

6. THE EFFECT ON THE LISTENER

In this chapter use will be made of empirical research seeking to examine the effect on listeners exposed to three different (narrative, expository and topical) preaching models. The purpose will be to establish whether the different preaching models, including other aspects of those sermons, are in any way proclaiming the Glory of God leading to vitality of faith and worship, or whether the sermons are in any way a hindrance to the listeners' faith and worship by obscuring the Glory of God.

In the previous chapter various the relevant concepts from the literature study were identified as either obscuring or proclaiming the Glory of God. These concepts were then compiled into a questionnaire (Appendix 1) to be used in surveying listeners immediately after hearing a sermon.

After analysing and interpreting the responses of the listeners who completed the questionnaires the study will seek to present an adjusted theory of praxis for proclaiming the Glory of God.

6.1 Method of Survey

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was compiled with the following intentions:

- Identifying relevant biographical details of the respondents.
- Identifying the respondents' commitment to the hearing of sermons.
- Gain insight into the impressions of the respondents while listening to the sermon.

- Seek to establish whether man or God was the obvious focus of the sermon.
- Seek to establish who was the most dominant in the service.
- Establish the respondents' perception of the content of the sermon.
- Establish the respondents' experience as a result of listening to the sermon.
- Identifying the respondents' understanding of God's passion for his own glory.
- Establish the respondents preferred preaching model.
- Compare the relevant outcomes of the churches surveyed seeking to establish any variation with regard to preaching model and the proclamation of the Glory of God.

It was decided to survey at least nine different churches. One of the churches intended for survey was very small (25 in attendance). As a result of this a tenth church was added to the list to be surveyed. All the churches were in some way connected to the Baptist Union of South Africa and located in the Gauteng Province.

The churches were chosen seeking to have all three models of preaching represented. It was only possible to find one church willing to participate where narrative preaching (N1) is practiced. The other nine churches surveyed had four practicing expository preaching (E1, E2, E3 and E4) and five making use of the topical sermon model (T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5).

The population of all churches surveyed included members (those who have officially applied), adherents (those who regularly attend) and

visitors (those who occasionally attend). It was agreed that a facilitator distribute the questionnaires immediately after the preacher had concluded his sermon with a prayer. It was agreed to distribute one hundred questionnaires (unless the attendance was less) evenly across the congregation. The intention was to receive at least fifty completed questionnaires back for analysis. This however was not possible in two of the churches surveyed due to the small population present on the day of the survey. Nine churches were surveyed on the 13th August 2006 with one church (N1) being surveyed on the 6th August 2006. The returned questionnaires were then captured for analysis by the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria.

The table below is a summary of the survey conducted and those involved.

| Respondent number | Church | Model | Attendance | Number of Respondents |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1001-1079 | N1 | Narrative | 120 | 79 |
| 2001-2054 | E1 | Expository | 60 | 54 |
| 2055-2075 | T1 | Topical | 25 | 21 |
| 3001-3052 | T2 | Topical | 75 | 52 |
| 4001-4090 | T3 | Topical | 180 | 90 |
| 5001-5094 | T4 | Topical | 250 | 94 |
| 6001-6091 | E2 | Expository | 180 | 91 |
| 7001-7091 | E3 | Expository | 100 | 91 |
| 8001-8094 | T5 | Topical | 180 | 94 |
| 9001-9087 | E4 | Expository | 420 | 87 |

Table 1

Copies of the manuscripts used by the respective preachers have been attached as Appendices at the end of this dissertation. These manuscripts have not been edited or modified in any way but are in the form they were given. The manuscripts from churches (E1) and (T1) were hand written and had to be typed for inclusion. Table 2 below is list of the appendices showing the preaching model and code used to identify the specific church participating.

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------|----|
| Appendix 2 | Narrative sermon | N1 |
| Appendix 3 | Expository sermon | E1 |
| Appendix 4 | Topical sermon | T1 |
| Appendix 5 | Topical sermon | T2 |
| Appendix 6 | Topical sermon | T3 |
| Appendix 7 | Topical sermon | T4 |
| Appendix 8 | Expository sermon | E2 |
| Appendix 9 | Expository sermon | E3 |
| Appendix 10 | Expository sermon | E4 |
| Appendix 11 | Topical sermon | T5 |

Table 2

6.2 Analysis and Discussion of the Survey

A total of 752 completed questionnaires were received. Seventy nine of these represented responses from respondents exposed to the narrative preaching model compared to 351 and 323 representing responses from topical and narrative preaching models respectively.

The responses from those exposed to the narrative model were particularly important in this study where there has been an increase of interest in the New Homiletic as described by Immink (2004:100). "In

North America, the dominant paradigm in the last quarter of the twentieth century was the New Homiletic. This movement can be labelled in different ways: poetic, narrative, imaginative, creative or transformational.“ In the South African Baptist context where the emphasis is on expository and topical preaching it was not practically possible to find additional willing participating churches who practice narrative preaching. The one participating church was therefore seen as an essential and necessary part of this research.

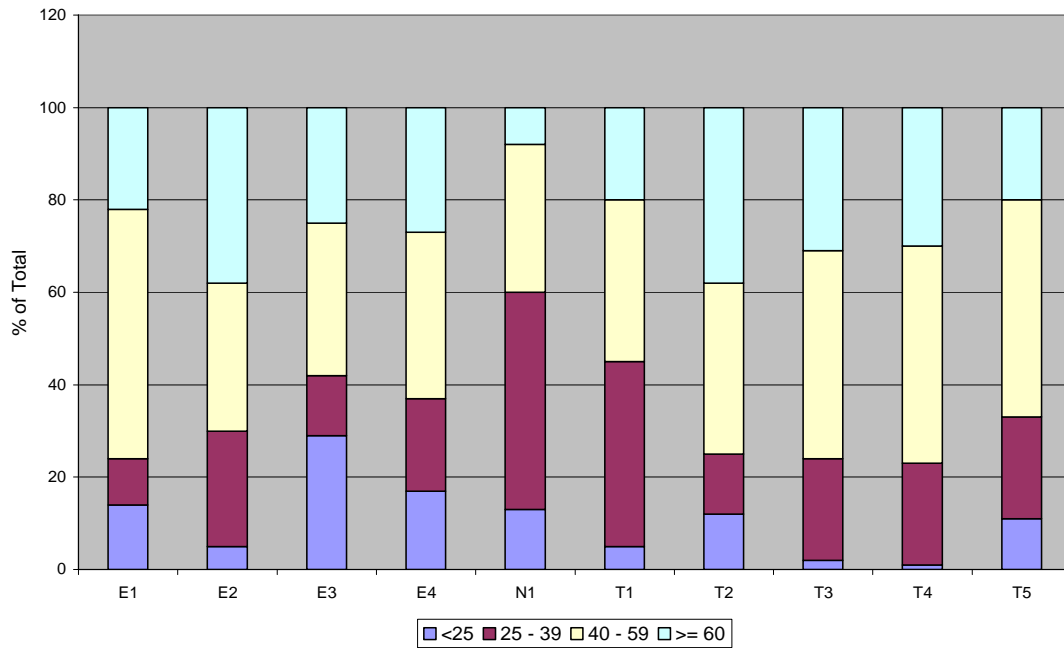
The first phase of analysis consisted of a one-way frequency analysis of all the variables contained in the questionnaire.

6.2.1 One Way Frequency Analysis

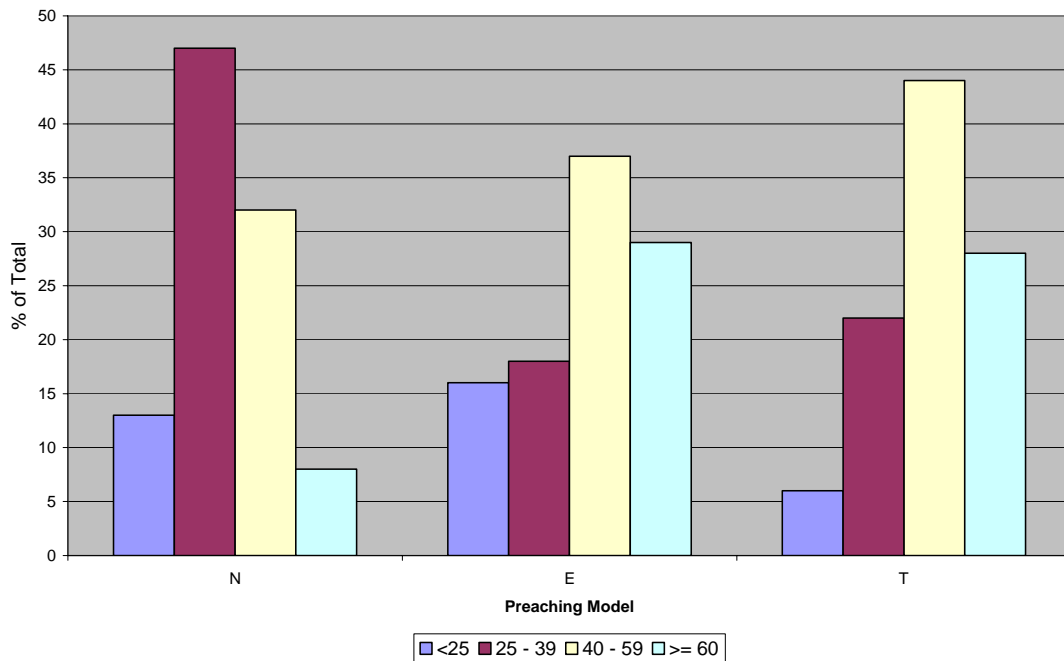
6.2.1.1 Biographical Details

Of the 752 respondents 11% were under the age of 25, 23% were between 25 and 39, 40% between the age of 40 and 59 and 26% were 60 and older. The variation in these trends across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.

What is your age in completed years?

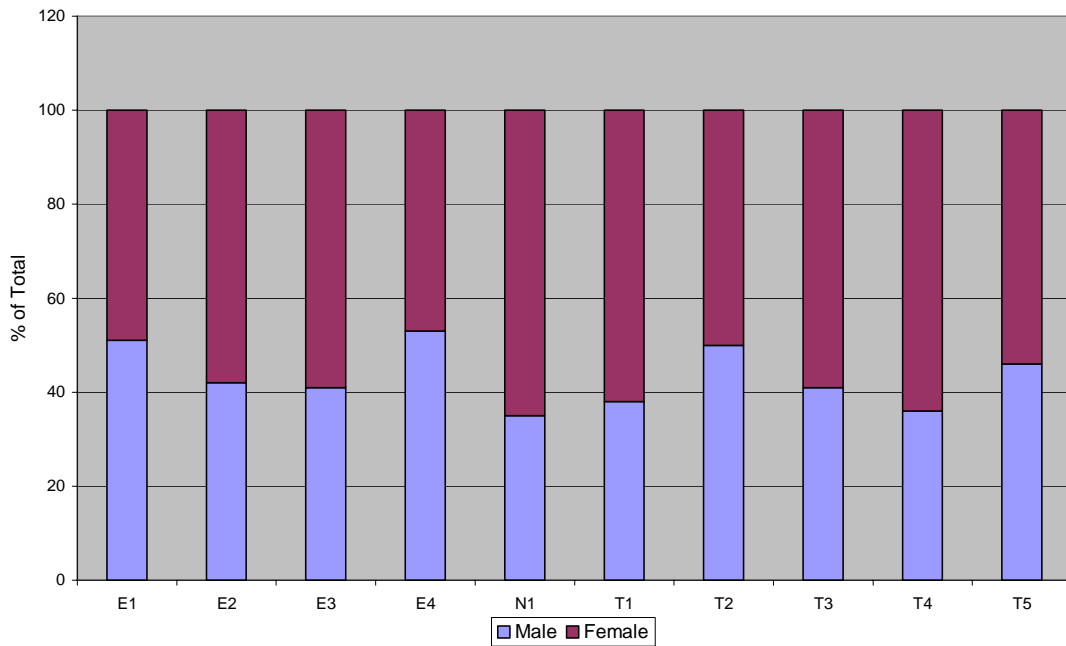


What is your age in completed years?

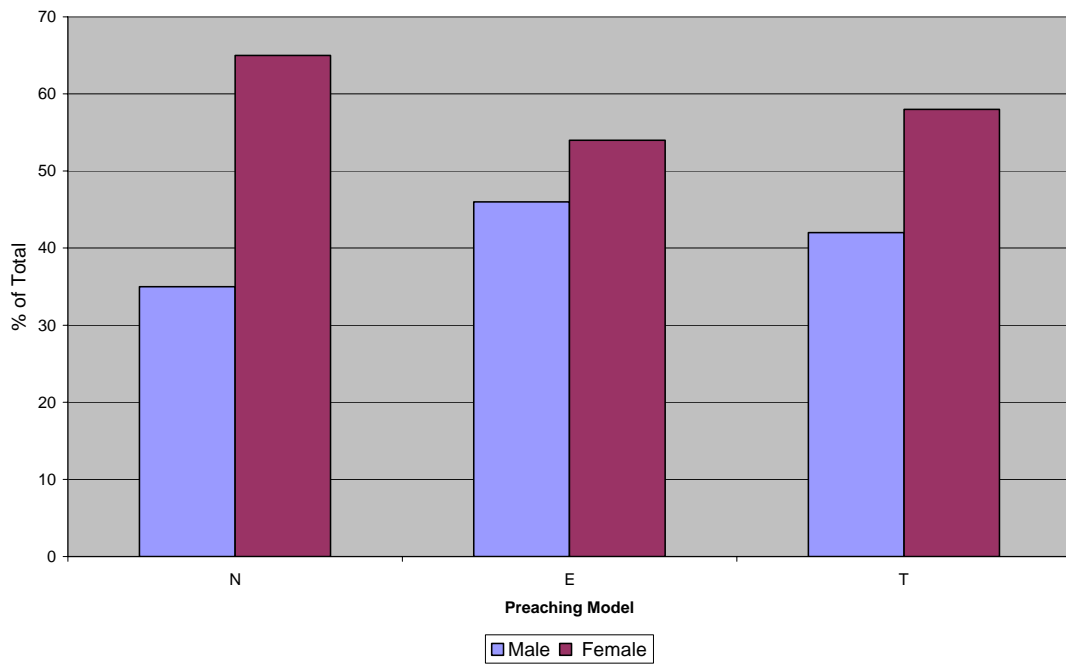


Forty three percent of the total respondents were male and 57% were female. The variation in these trends across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.

What is your gender?



