – Port Elizabeth - 05				
18 Port Alfred	Jason Currie	10	10	198-207
19 Westway Bethel	Gary Hempel	8	7	208-214
20 Grahamstown	Dirk Coetzee	4	4	215-218
City – Bloemfontein - 06				
21 Bloemfontein	Johan Jansen	1	1	219
City – Durban - 07				
22 Margate	Chris Anderson	10	6	220-225
23 Waterfall	Chris Wood	3	3	226-228
24 Westville	John Benn	31	30	229-258
25 Durban North	John Lansdell	8	8	259-266
26 Umhlanga	Sec: Wendy Jubber	4	4	267-270
27 Glenwood Comm	Dean Meistre	7	7	271-277
28 Scottsville	Steve Darch	11	11	278-288
29 Amanzimtoti	Ivan Haylock	4	4	289-292

City – Cape Town - 08				
30	Northpine	Alwen Mentoor	9	6 293-298
31	Bellville South	Charles Dickson	3	2 299-300
32	Blackheath	Theo Hendriks	6	5 301-305
33	Mowbray	Geoff Milligan	7	7 306-312
34	Claremont	Peter Smallbones	6	5 313-317
35	Melkbos	Rob Lucas	10	10 318-327
36	Sivertown	Sec: Adele Tito	13	No response.
37	Meadowridge	John Basson	47	34 328-362
38	Brackenfell	John Welsford	4	4 363-366
39	Blomvlei Road	Salwyn Coetzee	20	No response.
40	Table View	David MacDonald	4	4 367-370

May 2014

Dear Pastor

Thank you *so much* for being willing to participate in this survey that I discussed with you telephonically., I recognize that you and your time are in great demand by your congregation. If I may suggest, you may want to delegate this task to one of those special congregation members who are always willing and eager to help and who manage to get the job done without any effort. (Every congregation has one of these pure-gold-folk.)

A few pointers to help you:

- a) Ensuring the integrity of the survey: To ensure the integrity of the survey, it has to be a random survey. In other words, the selection of the candidates or respondents *must* be selected randomly. Some examples of a random selection: Every fourth person who walks through the door at church on a Sunday, or every person who is wearing a blue shirt, or all those with brown curly hair could be asked to participate in the survey. This ensures a random selection of respondents; it avoids the ‘better ones’ being asked.
- b) The best time to conduct the survey: If you would like to maximize coverage and avoid having to pursue the respondents, you may want to consider approaching them just before or just after the church service. It will take about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire, and the advantage is that they are all together, at one moment, and it can be completed on one day. I do not wish to be prescriptive. Please feel free to conduct it in a way that you consider best.
- c) Time constraints for the survey: While I certainly do not want to dictate the time frame in which it must be completed, unfortunately I do have time constraints – the deadline being the middle of June. May I graciously appeal for it to be conducted as soon as is it is conveniently possible? If one of your star members has been delegated the task, I have no doubt that they would resort to the dictum, ‘there is no time like the present’. The survey is self-explanatory. If you peruse it and you are unsure about an aspect, please feel free to contact me. I have enclosed a self-addressed envelope (postage already paid) for your convenience.

....., once again, thank you being willing to participate in this survey. You have been a great help and I’m deeply appreciative of that.

Together in mission with Him and for Him

Very sincerely ... **Craig Linden**

(Contact number: Cell - 078 5570198)

Dear Respondent

As part of my studies toward a PhD degree in Practical Theology with the University of Pretoria (with Prof Malan Nel as study leader), I'm required to conduct a survey among church members in respect of how they experience preaching in their local church.

Please, will you help me by participating in this survey?

Every preacher desires to be a good preacher, to make a meaningful and lasting contribution both to the church that they serve and to the life of their listeners. As preachers we believe that this is not only honouring to God, but what God requires of us. The question is: How does one become a good preacher and how does one make a meaningful contribution to the church and to the listener? This survey will go a long way in answering that question.

What I require of you:

I have formulated a number of statements which you are required to respond to. Please read the statement carefully and then give your honest response to it. Honesty is the key. You would need to respond as to how *you* have come to encounter or experience preaching in the church and not as to how you would like it to be. Remember, this is *your* personal experience of preaching in the church. Make a single choice. Either you will (1) strongly disagree, or (2) mildly disagree, or (3) mildly agree, or (4) strongly agree with the statement. Mark the appropriate block/box.

Allow me to assure you that as a respondent you will be anonymous in the process and that your answers will be treated confidentially. Allow me also to assure you that your honest evaluation of the preaching in the church will go a long way in helping preachers become better servants of God, and better servants of you.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Reverend Craig Linden (Researcher)

Appendix D

My Experience of Preaching

For office use only

Respondent number

1.	Gender (Please mark with an "x".)	Female	1	Male	2
2.	How old are you? years.				
3.	For how many years have you been attending this Baptist church? years.				
4.	In which city / town is this church?				
5.	What is the name of this church?				

