

Proclaiming the Glory of God. A Homiletical Approach

by

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Declaration

I, the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation in my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Summary

The intention of this research is to develop a homiletical approach that will better equip the preacher in proclaiming the Glory of God. The study comes in a context where there has been a legitimate shift in emphasis in the direction of the listener, but it is the contention of this study that the pendulum has swung away from the pre-eminence of God that should permeate sermons being preached.

Having established the need for a renewed apprehension of God in preaching the writer examines the general preaching landscape leading up to and including the 21st century. This part of the study includes some of the influences on the present day understanding on the role of knowledge and the questioning of God's ability to communicate truth to man. The study also shows how these influences have led to a focus in preaching on human feeling and experience.

The weight of God's glory is then examined with the consequent implication of God's passion for His own glory and the need for all preaching therefore to be Theo-centric. This is reinforced by an examination of the transcendence of God, unfolding the dangers of domesticating God by eliminating a sense of mystery as to the infinite nature of God.

An overview of more recent developments in homiletical theory is examined demonstrating the conspicuous absence of the pre-eminence of God in preaching. A summary of the following three preaching models is presented; expository, narrative and topical, to provide a basis for later comparison.

Key theological convictions and practices necessary to proclaim the Glory of God are then identified from the literature study. These are then used in a questionnaire compiled to be used in churches where the listeners are exposed to the three identified preaching models.

The results from the empirical study is then analysed in the light of the theory presented in the literature studies. On the basis of these outcomes the following guidelines were recommended:

- Guidelines on determining the content of the sermon.
- Guidelines on the focus of the sermon.
- Guidelines on the content of the sermon.
- Guidelines on believing that God is primarily concerned about Himself leading to greater confidence in God's grace to sinful people.

And then finally, concluding that if the desired goal of proclaiming the Glory of God is to be consistently accomplished, then the expository model of preaching is best suited to the task.

Keywords

Preaching

Knowledge

Human Feelings

Human Experience

Emerging Church

The Glory of God

The Transcendence of God

The pre-eminence of God

Preaching models

Expository

Narrative

Topical

Listener

Apprehension of God

Theo-centric

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1. INTRODUCTION

For many listeners, preaching can be dull and lifeless (Baumann 1998:11). Sometimes listening to a sermon is an ordeal to be endured rather than life-giving bread from God to a hungry soul. At times in the praxis of preaching an encounter between the human and divine is absent, leaving hearers sterile in their worship and stagnant in their spiritual growth. Congregants are found to be regularly “clock watching” waiting for the moment of release and relief when the sermon is finally over. They are then free, in their thinking, to escape from the drudgery of church to really live and enjoy the rest of the day and week.

In some situations preaching has become nothing more than suggested prescriptions of how to do one thing or another in the course of living life with its many challenges. Preachers are often limiting their preaching to the listeners’ perceived needs like the offering of advice on solving emotional problems or developing a myriad different life skills.

In the light of the increased focus on the listeners’ needs determining the agenda for the preacher and seeking to understand the role of the pastor as preacher Jim Shaddix (2003:3) asks,

Did God really commission him to be the dispenser of the infinite number of how-tos necessary for navigating daily life effectively? Is it possible for any preacher to be that smart? Can he be the expert in that many fields, especially when you consider the plethora of life issues for which the people in the congregation are seeking help? Is it possible for any pastor to invest the kind of time necessary to research and organize such an expanse of information? There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that today we churchgoers are asking questions about daily living. But are pastors responsible for or even capable of answering all those questions?

It is also common place to find the church trying a variety of options to “succeed”.

Technique is being substituted for truth, marketing action for thought, the satisfaction of the individual for the health of the church, a therapeutic vision of the world for a doctrinal vision, the unmanageable by the manageable, organism by organization, those who can preach the word of God by those who can manage an organization, the spiritual by the material. At the center of these substitutions is an individualism fired by a shallow self-centered consumerism. And along with this, and because of it, has come a debilitating loss of truth – the very thing that brought mainline denominations low – and behind that there lies the loss of awareness of God as objective and transcendent. This too is an inescapable part of the move to the market, of adaptation to the ways of the world that modernization has brought about.

(Wells 1994:86)

And then there are some listeners who are exposed to nothing more than ‘sermonettes’ comprising of a few ‘blessed holy thoughts’ with the intention of lifting the hearers’ spirits for the week ahead. Sermons are often thought of and perceived as dreary, dead and meaningless.

While this may be the modus operandi and experience in many churches one would question whether this is what is intended or expected by those who take preaching seriously as described by Cooper and McClure (2003:2).

The sermon, in principle, is central to the life and thought of a worshipping community. It brings together the fundamental working powers and authorities of a living faith. In the context of a worship service, the sermon is the meeting place of God, Scripture and the present; it provides a home for faith, theology

and culture; it is where a biblical understanding of reality is confessed, interpreted, and related to our experience of reality; it is where we hear whispered to us an inner word of God addressing the particulars of our lives and times; and finally, it is where gospel and judgment encounter us.

More importantly; can this be what God's intended purpose for preaching is? There is surely something more majestic and glorious in the event of preaching that would inspire greater faith in God and worship of God.

1.1 The Problem Stated

The preacher in a local congregation has a significant role not only in communicating the Word of God in a sermon in a technically superior manner but his mandate from God is to lead the people to encounter the Glory of God. Paul urges Timothy to see the gravity of this task; "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his Kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction (2 Timothy 4:1-2)." William Hendriksen explains that this "heralding" or "preaching" is generally "the divinely authorized proclamation of the message of God to men" (1991:309). This must have serious implications for the preacher and the listener exposed to the recent popular homiletical practice which has turned in its emphasis and focus to the subjects. It has resulted in a strong emphasis on human experience,

human experience has become the focal point of the sermon. Meanwhile, subjective religion is in vogue and the personal search for meaning receives full attention. Since the human experience receives central attention, God is mostly mentioned indirectly. God-language is primarily language about our human awareness of God.

(Immink 2004:110)

And as Campbell (1997:142) observes, the preacher in many instances today primarily speaks about God “by speaking of how God is reflected in human existence and experience”.

The preacher’s accountability to God must also call into question preaching methodology practiced at the 2005 Baptist Youth of South Africa Summer camp where the keynote speaker unashamedly made use of unwholesome frivolous language (March 2006 Baptist Union of SA Executive minutes) in his sermon to more than a thousand teenagers.

This does lead to two further questions; was this the pattern and practice of the New Testament church and, is this what God intended for the task of preaching?

A completely different focus is conveyed by J. I. Packer, speaking of his impressions after hearing Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones saying that he had never heard such preaching. It came to him as a listener with the force and surprise of electric shock bringing him “more of a sense of God than any other man” (Catherwood 1985:170).

Piper (1990:22) asks the all important and relevant question: “Do people in the 21st century take from the worship service a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory, the grand object of God’s infinite Being? Do they enter for one hour in the week into an atmosphere of the holiness of God which leaves its aroma upon their lives all week long?”

All action inevitably leads to consequences. The preacher may then with his focus and emphasis on human experience in the preaching event be an obstacle in mediating the word of God to the listener, whereas should his goal not be that of meaningfully facilitating the mediating of the word of God in to the life of the listener leaving a distinct impression of a sense of God? Should God-honouring preaching not make every effort to avoid obscuring God’s

revelation and glory but rather occupy itself in shining the light of God's word and glory into the heart and mind of the listener?

If this is true, then what we need most, in the words of Allen, is a "revitalized apprehension of the reality of God" (1995:30). John Piper (1990:9) goes a step further in describing the current dilemma in the preface of his book, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*,

People are starving for the greatness of God. But most of them would not give this diagnosis of their troubled lives. The Majesty of God is an unknown cure. There are far more popular prescriptions on the market, but the benefit of any other remedy is brief and shallow. Preaching that does not have the aroma of God's greatness may entertain for a season, but it will not touch the hidden cry of the soul: Show me thy glory!

1.2 Purpose

The intention of the research is to develop a homiletical approach that will better equip the preacher in proclaiming 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 "with and of" God in worship.

1.3 Methodology

The research of this study will follow two methods.

1.3.1 A Literature Study

The first is making use of a literature study to describe a Biblical understanding of the Glory of God, seeking to understand how the preacher obscures or proclaims this vision of God in his preaching praxis. The literature study will seek to give an overview focusing on the more recent theological influences, features, emphases and trends in theories of preaching as well as

describing the more prominent preaching models been utilized in the Evangelical and Baptist contexts. Literature sources will be examined with an emphasis and particular interest in that which has been written by evangelicals who, like Baptists, have a high view of Scripture.

The literature study will include a review of some of the classics on preaching as well as more recent books and articles written relevant to this dissertation.

1.3.2 Practical-theological Method

Since practical theology deals with God's activity through the ministry of human beings (Heitink 1999:8), the accumulation and organizing of information must not be an end in and of itself. It is rather a means to an end. The desired end is that of being a useful channel in the hands of God thus facilitating a living faith and meaningful encounters with God.

It is for this reason that a second aspect to the methodology must be included. The literary study must be supplemented and supported by research methods that lead to changes in action.

According to Heitink (1999:6), practical theology as a theory of action is the empirically orientated theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society. It inevitably aims at change, through a process of management and steering.

In this methodology of practical theology one meets the concepts of understanding, explanation and change (Heitink 1999:163). These concepts are represented by hermeneutic, empirical and strategic perspectives respectively. Each perspective forms part of a triangular relationship that interconnects assisting the researcher in the task of arriving at meaningful conclusions.

The hermeneutic perspective (Heitink 1999:178) includes researching the theoretical ideas, present day features and challenges that the study of

homiletics is facing. The challenge in the context of this study being a concern for vibrancy of faith and worship in response to the proclamation of the Glory of God. It is here that the literature study will make a valuable contribution.

The empirical perspective (Heitink 1999:220) will focus on explanation. In this section, I will seek to illustrate the theoretical ideas by looking at specific preachers, the content of their sermons and the congregational response. This will include scrutinizing their particular preaching practice seeking to establish how it can either be a hindrance or a help to faith and worship prompted by the Glory of God.

The strategic perspective (Heitink 1999:201) will seek to facilitate change. Once a hermeneutical approach has been developed in the circular process of understanding and explanation, then a new theory of action will be formulated to develop the skills of the preacher.

The process can be illustrated by means of the diagram shown in Figure 1.

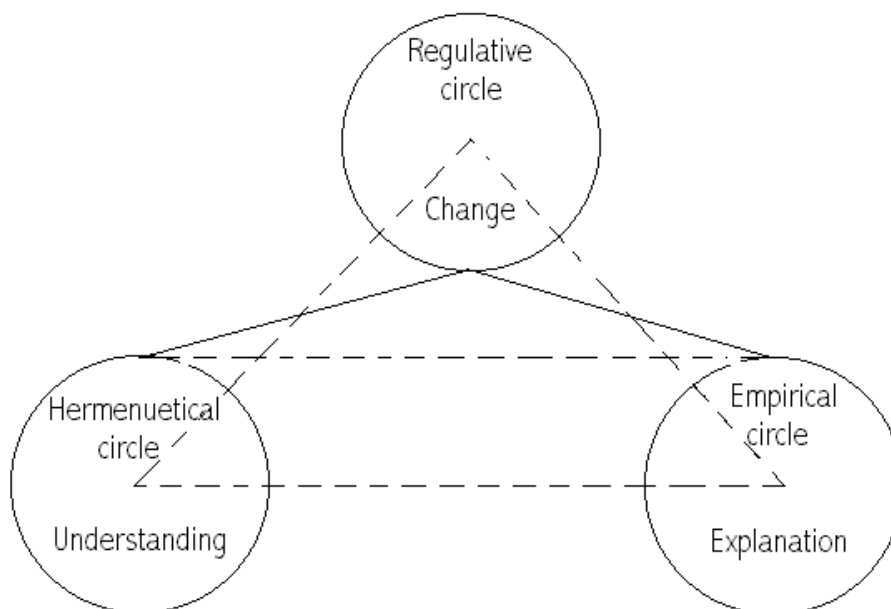


Figure 1

1.4 Development of Study

In developing this study, the authority, inerrancy and sufficiency of the Bible is assumed. What really matters is what God thinks (Guinness 1993:14). The research undertaken in this dissertation will seek to be in line with the high view Baptist's have held and continue to hold on Scripture.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa confirmed their position on the authority of Scripture at a National Assembly in 1998 (*The South African Baptist Handbook*, 1998-1999:413). This step took the Baptist Union back to what Hudson-Reed had said years ago,

Differences of opinion strongly held and maintained among us have not been able to break the bond of loyalty to the Scriptures as the Word of God... We have always thought of ourselves as people of the Book. All Christians hold to the authority of the Bible, but Baptists have a peculiar view on the supremacy of that authority.

(1983:357)

The Bible therefore cannot be ignored or taken lightly by any preacher seeking to be relevant and effectively used in transforming the lives of his hearers. The usefulness of Scripture is described by the Apostle Paul writing to Timothy saying that "All Scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16).

On the basis of the above assumption the research will be developed in the following areas:

1.4.1 Understanding the 21st Century Challenge

The intention of this chapter is to identify some of the challenging features on the preaching landscape of the 21st century. The research will be limited to

features on the preaching landscape of the 21st century that impact the vision of a Majestic and Glorious God. The focus of this study is limited to exploring effective preaching of the Glory of God evoking the response of worship and the vitality of faith in God.

1.4.2 A Biblical View of the Glory and Transcendence of God

The Biblical text will be surveyed with detailed focus on selected relevant passages to establish the meaning of the Glory of God in the belief system of those believing men and women. Further attention will be given to an understanding and emphasis of the immanence and transcendence of God from a Biblical point of view.

1.4.3 Theological Theories and Preaching Models

The research will then seek to identify and survey several past and current theological theories and preaching models. The theological theories and preaching models will be discussed and examined in the light of the biblical text and mandate.

1.4.4 Towards a Homiletical Approach

Murray A. Capill (2003:12) says that preaching: “Is intended to produce by the grace of God, a deep impression on the hearts and souls of the hearers. It is a divinely ordained means of drawing people to God and compelling them to respond to Him.”

In this chapter a summary of key theological convictions and practices gleaned from the literature research will be identified. These key theological convictions and practices will be deemed necessary for a preaching model that is best suited to proclaim the Glory of God bringing the listener into an encounter with the magnificence of God. As a result of this emphasis, leaving an impression of God on the hearers, and in this way inspiring them to greater

vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter of God in worship.

1.4.5 The Effect on the Listener

Through the use of empirical research this study will seek to examine the effect on listeners exposed to three different preaching models, namely narrative, expository and topical. The purpose is 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. The design of the questionnaire used will include the key theological convictions and practices identified in the previous chapter.

In doing this it must however be stressed that in the process the listener will not be ignored. Vos promotes the importance of the listener (2005:317) stressing that the preacher diligently considers how the sermon benefits those listening to the sermon.

The preacher should always look for ways of involving his/her audience in the introduction, the arrangement of the sermon movements and the conclusion. The sermon should be created and delivered for the benefit of the congregation.

The literature study will seek to identify and therefore provide the specific helpful as well as distracting (or hindering) features in a sermon that lead to faith and worship of the listeners, providing a basis for detailed scrutiny of specific preachers and their sermons.

1.4.6 An Adjusted Theory of Praxis

The strategic perspective (Heitink 1999:201) will seek to facilitate change. Once the homiletical approach has been developed in the circular process of

understanding and explanation, then a new theory of action will be formulated to develop the skills 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.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGE

One cannot generalize making broad pronouncements on the state of preaching. There are some and perhaps many situations where preaching is powerful and effective. It cannot, however, be said that this is what is happening in every local church. Capill (2003:9) makes the following observation:

In many a church you can find preaching that is topical and contemporary, but light on biblical substance. You can easily find preaching that is personal, but in a largely subjective or emotional way. You may well find preaching that is solidly biblical, yet rather lifeless and dreary. But to find clear, powerful preaching of the Word that grips your heart and leaves you not so much feeling that you have been in the presence of a great communicator as in the presence of a great God, not so much entertained by a man as enthralled by the truth of God – that, it seems, is all too rare.