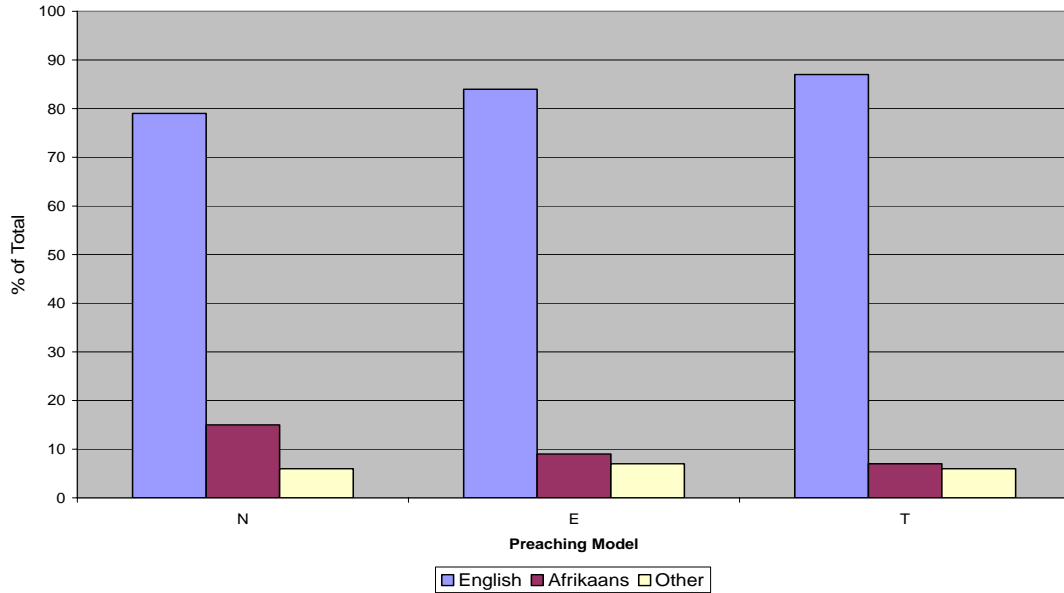
What is your gender?



There were 85% of the total respondents who indicated that English was their home language with 9% Afrikaans and the remaining 6% including Zulu, Sotho and French (V4). Those surveyed included 88% white, 8% black, 2% coloured (V5). The variation in these trends across the

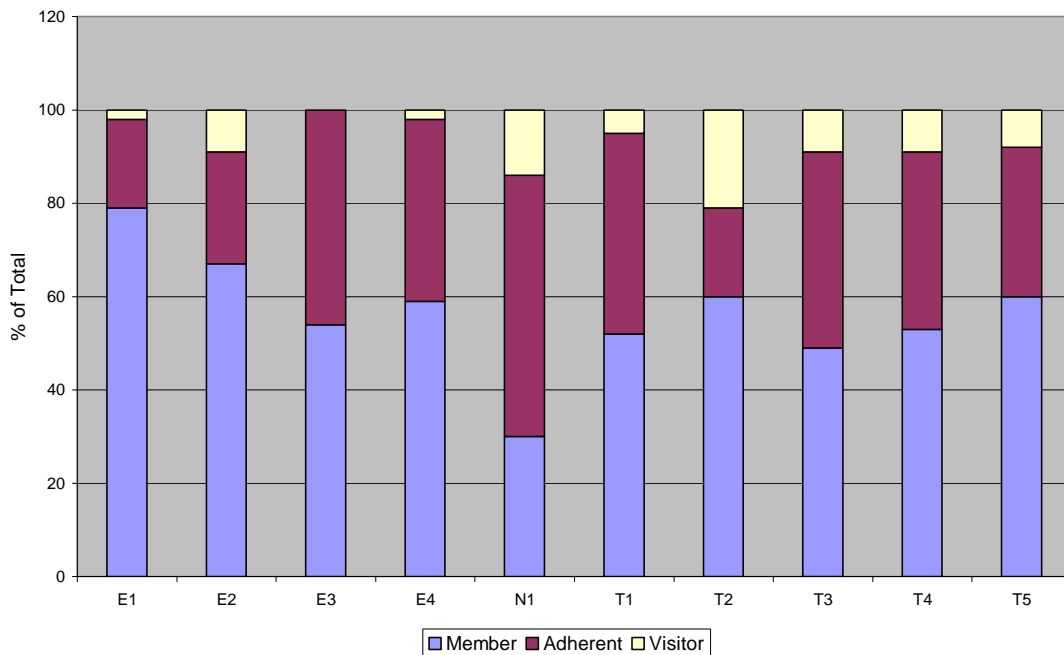
churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graph below.

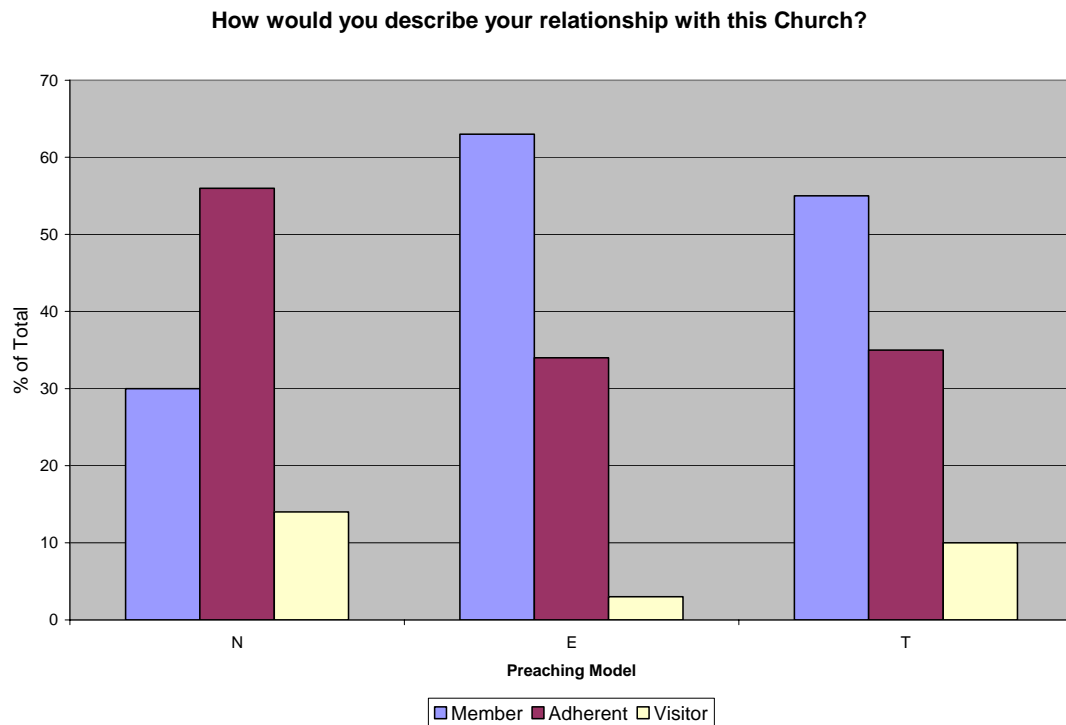
What is your home language?



Fifty six percent of the respondents were members of the church, 37% were adherents and 7% being visitors (V6). The variation in these trends across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.

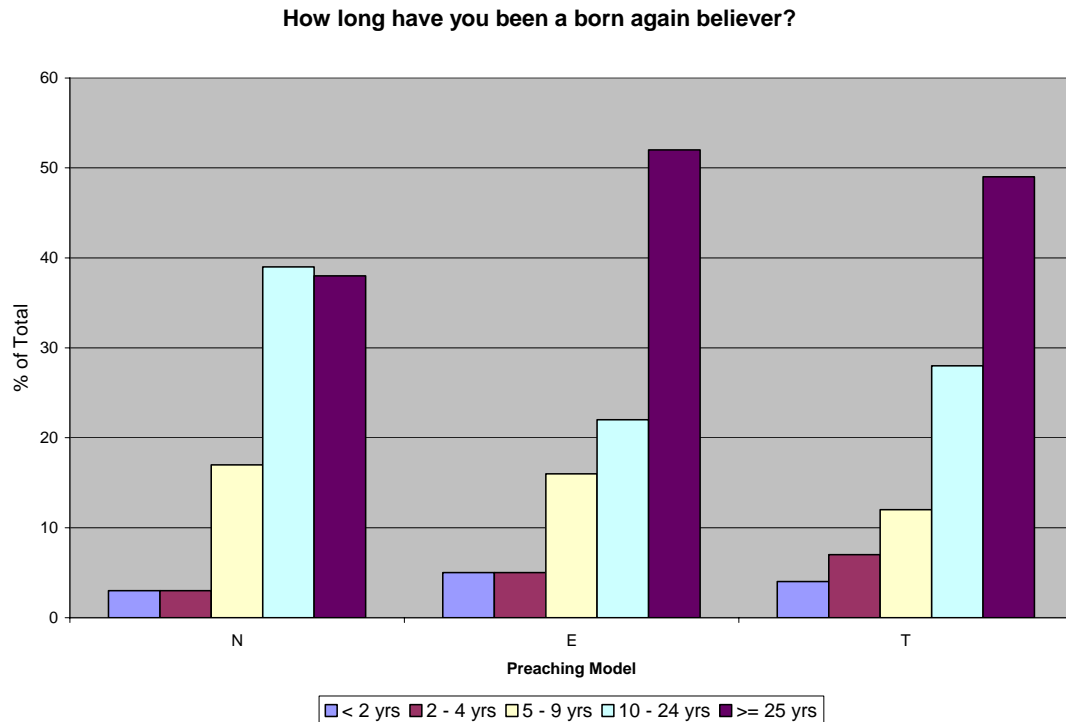
How would you describe your relationship to this church?





It is noted that all three categories of churches above had a significant number of adherents (in regular attendance), with the narrative grouping having more adherents than members (officially applied).

Four percent of the respondents claimed that they had been born again believers for less than 2 years, 5% between 2 and 4 years, 14% for between 5 and 9 years, 26% for between 10 and 24 years and 50% for longer than 25 years (V7). The variation in these trends across the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graph below.



6.2.1.2 Respondents' Commitment to the Hearing of Sermons

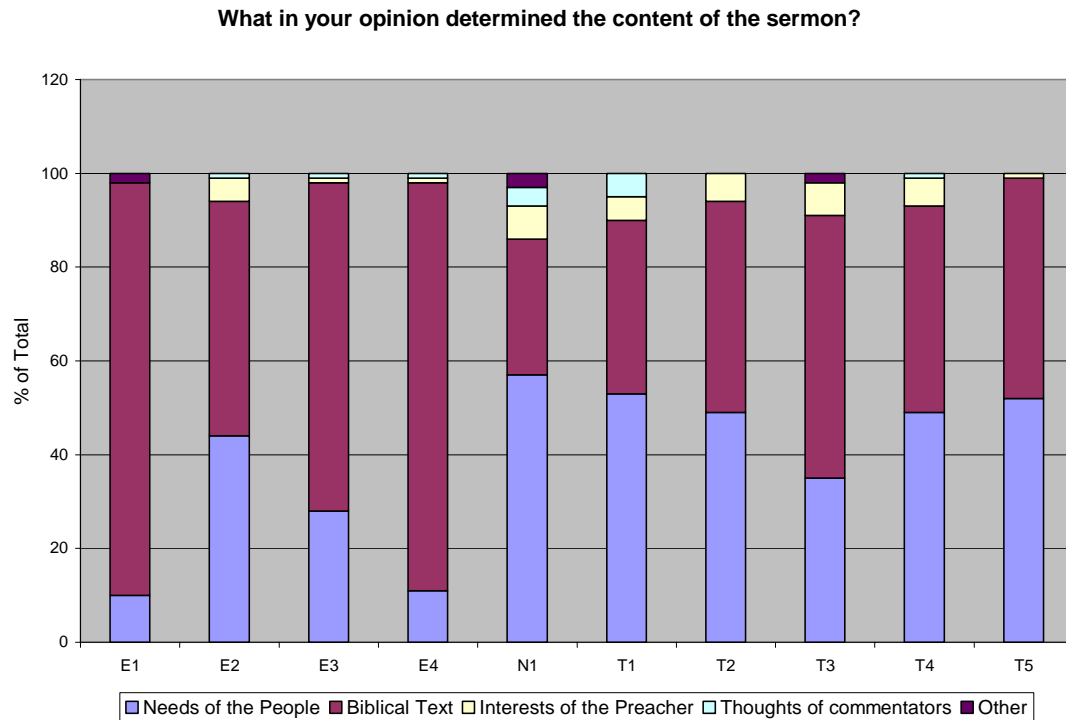
Seventy seven percent of the respondents indicated that the hearing of sermons was always a regular part of their Christian life, 20% usually, 2% seldom and 1% never listened to sermons as a regular part of their Christian life (V9). This same trend was found in the individual churches with almost all of the respondents committed to usually or always listening to sermons.

6.2.1.3 Impressions of the Respondents

The questions in this section were asked to establish overall impressions by the respondents while listening to the sermon.

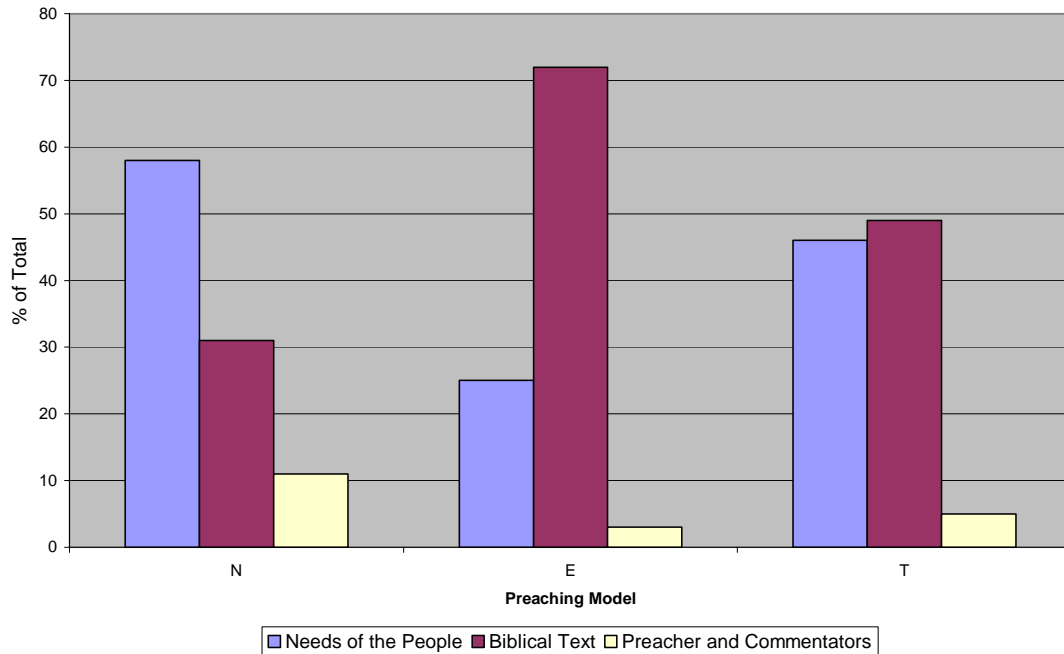
Although 56% of all the respondents expressed the opinion that the Biblical text determined the content of the sermon, 37% felt that the needs of the people set the agenda for the sermon. The variation in these trends across

the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.