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V5

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6. Please read and consider each statement below and then indicate your level of agreement by marking the appropriate box with an "x".	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree
As believers we are 'living stones' who are built into a 'spiritual house.'	1	2	3	4
The church is meant to grow in quantity – in numbers.	1	2	3	4
The church is meant to grow in quality – in maturity.	1	2	3	4
God builds a congregation of believers.	1	2	3	4
God lives among a congregation of believers.	1	2	3	4
God works through a congregation of believers.	1	2	3	4
The church is built up by God – by what God does for the church.	1	2	3	4
The church is built up by believers as they exercise their spiritual gifts.	1	2	3	4
God has a plan to save the world.	1	2	3	4
The church is central in fulfilling God's plan to save the world.	1	2	3	4
The church exists to serve God – it is for his glory.	1	2	3	4
The church exists to serve its members – to build up its members.	1	2	3	4
The church exists to serve the world – it is for the benefit/salvation of mankind.	1	2	3	4
The story of the Bible is a story of God's saving mission to the world.	1	2	3	4
The church is mission – its soul is rooted in the mission of God to save the world.	1	2	3	4
The church is sent by God to be on mission <i>for</i> God in the world.	1	2	3	4
The church is sent by God to be on mission <i>with</i> God in the world.	1	2	3	4
Preaching is one of the primary ways in which God speaks to his church.	1	2	3	4
Preaching is one of the primary ways in which God gives the church its identity.	1	2	3	4
No church can be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching.	1	2	3	4
The church is built up through a 'step by step' walk through the Bible.	1	2	3	4
The church is built up through focusing on relevant, contemporary topics.	1	2	3	4

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V27

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Appendix D

	Strongly disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree		
<p>As before, please read and consider each statement below and then indicate your level of agreement by marking the appropriate box with an "x".</p>						
When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she...						
recognizes that preaching is "serious business".	1	2	3	4	V28	<input type="checkbox"/>
recognizes that preaching is a "joyful privilege".	1	2	3	4	V29	<input type="checkbox"/>
has thoroughly prepared the sermon.	1	2	3	4	V30	<input type="checkbox"/>
has thoroughly prepared his/her heart before preaching.	1	2	3	4	V31	<input type="checkbox"/>
When listening to sermons from my pastor, I notice that...						
the sermon is full of God's greatness.	1	2	3	4	V32	<input type="checkbox"/>
the sermon is full of God's vibrant presence.	1	2	3	4	V33	<input type="checkbox"/>
my pastor stimulates/creates a silent conversation with me in the sermon.	1	2	3	4	V34	<input type="checkbox"/>
my pastor's message is Good News, even if the 'hard truth' be told.	1	2	3	4	V35	<input type="checkbox"/>
my pastor's sermons are up-building - they shape my life and build me up.	1	2	3	4	V36	<input type="checkbox"/>
my pastor's sermons inspire me to rejoice in my salvation.	1	2	3	4	V37	<input type="checkbox"/>
my pastor's sermons inspire me to live more fully for God every day.	1	2	3	4	V38	<input type="checkbox"/>
When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she has spent time...						
uncovering the true meaning of the passage.	1	2	3	4	V39	<input type="checkbox"/>
uncovering to whom the verse/passage was written.	1	2	3	4	V40	<input type="checkbox"/>
uncovering the background/history of the verse/passage.	1	2	3	4	V41	<input type="checkbox"/>
uncovering the grammar of the verse/passage.	1	2	3	4	V42	<input type="checkbox"/>
uncovering the purpose/reason of the verse/passage.	1	2	3	4	V43	<input type="checkbox"/>
uncovering what goes before and what comes after the verse/passage.	1	2	3	4	V44	<input type="checkbox"/>
listening to the 'voice of God' in the verse/passage.	1	2	3	4	V45	<input type="checkbox"/>
When listening to sermons from my pastor, it is clear that he/she...						
has understood the verse/passage – <i>ah-ah, this is God's truth!</i>	1	2	3	4	V46	<input type="checkbox"/>
has sought to explain the verse/passage – <i>clearly and simply.</i>	1	2	3	4	V47	<input type="checkbox"/>
has sought to apply the verse/passage – <i>a message for today.</i>	1	2	3	4	V48	<input type="checkbox"/>
has understood the 'big picture' of the passage, chapter and book from which he/she is preaching.	1	2	3	4	V49	<input type="checkbox"/>
has studied the people to whom he/she is preaching.	1	2	3	4	V50	<input type="checkbox"/>
is conscious of the <i>modern</i> world in which his/her hearers live.	1	2	3	4	V51	<input type="checkbox"/>
is conscious of the <i>personal</i> world in which his/her hearers live.	1	2	3	4	V52	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix E

The Quantitative Survey Questionnaire**Category 1 – The Church:**

1. Please comment on the statement: The church is a spiritual house which is made up of ‘living stones’ that have been built into this house.
2. Please comment on these statements? i) The church is meant to grow in quality. ii) The church is meant to grow in quantity.

Category 2 – Identity of the Church:

1. What, in your understanding, is the (core) identity of the local church?
Sub-question: Who are we as the church?
2. What, in your understanding, is the reason(s) for the church’s existence?
Sub-question: Could you comment on these statements: The church exists to serve God. The church exists to serve its members. The church exists to serve the world. Have you heard of and what do you understand by the term *missional*?

Category 3 – The issue of Preaching:

1. Concerning your view of preaching:
 - a. Is it important to you?
 - b. Is it invaluable and essential to the church?
 - c. Is preaching one of the primary ways that God speaks to his church?
 - d. Could a church be healthy without a solid diet of biblical preaching?
2. Concerning your time and energy that you devote to preaching:
 - a. Do you struggle with the amount of time and energy you are able to devote to sermon preparation?
3. Concerning your approach to preaching:
 - a. Do you preach methodically and systematically through the Bible?
 - b. Do you preach topically, focusing on contemporary relevant issues?

Appendix E

Category 4 – Hermeneutical Preaching:

1. What role, if any, do the principles of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) play in your sermon preparation?
2. Do you have time to dig deep into aspects like the occasion, background, history, grammar and genre of the text from which you are preaching?

Category 5 – Contextual Preaching:

1. In sermon preparation, are you able to consciously take note of the context of the text or passage from which you are preaching?
2. In sermon preparation, are you consciously aware of the context of your hearers/listeners – their modern and personal world in which they live?