There is no doubt a multiplicity of reasons for this particular state of affairs in preaching.

2.1 The Role of Knowledge in the Christian Faith

Throughout its history the one true Church founded on the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself being the Cornerstone, has believed and confessed that the one true God has “revealed himself, not only in creation and providence, not only in Jesus Christ, but also verbally or informationally” (Reymond 2003:13). This foundational belief has been questioned and in many instances discarded, thus having an effect on the role of preaching.

Christian theology has over the past centuries been subject to the attack on the role of knowledge in the Christian faith. Many present-day theologians are

questioning God's ability to communicate truth to man and therefore undermine man's ability to attain knowledge about God (Nash 1982:11).

This agnostic attitude toward God can be seen in the writings of Gordon Kaufman (1972:95):

The real reference for "God" is never accessible to us or in any way open to our observation or experience. It must remain always an unknown X, a mere limiting idea with no content. It stands for the fact that God transcends our knowledge in modes and ways of which we can never be aware and of which we have no inkling ...God is ultimately profound Mystery and utterly escapes our every effort to grasp or comprehend him. Our concepts are at best metaphors and symbols of his being, not literally applicable.

This kind of scepticism is also apparent in the writings of philosopher W T Stace (1955:19) who maintained that "God is utterly and forever beyond the reach of logical intellect or of any intellectual comprehension, and that in consequence when we try to comprehend his nature intellectually, contradictions appear in our thinking."

These views have trivialized the traditional role that truth has played in Christian religion. Cognitive knowledge about God is simply declared impossible and replaced by personal encounter, religious feeling, trust or obedience (Nash 1982:12). In other words "God does not give us information by communication. He gives us Himself in communion. It is not information about God that is revealed but ...God Himself" (Baillie 1956:29).

William Temple (1934:316, 322) held that "there is no such thing as revealed truth ...What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific revelation is not truth concerning God but the living God Himself". This marked a dramatic break from traditional historic Christianity, a tradition that affirmed both an

intelligible revelation from God and the divinely given human ability to know the transcendent God through the medium of true propositions.

Nash (1982:13) says that the possibility of human knowledge about God has been denied on at least three grounds: (1) some have precluded knowledge about God on the basis of particular theories about the nature of human knowledge; (2) others have been led to antagonism because of their view of the nature of God. An example of this is that some have so exaggerated the divine transcendence that the Wholly Other God of whom they speak could not be an object of human knowledge; and (3) still others have affirmed the impossibility of knowledge about God because of theories about the nature of human language. They regard human language as incapable of serving as an adequate carrier of information about God.

He asks whether there is a relationship between the human mind and the divine mind that is sufficient to ground the communication of truth from God to humans. He further states that there was no doubt in Christian thought that such a relationship exists and that such knowledge is possible until alien theories of knowledge gained ascendancy in the decades after Hume and Kant (Nash 1982:14).

If there is no communication of truth possible from God to humans then this has serious implications for the preacher who intends to be instrumental 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.

It is nevertheless important to understand the development of this kind of thinking coming to us today via a number of influential thinkers.

The writings of David Hume (1711 -1776) attacked the supremacy of human reason, which had been one of the cardinal tenets of the Enlightenment. He did this by seeking to show that human reason has definite limits (cf. Hume 1993:11-24). Anyone who extends reason beyond its limits becomes involved

in absurdities and contradictions and becomes prone to the disease of scepticism (Brown 1974:68, Young 1982:76). Hume believed that philosophers have been far too optimistic in assessing the claims of human reason. Most of the things we think we know are not known at all, that is, they have not been arrived at on the basis of reasoning and they are not supported by experience.

Hume held that pivotal beliefs rest on something other than reason and experience. The something other is that of instinct, habit and custom. Some non-rational force compels us to accept these pivotal beliefs. In his writings on ethics Hume argued that moral judgments do not rest on reason but on non-rational human nature. Hume (1993:16) asks, “Why torture your brain to justify the course of nature upon suppositions, which for aught you know, may be entirely imaginary, and of which there are to be found no traces in the course of nature?” In ethics, as in metaphysics and religion, human reason is and ought to be the slave of human passions, that is, our non-rational nature. This is tantamount to the claim that we cannot have knowledge about the transcendent. This axiom Nash (1982:20) identifies as the foundation of what he calls Hume’s Gap.

Hume did not doubt the existence of an external world. Nature, instinct and common sense all lead us to believe in an external world. According to Hume the arguments of the rationalists should be ignored and personal instincts should be trusted. He believed that investigation ought to be limited to areas, such as mathematics, where knowledge is possible. “Speculative knowledge claims about certain topics in metaphysics, theology, and ethics should be avoided; such matters should be accepted on the basis of faith, not knowledge” (Nash 1982:20, cf. Young 1982:77, Brown 1974:93). “All the philosophy, therefore, in the world, and all the religion, which is nothing but a species of philosophy, will never be able to carry us beyond the usual course of experience, or give us common measures of conduct and behaviour different from those which are furnished by reflections of human life (Hume 1993:22).

Hume's goal in his discussions on religion was the same as his objective in philosophy: he wished to show that reason is powerless to convert anyone to the claims of faith. Speaking of the nature of the divine Being; his attributes, his decrees, his plan of providence Hume (1993:30). comments, "Concerning these, human reason has not reached any certain determination: But these are topics are so interesting, that we cannot restrain our restless enquiry with regard to them; though nothing but doubt, uncertainty and contradiction, have, as yet been the result of our most accurate researches". He's personal preference seems to have been for a non-rational faith in a god unsupported by reason, revelation, miracles, or evidence of any kind (Horton 1995:167, Nash 1982:22, Brown 1974:73).

The nature of Hume's Gap can be identified as the rejection of the possibility of a rational knowledge of God and objective religious truth. He grounded man's belief in God in man's non-rational nature (Young 1982:62). Hume was the precursor of those philosophers and theologians who insist that religious faith must be divorced from knowledge and who believe that the impossibility of knowledge about God will in some way enhance faith. Hume was engaged in denying knowledge in order to make room for faith. For him knowledge and faith have nothing in common. The arrogance of rational religion must be destroyed so that faith (non-rational faith) can assume its proper place as the only legitimate ground of religion (Sproul 2000:114, Nash 1982:22).

Nash (1982:22) shows how Hume's Gap makes its appearance in the thought of many modern thinkers. "The contemporary eclipse of God can be seen in Sartre's 'silence of God,' in Heidegger's 'absence of God,' in Jasper's 'concealment of God,' in Bultmann's 'hiddenness of God,' in Tillich's 'non-being of God,' and in radical theology's assertion of 'the death of God'."

Paul's sermon to the philosophers on Mars Hill (Acts 17) concerning worship of the Unknown God seems quite relevant to this important issue. Non-evangelical theology since Hume is a chronicle of futile attempts to retain respectability of religious faith while denying religion any right to revealed truth.

While contemporary non-Evangelicals have virtually reduced faith to “courageous ignorance” (Henry 1970:13) evangelicals are failing in defending God’s objective communication of truth. Hume’s Gap has infected modern orthodoxy to the extent that many evangelicals are ignoring or de-emphasizing the cognitive dimension of divine revelation. This Christian anti-intellectualism may be manifested in a variety of ways (Nash 1982:23): in contempt for creeds, in a search for God through the emotions, in a dependence upon some kind of mystical experience

The most obvious consequence of Hume’s Gap is a minimal theism. Once Hume’s stance is adopted, New Testament Christianity, with its proclamation of a divine Christ whose death and resurrection secured redemption from sin and gave hope beyond the grave must be replaced with a religion that talks about how good it feels to have an experience with a god about whom nothing definite can be known. The threat to Christianity from the legacy of David Hume is not a full-fledged frontal assault upon Christian theism... Hume’s legacy is more insidious. It undermines the faith not by denying it but by directing our attention away from the importance of its knowledge-claims and its truth-content.

(Nash 1982:24)

A second thinker of the eighteenth century whose system of thought has encouraged scepticism (cf. Brown 1974:91) about the possibility of the knowledge of God is the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Any scepticism about the knowledge of God will adversely affect the role of preaching in its effort to lead worshippers to a greater vision of the Majesty of God and vibrant true worship.

David Wells, in his book *God in the Wasteland* (1994:104), is convinced that Kant influenced present day rules for “discussing how it is that someone knows the external world, and in so doing initiated the breakdown of the old

distinction between subject and object". He further states that when this breakdown crossed over into theology, it resulted in an "overemphasis on God's immanence and a diminished emphasis on his transcendence." The question must be asked and answered as to whether this influence paved the way for a change in emphasis away from the Glory of God in preaching.

Philosophers prior to Kant, says Wells (1994:104), had assumed that human knowledge is possible only as the mind is adapted to the world. "The reigning epistemological paradigm held that the mind was simply a mirror in which the external world was reflected, that an objective world imprinted its reality on minds that were passive, inert, and uninvolved in this transaction."

Kant (1965:introduction) rejected this model and reversed this order,

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them a priori, by means of concepts, have on this assumption ended in failure. We must therefore make trial of whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge.

"Instead of beginning with the objective world, he began with the subjective conditions for knowledge, with the shape and functioning of the mind" (Wells 1994:104).

Kant believed that while sense experience is necessary for human knowledge in the sense that no one would have any knowledge without it, sense experience is not a sufficient condition for knowledge. Something else (a form or structure) must be added to the content supplied by the senses.

The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called phenomenon. That which in the phenomenon corresponds to the sensation, I term it matter; but that which effects that the

content of the phenomenon can be arranged under certain relations, I call it form. But that in which our sensations are merely arranged, and by which they are susceptible of assuming a certain form, cannot be itself sensation. It is, then, the matter of all phenomena that is given to us a posteriori; the form must lie ready a priori for them in the mind, and consequently can be regarded separately from all sensation.

(Kant 1781:www.ilt.columbia.edu/academic)

Unless the content is given form or structure by the human mind, knowledge would be unattainable. Concepts (the form supplied by the human understanding) without percepts (the content supplied by the senses) are empty; percepts without concepts are blind. Human knowledge, then, has two necessary conditions: the form supplied by the mind and the content supplied by the senses. But neither condition is sufficient by itself to produce knowledge (Nash 1982:26).

Kant taught that the form or structure that the human understanding supplies to knowledge exists in the form of categories or innate aptitudes for knowing. “He argued that the mind sorts into categories the stream of information contributed by the five senses and then synthesizes the data in ways that do not necessarily correspond to what is externally existent” (Wells 1994:104). Since all human knowledge must be mediated by these categories, men cannot know anything that is not so mediated. The unfortunate consequence of this claim, however, was a radical disjunction between the world as it appears to us (the world modified by the categories of our understanding) and the world as it really is. According to Kant, human knowledge never brings us into contact with the real world, what he called the noumenal world. All we know is the phenomenal world, the world as it appears to us after it has been modified by our categories of our understanding. Since our knowledge is always perceptually modified by the a priori categories of the mind, the real world (noumena) is not only unknown but unknowable (Nash 1982:27, Horton 1995:126).

Wells (1994:104) goes on to draw an implication: “That once the mind was seen as itself a source of knowledge, knowledge that was then superimposed on the data from the outside world, and once this knowledge was cut loose from control in the knowledge of God, a juggernaut was launched.”

Hume had his Gap; Kant had his Wall. Kant’s system had the effect of erecting a wall between the world as it appears to us and the world as it really is. Human knowledge is restricted to the phenomenal world, the world of appearance, the world shaped by the structure of the knowing mind. Knowledge of any reality beyond the Wall, which includes the world of things in themselves, is forever unattainable. Human reason cannot penetrate the secrets of ultimate reality. Answers to the most basic questions of theology and metaphysics lie beyond the boundaries of human knowledge. Since God is not a subject of experience and since the human categories cannot be extended to transcendent reality, Kant’s God is both unknown and unknowable. Whenever human reason attempts to penetrate beyond Kant’s Wall, either in a search for knowledge about God or in a quest for answers to ultimate questions, it becomes involved in antimonies and contradictions (Nash 1982:27).

Kant believed that he had served the interests of the Christian religion by stating that he had found it necessary to deny knowledge (Brown 1974:104) in order to make room for faith (Nash 1982:28). Hume and Kant had arrived at nearly the same point as for both men faith and knowledge have nothing in common. Every time human reason attempts to leap across Hume’s Gap or tries to break through Kant’s Wall separating the phenomenal and noumenal worlds (as speculative metaphysics and theology seek to do), reason becomes bogged down in contradictions.

Human reason they believed could not penetrate the secrets of ultimate reality. The most basic questions of metaphysics and theology are questions to which human reason can find no answers, not even from God. Hume’s Gap and Kant’s Wall represent the limits beyond which human reason cannot go;

they simply state, among other things, that human knowledge about God is an unattainable goal.

(Nash 1982:28)

Kant does however see a role for God in spite of God being one of the unknowables. He proposed that it is only in moral experience that such knowledge can be grounded, for the knowledge we have of ourselves as moral beings is inexplicable if God does not exist (Wells 1994:107). If in his criticism of the limits of theoretical knowledge Kant gets rid of God out of the front door, he rushes to the back door to let God in. He does this in an effort to salvage morality. In his moral and practical philosophy he seeks a basis for ethics and argues for the presence of a categorical imperative, a universal sense of oughtness that is integral to human experience and provides a moral obligation to duty (Sproul 2000:130).

Kant argues therefore for the Christian God on the basis that He must exist for ethics to have any meaning and so even if we cannot know that God exists, for practical purposes we must live “as if” He exists for ethics and society to be possible. If there is no absolute ethical norm, morality is reduced to mere preference and the world is a jungle where might makes right (Sproul 2000:131).

2.2 An Emphasis on Human Feelings

Kant’s rejection of the possibility of cognitive knowledge of God was taken up by various thinkers including Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), both of whom became major sources of Protestant liberalism. Schleiermacher’s first important book, *On Religion: Addresses in Response to its Cultured Critics*, appeared in 1799. He thought of his own work as a reaction against Kant’s reduction of religion to an ethical exercise of the will. But despite his protests against Kant, Schleiermacher’s position in the end became an extension of Kant’s theological agnosticism (Nash 1982:29).

Schleiermacher distinguished between the kernel and the husk of religion suggesting that many of the cultured despisers of religion in his day were in fact offended by the nonessential elements of Christianity. The dispensable husk of religion, in his view, included the metaphysical theories and theological doctrines so many unbelieving intellectuals found incredible. Schleiermacher (1969:55) wrote,

For what are these doctrinal structures, these systems of theology, these theories about the origin and the end of the world, these analyses concerning the nature of an incomprehensible being? Here everything elapses into callous argumentation. Here the sublimest subjects are made pawns of controversy between competing schools of thought. Now surely ...this is not the character of religion. If, therefore, you have paid attention only to these religious dogmas and opinions, you do not yet know religion in itself at all, and religion is not what you are objecting to. Why haven't you gone deeper to find the kernel lying inside these outer layers?

Schleiermacher went on to reject two approaches to religion. Firstly, he attacked those who thought of religion primarily as a way of thinking or knowing something. Secondly, he criticized those who, like Kant, viewed religion primarily as a way of living or doing, as a kind of conduct or character. For Schleiermacher, religion must not be confused either with knowing or with doing. He believed that true religion is found in feeling (Schleiermacher 1969:55-56).

Faith must be something quite different from a mishmash of opinions about God and the world (the theoretical approach) or a collocation of commands for one life or two (the practical way of Kant). Piety must be something more than the craving after this hodgepodge of metaphysical and moral crumbs, something more than a way of stirring them up.

(Schleiermacher 1969:73)

Schleiermacher went on to reinterpret Christian theology in terms of his emphasis on religious feeling. He did this in a two-volume work, *The Christian Faith* (published 1821-1822), where he expanded his conviction that the essence of religion is to be found in a human being's feeling of absolute dependence.