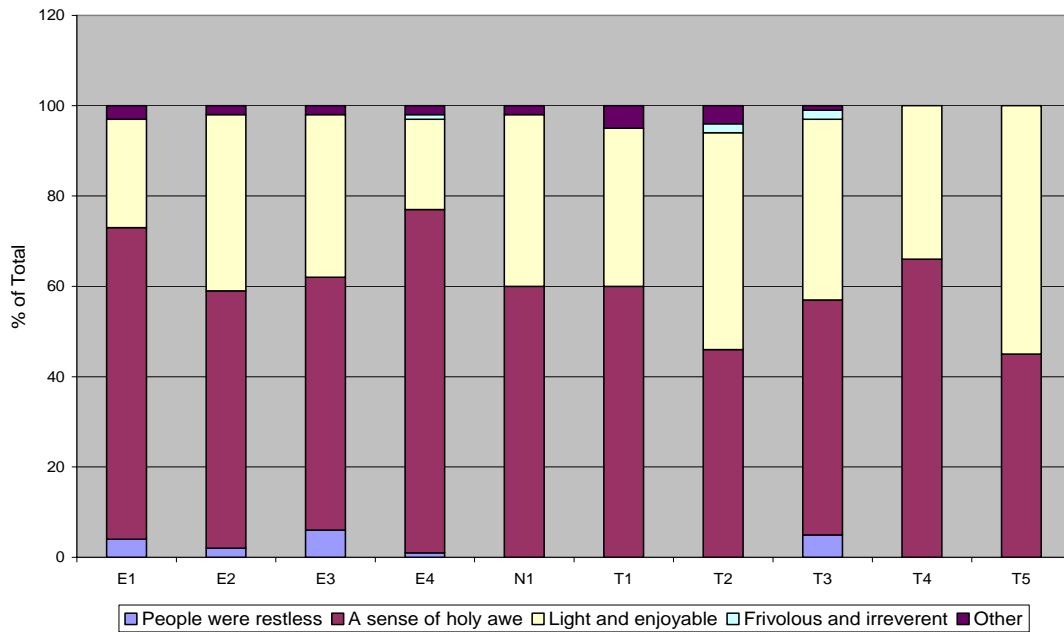
Seventy two percent of the respondents exposed to the expository preaching model held the opinion that the biblical text determined the content of the sermon, whereas 58% of those exposed to the narrative model of preaching held the opinion that the needs of the people determined the content of the sermon. Forty nine percent of the respondents exposed to the topical preaching model held the opinion that the biblical text determined the content of the sermon and 47% had the opinion that the needs of the people determined the content of the sermon.

What in your opinion determined the content of the sermon?

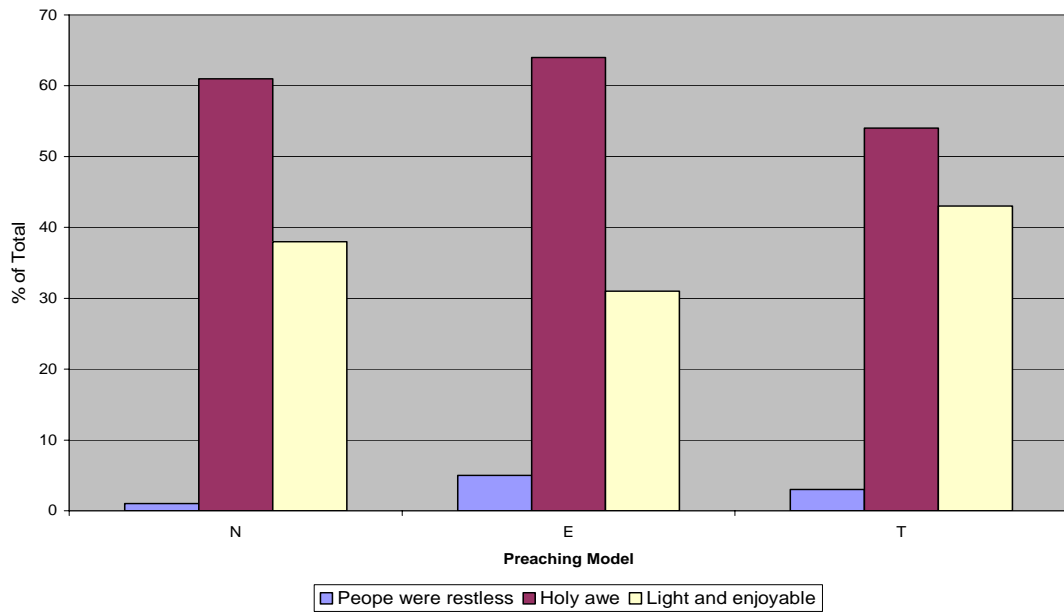


Fifty eight percent of all the respondents described the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon as “a sense of holy awe”, 37% as “light and enjoyable”, 2% as “restless”, 1% as “frivolous and irreverent” and the remaining 2% as other. The variation in this pattern across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models are depicted in the graphs below.

How would you describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon?



How would you describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon?

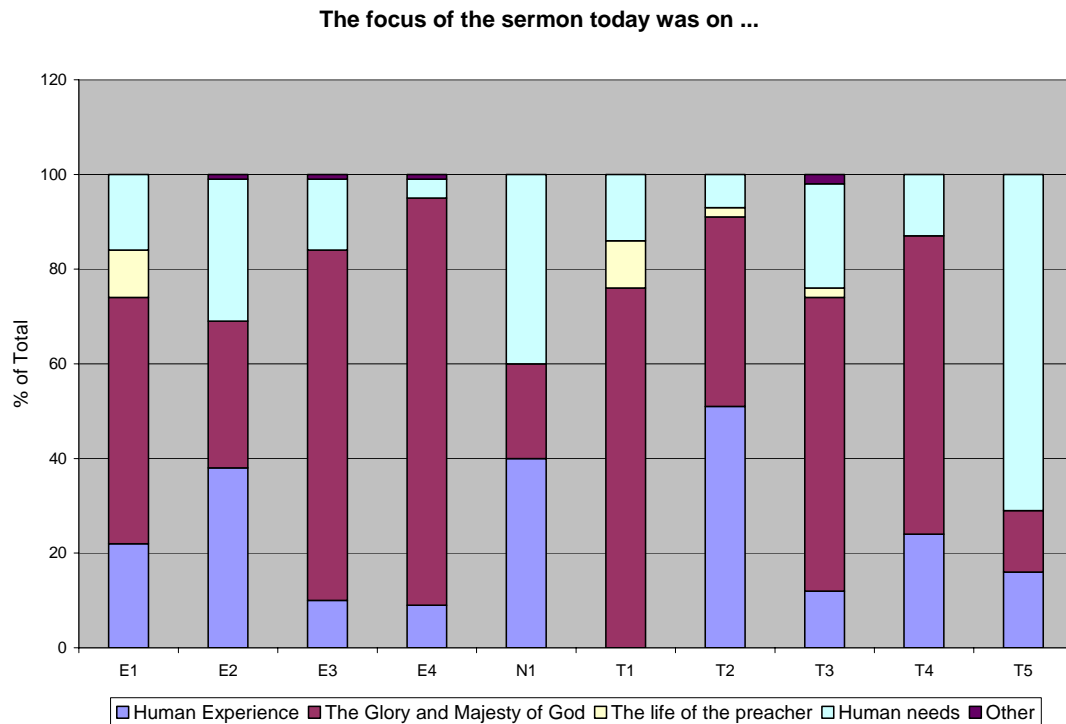


6.2.1.4 The Focus of the Sermon

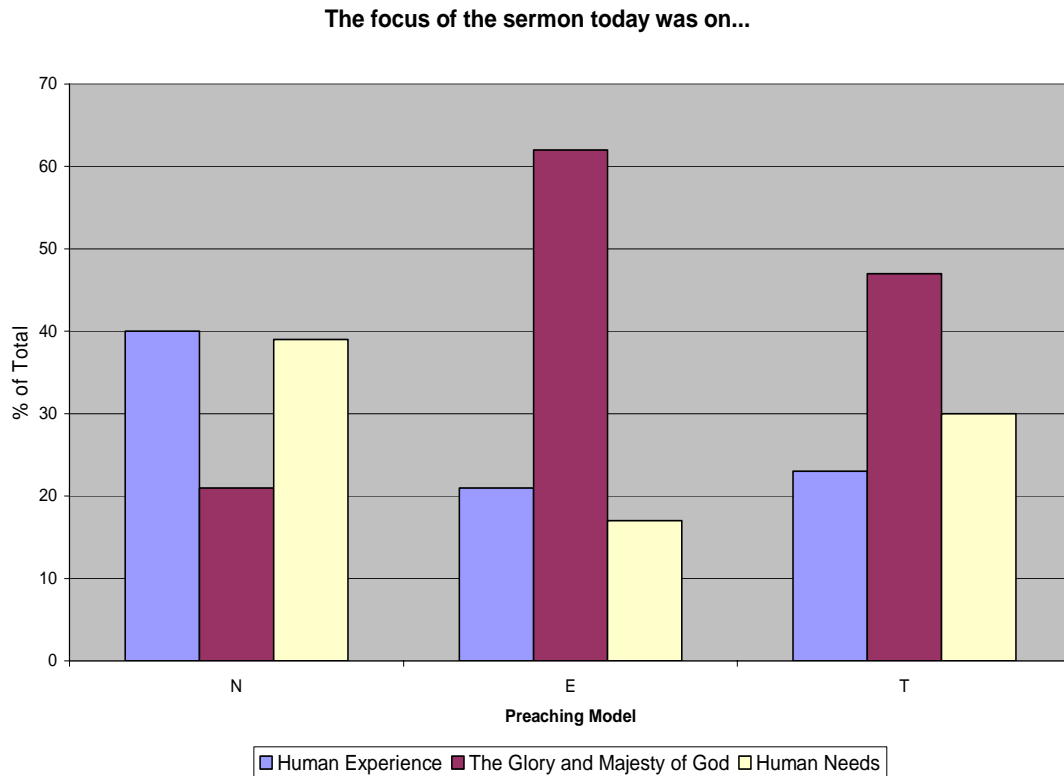
Fifty one percent indicated that the focus of the sermon was on “the Glory of God”, 22% on “human experience”, 25% on “human needs, 1% on the life of the preacher and 1% on other.

It is significant to note that 47% of the respondents indicated that the overall focus was on people (human experience and needs) rather than on God.

The variation in these trends across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.



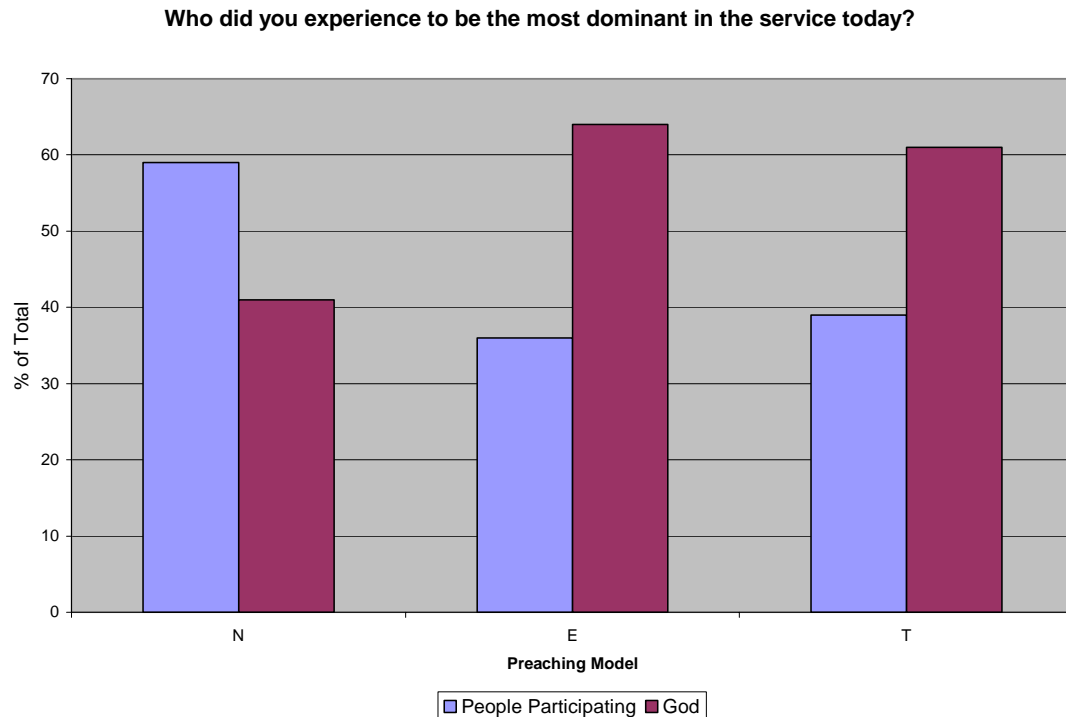
It is noted that the expository and topical grouping of churches had most respondents indicating the focus of the sermon being on the Glory of God. The narrative grouping indicated the opposite.



6.2.1.5 The Most Dominant in the Service

Sixty percent of all the respondents experienced God to be the most dominant in the service, 35% the preacher, 4% the worship leader and 1% a musician.

The variation in these trends across the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graph below.



It is noted that the expository and topical grouping of churches had most respondents indicating God to be most dominant in the service. The narrative grouping indicated that people participating were most dominant in the service.

6.2.1.6 Respondents' Perception of the Content of the Sermon

A series of questions were asked about the actual sermon on the day of the survey. The responses in this section were very positive in the way the respondents perceived the sermon to be promoting God. It was however found that in searching for certain keywords in the actual sermon manuscript a different picture emerged in some of the sermons. It is noted that the word atonement was not used by any of the preachers with the cross mentioned by E3, E4 and T1. The absence of these words begs the question as to whether the sermons preached really promoted the cross of Christ. It is also noted that none of the keywords featured with great frequency in N1 most probably pointing to a lack of emphasis on God. The keywords and their frequency use can be seen in Table 3 below.

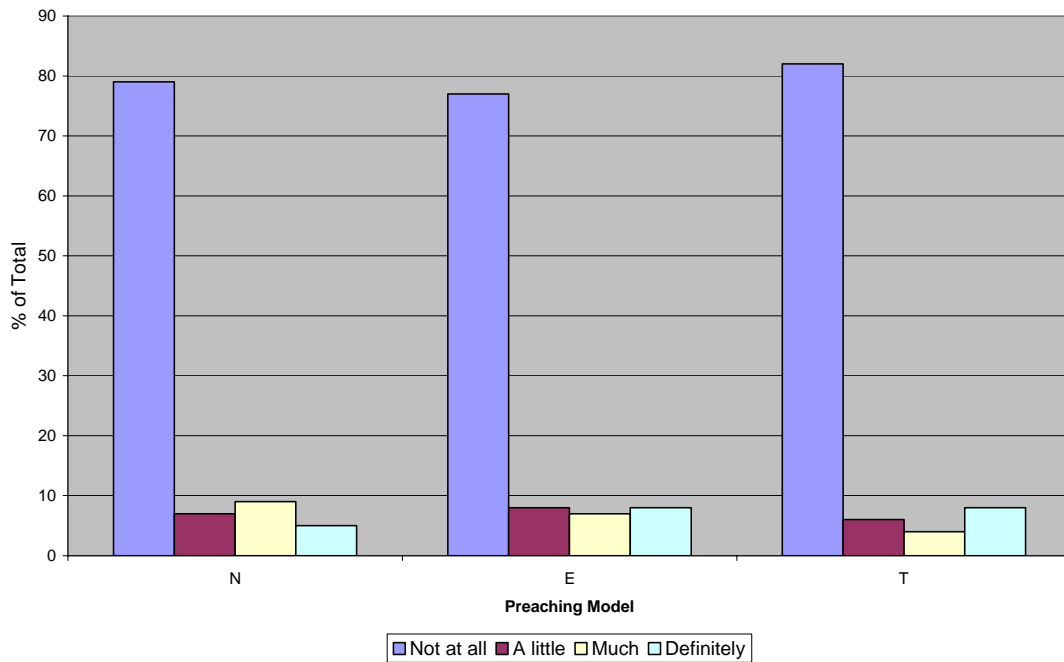
| | God | Jesus | Christ | Atonement | Cross |
|----|-----|-------|--------|-----------|-------|
| E1 | 19 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| E2 | 16 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| E3 | 10 | 17 | 16 | 0 | 3 |
| E4 | 21 | 15 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| N1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| T1 | 8 | 17 | 11 | 0 | 3 |
| T2 | 17 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| T3 | 28 | 13 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| T4 | 12 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 |

Table 3

The variation in the trends across the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.