"The common element in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety... is this: the consciousness of being totally dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation to God" (Schleiermacher 1928:12). Later in the same book he wrote, "God-consciousness is always... the feeling of absolute dependence" (Schleiermacher 1928:260).

He maintained that knowledge of God was restricted to the self, where the immanence of God was registered in feeling – specifically, awe deriving from a radical dependence. "Thus God", says Wells (1994:108), "became a kind of psychological deposit, a 'something' deep in the self. Somewhere within, the divine signature could be read with enough clarity to secure some meaning in life." Nash (1982:30) agrees:

Schleiermacher's view reduces to the position that God is unknowable to the human intellect. Instead of looking for God in nature or in the Bible or in human reason, we should look within. God is to be found in a special kind of feeling, the feeling of absolute dependence.

He became to be regarded as the fountainhead of one dominant form of liberalism, namely, the view that it doesn't matter what a person believes, it is what he feels that is important. It is clear that he thought it wrong to regard revelation as any kind of human discovery. Revelation is not something "excogitated in thought by one man and so learned by others" (Schleiermacher 1928:50). As H D McDonald explains, revelation for Schleiermacher "is not an in-breaking of God, but an up-surgings of divine humanity" (1959:169).

Schleiermacher insisted that God can never be known as He is in Himself. He can only be known by men as God-in-relation-to-humans. Because of his exaggerated emphasis on divine immanence he concluded that God is too close to contemplate with any objectivity (Nash 1982:31). Schleiermacher wrote, “All attributes that we ascribe to God are to be taken as denoting not something special in God, but only something special in the manner in which the feeling of absolute dependence is to be related to Him” (Schleiermacher 1928:194). The divine attributes are for him, not objective characteristics of God, they are merely reflections of human feelings (Nash 1982:31).

Wells (1994:107) points out that Schleiermacher “repudiated objective knowledge of God and then, like the romantics, reached down into his own being to find the grounding for his knowledge of God”. Barth (1982:217) says that Schleiermacher “viewed God as the mirror image of the self”. If the result was, as Friedrich Schlegel charged, a God who was a “little skinny”, the reason, of course, was that God could be no larger than the self of which He was a reflection. And as Barth (1936-77:339) commented, “For all his brilliance, Schleiermacher ended up knowing only himself and not God.” Barth (1936-77:193) further commented that the reason so much attention to this aspect of Schleiermacher’s thought is that modern theology suffers from a bad conscience. “Theology suffers from a chronic lack of objectivity in our age: we do not know what we are talking about but we still want to talk about him, so theologians have repeatedly returned to Schleiermacher to see if perhaps he might show us how to do it.”

2.3 The Church in the Market Place

Is the chronic lack of objectivity at least in part responsible for the overt emphasis on human feelings? Gary E. Gilley (2002) raises the challenge of the church in the age of entertainment in his book *This Little Church went to Market*. He maintains that the new paradigm church in its efforts to enlarge the church numerically has given itself to marketing rather than following the biblical mandate as given in the New Testament.

In their [specific reference here is being made to the writings and practices of Rick Warren of Saddleback and his *The Purpose Driven Church*, George Barna and also Lee Strobel's *Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary*] church growth methodologies more attention is paid to market strategy, business techniques and demographics than to New Testament instruction.

(Gilley 2002:20)

A secular magazine, *American Demographics* (April 1999), claims to have its finger on the pulse of American's wants and desires says that people today are,

Into spirituality, not religion... Behind this shift is the search for an experiential faith, a religion of the heart, not of the head. It's a religious expression that downplays doctrine and dogma, and revels in direct experience of the divine – whether it's called the "Holy Spirit" or "cosmic consciousness" or the "true self". It is practical and personal, more about stress reduction than salvation, more therapeutic than theological. It's about feeling good, not being good. It's as much about the body as the soul... Some marketing gurus have begun calling it "the experience industry.

(Cimino & Lattin 1999:62)

"Congregates," the authors believe, "care as much about a church's childcare services as its doctrinal purity, pay more attention to the style of music than the pastor's theological training" (Cimino & Lattin 1999:62). If the emphasis of placing the felt needs of the people, above that of what Scripture teaches as the real needs of people then there will inevitably be a paradigm shift in the way church is done and must lead to consequences in the area of preaching.

The movement in our day to the entertainment explosion being enjoyed by masses is described by Neal Gabler (1999:16) is "about gratification rather

than edification, indulgence rather than contemplation, escape from moral instruction rather than submission to it". It is in reality nothing more than senseless fun.

Donald G. Bloesch (2001:54) reported in a *Christianity Today* article the early signs of a backlash to the seeker-sensitive services so popular today:

Evangelical Protestantism is in trouble today as increasing numbers of business and professional people are searching for a new church. The complaint I hear most often is that people can no longer sense the sacred either in the preaching or the liturgy... Worship has become performance rather than praise. The praise choruses that have pre-empted the great hymns of the church do not hide the fact that our worship is essentially a spectacle that appeals to the senses rather than an act of obedience to the mighty God who is both holiness and love. Contemporary worship is far more ego-centric than theocentric. The aim is less to give glory to God than to satisfy the longings of the human heart. Even when we sing God's praises the focus is on fulfilling and satisfying the human desire for wholeness and serenity.

An over-emphasis and preoccupation with what people want and feel will no doubt affect the agenda of preachers and their preaching. If the market is the determining factor for preaching it is no wonder that pastors have abandoned the systematic, expository preaching of the Word (Gilley 2002:115). There are some preachers, says MacArthur (1995:253) resisting this trend,

If preaching is to play its God-designed role in the church, it must be built on the Word of God... Much preaching today emphasizes psychology, social commentary and political rhetoric. Bible exposition takes a back seat to a misguided craving for relevance... Lamentably, there is a discernable trend in contemporary evangelicalism away from biblical preaching and a drift toward an experience-centered pragmatic, topical approach in the pulpit.

Piper raises a number of penetrating questions in response to an article “Insider Movements” which appeared in the publication *Mission Frontiers* (September – October 2005). Referring to the “signs” in John’s Gospel and the reason John gives for including them in his gospel; these are written “so that you may believe”. He (Jesus) “manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in Him.” That is the way faith comes. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes “He will glorify me!” (John 16:14). Therefore we declare the fullness of the glorious Person and Work of Christ in history. That is how the church is created and sustained.

It seems to me that a growing number of pastors and missionaries have lost confidence in this truth. They have concluded that the gap between the glory of Christ and the felt needs of their neighbours, or between the glory of Christ and the religion of the nationals, is simply too great for the Word to overcome. The upshot seems to be the minimization of the Word of God in its robust and glorious fullness.

Armed with a “big business” mentality, many in the seeker-sensitive movement have replaced Bible-based sermons with anecdote-filled talks. After all, that’s the stuff that sells. In light of this growing evangelical trend, MacArthur (2003) in an article “Fifteen evil consequences of Plexiglass preaching” (www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/plexiglas-sf1.htm) examines what happens when preachers put the seeker before the Saviour and abandon God’s Word for ear-tickling entertainment.

At least two of these consequences he mentions have a bearing on the subject of this thesis. They are:

It clouds the true depth and transcendence of our message and therefore cripples both corporate and personal worship. What passes for preaching in some churches today is

literally no more profound than what preachers in our fathers' generation were teaching in the five-minute children's sermon they gave before dismissing the kids. That's no exaggeration. It is *often* that simplistic, if not utterly inane. There is nothing deep about it. Such an approach makes it impossible for true worship to take place, because worship is a transcendent experience. Worship should take us above the mundane and simplistic. So the only way true worship can occur is if we first come to grips with the depth of spiritual truth. Our people can only rise high in worship in the same proportion to which we have taken them deep into the profound truths of the Word. There is no way they can have lofty thoughts of God unless we have plunged them into the depths of God's self-revelation. But preaching today is neither profound nor transcendent. It doesn't go down and it doesn't go up. It merely aims to entertain.

It breeds a congregation that is as weak and indifferent to the glory of God as their pastor is. "Seeker-sensitive" preaching fosters people who are consumed with their own well-being. When you tell people that the church's primary ministry is to fix for them whatever is wrong in this life—to meet their needs, to help them cope with their worldly disappointments, and so on—the message you are sending is that their mundane problems are more important than the glory of God and the majesty of Christ. Again, that sabotages true worship.

Gilley (2002:59) maintains that one of the strongest influences behind the change in the message and methodology of the new paradigm church is the invasion of psychology, and its focus on felt needs and the competition in the market place. He believes that the church has become a reflector of our times rather than a revealer.

Os Guinness (2000:43) warns, "The problem is not that Christians have disappeared, but that Christian faith has become deformed. Under the

influence of modernity, we Christians are literally capable of winning the world while losing our own souls.”

Responding to this deformity, Gilley (2002:62) believes that “the means for progressive sanctification and biblical living have been shifted from the scriptural to the therapeutic.” A large part of the reason for this lies in the almost wholesale embracing of psychology by the Christian community.

Huge differences in understanding and approach exist between a secular psychological approach and a biblical perspective. The biblical perspective maintains mans responsibility for his actions as opposed to a psychological approach where difficulties are all attributed to external influence (Gilley 2002:63). He goes on to elaborate on a number of fundamental differences between Psychology and Scripture (see Gilley 2002:64-66). The differences include:

- Difference in focus – Scripture is God-centred, psychology is man-centred.
- Difference in view of human nature – psychology teaches that human nature is basically good or at least neutral whereas Scripture teaches that people are sinners with a flawed and depraved nature.
- Differences in view of values – The Bible teaches absolutes where God defines truth whereas psychology promotes relativism.

Secular psychology has received a warm welcome in many evangelical circles. *Christianity Today* (1993:31) says, “Right now evangelicals are swimming in psychology like a bird dog in a lake; they hardly seem to realize how much has changed... They certainly do not feel in danger...” Gilley (2002:66) raises his concern by saying that “Christianity and psychology both deal with the issue of how to live, yet they come at it from opposing angles, draw different conclusions, and basically are not compatible.

2.4 The Emerging Church

“During the last dozen years ‘emerging’ and ‘emergent’ have become strongly associated with an important movement that is sweeping across America, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere (Carson 2005:12). This movement using the two words “emerging” and “emergent” as defining adjectives of their movement have also made their appearance in the South African Baptist context.

“At the heart of the movement or as some leaders prefer to call it, ‘the conversation’,” says Carson (2005:12),

lies the conviction that changes in culture signal that a new church is “emerging”. Christian leaders must therefore adapt to this emerging church. Those who fail to do so are blind to the cultural accretions that hide the gospel behind forms of thought and modes of expression that no longer communicate with the new generation.

Gerald K Webber (2005:www.baptistbulletin.org) gives some insight into understanding this emerging church.

On the crest of a postmodernism wave rides a new movement called the emerging (or emergent) church. It’s essentially a Generation-X happening, a reaction to the seeker-driven approach of the Baby Boomers and many who preceded them.

Calling this a “movement,” which *Merriam-Webster’s* dictionary defines as “a series of organized activities working toward an objective,” may be premature. Despite the volume of material in books and blogs, little about the emerging church is organized. Some adherents call it a conversation.

Still, this trend will not be ignored. Every week followers gather to drink coffee, listen to Christian music, and hear a story-sermon under church names like The Journey, Pierced Chapel, and Scum of the Earth Church. They have rejected the structure of the megachurch movement and have minimal concern for performance.

He offers the following six personal observations about the emerging church:

The emerging church defies definition. Even proponents of the emerging church have difficulty nailing down its definition. Leonard Sweet, author of *Post-Modern Pilgrims* and *Jesus Drives Me Crazy*, is quoted in www.theooze.com: “Our faith is ancient. Our faith is future. We’re old-fashioned. We’re new-fangled. We’re orthodox. We’re innovators. We’re postmodern Christians.” Sweet (2003:19) observes that Christian Spirituality is “anything but sane if sane means ‘logical, predictable, serious or safe. Christian spirituality is highly illogical, paradoxical, volatile, playful and dangerous. The world of faith is freakish unpredictable”.

The emerging church is driven by disappointment. At heart the emerging church is a protest movement, deeply disillusioned with the previous three or four generations. They have a great respect for ancient forms and traditions but feel that their “modern” forbears have failed them. Carson (2005:14) agrees describing the common thread of protest as “we were where you were once, but we emerged from it into something different.” Emergents are turned off by the traditional worship patterns of the Builder generation and by their absolutism. They reject what they describe as “rational” preaching, dogmatic teaching, and confrontational evangelism. They are even more appalled at the commercialism of Baby Boomers and are determined to replace “programs” with “relationships,” “excellence” with “realism.” They refer to this as the “rebooting of being church.”

The emerging church deprecates doctrine. The emerging church may well be the leading edge of an ecumenical updraft for the twenty-first century.

Reflecting a postmodern mind-set, adherents prefer an individualist whatever-works-for-you approach to theology. One website (www.emergingchurch.org) states, "The modern creedal orientation of 'we believe' has been subverted by the postmodern creedal orientation summed up by Sheryl Crow in her song which proclaims, 'if it makes you happy, it can't be half bad.' "

Steve Chalke & Alan Mann (2003:67), recognized leaders of the Emerging church have a problem with the doctrine of original sin,

While we have spent centuries arguing over the doctrine of original sin, pouring over the Bible and huge theological tomes to prove the inherent sinfulness of all humankind, we have missed a startling point: Jesus believed in original goodness! God declared that all his creation, including humankind, was very good. That is not to suggest that Jesus is denying that our relationship with God is in need of reconciliation, but that he is rejecting any idea that we are, somehow, beyond the pale.

McLaren (2004:60-61) shows little concern for accurate exegesis and good handling of the Scriptures. Instead he displays great sympathy for those who reject miracles. He writes, "I feel more sympathy with those who believe otherwise, and I applaud their desire to live out the meaning of the miracle stories even when they don't believe the stories happened as written". This inevitably leads to a diminishing view of Scripture, which in turn must affect the proclamation of the Glory of God.

Albert Mohler (2005) observes in a <http://www.crosswalk.com/> blog,

The Emergent movement represents a significant challenge to biblical Christianity. Unwilling to affirm that the Bible contains propositional truths that form the framework for Christian belief, this movement argues that we can have Christian symbolism and substance without those thorny questions of truthfulness that have so vexed the modern mind. The worldview of

postmodernism—complete with an epistemology that denies the possibility of or need for propositional truth—affords the movement an opportunity to hop, skip and jump throughout the Bible and the history of Christian thought in order to take whatever pieces they want from one theology and attach them, like doctrinal post-it notes, to whatever picture they would want to draw.

The emerging church is deficient in discernment. One cannot deny the intelligence of the emerging church’s proponents. Some are obviously astute and articulate. Native intelligence and biblical discernment, however, are two different things.

Its most eloquent spokesman, Brian McLaren, is pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church in Spencerville, Maryland. McLaren is a smart guy; he graduated summa cum laude from the University of Maryland and obtained his Master of Arts degree with a 4.0 grade point average. He left academia to found the church he pastors. The author of *A Generous Orthodoxy*, McLaren is an illustration of the distinction between intelligence and discernment. On Cedar Ridge’s web site is the church’s doctrinal statement. It includes a paragraph about Jesus Christ with no indication of His eternal deity, a reference to the Holy Spirit with no suggestion that He is God, and a declaration that “God speaks to us in the Bible” with not a word about its inspiration or inerrancy. Regarding “unity,” the statement reads, “Cedar Ridge recognizes diversity among Christians in nonessential areas”; the paragraph gives no hint of what those nonessentials are. Such looseness may not be universal, but it is typical of the emerging church’s lack of discernment.

The emerging church dotes on devotion. By minimizing “divisive” doctrine, by emphasizing the primacy of relationship over reasoned belief, by elevating God’s (almost indiscriminate) love for mankind over His essential holiness and justice, by raising unity above truth, the emerging church creates an atmosphere where peace is the summum bonum (supreme good from which all others are derived).

The emerging church is destined for disuse. The emerging church will ultimately go the way of philosophies that are driven by culture. Os Guinness warned, in *Dining with the Devil* (1993), “He who marries the spirit of the age soon becomes a widower.”

The advent of this movement has bearing on this research in that many in the movement and those curiously interested are asking about the place and nature of preaching in this emerging church.

A pastor, identifying himself as Pastor Pete (2006: www.opensourcetheology.net/node/856) submitted his questions in regard to preaching in the emergent church on an internet blog:

In the Reformed tradition, thanks to Karl Barth, we are often referring to the three-fold witness of the Word. That is, 1) the Word that took flesh in Jesus Christ, 2) that is witnessed to in Scripture, and 3) that is proclaimed in Word and Deed by the church. I'm particularly interested in your thoughts on the third (if there is a similar thread, please let me know). Specifically, what form will preaching take in the emergent church? In our tradition, the sermon has always taken centre stage. As a pastor who preaches every Sunday I'm starting to become a little dissatisfied with the practice. I stress "a little." I look forward to doing it, but the results are anti-climactic. I'm wondering, with the emergent church's leaning toward experience and relationship, if a guided, communal conversation might replace a prepared, individual lecture?

The responses to his questions certainly indicate that new styles and structures in preaching are being tested. Graham Doel (2006: www.opensourcetheology.net/node/856) posted a response onto the blog saying that he has experimented with conversational dialogue, congregational dialogue, creative story telling and community topic selection.

Casey Tygrett's (2006) article entitled *Ugly Preaching* expresses frustration about current preaching (www.theooze.com/articles/article.cfm?id=1193),

I realize even to use this term I'm dragging up a dead set of presuppositions, but in thinking about preaching, teaching, talking or homiletizing, etc., there is for me a state of increasing frustration. Why don't people hear the truth in what I'm saying? Where is the response regarding their lives? We trust in the spirit of truth to really get to the heart of things, but in the end the frustration of someone who undertakes to teach people about the Gospel is often intense and mysterious. Each talk, each exposition, crafted with hope and care is received as if it were a commencement address: "Good sermon. Not too long." People see it as my job—I see it as a matter of disseminating life or death challenges. There is only so long one can dive into and out of this pool before a mental and spiritual funk begins to develop.

Dan Kimball (2003:175) offers visions of modern preaching and post modern preaching. In his view the modern preaching is inadequate and goes to the extent of suggesting that biblical terms like "gospel" and "Armageddon" need to be "deconstructed and redefined". In modern preaching the biblical text is communicated primarily with words whereas in post modern preaching "the scriptural message is communicated through a mix of words, visual arts, silence, testimony, and story, and the preacher is a motivator who encourages people to learn from the Scriptures throughout the week".

2.5 Is Something Missing?

Having listed three inadequate responses (see Capill 2003:9-11) to what is seen as a crisis in preaching, Capill (2003:12) maintains that the more fundamental crisis concerns "the lack of spiritual vigour in much preaching." Something is missing - in that contemporary preaching is powerless, failing to

convict sinners, convert the lost, sanctify the saints, produce deep and lasting change in people's lives, overwhelm people with sheer majesty, grandeur, excellency and beauty of God, and his only Son, Jesus Christ. "It is the crisis of preaching that, for all its relevance, innovation or soundness is devoid of the power of the Holy Spirit".

Lloyd Jones (1971:91) has the same sentiment when appealing for something more than an intellectual presentation of biblical truth. "You are not simply imparting information, you are dealing with souls, you are dealing with pilgrims on the way to eternity, you are dealing with matters not only of life and death in this world, but with eternal destiny." He goes on to say (1971:98) that the chief end of preaching is to give people a sense of the presence of God:

I can forgive a man for a bad sermon; I can forgive the preacher almost anything if he gives me a sense of God, if he gives me something for my soul... if he gives me some dim glimpse of the Glory of God, the love of Christ, my Saviour, and the magnificence of the gospel.

This problem is not confined to a particular era either. In his day, Jonathan Edwards (1974:391) addressed the same issue,

Was there ever an age, wherein strength and penetration of reason, extent of learning, exactness of distinction, correctness of style, and clearness of expression, did so abound? And yet, was there ever an age, wherein there has been so little sense of the evil of sin, so little love to God, heavenly-mindedness, and holiness of life, among the professors of the true religion? Our people do not so much need to have their heads stored, as to have their hearts touched; and they stand in the greatest need of that sort of preaching, which has the greatest tendency to do this.

Do the preacher and listener not need to have their minds and hearts gripped by the Glory of God? Will this not, at least in some way address the lifeless, boring and lacklustre orations offered as pitiful substitutes for the powerful preaching of the Word of God?

3. A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE GLORY AND TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

Protestant catechisms ask the question, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer given: “The chief end of man is to glorify God...” Most would agree with this response, but says W. Robert Cook (1984:291), “The thoughtful person will raise yet another question that is not addressed by the catechism. What is meant by ‘glorify God’? And even more basically, what is the glory of God?”

In this chapter the biblical text will be surveyed to establish the meaning of the Glory of God. Attention will also be given to an understanding and emphasis of the immanence and transcendence of God.

3.1 The Glory of God

3.1.1 Glory in the Old Testament

In the light of having its roots in the word “dokeo”, the classical usage of the word “doxa” took two primary directions: On the one hand it had the sense of expectation, referring to one’s own opinion, while on the other hand it meant reputation, referring to the opinion of others about oneself. Josephus uses the term in this way but adds the idea of honour or glory – this due to the influence of the Old Testament on his thinking (Cook 1984:291).

In the LXX “doxa” is the translation of “kabod” which refers to that which is weighty or impressive and may be used of man or God (Cook 1984:292). The most frequently used word in the Old Testament for glory is “kabod”. It means “difficult,” “weight,” “heaviness,” “worthiness,” “reputation,” or “honour” (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:246). It can be used of men to show that a person is a man of weight or substance (Gordon 1975:730), or impressive (Cook 1984:292). Since the word “kabod” comes from the word “kabed”, “to be heavy,” it gives the idea that the one possessing glory is laden with riches

(Genesis 31:1), power (Isaiah. 8:7) and position (Genesis 45:13) (Elwell 1987:443). Berlejung & Frevel (2006:246) add that the adjective “kabad” can convey this heaviness or oppression in a negative sense, whereas the noun “kabod” never has a negative connotation.

When used of God it refers to the impact made on man from God’s self-manifestation (Cook 1984:292). “Kabod” also described the manifestation of light by which God revealed Himself, whether in a lightning flash or in the blinding splendour which often accompanied theophanies. Similarly we see the disclosure of the divine presence in the cloud which led Israel through the wilderness and becoming localized in the tabernacle (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:246; Elwell 1987:443).

At times “kabod” had a deeper penetration, denoting the person or self. When Moses asked of God, "Show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18), he was not speaking of the light-cloud, which he had already seen, but he was seeking a special manifestation of God which would leave nothing to be desired (cf. John 14:8). Moses wanted to know God as He was in himself. In reply, God emphasized his goodness (Exodus 33:19). The word might be rendered in this instance "moral beauty." This incident involving Moses reveals the idea that God's glory is not confined to some outward sign which appeals to the senses, but is that which expresses his inherent majesty, which may or may not have some visible token (Elwell 1987:443). The glory belongs to God intrinsically. It is an essential quality in God’s character (Gordon 1975:731). “Whereas the glory of God is His essentially and inherently, the major emphasis”, says Gordon, (1975:732) “in Scripture is on the glory in its manifestation. It describes the self-revelation of God’s being and character.” This is shown in Isaiah 60:1 “Arise shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.” The display or radiance of God’s glory is a reflection of his character (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:247).

Isaiah's vision of God (6:1–8) (cf. Berges 1998:94-104; Motyer 1993: 75-78) included both the perception of sensible features and the nature of God, particularly his holiness (cf. John 12:41) (Elwell 1987:443, Gordon 1975:731).

Berges (1998:94) describes the vision as emphasizing the true kingship of God. The vision of God is such that it exceeds all conventional understanding of the man on the street. God is above all. His kingly majesty is above all else. God's glory is so majestic that to see his face is to die (Exodus 33:20) (Gordon 1975:731). Isaiah uses the impressive phrase, "the splendour (glory) of his majesty in 2:10, 19, and 21. He had in mind, suggests Gordon (1975:732), "a frightening revelation of God".

The intrinsic worth of God, his ineffable majesty, constitutes the basis of warnings not to glory in riches, wisdom, or might (Jeremiah. 9:23) but in the God who has given all these and is greater than his gifts (Elwell 1987:443). For the people of Israel the glory of God surpassed all other aspects of glory. "Although the word could refer to armies or wealth, Israel must trust in neither of these but in the Lord" (Isaiah 31:1, 3; cf. Psalm 20:7; 62:7) (Gordon 1975:731).

Calvin (1983:331) shows that in the Decalogue, God having demanded exclusive worship in the first commandment prohibits image worship in the second. The prohibition arises from an apprehension of God's glory – glory of such a nature that no earthly form can be given to it (Deuteronomy 4:15).

Calvin (1983:91) says, "As often as any form is assigned to God, his glory is corrupted by an impious lie". This is put very directly in Isaiah chapter 40, especially verse 18 "to whom will you compare God? What image will you compare him to?" it is then seen how foolish it is to represent such a glorious God by an idol (cf. Isaiah 41:7, 44:9ff, 46:5ff).

The prophets often use the word "glory" to set forth the excellence of the Messianic Kingdom in contrast to the limitations of the present order (Isaiah 60:1-3) (Elwell 1987:443).

It is interesting to note an alternate view on understanding the glory of God as presented by John T Strong (cf. 2000:69-89) where he argues that Ezekiel understood Yahweh's "kabod" as a hypostasis (2000:72), where hypostasis is

defined as “a quality, epithet, attribute, manifestation or the like of deity which through a process of personification and differentiation has become a distinct (if not fully independent) divine being in its own right” (McBride 1969:5). Strong (2000:73) does, however, acknowledge, that “scholarship as a whole has not followed this course.”

3.1.2 Glory in the New Testament

Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida (1989:66) analyse the Greek word “doxa” in their Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains and divide the meaning of this word into the following different ranges or categories: splendour, brightness, amazing might, praise, honour, greatness, glorious being, heaven, pride and sublime glory.

In view of the purpose of this research it is necessary to elaborate on each of these meanings. The specific indices are noted alongside of the equivalent English meaning.

- 79.18 The quality of splendid, remarkable appearance as seen in Matthew 6:29; even Solomon in all his splendour was not arrayed as one of these.
- 14.49 The state of brightness or shining – “brightness, shining, radiance” as seen in Acts 26:13; a light much brighter than the sun shone around me from the sky.
- 76.13 The manifestation of power characterized by glory as seen in Romans 6:4; just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father. This aspect of glorious may be expressed as ‘that which causes wonder’ or ‘that which causes people to marvel.’

- 33.357 To speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving of honour – to praise, to glorify as seen in Luke 17:18; why is this foreigner the only one who came back to praise God?
- 87.4 Honour as an element in the assignment of status to a person as seen in John 4:44; a prophet has no honour in his own country.
- 87.23 State of being great and wonderful as seen in Matthew 4:8; he showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and their greatness.
- 12.49 A benevolent supernatural power deserving respect and honour – glorious power, wonderful being as seen in 2 Peter 2:10; arrogant people showing no respect for the glorious powers above.
- 1.15 A place which is glorious and, as such, a reference to heaven as seen in 1 Timothy 3:16; he was taken up to heaven.
- 25.205 The reason or basis for legitimate pride as seen in 1 Thessalonians 2:20; for you are our pride and joy.
- 33.468 An idiom literally “to give glory to God,” a formula used in placing someone under oath to tell the truth as seen in John 9:24; promise before God to tell the truth.
- 12.6 A title for God, literally “majestic glory” as seen in 2 Peter 1:17; For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory...

An overview of God's glory in the NT is described by Elwell (1987:443) where he says in general “doxa” is used of honour in the sense of recognition or acclaim (Luke 14:10), and of the vocalized reverence of the creature for the Creator and Judge (Revelation 14:7). With reference to God, it denotes his

majesty (Romans 1:23) and his perfection, especially in relation to righteousness (Romans 3:23). He is called the Father of glory (Ephesians 1:17). The manifestation of his presence in terms of light is an occasional phenomenon, as in the Old Testament (Luke 2:9), but in the main this feature is transferred to the Son. The transfiguration is the only instance during the earthly ministry, but later manifestations include the revelation to Saul at his conversion (Acts 9:3ff) and to John on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:12ff). Paul speaks of God's glory in terms of riches (Ephesians 1:18; 3:16) and might (Colossians 1:11). The display of God's power in raising his Son from the dead is regarded as glory (Romans 6:4). The use of the word "glory" when connected to God in the New Testament conveys a clear sense in which God is lifted out above the ordinary (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:247).

Christ is the effulgence of the divine glory (Hebrews 1:3). It is through that the perfection of the nature of God is made known to men. When James speaks of Him as the Lord of glory (2:1), his thought moves in the direction of the revelation of God in the tabernacle. At the tabernacle the divine presence was a gracious condescension but also an ever-present reminder of God's readiness to mark the sins of his people and to visit them with judgment. So the readers of James's epistle are admonished to beware of partiality.

The glory of Christ as the image of God, the Son of the Father, was veiled or hidden from sinful eyes during the days of his flesh but was apparent to the men of faith who gathered around Him (John 1:14). Berlejung & Frevel (2006:247) state that the glory of Christ is often used in connection with honour, grace and truth. The word "doxa" connects these words with an understanding of God in the moments he reveals himself as the sovereign holy One.

Even as the pre-incarnate Son had dwelt with the Father in a state of glory (with no sin to mar the perfection of the divine mode of life and intercourse), according to his own consciousness (John 17:5), so his return to the Father can properly be called an entrance into glory (Luke 24:26). But more seems to be involved here than a sharing with the Father of what He had enjoyed in

ages past. God now gives Him glory (I Peter 1:21), in some sense as a reward for the faithful, full completion of the Father's will in relation to the work of salvation (Philippians. 2:9-11; Acts 3:13). So it is that both the taking up of Christ from the earth (I Timothy 3:16) and his return (Colossians 3:4; Titus 2:13). So it is the representations of his presence and activity as the future judge and king (Matthew 25:31) are also associated with a majesty and radiance which are largely absent in the portrayals of Jesus in the days of his humiliation (Elwell 1987:443).

While the contrast is valid, therefore, between the sufferings of Christ and the glory (literally, the glories) to follow (I Peter 1:11), John's Gospel reveals a further development, namely, that the sufferings themselves can be viewed as a glorification. Jesus was aware of this and expressed himself accordingly. "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12:23). This word "hour" in the Fourth Gospel points regularly to the death of Christ. Jesus was not seeking to invest the cross with an aura of splendour which it did not have, in order to conjure up a psychological antidote to its pain and shame. Rather, glory properly belongs to the finishing of the work which the Father had given Him to do, since that work represented the perfect will of God (Paul calls his preaching "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Christ is raised alongside of the Father into the place of glory, especially as the crucified One he participates in the glory of God (Hebrews 2:7, 9; 1 Peter 1:21) unknown to those who crucified him (1 Corinthians 2:8). Participation in the glory of God is the aim of sending Jesus (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11). For the Christian the participation in the glory of God comes to completion when ultimately glorified with Christ. This is the goal and perfection of their lives and faith (1 Thessalonians 2:12). The gift of salvation to the believer which has come after losing or falling short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) is the beginning again of participation in his glory in some measure in this life but finally fully in the presence of the God of glory. Paul announces the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is then through Jesus who is the image of God that the believer participates in the glory of their Lord. This vision of the Christ as the image of God has the power of new creation which brings transformation and

renewal into the image of God that they had before the fall (2 Corinthians 3:8) (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:246; Elwell 1987:443).

For John the word “doxa” includes the whole event of salvation through the lifting of Jesus on the cross. Jesus returns to the glory of the Father from where he came and so glory belongs to Christ as the pre-existent One (John 1:14). It can also be seen that the believer is in his earthly life already included in this glory to some extent, but will be perfected in the heavenly union with the Father and Son (John 17:24; Romans 8:18, 21) (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:248).