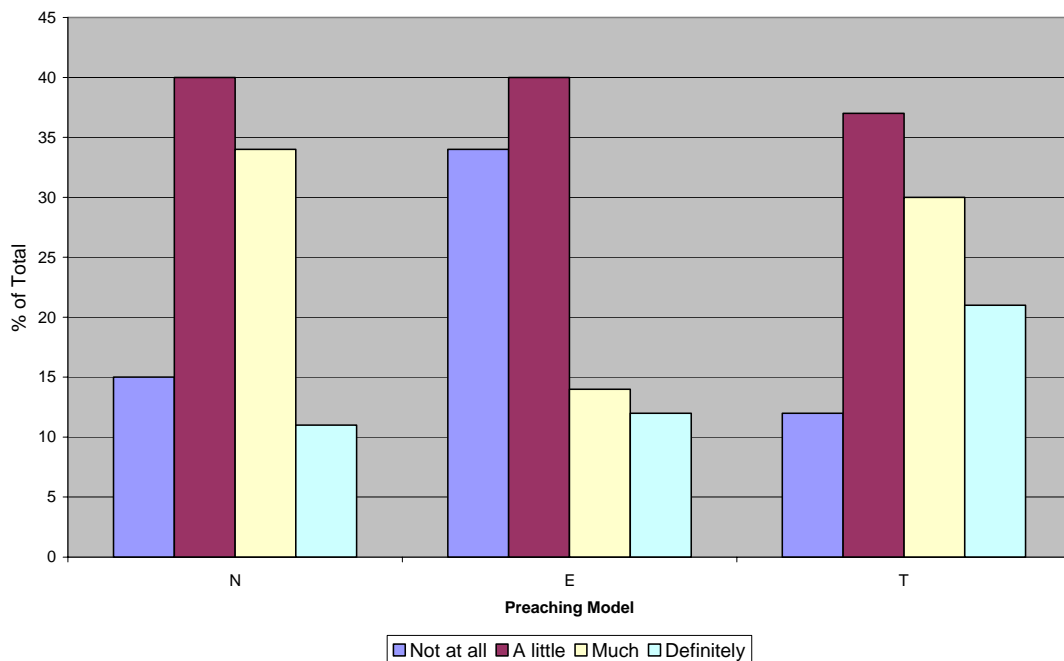
By far the majority of respondents exposed to each of the preaching models did not find the sermon to be an ordeal to endure. This is an indication that listeners generally appear to be satisfied with a broad spectrum of preaching style and content. This does prompt the question as to whether the listeners are discerning about preaching standards acceptable to God in line with apostolic preaching in the New Testament era.

The sermon today was an ordeal to endure

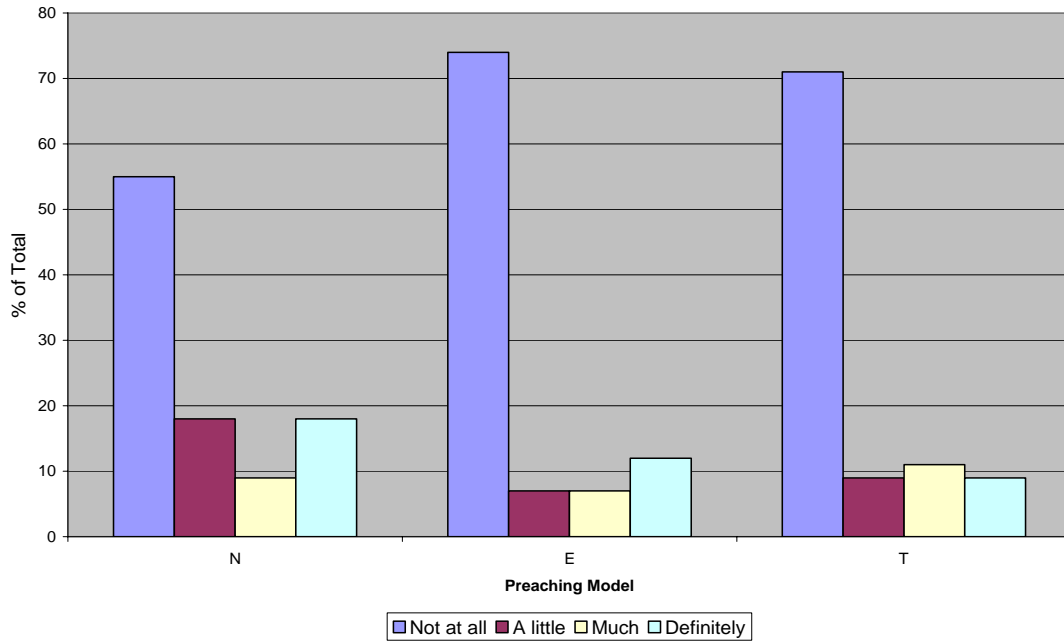


Those exposed to the expository preaching model indicated that the sermon today was less entertaining than those exposed to the narrative and topical models.

The sermon today was very entertaining

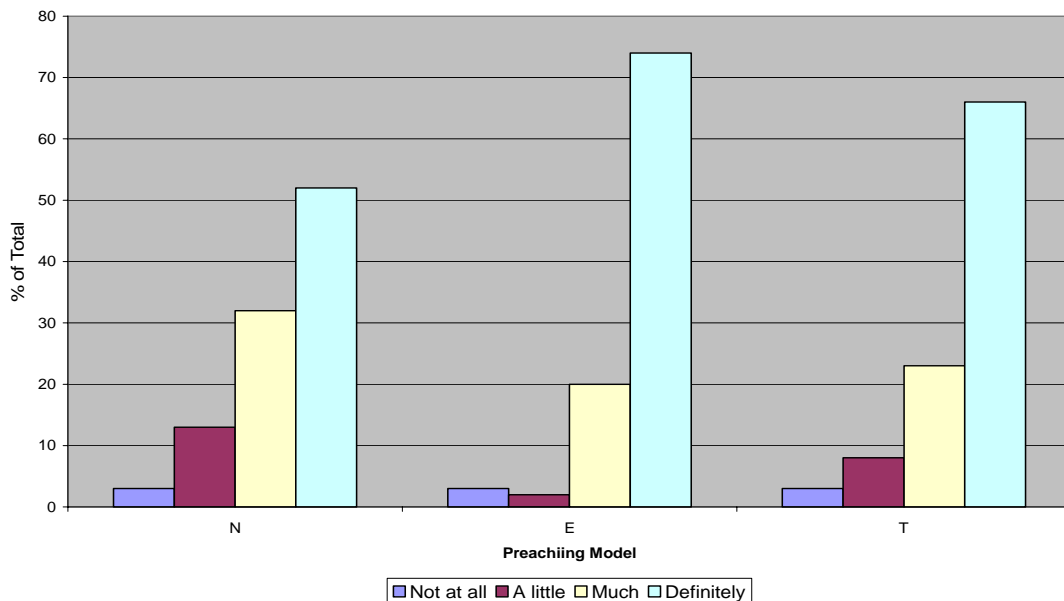


The sermon today was light on Biblical substance

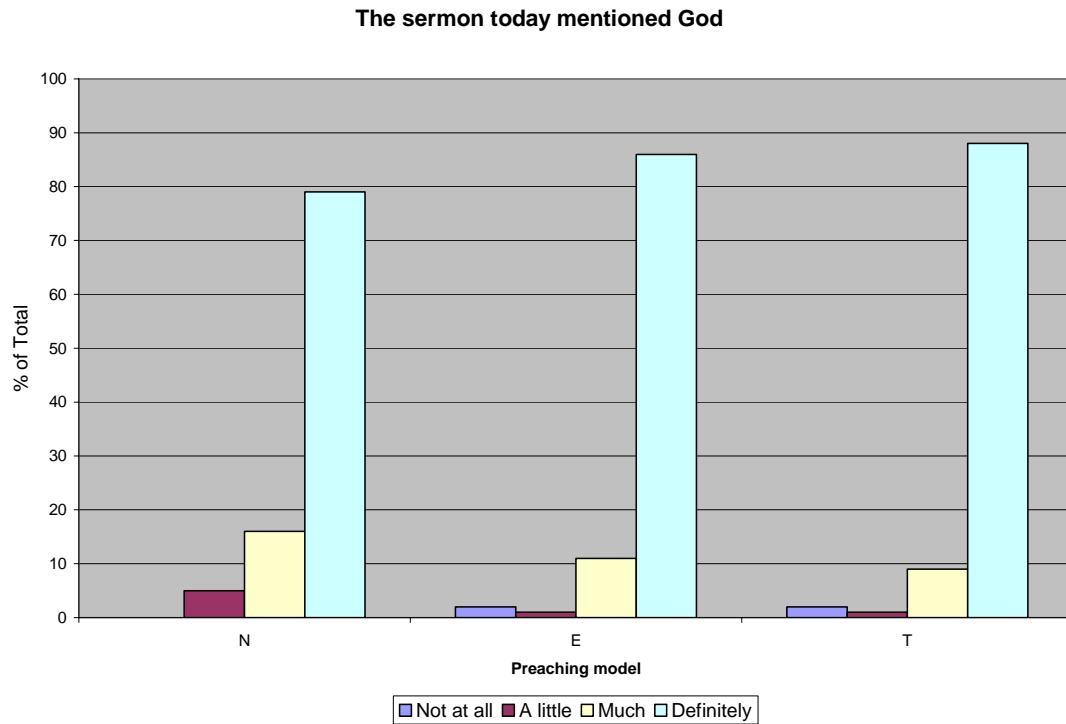


Even though 55% of the respondents indicated that the narrative sermon was not light on biblical substance it is noted that more respondents i.e. 74% and 71% indicated that the expository and topical models respectively were not light on biblical substance. The graph below shows a similar trend in terms of those exposed to the expository and topical models indicating a greater percentage of respondents, 73% and 67% respectively, indicating the sermon clarifying the biblical text

The sermon today clarified the Biblical text

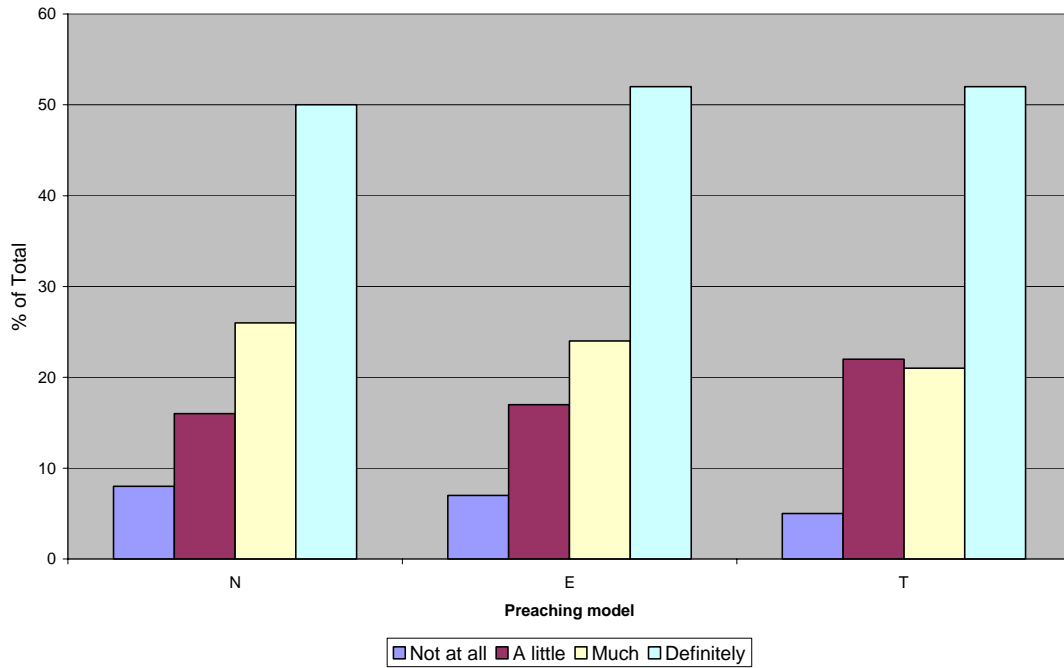


An analysis of the actual sermon manuscripts verifies that all the sermons preached mentioned God. See table 2 above.



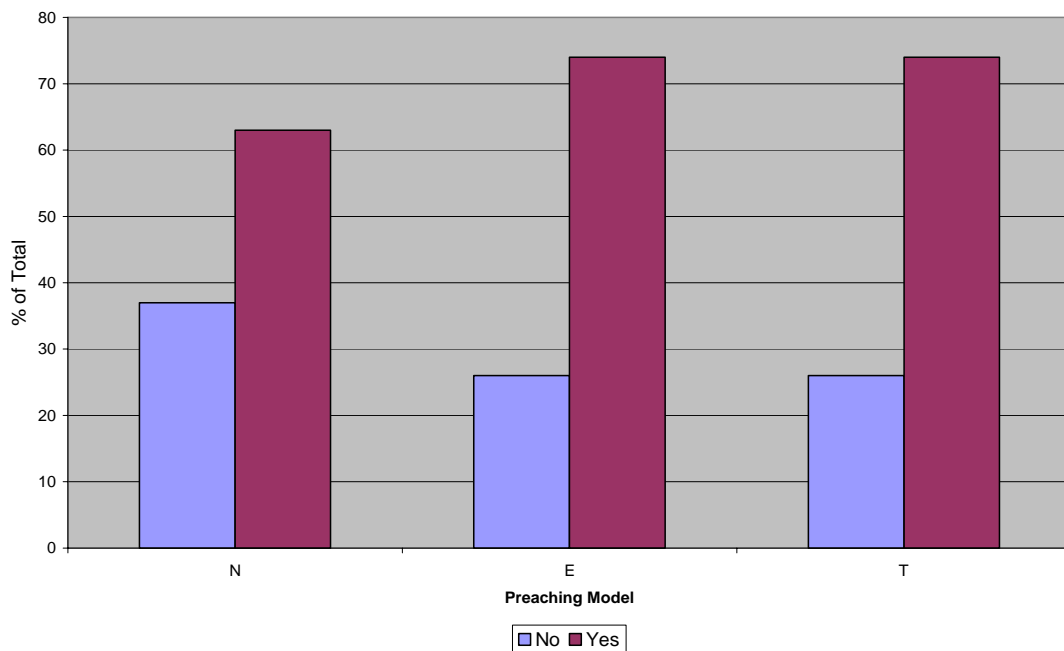
Whereas at least 50% of the respondents exposed to all 3 models indicated the sermon focusing on the cross of Christ, the actual analysis of the sermon manuscript does not verify this perception with only E4, E3 and T1 mentioning the cross of Christ.