Of the sixty-one times “doxa” and “doxazo” occur in John’s writings, says Cook (1984:293) only five relate to a being other than God. In all but two of the remaining fifty-six instances the glory is directed to the Father or the Son. The two exceptions involve believers who may receive glory from God or Christ (John 5:44; 17:22).

The Father is seen bringing glory to himself (John 12:28; 17:5) or to the Son (John 8:54; 12:16; 13:32; 17:1, 5, 10, 22, 24). The Father glorifies himself through the life, death and exaltation of Jesus Christ, for it is in Jesus we have the most concentrated revelation of the moral perfections of God. John presents the Son glorifying the Father (John 7:18; 13:31; 14:13; 17:1, 4). Jesus does this as a pattern of life throughout his ministry. Jesus also says in John 16:14 that one of the significant ministries of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:248; Cook 1984:293).

Then it is noted by Elwell (1987:443) that the Father and Son are glorified by various created intelligences. Men in general, even the unbelieving, may bring glory to God (John 9:24; 13:31; Revelation 11:3).

Eschatological glory is the hope of the Christian (Romans 5:2). In this future state he will have a new body patterned after Christ's glorified body (Philippians 3:21), an instrument superior to that with which he is presently endowed (I Corinthians 15:43). Christ within the believer is the hope of glory

(Colossians 1:27). He is also the chief ornament of heaven (Revelation 21:23).

A somewhat specialized use of the word is that which can be seen in the doxologies, where they are ascriptions of praise to God for his worth and works (e.g., Romans 11:36)

“There is no question,” says Cook (1984:292), “that the NT usage of “doxa” keys in from the LXX rather than from secular Greek. The idea of opinion was dropped out of sight.” When it was used ethically to mean “reputation” it always has a positive note. When it is used in a visible sense it seems to mean “radiance” and is especially related to the light that radiates from God’s presence (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:247)..

Theologically it is the ethical usage that is significant. “The glory of God, conceived of as the revelation of his character, is the loftiest of truths” (Cook 1984:292). In a general sense the Glory of God may then be defined as “the exhibition of His Divine attributes and perfections (Psalm 19:1) or the radiance of His presence (Luke 2:9)” (Elwell 1987:443).

Bernard Ramm (1963:18) further develops this and succinctly points out clarifying that “the glory of God is not a particularized attribute like the wisdom of God but an attribute of the total nature of God, virtually an attribute of the attributes.”

3.1.2.1 The Glory of God as Understood by the Apostle Paul

An understanding of the word “glory” from the writings of Paul include various emphases (Lowery 1994:251). God's glory “*doxa*” is a characteristic associated with his presence and may be called a visible sign of his presence. Paul links God's presence and glory in his letter to the Thessalonians when he describes the fate of those who reject the gospel: "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty (glory) of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). “This banishment

from loving fellowship with Christ implies expulsion from ‘the glory (radiant splendour) of his might’ as it is manifested in the salvation of the saints” (Hendriksen 1991:161).

A visual manifestation of God's glory is brightness or radiance (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:246; Lowery 1994:251). Paul compared the radiance reflected in the face of Moses after experiencing the presence of God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:29-35) with the greater and abiding glory associated with the Spirit's ministry in the new covenant (2 Corinthians. 3:6-18). This comparison introduces a transition in the understanding of visible manifestation. Instead of a brightness or radiance indicating God's presence and reflecting His glory, Paul described the ministry of the new covenant as a character-changing experience in which believers "are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory" (v. 18) (cf. Hodge 1963:76-80). This display of God's character in Christian experience is the primary manifestation of His glory in the era of the new covenant.

This is understood clearly when Paul calls his preaching “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Christ is raised alongside of the Father into the place of glory, especially as the crucified One he participates in the glory of God (Hebrews 2:7, 9; 1 Peter 1:21) unknown to those who crucified him (1 Corinthians 2:8). Participation in the glory of God is the aim of sending Jesus (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11). For the Christian the participation in the glory of God comes to completion when ultimately glorified with Christ. This is the goal and perfection of their lives and faith (1 Thessalonians 2:12). The gift of salvation to the believer which has come after losing or falling short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) is the beginning again of participation in his glory in some measure in this life but finally fully in the presence of the God of glory. Paul announces the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is then through Jesus who is the image of God that the believer participates in the glory of their Lord. This vision of the Christ as the image of God has the power of new creation which brings transformation and renewal into the image of God that they had before the fall (2 Corinthians 3:8) (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:248).

The two manifestations, radiance and character, come together in the culmination of salvation (Lowery 1994:251). Then the process of character transformation will be completed and the presence of God for Christians will be immediate, as it is now for Christ, "the Lord of glory" as described in 1 Corinthians 2:8. Prior (1985:51) states that "If the rulers of this age had perceived the true identity of Jesus, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory". Satan has blinded them (Barnett 1988:82) and so they cannot see the Lord of glory who is "the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). But Paul told the Romans, God's purpose for Christians is "to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Romans 8:29). Thus fulfilling the ultimate reason for this act of predestination which is the honour and glory of Jesus Christ (Sproul 1994:153). To experience the end result of that process is to be "glorified" (v. 30). Alternatively, when Paul referred to falling short of "the glory of God" (3:23) he described failure to gain access to this divine presence (cf. 5:2), in short, failure to obtain salvation (Sproul 1994:95). Because the Spirit is the empowering Agent of this character transformation in Christian experience, Paul occasionally used the term "glory" as a reference to the Spirit's work. Like when he wrote that "Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4), the word "glory" is a shorthand description of the Spirit's work (Sproul 1994:113).

Another concept associated with glory is the idea of approval or praise (Lowery 1994:252). Paul reminded the Thessalonians that when he ministered among them he was not looking for "glory from men" (1 Thessalonians 2:6), that is, people's praise or approval (Hendriksen 1991:63). The only approval or praise important to Paul as indicated in 1 Corinthians 4:5 was from God (Prior 1985:64). On the other hand, giving glory to God distinguished people who had a relationship with Him from those who did not. When Paul described those who rejected the truth about God, he said, "They neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him" (Romans 1:21). In contrast to this was an individual of faith like Abraham, who "gave glory to God" (4:20). People thus give glory to God by what they say and do, that is, by expressing praise and thanks to Him and by representing Him in reflecting His character and doing His will (Lowery 1994:252).

3.1.3 God's Passion for His Own Glory

Reymond (2003:55) states that God loves himself with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength, that he himself is at the centre of his affections, that the impulse that drives him and the thing he pursues in everything he does is his own glory. This core belief of God pursuing his own glory will position the preacher with an emphasis that aligns with God and not man at the centre of his focus in preaching.

The instructed preacher will know that God created all things 'for his own glory' (Isaiah 43:7, 21), that he chose Israel 'for his renown and praise and honour' (Jeremiah 13:11), that it was 'for his name's sake and to make his mighty power known' that he delivered his ancient people again and again after they had rebelled against him (Psalm 106:7-8), and that it was 'for the sake of his name' that he did not reject them (1 Samuel 12:20-22), spared them again and again (Ezekiel 20:9, 14, 22, 44), and had mercy upon them and did not pursue them with destruction to the uttermost (Isaiah 48:8-11). He will have learned from the Scripture that it was 'for his own glory' that God did all these things (Ezekiel 36:16-21, 22-23, 24-32). He will know too that Jesus came the first time 'to glorify God' (John 17:4, 6), that every detail of the salvation which he enjoys God arranged in order to provoke in him 'the praise of his glorious grace' (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14), and that Jesus is coming again 'to be glorified' in his saints on that day, and 'to be marvelled at' among all who have believed (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

(Reymond 2003:56)

In spite of being raised in a Christian context where it was frequently taught and believed that "...whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31), Piper (2003:6) claims that no one had ever addressed the question of who the most God-centered Person in the

universe actually is. He had never been taught that God is the most God-centered person in the universe. He describes this as an explosive discovery affirming that “God loves His glory more than He loves us and that this is the foundation of His love for us” (Piper 2003:7).

“Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?” (Isaiah 2:22). “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save” (Psalm 146:3). This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD” (Jeremiah 17:5).

The Glory of God must be a supreme commitment among all Christians. The community of faith and its preachers must be consumed with this same commitment that God has to himself seeing that “God’s ultimate commitment is to Himself and not to us. And therein lies our security” (Piper 2003:7). Piper (2003:7-8) goes on to ask a number of questions with each answer referring back to God’s action on the basis of his love for his own glory, stating that this love for his glory is “no isolated note in the symphony of redemptive history. It is the ever recurring-motif of the all-sufficient Composer.” The questions asked include: 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). Why did God create a people for himself? “I created them for my glory” (Isaiah 43:7). Why did God spare rebellious Israel in the wilderness and finally bring them to the Promised Land? “I acted for the sake of my name (Ezekiel 20:14). Why did the Father send the incarnate Son? “To confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Romans 15:8-9). Why did the Son come to his final hour? “For this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27-28).

3.1.4 God Created the Universe to Show his Glory

God’s love for his glory can also be seen in that He created his people for his own glory (Grudem 1994:272), for he speaks of his sons and daughters as those “whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made” (Isaiah. 43:7)

(cf. Van Huyssteen 2006:119-125) . But it is not only human beings that God created for this purpose. All of creation is intended to show God's glory (Gordon 1975:73). Even the inanimate creation, the stars and sun and moon and sky, testify to God's greatness, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-2). The song of heavenly worship in Revelation 4 connects God's creation of all things with the fact that He is worthy to receive glory from them: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Revelation 4:11).

Primarily the creation shows God's great power and wisdom, far above anything that could be imagined by any creature (Grudem 1994:272). "It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens" (Jeremiah 10:12). In contrast to ignorant men and the "worthless" idols they make, Jeremiah says, "Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob, for he is the one who formed all things... the Lord of hosts is his name" (Jeremiah 10:16). One look at the sun or the stars convinces us of God's infinite power. And even a brief inspection of any leaf on a tree, or of the wonder of the human hand, or of any one living cell, convinces us of God's great wisdom. Who could make all of this? Who could make it out of nothing? Who could sustain it day after day for endless years? Such infinite power, such intricate skill, is completely beyond our comprehension. When we meditate on it, we give glory to God. When we affirm that God created the universe to show his glory, it is important that we realize that He did not need to create it. We should not think that God needed more glory than He had within the Trinity for all eternity, or that He was somehow incomplete without the glory that He would receive from the created universe. This would be to deny God's independence and imply that God needed the universe in order to be fully God. Rather, we must affirm that the creation of the universe was a totally free act of God. It was not a necessary act but something that God chose to do. "You created all things, and *by your will* they existed and were created" (Revelation 4:11). God desired to create

the universe to demonstrate his excellence. The creation shows his great wisdom and power, and ultimately it shows all of his other attributes as well. It seems that God created the universe, then, to take delight in his creation, for as creation shows forth various aspects of God's character, to that extent He takes delight in it (Grudem 1994:272).

3.2 The Transcendence and Immanence of God

3.2.1 Definitions

The terms “transcend” or “transcendence” is derived from the Latin verb “*transcendere*” which initially means simply a passing over, a going-beyond-something or an ascent to what is “more” and “over and above” (Wendel 2004:53). Carson (1996:223) says that “by transcendent, I mean that God exists apart from the creation that he made, and this above space and time. Thus he is not in any way dependent upon his creation; he is self existing – that is he draws his own existence only from himself”.

Grudem (1994:267) describes how Scripture teaches that the relationship between God and creation is unique among the religions of the world. It teaches that God is distinct from his creation. He is not part of it, for He has made it and rules over it. The term often used to say that God is much greater than creation is the word transcendent. This means that God is far “above” the creation in the sense that He is greater than the creation and He is independent of it. Sproul (1985:55) explains,

The word transcendence means literally “to climb across.” It is defined as “exceeding usual limits.” To transcend is to rise above something, to go above and beyond a certain limit. When we speak of the transcendence of God we are talking about that sense in which God is above and beyond us. It tries to get at His supreme and absolute greatness. The word is used to describe God’s relationship to the world. He has absolute power over the world. The world has no power over Him. Transcendence

describes God in His consuming majesty, His exalted loftiness. It points to infinite distance that separates Him from every creature. He is an infinite cut above everything else.

Wells (1994:116) agrees that Scripture indicates that God is transcendent because He is self-sufficient, owing nothing to the creation for his own life, and so powerful that He can always act within that creation. He is dependent on nothing outside of himself for the realization of his will but, because the creation is always and at every moment dependent upon Him, He is always over it. He however goes on to add that God is transcendent because his utter moral purity separates Him from all human life and defines Him in his essential character.

The Scriptures, however, also show that God is very much involved in creation, for it is continuously dependent on Him for its existence and its functioning. The technical term denoting God's involvement in creation is the word immanent, meaning "remaining in" creation. (Grudem 1994:267). The God of the Bible is not an abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in his creation. "God is not an impersonal force or power, but a being who interacts with other persons (whom he has made) as a person – with interchange, speech, 'personality'" (Carson 1996:223). The Bible is the unfolding story of God's involvement with his creation, and particularly the people in it. Job affirms that even the animals and plants depend on God: "In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10). In the New Testament, Paul affirms that God "gives to all men life and breath and everything" and that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25, 28). Indeed, in Christ "all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17), and He is continuously "upholding the universe by his word of power" (Hebrews 1:3). God's transcendence and immanence are both affirmed in a single verse when Paul speaks of "one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:6). The fact that creation is distinct from God yet always dependent on God, that God is far above creation yet always involved in it, means that God is both transcendent and immanent.

Having surveyed the development of the doctrine of God from more than two thousand year before Christ to nearly two thousand years after Christ Johnson and Webber (1989:101) confirm that they stand in the tradition of the church with their “feet firmly planted in the biblical and classical Christian teaching about God as a living, personal and triune God”.

It is within that commitment that Johnson and Webber (1989:101) argue that a balance be maintained between transcendence and immanence, therefore questioning,

the theologies of transcendence that make God remote and indifferent to creation and theologies of immanence that fail to maintain an adequate distinction between God and the creation... As a person who is at once” wholly other,” God is also the God whom we truly encounter in worship and in the everyday events of life. We believe God is best worshipped and served when seen simultaneously in the glory of transcendence and the personalness of immanence.

George J Zemek (1990:131) agrees, saying,

That “Presence theology” discussions and debates about whether or not in the OT the Lord is ever genuinely conceived of as dwelling on earth have generally been counter-productive in the edification of the church. Finite and fallible deliberations, energized by overly simplistic assumptions, have both impugned key texts and skewed their balanced theology. Conclusions that see contradiction rather than complementary truths have resulted, especially in reference to God's transcendence and immanence.

3.2.2 Biblical Theology

A consideration of God who is outside can be seen by taking note of a large family of texts that Wells (1994:122) describes as speaking

...of the plenitude of God's being, his bright excess, his overwhelming largeness and the far reaches of his being that exceed all human understanding. These texts declare that God is exalted, that he is 'high', that he is 'above'...They celebrate that fact that God in his being, character, and will is not subject to the ebb and flow of life, to its limitations, to its distortions, that such is the power God has that even in a fallen world he is able to effect his will, exercise his sovereign control, and act in the fabric of its life. When he does so, however, his ways may sometimes seem dark and mysterious to finite sinners.

There is a group of texts that refer to the greatness of God's being and character, of His being elevated or 'above' this world. The Psalmist declares that God dwells "on high" (113:5; 99:2-3), that his "greatness is unsearchable" and he is "greatly to be praised" (145:3). Isaiah sees him in a vision sitting on a throne "high and lifted up" (6:1), he speaks of God who effortlessly exercises complete sovereignty over all creation (40:15-20) and in the lives of individual people (40:21-26). Similar references appear throughout the New Testament (Romans 1:10; Ephesians 1:4-5; Colossians 4:12). Stephen expressed his confidence in God's sovereignty when he gave his final sermon, calling him the "Most High" (Acts 7:48) (cf. Carson 1996:230-232).