The sermon today focused on the cross of Christ



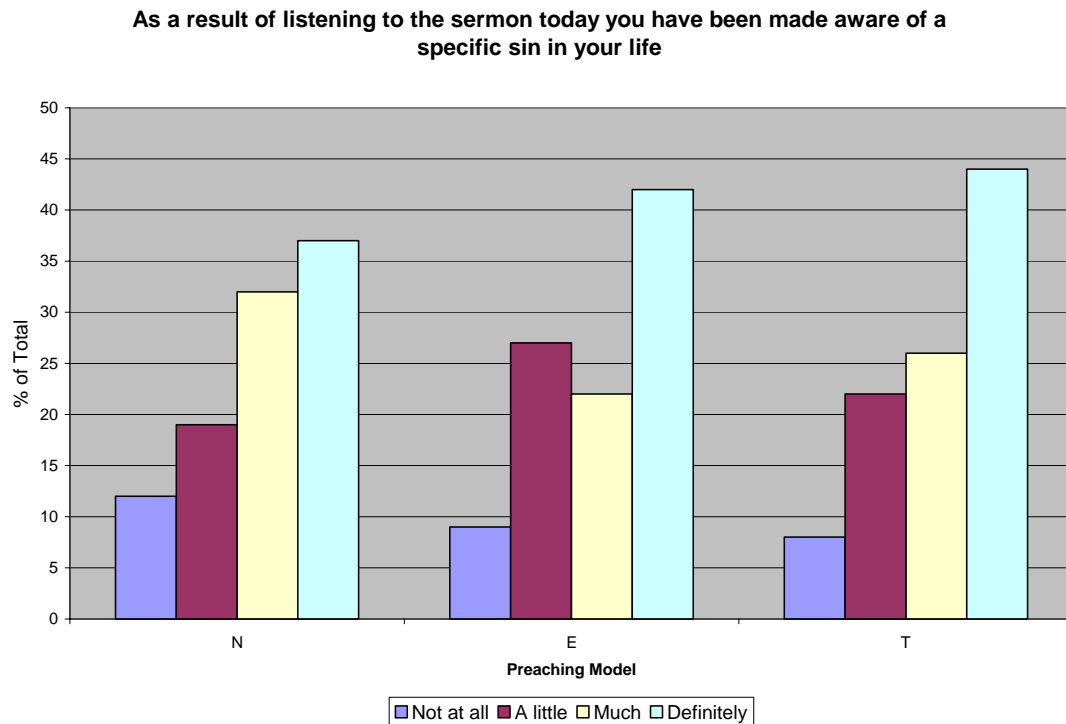
Eleven percent of all respondents indicated that the sermon today did not at all promoted the mystery of God, 16% indicated a little, 24% much and 49% definitely indicated the sermon today promoted the mystery of God.

The sermon today promoted the mystery of God



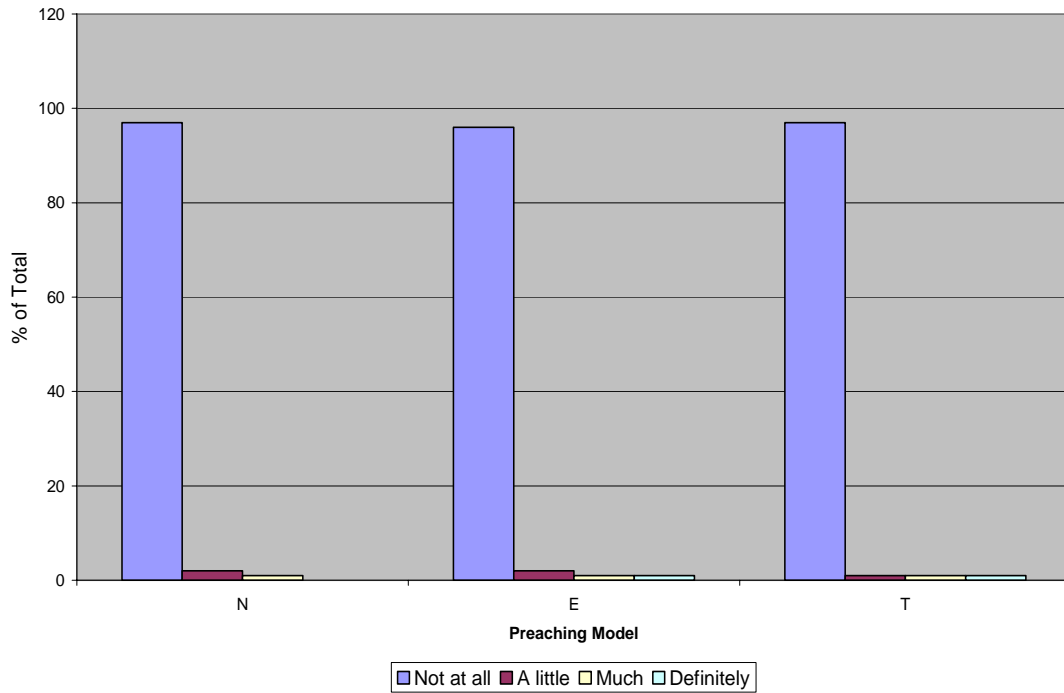
6.2.1.7 The Respondents' Experience as a Result of Listening to the Sermon

The variation in the trends across the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.



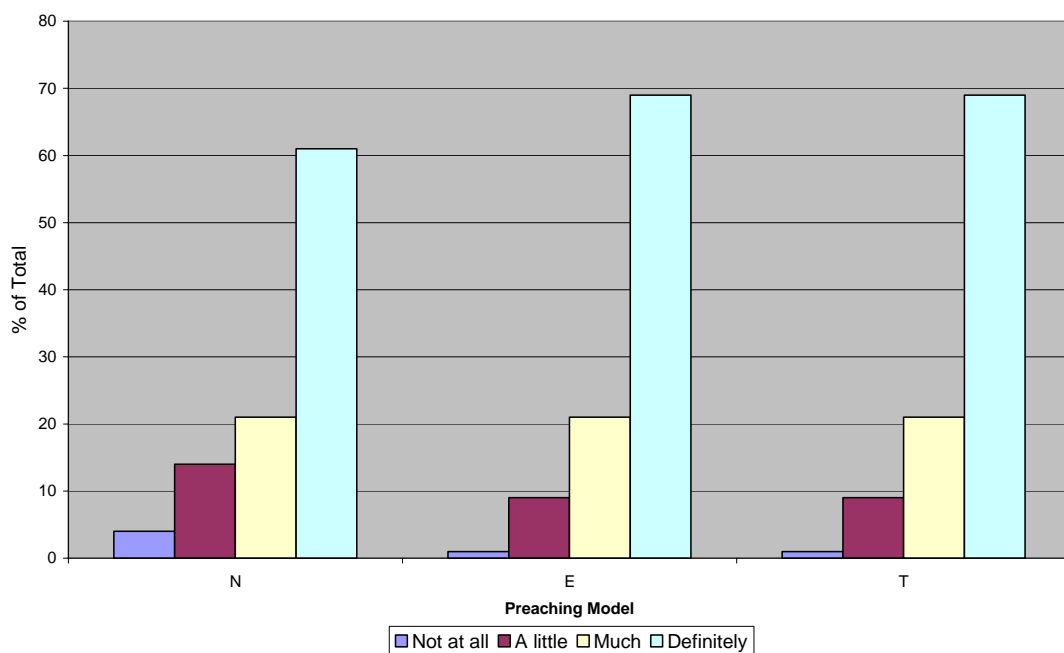
Although 67% of the respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon today they had been made aware of a specific sin in their lives, 96% of all respondents were not offended by the sermon preached. This does indicate openness by the listeners to be confronted with challenges from the sermon.

As a result of listening to the sermon today you were offended



Sixty eight percent of all respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they were definitely inspired to worship God, 21% much, 9% a little and 2% not at all.

As a result of listening to the sermon today you are inspired to worship God

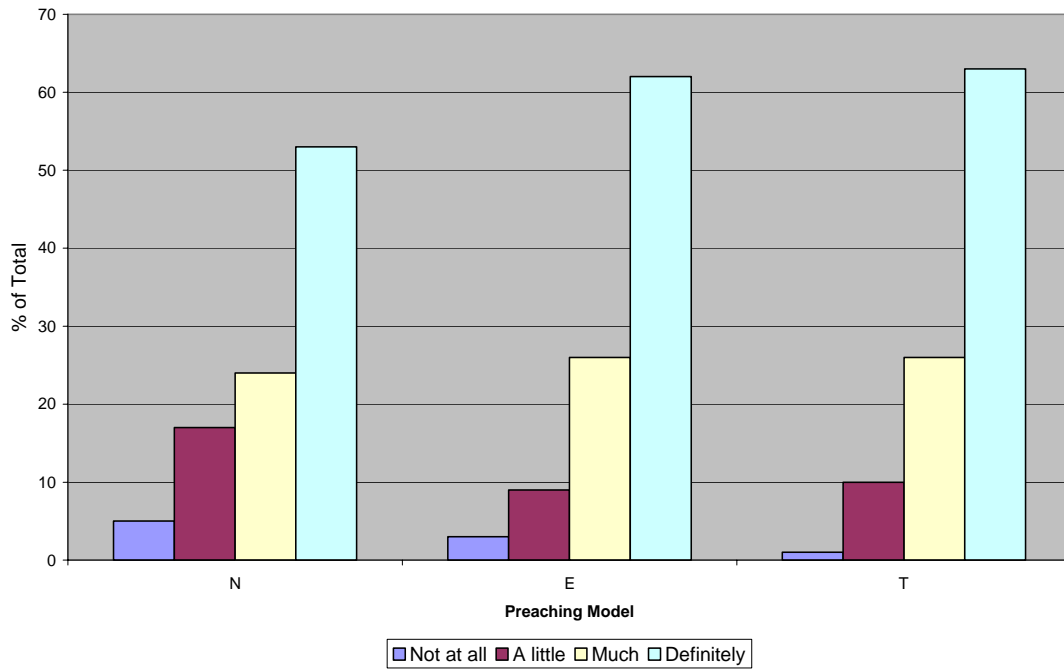


Fifty two percent of all the respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they definitely had a glimpse of the Glory and Majesty of God, 31% much, 14% a little and 3% not at all.



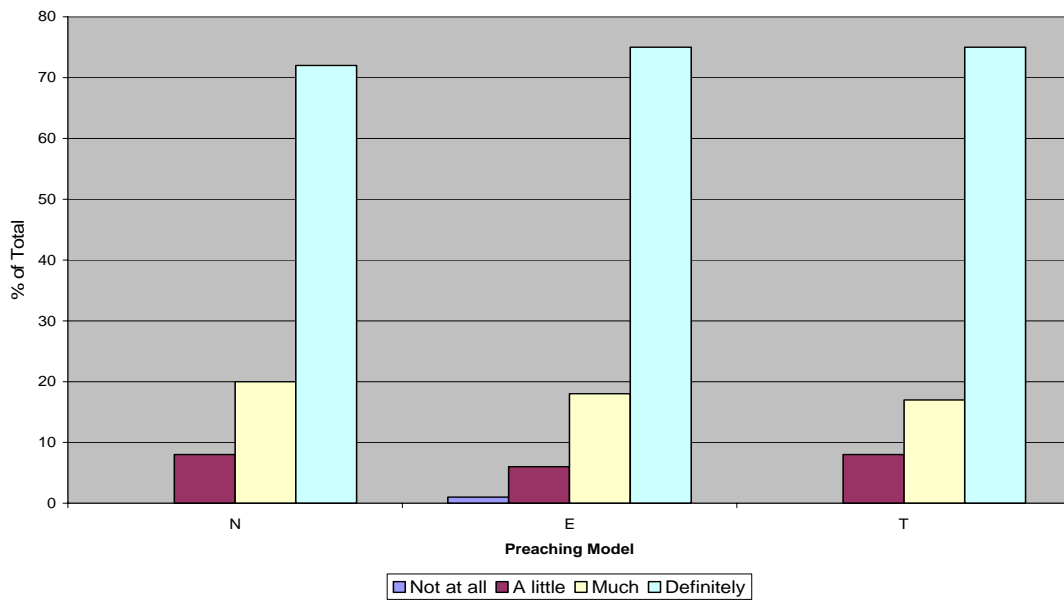
Sixty two percent of all the respondents were as a result of listening to the sermon definitely made more aware of God, 26% much, 10% a little and 2% not at all.

As a result of listening to the sermon today you were made more aware of God



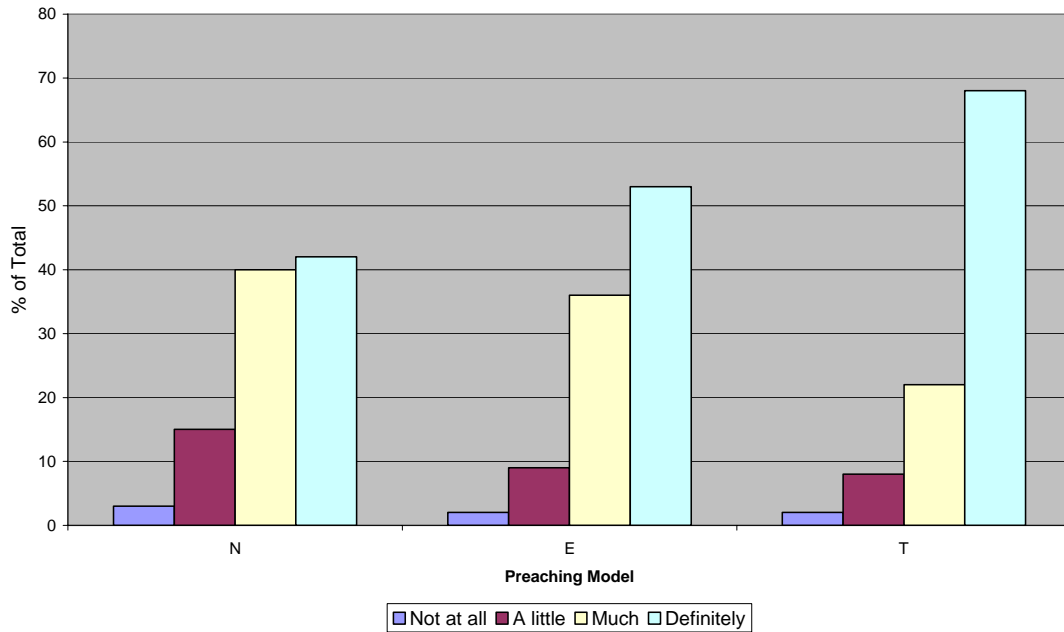
Seventy four percent of all respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they had definitely heard from a great God, 18% much, 7% a little and 1% not at all.

As a result of listening to the sermon today you have heard about a great God



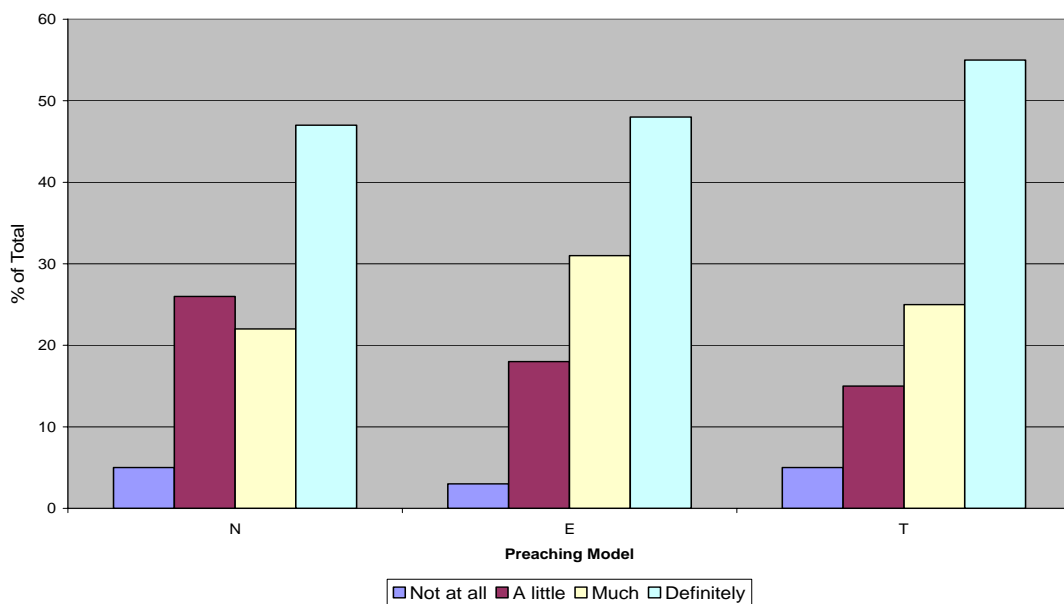
Fifty eight percent of all the respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they had heard from a great communicator, 30% much, 9% a little and 3% not at all.

As a result of listening to the sermon today you have heard from a great communicator



Fifty one percent of all respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they definitely heard God speaking to them, 27% much, 17% a little and 5% not at all.

As a result of listening to the sermon today you heard God speaking to you



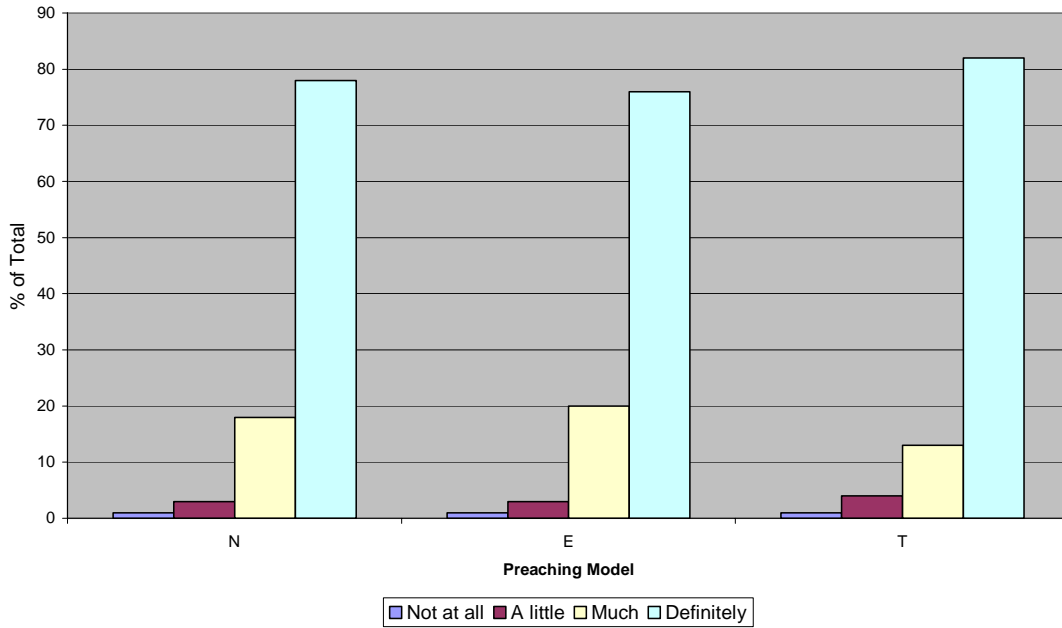
The 3 graphs below indicate that the respondents exposed to all three preaching models were very positive about their perception of the preachers' relationship with God.

Seventy percent of all respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they definitely sensed the preachers' dependence on the Holy Spirit, 21% much, 7% a little and 2% not at all.



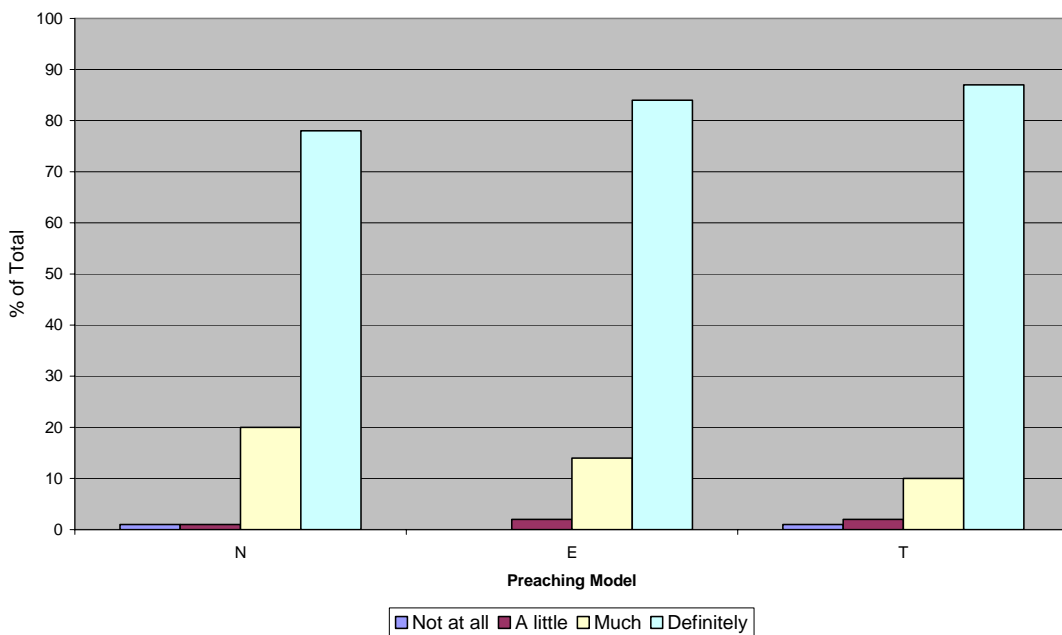
Seventy nine percent of all respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they definitely sensed that the preacher is in touch with God, 17% much, 3% a little and 1% not at all.

As a result of listening to the sermon today you sensed the preacher is in touch with God



Eighty five percent of all respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they definitely sensed the preacher's commitment to the Glory of God, 13% much, 2% a little but none indicated not at all.

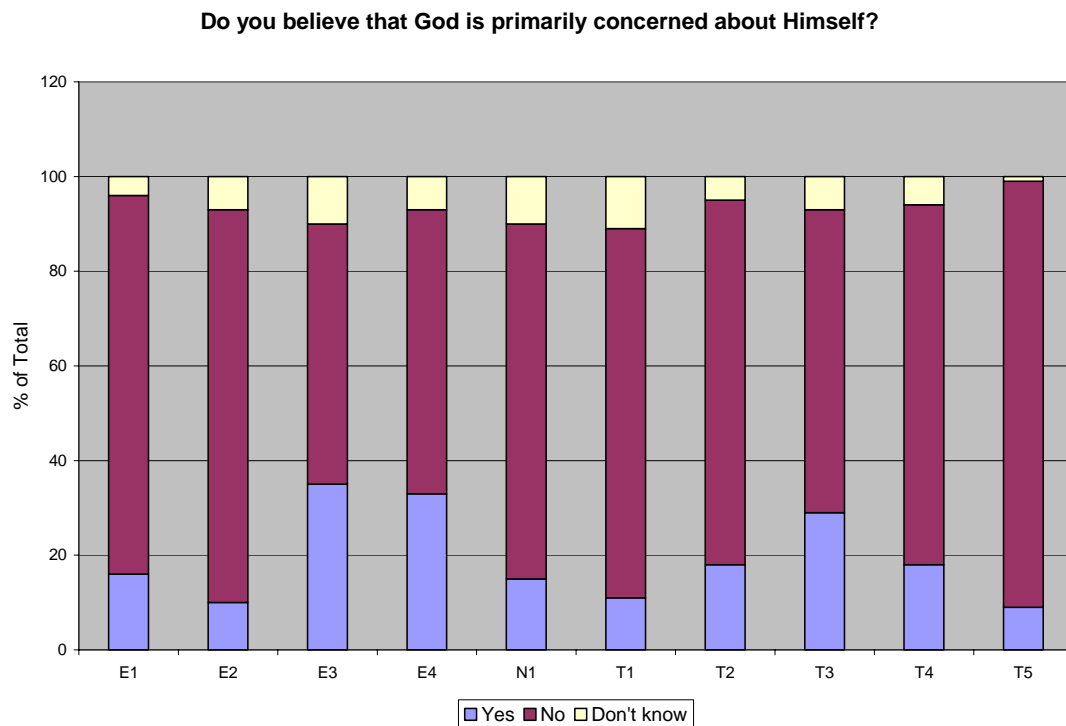
As a result of listening to the sermon today you sensed the preacher's commitment to the Glory of God



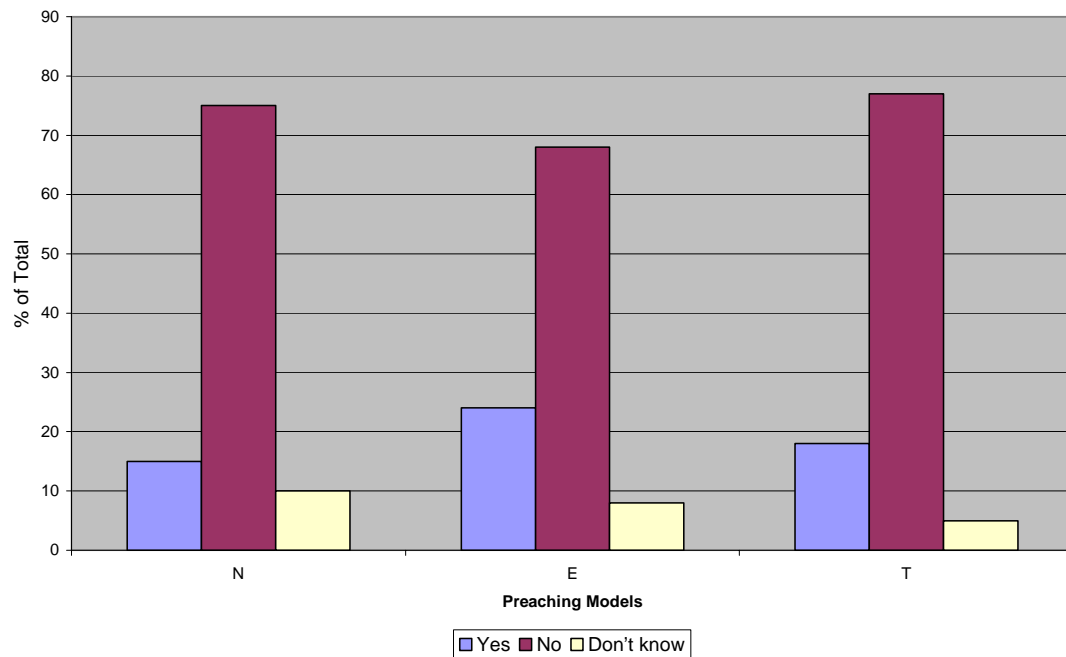
6.2.1.8 The Respondents' Understanding of God's Passion for his Own Glory

Seventy six percent of all the respondents do not believe that God is primarily concerned about Himself, 18% of the respondents believe that God is primarily concerned about Himself and 6% do not know.

The variation in these trends across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below. There are at least two churches where there is a greater percentage of respondents who believe God is primarily concerned about Himself.



Do you believe that God is primarily concerned about Himself?

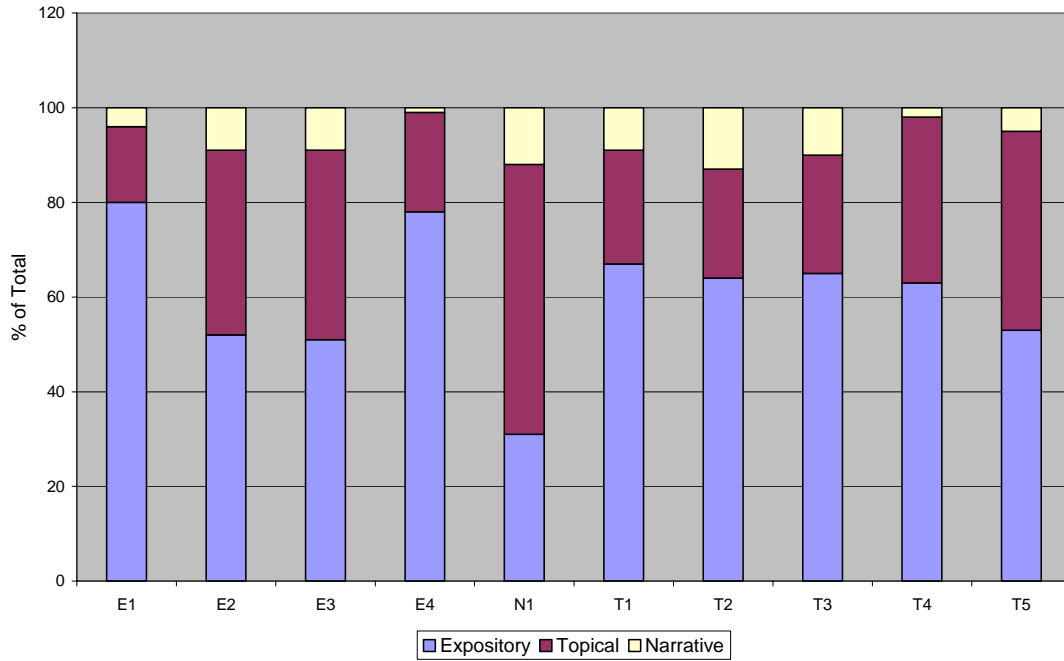


6.2.1.9 The Respondents' Preferred Preaching Model

Fifty nine percent of all the respondents preferred expository preaching, 34% preferred topical preaching and 7% preferred narrative preaching.

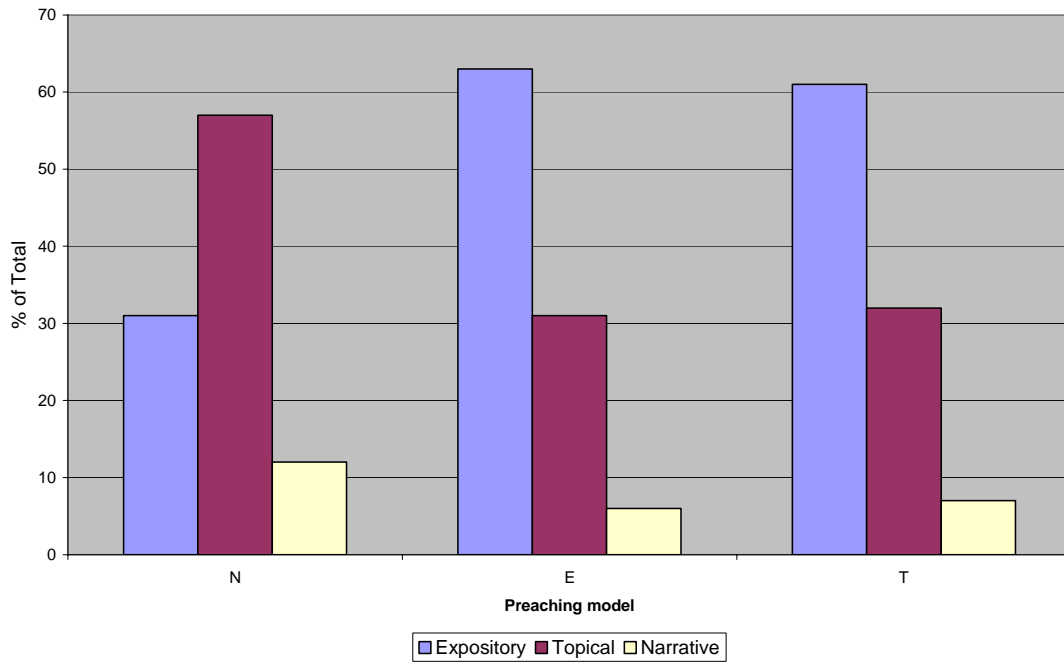
The variation in these trends across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.