It is this God, elevated over all of life, from whom Christ came. In John's Gospel, the contrast is drawn especially sharp in two forms. John distinguishes between two realms in life, sometimes contrasting "glory" with "flesh" and sometimes contrasting what is "above" with what is "below". It was from the realm of glory that Christ descended (3:13; 6:33, 38; 10:38) to take flesh (1:13-14). On forty-two occasions, John describes Christ as having been "sent" into this world, leaving God who is above and coming below (3:17;

9:39; 10:36; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37). Many have subsequently stumbled at this point, perplexed over the relation between the Father who was left and the Son who came. Did they share the same divine being? Could they be different grades of divinity? Did the separation require some kind of distinction between the divinity of the Father and the Son? The New Testament shows no such perplexity. Luke characterizes Christ as “the Son of the Most High” (1:32); Paul, citing Psalm 68:18, states that after completing his work on the cross, Christ “ascended on high” (Ephesians 4:8); and all the New Testament authors affirm both implicitly and explicitly that the goodness of the Son was not different from that of the Father and by the fourth century, in the Nicene Creed, the early church had finally secured this position against the heretical alternatives (Wells 1994:123-124). Jan G. van der Watt (cf. 2000:296-303) discusses how the sending by the Father of the Son places the mission within the family context thus emphasizing the relation between the mission and the family.

There are then texts that speak directly of the painful and sometimes terrifying reality of God’s utter moral purity. This too, is part of his elevation. This was part of what Isaiah saw in the temple when he cried out with the words, “Woe to me (6:5) (cf. Berges 1998:94-104; Motyer 1993: 74-78). He was struck by the dreadful danger that he and the rest of God’s people were placed in by this holy God, for this kind of holiness, of necessity, asserts itself against what is dark, wrong, perverse, and disobedient. And yet, a little later Isaiah says, “I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him” (8:17). Later yet he says, “Truly you are God who hides himself...” (45:15). Why would a God whose holiness so awed Isaiah now seem to disappear? Sometimes the answer to this dilemma is that God’s absence, his “hiding”, his inaccessibility in the realm “above” is itself an expression of his judgment: He judges by withdrawing his presence. At other times, however, his judgment is more overt; the Old Testament gives a running commentary of those moments through the centuries when God’s holiness asserted itself against those who were arrogant, unbelieving or disobedient (Wells 1994:124).

Finally, there are texts acknowledging that God's ways often elude human understanding. Paul, for example, says that God's judgments are "unsearchable" and his ways "inscrutable" (Romans 11:33). God's apparent absence from our lives is not always a matter of judgment; sometimes, it is just a matter of the strange unfathomable out-workings of his providence. Sometimes sufferers facing circumstances that seem to herald the defeat or flight of God simply have to trust that He is indeed good, that He is indeed present. God's government of the world is often morally opaque from our perspective, and it will be so until the final day. "Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?" (10:1) asks the baffled Psalmist (Wells 1994:125). Job, in his long anguish and confusion, knows "the dread of a silent and absent God" (Terrien 1978:363).

In Deuteronomy 29:29 we learn that what is un-revealed will remain unknown: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."

The God of the Bible is the God who reveals himself – which is to say that revelation is not a matter of human discovery but of divine-disclosure. And the fact that God could have remained completely inaccessible to our understanding had He chosen to do so, that He could have concealed all that He is from us, and that He could have done this because He does not need us for his own completion. The fact that He did chose to reveal Himself to us is explicable only on the grounds of grace. (cf. Brunner 1934:548-560).

William C. Placher (1996:xi) raises an interesting point worth noting in the context of this dissertation. He says,

The problems of greatest concern to me are not the modern world's famous inability to believe in God – I'm willing, as a theologian to take my chances there – but the world's characteristically trivial images of God. When the culturally dominant pictures of God have come to be simplistic, it becomes

hard to arouse much excitement about the news of divine incarnation – or much sense of its meaning... (I am) worried – and continue to worry – that in the contemporary context God-talk too could seem a little too comfortable and domestic.

He is concerned about the appropriate language for God. In his book, *The Domestication of Transcendence* (1996), he proposes “a critical retrieval of some aspects of traditional Christian theology” (1996:xii). Before the seventeenth century Placher (1996:6) argue when speaking of transcendence,

Most Christian theologians were struck by the mystery, the wholly otherness of God, and the inadequacy of any human categories as applied to God... but in the seventeenth century philosophers and theologians increasingly thought they could talk clearly about God.

As a result there was a shift to a “contrastive” understanding of transcendence, where they were explaining God’s difference from created things by saying that God was *transcendent* (distant, unaffected) in contrast to *immanent* (close, engaged).

Rather than explaining how the categories break down when applied to God, they set the stage for the talking about transcendence as one of the definable properties God possesses – a quality we could understand and that many writers today could then come to find deeply unattractive. In that sense, transcendence got domesticated, and theology suffered as a result.

(Placher 1996:7)

Placher (1996:199), on this issue of transcendence, wants to recapture what the Bible makes clear about the transcendent mystery of God.

If Christians believe in God's transcendence, it follows that we remain cautious about all efforts to explain a process itself embedded in the work of God we recognize remains unknowable to us. We recognize the way in which the biblical narratives keep illuminating our understanding of our lives and shaping the worshipping communities in which we live those 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. This is what it is like to acknowledge the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.

Should this element of mystery and majesty not also be present in preaching? Are we as preachers not in danger of reducing God to something less than He actually is? God is not and cannot be one of the things in the world, to be analysed and compared with categories appropriate to the other things of the world. Placher (1996:10), quoting John of Damascus, "God does not belong to the class of existing things, not that God has no existence but that God is above all existing things, no even above existence itself." As Paul Tillich (1951:235) elaborated the point,

The being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others. If God is a being, he is subject to the categories of finitude, especially to space and substance. Even if he is called "highest being" in the sense of the "most perfect" and the "most powerful" being this situation is not changed. When applied to God, superlatives become diminutives.

The valid point being that something we can understand and adequately account for in terms of our human categories is not God (Placher 1996:10). In commending learning about the unknowable mysteries of God from three classical theologians, namely Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, Placher (1996:60) argues,

Just as for Aquinas we speak with confidence a language about God we do not understand, just as Luther urged a turning aside from any effort to penetrate the mystery of the hidden God in favour of trust in God's promises, so for Calvin the words we speak of God can help us to a confident trust in God even as we recognize the inadequacies both of the words themselves and of our understanding of them.

As a theologian and philosopher Aquinas sought to develop proofs for the existence of God in his *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas believed that God could be known not only through the eyes of faith, but also by human reason. Luther's (1966:34) confidence in God can be seen in what he says in his *Bondage of the Will*,

If you doubt, or disdain to know that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently, but necessarily and immutably, how can you believe confidently, trust to, and depend on his promises? For when he promises, it is necessary that you should be certain, that he knows, is able and willing to perform what he promises; otherwise, you will neither hold Him true and faithful; which is unbelief, the greatest of wickedness, and a denying of the Most High God!

Calvin (1983:174) also confirms his confidence in God by affirming that God's sovereignty focuses on God's omnipotent will.

He [God] is accounted omnipotent, not because he is able to act, yet sits down in idleness, or continues by a general instinct the order of nature originally appointed by him; but because he governs heaven and earth by his providence, and regulates all things in such a manner that nothing happens but according to his counsel.

The unknown truths about God does not have to erode confidence to speak about what is known even if there remains a measure of mystery. Does this not have an implication for the preacher who seeks to convey in his preaching a sense of the infinite supremacy and transcendence of God? I am convinced it does, in that the preacher does not always have to define God in such a way that exhausts any possibility of communicating his infinite transcendence without compromising his immanence. There is an element of mystery that must therefore remain.

Thomas G Long in his book *Beyond the Worship Wars*, argues for the inclusion of what he calls “The Presence of Mystery” (2001:15) during times of corporate worship in a Sunday service. He maintains that an important characteristic necessary for meaningful corporate worship is that “vital congregations make room somewhere in worship for the experience of mystery” (2001:20).

Barbara Brown Taylor reports that she periodically surveyed her congregations to inquire what sort of adult church-school classes they desired. They always asked for more courses on the Bible prompting her to involve professors from a local seminary to teach classes on the Bible. Yet the attendance was always poor. They always seemed to want more Bible study but few came to the classes. “Finally,” she notes, “I got the message. ‘Bible’ was a code word for ‘God’. People were not hungry for information about the Bible; they were hungry for an experience of God, which the Bible seemed to offer them” (Taylor 1993:47).

In like manner, people are not hungry for more worship services, for more hymns, sermons and anthems. They are hungry for experiences of God, which can come through worship; in the most primal sense, this hunger is what beckons people to worship. The anticipation of the holy is almost palpable, even in the tiniest church on the most routine of days. One can feel it as the people gather, in the spaces between the prayers and hymns, in the most electric silence before the homily.

(Long 2001:21)

Speaking of the preacher entering the pulpit, switching on the lectern light, and spreading out his sermon notes “like a poker hand” Frederick Buechner (1977:40) describes this sense of expectation, by saying:

All of this deepens the silence with which they sit there waiting for him to work a miracle, and the miracle they are waiting for is that he will not just say that God is present, because they have heard it said before...but that he will somehow make it real to them through the sacrament of words.

It is clear that an encounter with God is not something that human beings control or arrange,

No worship planning team could or should sit around a table brainstorming ways for holiness to erupt in an order of worship. However, while we certainly do not have the power to make God appear, a service of worship is a somewhat fragile medium, and we do have, it seems, the negative capacity to create static, to sabotage people’s perception of God’s presence. God is present in worship; our job is to clear the clutter and get out of the way of people’s sight lines.

(Long 2001: 21)

In as much as Long is specifically discussing the broader context of worship this same issue is applicable to preaching the sermon as part of that worship time. The preacher therefore needs to make every effort to ensure he does not create additional clutter in his message thus obscuring the listeners vision of the Glory of God.

Speaking of how many congregations have lost any sense of the transcendent in worship, Long (2001:24) quotes Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler who maintained,

What is needed is a concentrated attack on the lost realms of wonder and terror and ambiguity, which lie so shallowly beneath the shallow chatty, bland life of our Sunday-morning parish situation – an attack equipped for its work by Biblical knowledge, theological acumen, and a shared awareness of the infinite equivocations in the lives of people who still come, ever expectantly to our churches.

4. THEOLOGICAL THEORIES AND PREACHING MODELS

4.1 An Overview of Recent Developments in Homiletical Theory

Preaching has not remained static over the centuries. Preaching theory has continually developed with new insights and emphases being added by many contributors. This is also true of our own age where there is a wide spectrum of opinion. “Contemporary Homiletics shows a diversity of insights and operates from various presuppositions” (Immink 2004:89). Even within a particular and defined denomination, like the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, there is no consistent homiletical model. Preaching in its intention and methodology varies among these churches. There are those who champion expository preaching and others who prefer narrative and topical styles of preaching.

The last decades of the twentieth century, North American Homiletics was dominated by what is being called “New Homiletics” and during the first years of the new millennium, the emphasis has been moving further away from the modernist logos to postmodern poetics, a further turn to the listener (Immink 1994:89). Vos (2005:292) discussing “Art as a window on the experiential world” says that,

The experiential world floats on the waters of poetry... We can be carried along by the currents, or almost drowned by its maelstroms. Sometimes we can scarcely keep our heads above the water and at other times we are splashing about happily in the streams of life’s experiences... Poetry allows people to dream, no matter how dire their circumstances.

“Homiletics is exiting the houses of tradition, scripture, reason and experience” (McClure 2001). It is not that the fundamental constituents of preaching are no longer important, but, says Immink (2004:89),

...their self evident meanings have evaporated. Positions are continuously under deconstruction, identities are fragmented and erased. Surely the basic questions remain. How should we read the Bible as a text? How does anamnesis work? How should we reason in the communication of faith? What is the role of human experience in religious discourse? These questions are handled from quite different perspectives, however. Homiletics is fragmented.

Even here it must be noted that the question regarding the Glory of God is conspicuous by its absence. Surely the question uppermost in any preaching event is that of: how and in what way is the Glory of God being communicated?

In the western European context, Homiletics took an empirical turn following a heyday of kerygmatic theology. Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and C H Dodd had understood preaching primarily as an encounter with God's redemptive presence, albeit in different ways. The movement now is toward the process of understanding: how do the listeners engage in the process of understanding? The hearer of the sermon is seen as an active participant in the preaching process (Immink 2004:89).

There is no doubt that the preacher seeking to make a difference must take note of the present audience. "The person living in the 21st Century must be taken seriously for meaningful ministry to take place. The preacher must understand the congregation in its own context to avoid proclamation taking place in a vacuum" (Janse van Rensburg 2002:39).

Nell (Vos (ed.) 1994:28) agrees: "A sermon must be heard in order to have any effect... Preaching as a communication act is intended to act upon an audience, to modify an audience's convictions or dispositions... " The preacher in every context, including the postmodern context needs to know and understand his audience.

The inclusion of the listener or hearer alongside the biblical text is supported by Ernst Lange (1976:58). Gert Otto (1976) emphasizes the rhetorical dimension of preaching: preaching is an address, a speech. The Dutch homiletician, G D J Dingemans (1991), argues for a hermeneutical approach from the perspective of the hearer. Another recent tendency is linked with the late-modern interest in existentialism and subjectivism and moves in the direction of a more constructionist approach. Wilfried Engemann (1993) developed a “semiotic homiletic” in which he tries to do justice to the socio-cultural context of signification. There is also an interest in a more aesthetic approach. Martin Nicol has described how preaching can become a work of art (see 2000:19-24). Vos (2005:306) agrees, saying that the homiletician “is to craft a sermon with care and make it a work of art”. Umberto Eco’s idea of *offenes Kunstwerk* is introduced into homiletical theories in order to emphasize that texts can be understood in many different ways, that hearers provide their own interpretation, and that we definitively need imagination and metaphorical language in order to represent the divine mystery (Immink 2004:90).

4.1.1 Developments Around the Kerygmatic Theory

H. Grady Davis (1958:109) in his book, *Design for Preaching*, argues that preaching in the New Testament takes the characteristic form of “official announcement, proclamation of God’s action and offer, by the mouth of a chosen messenger.” Proclamation is presented as a promise. It consists of promises made by God, promises of forgiveness and help, of liberation and joy, of hope and of glory (Immink 2004:93). The word *euaggelizein* (Louw & Nida 1989:412) means “to communicate good news concerning something (in the New Testament a particular reference to the gospel message about Jesus”. It expresses the good news of God’s redemptive action in Jesus Christ. But Davis adds that the ministry of the word is not derived from this concept alone. In the New Testament, teaching and exhortation are the legitimate forms of speech. “Kerygma points to God’s decisive acts in Christ and calls for faith and repentance. Teaching and exhortation focus on the

need in the community of faith to grow in knowledge, faith and obedience” (Immink 2004:93).

The herald model is the preferred way of preaching by those who hold to a word-theology. In his early days Barth held that the church had forgotten to read the Word as God’s Word. He was concerned that preaching had turned into a kind of religious discourse, a reflection of human needs and religious desires. This same concern underlies the motivation for this thesis. Barth insisted beginning with his Romans placing strong emphasis on the otherness of God. He saw that, “the Gospel proclaims a God utterly distinct from men. Salvation comes to them from him [God], and because they are, as men, incapable of knowing him, they have no right to claim anything from him” (Barth 1968:28). Therefore, that in preaching we are confronted with a critical and salvific word of God, a word that radically changes us (Immink 2004:93). Eduard Thurneysen argued that preaching as a communicative act is never a communication of experiences, be they pious or not. Instead preaching is about God’s salvific acts in history (Thurneysen 1971:105-118). The emphasis is on God’s saving activity in the world and not on human religious experience. The herald model reinforces that personal experiences, personal opinions, and colourful anecdotes are not truly important in the act of preaching (Long 1989:27). Instead, the divine-human encounter in Jesus Christ is to be re-presented. Preaching has to serve the word of God, i.e. Jesus Christ as the act of God. For that reason, preaching is the exposition of scripture. Consequently, says Immink (2004:93),

Our subjective experience or subjective interpretation is de-emphasized in the act of preaching. Instead, preaching is sacramental. It is a human speech act through which God’s salvific action is re-presented (Barth 1971:165-178), not in the sense that we can domesticate God, but rather that God can create the Christ event to be performed in our midst. Preaching is a kerygmatic event, not an expression of human consciousness.

Bloesch (2001:55) commenting in *Christianity Today* in an article advocating kerygmatic preaching entitled “Whatever happened to God” (www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/002/9.54.html) questions the sad state of the sermon,

Equally deplorable is the state of the sermon, which in historic Protestantism was considered the primary means of grace. Our preaching may appeal to the Bible, but that appeal is often more cultural than biblical. We interpret the Bible through the lens of our own experience or our particular religious tradition. We do not allow for the fact that the Spirit speaking to us through the Bible may call our traditions and our theologies into question. The surest evidence that Protestantism has abandoned its glorious heritage—of being not only a reformed church but a constantly reforming church—is the demise of kerygmatic preaching, preaching that consists in retelling the story of God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. Ministers may preach from the Bible, but this does not guarantee that they are preaching the Word of God. Their sermons are didactic more than kerygmatic, more centred on moral concerns than on the gospel.

Lischer (1992:53) advocates the kerygmatic approach in a more moderate form, he says that “because it is God who speaks and the Holy Spirit who attends the Word, those who preach, teach and give testimony do so with the assurance that the Word's effective power is not diminished”. Long defines preaching as “bearing witness” and Charles Bartow (1997:3) in his book *God's Human Speech*, emphasizes the performance dimension of the kerygmatic model.

And if the divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ is the primary locus of performative action for practical theology..., it is imperative that we attend to that self-disclosure with all the varied means appropriate to it... The Word of God is face to face, oral-aural situated, and suasive discourse. It is not a dead

letter... It is an event of *action divina* (God's self-performance). It is in fact God's human speech.

The gospel here is primarily understood as an event of the divine self-performance. That self-performance is enacted again in preaching. In the *homo performans*, we meet the divine action (Bartow 1997:60). Preachers are not referring to the imaginations of their hearts, they testify to the divine self performance. Language therefore does not have an expressive function, but instead it is relational and depicts reality. What it evokes is not merely knowledge or emotion, but instead human action brought about by the enactment of God's self-disclosure in preaching (Immink 2004:94).

A specific form of narrative kerygmatic Homiletics has been developed in the tradition of the Yale school of theology. It aims at overcoming the old liberal experiential-expressive model of religious communication by presenting a cultural-linguistic alternative. The old subjective approach is rejected, mainly because it locates religion in the pre-reflective depth of the self. In the old model, faith is primarily a subjective experience and becomes discursive when it is expressed in thought and language. In a cultural-linguistic outlook, religion is viewed as a kind of cultural or linguistic framework that shapes the entirety of life and thought (Lindbeck 1984:33). Language and culture are a priori, and religion is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivity rather than being a manifestation of subjectivity. The outer has priority over the inner and consequently religion is an external world that shapes the self and its world (Immink 2004:95).

Eugene Lowry introduced strategies for narrative sermons and holds the view that evoking an experience is the purpose of preaching. Yet there is an explicit kerygmatic moment in his theory of preaching. Lowry distinguishes between preaching as a task and preaching as a goal and introduces the term proclaiming to describe the goal,

Preaching I can do. I choose it: I prepare for it. Prayerfully I engage it, and I perform it. I do it Sunday next. Proclaiming the

Word is what I hope will happen next Sunday. I will attempt my preparation strategy in such a way as to maximize the chance for it. But proclaiming the Word? Nobody has the grip of control for it. You cannot capture it; you cannot control the receipt of it; you cannot package it; you cannot deliver it, and you cannot control the receipt of it. Sorry. Preaching the sermon is a task; proclaiming the Word is a hoped for goal. It would be an achievement indeed.

(1997:37)

Lowry points out that the bridge between preaching and truly proclaiming is evocation, but understood as an encounter with God's salvific presence (Immink 2004:95).

Immink maintains that is important to see that kerygmatic preaching is not only stimulated by the Barthian tradition but also by Bultmann's theology. According to Bultmann preaching is personal address, summons, demand and promise. "The message of Jesus is an eschatological gospel – the proclamation that now the fulfilment of promise is at hand, that now the Kingdom of God begins" (Bultmann 1935:27). The summons and demand is evident at the last meal Jesus has with his disciples. Jesus' message is "based on certainty: the Kingdom of God is beginning, is beginning now! His own activity is for him and for his followers the sign that the Kingdom is imminent... In this last hour... decision is inevitable – for him or against him" (1935:30). Referring to the parable of the great banquet in Luke 24:16-24 Bultmann (1935:33) claims that "The call to the Kingdom of God is accordingly, as the parable shows, an invitation which is at the same time a demand. Where the Kerygma is proclaimed, there is the very revealing moment of grace (Immink 2004:95).

4.1.2 The Growing Importance of the Listener

One of the most fundamental characteristics of Homiletical discourse in the second half of the twentieth century is the attention to the hearer (Immink 2004:96).

It is necessary for the preacher to understand the world of the congregation (Pieterse in Vos 1994:6). This requires more than just the study of the Bible and commentaries but a penetration by the preacher into the world of the parishioners.

Long (1989:12) states that the preacher must approach the text as a representative of the congregation. He says, “we have been immersed in the lives of these people to whom we will speak, which is another way of saying that, symbolically at least we rise to the pulpit from the pew” .

What exactly does the listener hear, and what does he or she expect to happen in the church? This resulted in hearer-centred models in Homiletics. It was not that the kerygmatic theologians overlooked the listener but their concern was primarily theological and epistemological in nature.

One of the results of empirical research being used in Practical Theology during this period was that homeleticians began to see that preaching was not efficient (Immink 2004:97). New insights emerging from the social sciences led some theologians to admit that preaching does not function well in terms of communication. Karl-Wilhelm Dahm observed that preaching is too much a one-way activity of the preacher, which results in a consumer-attitude of the hearer. Although there is some positive result at the emotional level, they really do not change people's lives and have zero impact on a cognitive level. A few years later, Karl-Fritz Daiber completed large-scale empirical research in the churches of Hannover, and one of the results was that the hearers interpret sermons from their subjective mindset. Ever since then, apprehending the sermon has become a central theme in Homiletical studies.

In the South African context H.J.C. Pieterse (1991) has developed a dialogical communication model for Homiletics (Vos 1996:170). The communication model consists of conversation partners that strive to communicate in freedom and on equal footing (see Pieterse 1988:8-9).

Rudolf Bohren has been paying much attention to the active participation of the hearer, and has yet remained faithful to the kerygmatic model. He does so by using basic insights from reformed theology as developed by the Dutch theologian Arnold van Ruler. Central to van Ruler's work is the idea of the inhabitation of the Spirit. According to him, says Immink (2004:97),

The gospel is not only proclaimed but also realized in the human world and history, albeit in an incomplete and fragmentary way. The sinner is not only justified, but also regenerated and renewed. Divine grace is not only bestowed upon us, but also accepted, internalized, and lived as a public affair. This is the specific and distinctive work of the divine Spirit. In line with the Calvinist tradition, van Ruler argues that faith cannot be understood solely in Christological terms. It also has a pneumatological structure. This implies reciprocity between the divine and the human: to be accurate, a theonome reciprocity. Bohren uses these insights in his homiletical theory. The work of the Spirit is a work in us and with us. Where the Spirit works, there human activities are included: methods are involved and techniques applied, art is practiced and science used. Moreover, the Spirit is not only involved in the preaching of the word but also in the reception of the word. Consequently, Bohren pays full attention to the hearer. The hearing of the word is both a work of God and an art and work of the human being.

In the secular European culture and mindset where all self evidence of Christianity is gone and questions as to the relevance of the gospel are being asked, Lange, turning to the needs and expectations of the hearer, argues that the sermon has to clarify the situation. He does not contend that the

situation of hearer reveals ultimate meaning or that the situation is simply illuminated from within, but rather clarified in the light of the gospel. In the light of the gospel, clarification implies real change (Lange 1976:58). In this model, the sermon is a conversation with the hearer about that person's life – a conversation, however, in the light of God's promises (Lange 1976:58).

Hans van de Geest's *Presence in the Pulpit*, presents a slightly different approach but keeps the focus on the reception of the sermon. From the perspective of dealing with the personality and character of the preacher he focuses on the importance of trust between the preacher and hearer. He believes that the sermon is not effective when our human resistance and our hidden unwillingness are neglected or overruled (Immink 2004:99). It is important to deal with what David Buttrick calls "congregational blocks".

The Dutch homiletician Dingemans developed a hermeneutical model from the perspective of the listener. Using the insights of modern hermeneutics, he argues that we can neither hold onto an objective truth nor depart from a subjective certainty. All knowledge is best understood as human interpretation. He sees the preacher primarily as a mediator who facilitates the dialogue between the hearer and the biblical text (Immink 2004:99).

4.1.3 The New Homiletic

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. One of the leading principles in preaching is that preaching must be understood as an event-in-time. The purpose of this type of preaching is not to transmit cognitions but to facilitate an event to be experienced (Immink 2004:100). Good preaching does not seek to win consent to a truth claim, but evokes experience. An evaluation of the sermon is based on the question, what happened in this sermon.

Fred Craddock raises the practice of inductive preaching and he postulates three conditions (1981:62-64), which are necessary for inductive preaching,

First, particular concrete experiences (of the listeners and the preacher) are ingredient to the sermon, not just in the introduction to solicit interest as some older theories held but throughout the sermon. On the basis of these concrete thoughts and events, by analogy and by the listener's identification with what he hears, conclusions are reached, new perspectives are gained, decisions made.

The second matter thus far stressed as fundamental to induction in movement of material that respects the hearer not only capable of but deserving the right to participate in that movement and arrive at a conclusion that is his own, not just the speaker.

This leads us to a third and final comment about the inductive method and the role of the listener: the listener completes the sermon... What is suggested... is that the participation of the hearer is essential, not just in the post-benediction implementation but in the completion of the thought, movement and decision making within the sermon itself. The process calls for an incompleteness, a lack of exhaustiveness in the sermon. It requires of the preacher that he resist the temptation to tyranny of ideas rather than democratic sharing. He restrains himself, refusing to do both the speaking and the listening. To give both stimulus and response, or in a more homely analogy, he does not throw the ball to catch it himself.

Induction begins with the particulars of life experience and points toward principles, concepts and conclusions (Lewis & Lewis 1983:32). In a later work they describe inductive preaching as "laying out the evidence, the examples, the illustrations and postpone the declarations and assertions until the

listeners have a chance to weigh the evidence, think through the implications and then come to the conclusion with the preacher at the end of the sermon” (1989:43). Inductive preaching works from the particulars to the whole, from the unknown to the known and employs four valuable elements.

Another aspect of the New Homiletic is the use of creativity and imagination. Imagination is understood as a rule-governed form of invention. It has to do with inspiration and creativity (Immink 2004:103). Vos (2005:291), discussing the need for the preacher to be part of the experiential world of the listener, says that the “homiletician needs to do more than try to understand the listener’s experiential world; as far as possible, he/she should have an intuitive understanding of the listener’s emotional state”, thus illustrating the proposed use of imagination and creativity.

A good summary of more recent new directions in Homiletics is found in Rose’s *Sharing the Word*. She favours a conversational model in which “the preacher and the congregation gather symbolically at a round table without head or foot, where the labels like clergy and laity disappear and where believing or wanting to believe is all that matters” (1997:4). All forms of hierarchy must be abandoned: the preacher is not an authority figure, there is no absolute or objective standard of word, and no propositional truth. All present have a contribution in a partnership between the preacher and the congregation (Immink 2004:104).

4.2 Contemporary Preaching Models

“The choice of the type of sermon has a communicative value and is a road along which the preacher and the congregation can travel” (Vos 2005:316). Important to this study is what happens down the road to the listener in terms of either being exposed or not being exposed to the Glory of God.

The preacher has a responsibility in bringing the listener to a particular destination. The destination must include inspiring the listeners to greater

vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter with God in worship.

This study will consider three different preaching models in line with what is preferred and used most often in the South African Baptist context.

4.2.1 Narrative Preaching

The narrative preaching model is not entirely new. In the Bible, there are what Walter Brueggemann (Long 1980:64-65) has called “primal narratives” such as Exodus and Passion stories. It was also prevalent in synagogue preaching, where preachers engaged in at least two distinct forms of proclamation: *halakah* (“the way”) and *haggadah* (“story”). Halakah involves applying the legal provisions of the Torah to new circumstances, while Haggadic preaching weaves the hearers’ circumstances in to the biblical narratives (Vos 1994:95).

Narrative preaching is being promoted as a primary sermon form in the 21st Century. It is argued by H. Grady Davis (1958:157) that if only one-tenth of the gospel is exposition and nine-tenths of it narrative then why do our “perceptual sermons roar on, entirely out of sync with the Bible’s narrative model?”

4.2.1.1 Definition

In seeking to understand what narrative preaching is it needs to be distinguished from mere story telling. It cannot just be seen as story telling. Long (1989a:71) defines a story as a series of events that have a beginning, a middle and an end. These elements of time, says Pieterse (1987:166), are linked “by logical relationships, by a causal relationship” or, as suggested by Schlafer (1992:63; 68-70), “by the dynamics between narrative, images and arguments”. However, as Buttrick (1987:10) points out, the report of chronological events cannot be considered a narrative.

“A narrative is the artistic arrangement and the telling of the events in such a way that the story has its ultimate effect in its sermonic context” (Janse van Rensburg 2003:56). Stories will not automatically produce a good sermon (Schlafer 1992:82). It is the plot of the story that adds that special charm and seductive power to entice the listener to become involved (Janse van Rensburg 2003:56).

Stories may give identity or even prove a point or share ideas (Robinson 1990:34) whereas preaching in narrative form transforms identity, because it places the story within the bigger context of God’s story. Although we cannot predict the effects of a sermon, the power of narrative is that it invites people to identify with a character in the narrative. Schlafer (1992:79) explains:

If a point of identification can be established with characters who are engaged in realistic interaction, there is the possibility that such an identification can have the effect of reshaping the life stories of those who hear the story in the sermon.

Well-told narratives draw the listener to the place where the listener identifies with the people in the story. Some characters are preferred above others but as the listener identifies with the trials and tribulations, the joys and loves of the characters, the listener experiences a solidarity with them that enables him/her to say: “I like that” or “I wish I could be like that” or “I do not wish to be like that” (Long 1989:75), or as Miller (1992:110) says, “What must I do?”

Although the story captures the attention of the listener instantaneous change cannot be guaranteed. Pieterse argues that the “single life-changing factor in Christian narratives is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ” therefore claiming that all preaching should be Christ-centred (1987:11-17).

“The literature in narrative preaching shows that the concept of narrative is not universal in its semantic interpretation” (Janse van Rensburg 2003:57). Some see a narrative sermon to be the re-telling of a biblical story, others understand narrative preaching to include a story about life that explains

biblical truths. Illustrations, often used to confirm an expository sermon, as well as poetic language, the life story of the individual, authentic experiences are also considered by some to be narrative.

Lowry (1993:25-27) defines narrative preaching in such broad terms that he regards each sermon “that moves from opening disequilibrium through escalation of conflict to surprising reversal to closing denouement” as a narrative sermon whether it contains a story or not. Vos (1996:181-186) argues that any approach that causes the sermon to be more pleasing could be called narrative, whereas some writers even include the traditional style of preaching in the definition of narrative (Hamilton 1992:104).

Janse van Rensburg (2003:57) maintains that this all-inclusive understanding of the term “narrative” is unfortunate, as it does not help us to understand the narrative art form better. On the contrary, it confuses more than it enlightens.

The narrative sermon according to Calvin Miller (1992:103) is not a simple matter of using stories and illustrations to make the sermon interesting, instructive, or challenging.