What model of preaching do you prefer?



Respondents exposed to expository and topical preaching models indicated a clear preference for expository preaching,

What model of preaching do you prefer?



6.2.2 Second Level “chi-squared” Analysis

Certain outcomes of the churches surveyed were compared and analysed to determine whether there was any significant statistical relationship between the chosen variables. This was done seeking to establish any relationship and / or variation with regard to the preaching model used and the proclamation of the Glory of God.

6.2.2.1 Preaching Model Compared to the Opinions of the Respondents as to what Determined the Content of the Sermon Preached.

Those exposed to the narrative model of preaching tended to have the opinion that “the needs of the people”, “the interests of the preacher” and “the thoughts of various commentators” determined the content of the sermon. Whereas there was no tendency among those same respondents who held the opinion that the “biblical text”, “the Spirit of the Lord”, “what the Lord laid on his heart” and “missions” was that which determined the content of the sermon.

Those respondents exposed to the expository preaching model tended to have the opinion that the “biblical text”, “the Spirit of the Lord”, “what the Lord laid on his heart” and “missions” determined the content of the sermon. Whereas there was no tendency among those same respondents who held the opinion that “the needs of the people” was that which determined the content of the sermon.

Those exposed to the topical model of preaching tended to have the opinion that “the needs of the people” determined the content of the sermon.

6.2.2.2 Preaching Model Compared to the Description of the Atmosphere During the Delivery of the Sermon.

Those exposed to the expository preaching model most probably did not have the tendency to describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon in

“light and enjoyable” category of responses. Whereas those exposed to the topical preaching model most probably did have the tendency to describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon in the “light and enjoyable” category of responses.

6.2.2.3 Preaching Model and the Sermon Today Promoted the Mystery of God

None of the three preaching models revealed any statistical significant relationship either as promoting or not promoting the mystery of God.

6.2.2.4 Preaching Model Compared to the Focus on the Sermon Today

Those exposed to the expository preaching model tended to see that the focus of the sermon preached today was on the Glory of God, whereas there was no tendency as to the focus of the sermon being on human needs.

Those exposed to the narrative model of preaching tended to see that the focus of the sermon preached today was on human experience and human needs, whereas there was no tendency as to the focus of the sermon being on the Glory of God.

No statistically significant relationships were evident for those exposed to the topical preaching model and any of the areas of focus in the sermon today.

6.2.2.5 Preaching Model Compared to who was Most Dominant in the Service

Those exposed to the narrative model of preaching tended to experience various people present (musicians, worship leaders and preachers) to be the most dominant in the service today. Whereas there was no tendency among

those same respondents to experience God to be the most dominant in the service.

There was no statistically significant relationship evident for those exposed to both expository and topical models of preaching and the matter of who was most dominant in the service today.

6.2.2.6 Preaching Model Compared to do You Believe God is Primarily Concerned about Himself

None of the three preaching models revealed any statistical significant relationship to those who believed God is primarily concerned about Himself, those who did not believe God is primarily concerned about Himself and those who did not know whether God is primarily concerned about Himself.

6.2.2.7 Belief that God is Primarily Concerned about Himself Compared to Selected Variables

No statistical relationship was observed in any of the responses (yes, no and I don't know) about believing that God is primarily concerned about Himself when compared to the responses to the following questions: "What in your opinion determined the content of the sermon today?" "How would you describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon?" "Who did you experience to be the most dominant in the service today?"

Those respondents who did not know whether God is primarily concerned about Himself most probably tended to identify that the sermon today did not promote the mystery of God. There was, however, no statistically significant relationship evident among those respondents who did or did not believe that God is most concerned about Himself and the sermon did or did not promote the mystery of God.

The respondents who indicated that they did believe that God is most concerned about Himself, most probably tended to see the focus of the

sermon today on the Glory of God. There was, however, no statistically significant relationship evident among those respondents who did not believe or those who did not know that God is most concerned about Himself and the various responses on the focus of the sermon.

6.2.2.8 The Age of the Respondents Compared to Selected Variables

Respondents under the age of 25 tended to have the opinion that the content of the sermon was determined by the interests of the preacher and the thoughts of various commentators, whereas those between the age of 40 and 59 tended not to have the opinion that the content of the sermon was determined by the interests of the preacher and the thoughts of various commentators. There was no further statistically significant relationship evident among the other age groups and the opinion as to what determined the content of the sermon.

Respondents between the age of 25 and 39 tended to describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon in the category of “light and enjoyable”. Whereas respondents 60 and older tended not to describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon in the category of “light and enjoyable” but tended instead to describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon in the category “a sense of holy awe”. No further statistically significant relationships were evident in the remaining age groups and the responses as to the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon.

No statistical relationship was observed in any of the age groups compared to those respondents indicating that the sermon today promoted or did not promote the mystery of God or on the responses to the focus of the sermon today.

Respondents 39 and younger most probably tended to experience a person (the worship leader, the preacher or a musician) as dominant in the service whereas those older than 60 most probably tended to experience God as most dominant in the service. No further statistically significant relationship

was evident comparing the ages of the respondents and their opinion as to who they experienced as most dominant in the service.

Respondents 25 and younger tended not to know whether God is primarily concerned about Himself whereas respondents over the age of 60 tended to know that God is primarily concerned about Himself. No further statistically significant relationship was evident comparing the age groups and the responses as to the question: “Do you believe that God is primarily concerned about Himself?”

6.2.2.9 The Gender of the Respondents Compared to Selected Variables

No statistically significant relationship was evident when comparing the genders of the respondents to the following questions: What in your opinion determined the content of the sermon today? How would you describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon? The sermon today promoted the mystery of God, The focus of the sermon today was on... and Do you believe that God is primarily concerned about Himself?

Male respondents tended to experience a person (the worship leader, the preacher or a musician) as dominant in the service. No further statistically significant relationship was evident by the remaining respondents and as to whom they experienced as dominant in the service.

7. AN ADJUSTED THEORY OF PRAXIS

In this final chapter consideration will be given to an adjusted theory of praxis. Now that a homiletical approach has been developed in the circular process of understanding and explanation, a new theory of action can be formulated to develop the skills and approach of the preacher in communicating the Glory of God through the Word of God, thus inspiring the listeners to greater vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter of God in worship. This final chapter includes what Heitink (1999:21) calls the strategic perspective which seeks to facilitate change in praxis.

In the light of the challenges facing the preacher in the 21st century context in regard to proclaiming the Glory of God and having sought to establish an understanding of the Glory and Transcendence of God certain observations and guidelines will be discussed. Every effort will be made to recommend preaching guidelines in the light of the empirical observations that reflect the weight of God's Glory.

The intention being to convince preachers to believe in preaching that is filled with the aroma of Christ as stated by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:14-15. 2 Corinthians 2:14-15; "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing."

It is preaching heralding a message permeated by a sense of God's greatness, majesty and holiness. The longing for this kind of preaching expressed so well by George Whitfield as quoted by biographer Arnold Dallimore (1970:16),

Yea... that we shall see the great Head of the Church once more... raise up unto Himself certain young men whom He may use in this glorious employ. And what manner of men will they

be? Men mighty in the Scriptures, their lives dominated by a sense of the greatness, the majesty and holiness of God, and their minds and hearts aglow with the great truths of the doctrines of grace. They will be men who have learned what it is to die to self, to human aims and personal ambitions; men who are willing to be “fools for Christ”, who will bear reproach and falsehood, who will labour and suffer, and whose supreme desire will be not to gain earth’s accolades, but to win the Master’s approbation when they appear before His awesome judgement seat. They will be men who preach with broken hearts and tear-filled eyes, and upon whose ministries God will grant an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, and who will witness “signs and wonders following” in the transformation of multitudes of human lives.

Through the use of the empirical research above the effect on listeners exposed to three different (narrative, expository and topical) preaching models has been examined. This was done to establish whether the different preaching models, including other aspects of those sermons, are proclaiming the Glory of God leading to vitality of faith and worship, or whether the sermons are in any way a hindrance to the listeners’ faith and worship by obscuring the Glory of God.

7.1 Recommended Guidelines

The intention of this research was to develop a homiletical approach that will better equip the preacher in proclaiming the Glory of God through the Word of God which will inspire listeners to greater vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter with (of) God in worship.

As a result of the literature study undertaken, as well as the outcomes of the empirical research, the following are recommended guidelines for proclaiming the Glory of God.

7.1.1 On Determining the Content of the Sermon

There is the need to have the biblical text primarily setting the agenda for the sermon.

If it is the text of Scripture that establishes the agenda for the sermon then the expositor must not start with some private idea instead “he begins with the Scripture itself and allows the verses under consideration to establish and frame the content of the sermon” (Begg 1999:28, Robinson 1980:23).

In the survey conducted for this dissertation this approach of using the biblical text to determine the agenda for the sermon was not evident by those exposed to the narrative preaching model. However it was most evident by those exposed to the expository model of preaching. In as much as it has been established that the listener (Vos 2005:317) and his or her needs are an extremely important consideration in the praxis of preaching it must not take the place of the Word of God setting the agenda.

The chi-squared analysis confirmed that those respondents exposed to the narrative model of preaching tended to have the needs of the people determining the content of the sermon and not that of the biblical text. The reverse of this was true for those exposed to the expository model of preaching having the tendency to see the biblical text as determining the content of the sermon.

Stuart Olyott (2005:29) asks the very simple but crucial question leading to the same conclusion about the biblical text setting the agenda for or determining the content of the sermon; “But where is the Word of God to be found?” He answers his own question by stating that,

All that God has to say to men and women has been written down in the words and sentences of the Bible. Those words and sentences have an intended meaning. Nothing, then – nothing at all! – can be more important than getting that meaning right.

Study which brings out the intended meaning of words and sentences is called exegesis. No preaching is true preaching unless everything that is said is built on a foundation of exegetical accuracy.

Stephen Olford (1998:44) has the same view. He says, “A sermon is the proclamation of the Word of God only if the text of the Word is accurately expounded and preached. So in the strictest sense of the term, authentic preaching is expository preaching”. As indicated in the literature study this view does not exclude using a topical or narrative approach in presentation provided that the biblical text is being used to determine the content of the sermon.

“To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view” says Stott (1982b:125-126), “The expositor pries open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted and unfolds what is tightly packed. The opposite of exposition is ‘imposition’, which is to impose on the text what is not there.”

The Apostle Paul did not merely claim to have a message *about* God. Shaddix (2003:14) claims. He says that as Paul walked into the pagan city of Corinth he made it clear that he had a message *from* God for them. He was convinced that the message was the only thing that could reveal the truth about life and eternity, and he gave God the credit. “In other words, his passion for God’s glory determined the content of his preaching. He went to great pains to ensure that what he put on the table for his listeners was in fact, the very Word of God as opposed to the wisdom of man”.

If the Apostle’s message was from God and about God then Christian preaching should be communicating the revelation that is about and from God. It is this revelation then that should set the agenda in determining the content of the sermon.

7.1.2 On the Focus of the Sermon

There is the need for preachers to have the focus of the sermon primarily on God.

Immink (1994:89) reports that as a result of what is being called “New Homiletics” there has been “a further turn to the listener”. This study has shown that an overemphasis on the listener can be a great hindrance to proclaiming the Glory of God. The empirical research revealed how those exposed to the narrative model of preaching saw the focus of the sermon predominantly on human experience (40%) and human needs (39%), whereas a mere 21% saw the focus on the Glory and Majesty of God. It is also significant that in the overall picture 47% of the respondents indicated that the overall focus of the sermon was on people (human experience and needs) and not on God.

The chi-squared analysis confirmed that those exposed to the expository model of preaching tended to see the focus of the sermon preached on the Glory and Majesty of God. The opposite trend was evident with those exposed to the narrative model tending to see the focus of the sermon on human needs.

The issue of focus was further elaborated in who the respondents perceived to be the most dominant in the service. Those exposed to the expository and topical models had a far greater percentage of respondents who experienced God to be more dominant whereas the opposite was evident with those exposed to the narrative model.

The chi-squared analysis confirmed that those exposed to the narrative model of preaching tended to experience the various people present as dominant in the service.

Respondents 39 years and younger most probably tended to experience a person as dominant in the service whereas those 60 years and older most probably tended to experience God as most dominant in the service.

It may be that the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of the listener and therefore away from God. D. A. Carson in his book, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, proposes that “the one thing we most urgently need in Western Christendom is a deeper knowledge of God. We need to know God better (1992:15). It is this redirected focus on God and the knowledge of God that that is being proposed in this dissertation. Carson (1992:15) goes on to describe the culture of our day

When it comes to knowing God, we are a culture of the spiritually stunted. So much of our religion is packaged to address our felt needs – and these are almost uniformly anchored in our pursuit of our own happiness and fulfilment. God simply becomes the Great Being who, potentially at least, meets our needs and fulfils our aspirations. We think rather little of what he is like, and what he expects of us, what he seeks in us. We are not captured by his holiness and his love; his thoughts and words capture too little of our imagination, too little of our discourse, too few of our priorities.

An adjustment is needed in the focus of preaching away from the present human centred priority of so many in the churches to being captured afresh by the Glory of God. This adjustment in focus on God will need to take place to work towards what Allen, calls a “revitalized apprehension of the reality of God” (1995:30). Preachers who choose to neglect this essential aspect of preaching will obscure God’s revelation and glory. There is the need to shine the light of God’s word and glory into the heart and mind of the listener.

For this to be a reality the preacher must himself be “ignited with a holy passion for God and be consumed with reaching souls” (Lawson 2003:121).

Lawson goes on to quote an incident that took place during the era of George Whitfield's powerful preaching.

When he was preaching in Edinburgh, many in the town awakened at five o' clock in the morning to gather and hear the evangelist. A man on his way to the tabernacle met David Hume, the notorious Scottish philosopher and sceptic. Surprised to see Hume on the way to hear Whitfield, the man said, "I thought you did not believe in the gospel." Hume replied, "I don't, but he does.

When a preacher strongly and deeply believes the message he is conveying, the strong convictions can have a powerful effect on those who hear him. There is no substitute for the preacher being thoroughly absorbed with God and his word.

Or as Piper (2006) urges, "Preaching is the heralding of a message permeated by the sense of God's greatness and majesty and holiness. The topic may be anything under the sun, but it is always brought in to the blazing light of God's greatness and majesty in his word (<http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/06/042706.html>).

7.1.3 On the Content of the Sermon

There is the need for preachers to include the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ in the content of the sermon.

The greatest concern in this area of the content of the sermon as exposed by the empirical research was the responses given in the survey question: "The sermon today focused on the cross of Christ". The responses in the survey did not correspond with the actual analysis of the manuscript of the preacher. This may be due to the listeners coming to the sermon assuming certain beliefs (like the work of Christ in atoning for sin) and yet not being discerning

as to whether this kind of important doctrine is being neglected by the preacher.

This does however show that the preacher needs to be far more aware of what was discussed in an earlier chapter as an essential conviction; the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Piper (<http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/06/042706.html>) suggests a focus on five essential dimensions of the gospel message.

The gospel is a message about historical events: the life and death and resurrection of Christ – summoning us to open them with thorough exposition of texts.

The gospel is a message about what those events achieved before we experience anything or even existed; the completion of perfect obedience, the payment for our sins, the removal of the wrath of God, the installation of Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah and king of the universe, the disarming of the rulers and authorities, the destruction death – all of these summoning us to open them with thorough exposition of texts.

The gospel is a message about the transfer of those achievements from Christ to particular persons through our union with Christ by faith alone apart from works – which summons us to open for our people the nature and dynamics of faith by the exposition of dozens of texts.

The gospel is a message about good things that are now true about us as the achievement of the cross is applied to us in Christ: that God is only merciful to us now instead of wrathful (propitiation), that we are counted righteous in Christ now (justification), that we are freed now from guilt and power of sin (redemption), that we are positionally and progressively made holy (sanctification) – all of which summons us to open these

glorious realities for our people week after week with thorough exposition of texts.

And finally the gospel is a message about the glorious God Himself as our final, eternal, all-satisfying Treasure - calls for the richest exposition that our people may be fed the best and highest food of heaven.

The exposition of texts is essential because the gospel is a message that comes to us in words and God has ordained that people see the glory of Christ – the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8). The task of the preacher is to open the words and sentences and paragraphs of Scripture and display “the glory of Christ who is the image of God”.

There is the need for preachers to convey in their sermons the mystery of God.

Another aspect in the content of the sermon that may help preachers convey the glorious transcendence of God is the willingness to promote the mystery of God. Placher (1996:199) who says that “we recognize the way in which the biblical narratives keep illuminating our understanding of our lives...(Y)et reflecting on our world in biblical terms keeps proving so enriching that we are willing to keep coming back to the Bible and leave many questions unanswered, many puzzles unresolved.” It is helpful for the preacher to avoid a contrastive view of the transcendence of God leading to a view of God that is trivial and small.

There is the need for preachers to saturate their own minds and their sermons with doctrinal substance.

Every sermon we preach should be full of doctrine (Olyott 2005:53). It should be rich in theology. This guideline has particular cautionary relevance in the context of the influence of the emerging church where the importance of doctrine is minimized. Don Carson expresses this concern over the

failure of emerging church leaders in handling facts, both exegetical and historical in a responsible way (see Carson 2005:155-156). He claims that there is lightness and inconsistency in their handling of the Scriptures. To proclaim the Glory of God it is essential to grapple with the weighty substance of theology.

It is when a preacher has his mind and heart filled with the divine revelation which has unveiled the mind of God that he will with the Apostle Paul be able to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8). The light of the gospel of the Glory of Christ and the mystery of God and every other aspect given to us in the Word can only be passed on to others when the preacher has saturated his own mind and sermons with doctrinal substance. Piper (2006:www.desiringgod.org) gives an example of the significance of the weight of doctrine speaking of the work of Christ on the cross accomplishing the redemption from condemnation and hell.

The death of the Son of God and the damnation of unrepentant human beings are the loudest shouts under heaven that God is infinitely holy, and sin is infinitely offensive, and wrath is infinitely just, and grace is infinitely precious, and our brief life – and the life of every person in your church and community – leads to everlasting joy or everlasting suffering. If our preaching does not carry the weight of these things to our people, what will? Veggie Tales? Radio? Television? Discussion groups? Emergent conversations?

Superficial doctrinal understanding will not be sufficient to convey the magnitude of God's love and grace. Instead preachers who saturate their souls and minds with doctrine, having their hearts captivated by the magnificence of God will find that it spills out in all of their preaching. Their proclamation will be such that it exalts God in His supremacy and revelation of His Glory.

7.1.4 On Believing that God is Primarily Concerned about Himself

There is the need for preachers to be convinced that God is the most self-centred person in the universe leading to greater confidence in God's grace to sinful people.

It was clearly evident that most of the respondents (76%) exposed to all three models of preaching do not believe that God is primarily concerned about Himself.

The chi-squared analysis revealed that the respondents who indicated they did believe that God is most concerned about Himself most probably tended to see the focus of the sermon on the Glory and Majesty of God.

The chi-squared analysis further revealed that respondents 25 years and younger tended not to know whether God is primarily concerned about Himself whereas respondents over the age of 60 years tended to know that God is primarily concerned about Himself.

This does give some indication as to an underlying man-centredness in the belief system of those surveyed. It does show a swing in belief on this matter from the older generation believing God is primarily concerned about Himself to the younger generation believing that God is not primarily concerned about Himself.

The research reveals that most respondents believe God is not primarily concerned about Himself. The literature study revealed a clear position that God has an uncompromising passion for His own Glory (Reymond 2003:55-56; Piper 2003:7). This passion that God has for His Glory is never a threat to His interest in the world. It is in fact the basis of confidence that believers can have knowing that God reaches out to humanity with salvation as shown in the literature study and the repeat of the following question: Why did God predestine us in love to be his sons? That "the glory of his grace may be praised" (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14).

There is therefore the need for continued study and teaching in this area of conviction to rise up and meet the need of a God-centred pulpit.

7.2 Recommended Preaching Model

The research reveals that 59% of all the respondents preferred expository preaching. Respondents exposed to the expository model (63%) and the topical model (61%) indicated a preference for expository preaching. It can therefore be said that the empirical study illustrates that the listeners in the given Baptist context favour the expository preaching model.

Any recommendation must include consideration of the recommended guidelines discussed in the section above and summarized below.

- The biblical text determining the content of the sermon.
- The need for preachers to have the focus of the sermon primarily on God.
- The need for preachers to include the light of the gospel of the Glory of Christ, the mystery of God, and doctrinal substance in the content of their sermons.
- The need for preachers to be convinced that God is the most self-centred person in the universe leading to confidence in God's grace to sinful people.
- The need for a God-centred pulpit.

This favourable statistic in conjunction with a high priority placed on the recommended guidelines for proclaiming the weight of the Glory of God forms a sound basis for proposing expository preaching as the recommended preaching model to enhance the goal of proclaiming the Glory of God.

Biblical exposition is the only sure way for the pastor to equip the modern church to hand off the heritage of the Christian faith to the next generation. People can listen to topical how-to and life application sermons all their lives and never really grasp on general Bible knowledge, Christian doctrine, systematic and biblical theology. Only as the Word of God is systematically and intentionally explained and applied do believers “come to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

(Shaddix 2003:174)

The recommendation to use expository preaching is reinforced by the observation Derek Thomas (2002:63) makes, “expository preaching is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of the God-breathed nature of Scripture. The idea is not so much that God breathed into the Scriptures, but that the Scriptures are the product of His breathing out... The Preacher is to make God’s Word known and make it understandable. Alec Motyer writing in the foreword of Robinson’s book (1980a:vi) agrees, “an expository ministry is the proper response to a God-breathed Scripture. Central to it all is that concern which the word ‘exposition’ itself enshrines: a display of what is there”.

This dissertation has not focused on all the very necessary homiletical details of sermon making and delivery. There can be no doubt that introductions, outlines and conclusions are vitally important in any sermon preached. One can add the importance of illustrations, titles, tone of voice, simplicity and relevance. But these have not been the focus of this research.

The intention and motive behind this work has been to promote preaching and sermons that are in step with and worthy of the weight of the Glory of God.

Like Calvin it would be commendable if all preachers of the Word could write as he wrote in his last will and testament, “I have endeavoured, both in my

sermons and also in my writings and commentaries, to preach the Word purely and chastely, and faithfully to interpret His sacred Scriptures” (Beza 1996:100).

There is of course is more to preaching than imparting information. Unless sermons address the affections, they have failed as sermons as indicated by Charles Simeon (1959:22), “the understanding must be informed, but in a manner, however, which affects the heart, either to comfort the hearers, or to excite them to acts of piety, repentance, or holiness”.

It is the contention of this dissertation that if the preacher permeates his sermons with a sense of the Glory of God, then the listeners will be so captivated by God, they will be moved to greater faith in God as well as experience a liveliness of faith.

7.3 A Sample Sermon

In an effort to demonstrate the above recommendations and guidelines a sample of an expository sermon with a focus on God is included below. This sermon was preached by the author of this dissertation toward the completion of this project.

Mark 12v1-12

Introduction

None of us like the experience of other people standing on our toes. We tend to react by challenging their right to do this type of thing. Remember the questions: ...who gives you the right to push in front of the queue, who do you think you are to take my parking?

Last time we saw the religious leaders reacting to Jesus. He was standing on their precious toes. He had exposed their corruption of making what God had

intended to be *a house of prayer for the nations into a den of robbers (11v17)*. They then challenge him with the question...

*Mark 11:28 “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked.
“And who gave you authority to do this?”*

Jesus asks a question in return (v29). His intention is to force them to make a choice. The religious leaders prefer to duck and dive not willing to stick their necks out. Jesus then goes on to tell a story.

Read Mark 12:1-12

Property ownership and its use is certainly an issue in the days we live. It was no different then. In fact this is probably one of the most common factors in all cultures and ages. Someone owns the property. The property normally has a particular purpose. If there are people around someone will occupy the property. In the light of this let us ask some questions about this story Jesus tells.

1. Who owns the vineyard?

Who owns this pencil? I do! Therefore I can do anything I like with it – you can't! If you can establish who the rightful owner of the vineyard, then it becomes a little easier to establish which rights and privileges belong to which party.

Mark 12:1 “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower.

The vineyard is a symbol of God's relationship to the chosen people Israel. One can see this connection with the very similar description given by Isaiah.

Isaiah 5:1, 2,7 My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. 2 He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. ...7 The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight.

God created the vineyard with great care. He did so with lots of attention to detail so that it may be healthy and productive. He *put up a wall* to keep wild animals and intruders out. He *dug a pit for the winepress*. That is he dug it out of solid rock, forming two vats – an upper shallow place where the grapes were trod, and a lower vat into which the juice ran through a channel in the rock.

He built a watchtower some fifteen to twenty feet high. This was the place for storage and shelter. But also a vantage point from which the entire vineyard could be seen and protected (even with a sling).

He planted a vineyard – he dug it up and cleared it of stones, and planted it with the choicest of vines. He created a beautiful garden from which it appeared great things would come. God owns the vineyard. God owns Israel and Judah – Is it not also true that God owns the world and everything in it? And is it not also true even more particularly he owns the church. They are the garden of his delight. He has given them the use of the garden.

Mark 12:1b Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey.

2. Do the tenants have any obligations to the owner?

Some of you own properties and you have I'm sure carefully selected your tenants. I guess you have an agreement; certain monies are to be paid monthly in advance as well as care is to be taken of the garden and buildings.

The owner here, God, does have some expectations

Mark 12:2 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

Lease agreements were common then as well, with the owner normally getting one third to a half of the produce. Would you agree that that is a fair deal? Isn't Jesus challenging these spiritual leaders to give to God that which is actually rightfully his? Surely the tenants do have an obligation to the owner?

The tenants here, the religious leaders, have their own ideas

Mark 12:3 But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

It is significant to note that even in the light of the owner's very patient dealings with them – the tenants stick to their guns!

Mark 12:4-8 Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. 5 He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

History reveals the sadness of this to be so true.

- **Elijah** was driven into the wilderness by wicked Kings (1Kings 19v1-5)
- **Zechariah** was stoned to death near the altar (2 Chronicles 24v21)
- **John the Baptist** was beheaded (Mark 6v27)

The writer to the Hebrews summarizes how God's messengers have been treated by the tenants.

Hebrews 11:37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated

Amazingly, graciously, mercifully God patiently persists...

6 *“He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’*

Here is a vivid picture of God’s patient love. God, the all powerful, all knowing Creator allows Himself to mistreated and abused by his creation. Don’t forget that this is the same God who has a passion for his own glory.

Isaiah 42:8 “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.

Shockingly, brazenly, selfishly the tenants deviously and greedily scheme...

7 *“But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ 8 So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.*

Here is a vivid picture of man’s rebellion to God. Last year we visited Nature’s Valley. While we down there we purchased a “modified tomato sauce bottle”. The bottle filled with sugar water hangs in a tree to provide water for little birds.

Some of the little birds drink from my bottle in my garden. Sadly I have noticed they think this whole bottle of sugar water belongs to them. If another bird comes along the fight for dominance begins.

Why do the religious leaders and others want to get rid of God’s messengers? Why do they plan in advance to kill God’s Son? It is because Israel’s leaders and others are like the little birds. They want the vineyard’s fruits for themselves.

3. Application

3.1 How would you react if you were the owner?

How patient are you with your tenants? I must confess on an occasion some years ago I got lawyers to instruct the Sheriff to attach goods from a tenant. The tenant had not paid his rent for 3 or 4 months. Would you be patient? How would you react? God is not like us. We see this even in the face of humanity's refusal to give God what rightfully belongs to Him – God persists and persists with us.

“If I were God,” cried Martin Luther, *“and the world had treated me as it treated Him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces.”*

God loves his creation. God is patient with his creation. God shows favour to those who are undeserving. God's messengers keep coming – heralding the good news message: God's Son has come in the greatest demonstration of love (John 3v16).

The rebellious tenants (you and me and the rest of the world) repeatedly hear this good news. But sadly very often they are ridiculed or abused or sometimes slain. In the main there is a strange and stubborn refusal to honor Him. There does however come a time when God's patience ends.

Mark 12:9 *“What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”*

On the one hand God's love and patience is amazing. On the other hand you must see that there is a very real danger in thinking your life and all you have are yours.

3.2 How are you responding to God as His tenant?

This world and everything in it, including you and me, belongs to God. He formed everything out of nothing. He has made it in all of its beauty and complexity. You and I have the privilege of being special tenants. We have the capacity to know God, to relate to Him, to worship Him – to give Him what

he demands and is worthy of. You must decide; be like the religious leaders and persist in thinking you are in control of everything (life, family, money, time, talent...future destiny) for your own benefit – pushing God out of your life. Or, understanding who you are; as a lost rebel in need of grace – living a life of faith in God to save you from you sin.

Mark 12:10 Haven't you read this scripture:" The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;

Jesus is that essential stone. This is a picture of one of the stones gathered for the building of Solomon's temple. Initially it is cast aside / rejected but then this rejected stone, becomes the keystone of the entrance. Jesus Christ is the keystone in the eternal, spiritual Temple of God. He went from rejection to the highest exaltation.

The challenge to you and me then also is one of – Have you without reservation accepted Jesus?

- Accept that he is God and that you live under his Lordship.
- Accept his work of atonement on your behalf, repenting from all stubborn refusals to give him what rightfully belongs to him.