The narrative sermon, rather than containing stories, is a story which, from the outset to conclusion, binds the entire sermon to a single plot as theme. Here and there sub-plots, separate illustrations or precepts may punctuate or ornament the narrative, but the theme narrative stays in force all the way through – from the sermon’s “once-upon-a-time” until its “happy ever after.”

4.2.1.2 Developing the Narrative Sermon

There are various approaches in developing a narrative sermon, including Lowry, with an emphasis on the plot, Buttrick with his emphasis on moves (1987:23-79), and Craddock with his emphasis on the inductive approach. Janse van Rensburg (2003:59) suggests that Miller’s approach (1992:112-

115) is the most workable, because of its simplicity and ability to accommodate the main elements of the other approaches.

The preparation and delivery of narrative sermons as in the case of any sermon can be considered under the following four categories: the approach, the writing, the delivery and the calling of the sermon (Miller 1992:112).

Approaching the narrative sermon deals with the early work of needing to arrive at a subject, text and form for the sermon.

The writing begins as soon as it is determined this is the best form to use. The contriving of the narrative sermon will have a plot for its primary ingredient. The plot is the unresolved tension that must remain unresolved until the final moments of the sermon. In other words, it can be said that the audience must be kept waiting in suspense for the resolution.

The delivery should be gilded with the best, well rehearsed techniques of oral delivery and dramatic enhancement.

The calling should be obvious by the time the narrative is resolved. What is the text demanding of them? What does God require? Is the issue clear? How can they meet the issue? Why was the sermon preached in the first place?

As seen above, Miller uses the plot (like Lowry) as the point of departure where the plot entails four moves as explained by Janse van Rensburg (2003:59-63):

An introduction – this is where the characters of the story are introduced. At this stage the narrator will have to consider all the facts as well as the arrangement of those facts in such a manner as to create expectation and meaningful anticipation. It is also here that motives and emotions are important if characters are to be presented as people like us.

Events – these are the events that are complicated by developments (other wise known as “itch” (Lowry 1997:81).

Resolution – while narrating the events, “the information triggers the listeners to get involved in their own story, interpreting what they hear and seeking answers and solutions” (Hughes 1990:58). The resolution brings about a sense of satisfaction.

A conclusion – the events, as in a movie, come to a quick conclusion for dramatic effect. Lowry (1997:86) states that this is a “crucial time for powerful economy of words”.

4.2.1.3 Advantages of Narrative Preaching

Miller (1992:104-106) sets out the following advantages of the narrative model:

- The narrative form forces our dull minds to pay attention to far more than the three point sermon form. Vos (2005:317) maintains “the main advantage of the story as a sermon is that it can be interesting, that it carries the listeners along with it.” There is, however, the danger that the story could become the sermon text removing the text in to the background.
- It manoeuvres a story to suit the whole congregation’s privatized needs. Each member of the congregation applies the story to his/her situation to arrive at the best individual application.
- It has to do with the flow and fix of the sermon.
- It may propel the preacher in the direction of sermonic artistry.

4.2.2 Expository Preaching

No treatment of the nature of expository preaching would be complete without referring to the dramatic scene recorded in Nehemiah 8. A scene described by Larson & Dahlen (2005:216) which was “not a spontaneous gathering but well planned and strategically arranged”.

All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. 2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. 3 He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. 5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. 6 Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 7 The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. 8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

(Nehemiah 8:1-8)

Raymond Brown (1998:127) commenting on this passage in Nehemiah 8 says, “The distinctive characteristics of this meeting for biblical exposition are strikingly relevant... Western materialistic culture has become increasingly indifferent to the Bible”. Brueggemann (2003:367) commenting on Nehemiah suggests that “particular attention be paid to the remarkable cluster of materials in chapter 8-10... The text narrates a determinative act... that marks the community of Judaism as the people of the book-cum-interpretation”.

Expository preaching therefore seeks to follow the pattern of preaching as established by Ezra and his associates. Those godly men read God’s book and explained it, and they did so in such a way that the people understood the implications (Begg 1999:27, Hughes 2001:19). Expository preaching is “Bible-centred preaching”. That is, it is handling the text “in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Bible writer as it exists in the light of the over-all context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers” (Unger 1955:33). The text of Scripture must be explained in such a way that people understand what God is saying to them (Hughes 2001:69).

True expository preaching creates an expectation amongst hearers to hear what it is that God is saying. Calvin expresses this in his commentary on Ephesians:

It is certain that if we come to church we shall not hear only a mortal man speaking but we shall feel (even by his secret power) that God is speaking to our souls, that he is the teacher. He so touches us that the human voice enters into us and so profits us that we are refreshed and nourished by it. God calls us to him as if he had his mouth open and we saw him there in person.

(1973:42)

4.2.2.1 Four key principles of expository preaching:

- Expository preaching always begins with the text.

That does not mean that every sermon will begin with the phrase, “Please turn in your Bible to ...” But it does mean that even when we begin by referring to some current event or the lyric of a contemporary song, it is the text of Scripture that establishes the agenda for the sermon. The expositor does 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). The congregation should be able to see that it is from the text of Scripture where the preacher derived truths put forth in the sermon (Hughes 2001:18).

This is a basic principle put succinctly in *The Directory for the Public Worship of God*, written in 1645. “It is presupposed, (according to the rules for ordination,) that the minister of Christ is in some good measure gifted for so weighty a service, by his skill in the original languages, and in such arts and sciences as are handmaids unto divinity; by his knowledge in the whole body of theology, but most of all in the holy scriptures” (www.epcew.org.uk/dpw/DPW.html#preachingoftheword). When raising an issue from a text, preachers, according to *The Confession of Faith* are to ensure that “it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text” and “that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence” (1970:379). Those who preach must ensure that their efforts lead to the listeners understanding their bibles. This conviction led those involved in the English Reformation to include in their first book on homiletics the clear instruction, “The Word of God alone is to be preached, in its perfection and inner consistency. Scripture is the exclusive subject of preaching, the only field in which the preacher is to labour” (Perkins 1996:9). That is why John Stott says, “It is our conviction that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching” (1982:125).

It is wrong therefore to think of expository preaching merely as a style chosen from a list (topical, devotional, evangelistic, textual, apologetic, prophetic or

expository). Roy Clements confirms this, “Expository preaching is not a matter of style at all. In fact, the determinative step which decides whether a sermon is going to be expository or not takes place, in my view, before a single word has been actually written or spoken. First and foremost, the adjective ‘expository’ describes the method by which the preacher decides what to say, not how to say it” (Clements 1998).

The task of the expositor goes beyond a running commentary on a passage or even a succession of word studies loosely held together by a few illustrations. It goes beyond the discovery and declaration of the central doctrine found in the passage.

In preaching the aim must be to let the text speak. As von Rad instructed young preachers: “every text wants to speak for itself” (1977:18). We should not only try to find out what the text means; we should also ask: “What is the passage trying to do?” (Buttrick 1985:91). In the words of Gerhard Ebeling: “The sermon is the execution of the text ... it is the proclamation of what the text has proclaimed” (1966:109). The text provides both information and proclamation (Logan1986:137) and as the Bible is read and preached, God speaks to us today.

- In expository preaching the preacher stands between two worlds.

Expository preaching seeks to fuse the two horizons of the biblical text and the contemporary world. Stott in his book *‘Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century’* (1982b) argues that it is possible to preach exegetically and yet fail to answer the ‘so what?’ in the listener’s mind. Ezra’s hearers would not have begun construction on the booths if he had failed to establish the link between the text and the times. True exposition must have some prophetic dimension that leaves the listener in no doubt that what he has heard is a living word from God and creates in him at least the sneaking suspicion that the Author knows him. The preacher’s task is to declare what God has said, explain the meaning and establish the implications so that no one will mistake its relevance.

Biblical and Theological studies do not by themselves make for good preaching. They are indispensable. But unless they are supplemented by contemporary studies, they can keep us disastrously isolated on one side of the cultural chasm.

(Stott 1982:190)

David Read commends the need for study but goes on to say,

...that theologically-cushioned, isolated study is a lethal chamber, and it is a dead word that is carried out along the corridor ...not the living Word spoken as it must be, from the heart and from life to life.

(1952:62)

It is necessary for the preacher to understand the world of the congregation (Pieterse in Vos 1994:6). This requires more than just the study of the Bible and commentaries but a penetration by the preacher into the world of the parishioners.

Long states that the preacher must approach the text as a representative of the congregation. He says, “we have been immersed in the lives of these people to whom we will speak, which is another way of saying that, symbolically at least, we rise to the pulpit from the pew (1989:12).”

- In expository preaching show relevance

Expository preaching encourages the listener to understand why a first-century letter to the church in Corinth is relevant to a twenty-first century congregation living in Pretoria.

The horizons of the biblical text and the contemporary world should fuse in such a way that the listeners are learning by example how to integrate the Bible with their own experience. Listeners face the twin dangers of assuming

either that what they have just heard is totally unrelated to where they are living or that it is immediately applicable, that it is “just for them” (cf. Begg 1999:30).

The preacher has to place himself in the text’s situation (horizon), whilst being true to one’s own situation (horizon). In the hermeneutical interaction that follows (putting one’s prejudices as questions and listening to the text’s answers to these questions) the preacher’s horizon is broadened

(Vos 1994:7)

Vos concludes, “Speaking and listening happens in dialogues. A dialogue with the biblical text can occur where there is critical exegetical analysis and attentive listening on the part of the preacher” (1994:7).

- In expository preaching depend on the work of the Holy Spirit

Azurdia III claims that,

The greatest impediment to the advancement of the gospel is the attempt of the church of Jesus Christ to do the work of God apart from the truth and power of the Spirit of God. Like the disciples, preachers are powerless, in and of themselves, to accomplish the ‘greater works’. The declaration of Jesus in John 15:5 remains true to this day: ‘Apart from me you can do nothing’.

(2003:29)

Pieterse confirms this by saying that we can only hear the living Word in preaching through the work of the Holy Spirit (1987:15).

Hughes correctly argues that our belief in the power and our dependence on the Holy Spirit of God must never ‘give us licence to be mediocre

communicators' (Hughes 2001:85). The same warning is given by Spurgeon (1970:127) to preachers who fail to employ effective homiletical techniques, saying:

There are some preachers who care very little whether they are attended to or not; so long as they can hold on through the allotted time it is of very small importance to them whether their people hear from eternity, or hear in vain: the sooner such ministers sleep in the churchyard and preach by the verse on their gravestones the better.

It is true the Holy Spirit can do anything he wants, but "he has called us to preach the word and to preach it clearly, to preach it accurately and to preach to communicate the content of the gospel" (Hughes 2001:85).

4.2.2.2 The advantages of expository preaching

Liefeld (1984:10-13) lists the following advantages from a preacher's point of view:

- The preacher can be more confident of preaching God's will when preaching the Word of God. True exposition increases that confidence and the sense of authority that grows out of it.
- In expository preaching the preacher can confine himself to biblical truth and minimize subjectivism.
- By using this model the preacher in preaching through the Bible is more likely to proclaim the "whole council of God" rather than using favourite parts of Scripture. Begg (1999:35) agrees, "expository preaching prevents the preacher from avoiding difficult passages or from dwelling on favourite texts".

- The context of the passage usually includes its own application. The preacher therefore gets directions as to how the passage should be applied in the present day.
- Scripture often provides a pattern that reveals the inner thoughts and feelings of the author. This can provide excellent suggestions for providing outlining for the sermon.

Further advantages of the expository sermon are:

- Blackwood (1995:78-81) says that “it deals with the book as the larger unit and the paragraph as the smaller one.”
- It sets limits, as explained by John Stott (1982:126-133), “it restricts us to the scriptural text,” and does not allow us to invent our own message.

One of the main advantages of expository preaching is that, if done without bias, the entire Bible will eventually be covered. In addition, the preacher will never be lost for a subject for his or her sermon, since few preachers have ever preached through the entire Bible in their lifetimes or with one congregation. Should they be so fortunate to finish the entire Bible with the same congregation, many years will have passed with (hopefully) lots of new faces in the congregation, so they can start over (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expository_preaching).

- Through expository preaching the preacher walks in the path of the original writer and there is less of a tendency for the preacher to preach his own opinion or the philosophy of the age (Chapell 2001:6).

Begg (1999:33-39) adds some important advantages of expository preaching,

- Expository preaching gives glory to God, which ought to be the ultimate end of all we do.

Since expository preaching begins with the text of Scripture, it starts with God and is in itself an act of worship, for it is a declaration of the mighty acts of God. It establishes the focus of the people upon God and His glory before any consideration of man and his need. In beginning here we affirm the place of preaching not the grounds of personal interest but because it please God. A congregation that has accepted this and is beginning to learn the implications of it will be markedly different from the one in which sermons constantly find their origin in the felt needs of the people.

- It makes the preacher study God's Word

The preacher who commits himself to the expository approach to preaching must himself become a student of the Scriptures. The first heart God's Word needs to reach is that of the preacher. John Owen (1968:76) spoke of this necessity for the preacher to experience the power of truth in his own soul,

A man only preaches a sermon well to others if he has first preached it to himself. If he does not thrive on the "food" he prepares, he will not be skilled at making it appetizing for others. If the Word does not dwell with power in us, it will not pass on power from us.

- It helps the congregation

Expository preaching helps the congregation to learn the Bible in the most obvious and natural way.

- It provides a balanced diet

The rich diversity of the entire Bible can then be taught to the congregation. The listeners are not limited to the interests of the preacher or the latest book he may have read. The Word of God sets the agenda.

4.2.3 Topical Preaching

In a general and broad sense topical preaching takes place when the preacher

is free to choose a text from the Bible rather than preach on a pericope assigned by the lectionary; when the preacher has an idea and then searches for a biblical text (or texts) treating that idea; even when the preacher writes on an assigned text but feels free to develop the sermon without rigid adherence to the structure of the text and without the compulsion to deal fully with every verse, phrase, or word in that text.

(Rossow 1992:85)

There are others who define topical preaching more specifically; Caemmerer (1959:133, 139) defines the topical sermon in terms of approach, He sees the topical sermon beginning with a theme and goal in the mind of the preacher. It is the preaching on a subject which the preacher has begun to develop before he turns to a text to define it. Or it can be said that it is “need orientated rather than tradition orientated” (Duduit 1992:86).

Allen (1992:3-4) says that he is committed to the “expository sermon being the life blood of the church” but argues for the use and value of the topical sermon on topics where the Bible is not explicitly clear. He defines the topical

sermon as interpreting a topic “in the light of the gospel but without originating or centering in the exposition of a biblical text or them”. He goes on to define a topic as “a need, an issue, or a situation which is important to the congregation, which calls for interpretation from the perspective of the gospel itself than from the standpoint of the exposition of a particular passage from the bible”.

Another writer (Broadus 1979:55) defines the topical sermon mainly in terms of the development of the sermon’s structure. “Topical sermons are those in which the divisions are derived from the subject. The topic may be derived from the text, but the divisions come from the subject.” The starting point here is the text and not the preacher’s idea. The text may even suggest the topic but what makes the sermon topical is that the sermon outline is developed in terms of headings natural to the topic rather than those indicated by the text (Rossow 1992:85).

There are at least three elements that Rossow (1992:85) identifies as essential for topical preaching. First, the selected topic must be a biblical topic, or, if not that, at least a topic treated – and resolved – from a biblical perspective. He rightly insists that the sermon topic must “ultimately have a ‘Thus says the Lord’ quality to it;” the authority of the Scriptures must be clear.

Second, in spite of the preacher developing his theme in his own individual way and may not deal with all the aspects of the text, “there must be considerable congruence between the content of the sermon and the content of the text. When a preacher embarks on the task of topical preaching he must not distort or disregard the meaning of the biblical text.

Third, the topical sermon must communicate the gospel, “the good news of God’s saving and sanctifying help through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The gospel must be seen as paramount, the principal ingredient, as the major reason why the sermon was preached at all.

4.2.3.1 Advantages of Topical Preaching

Various advantages of Topical preaching have been identified:

- It is more focused on the needs of the hearer and can be more rewarding. The preacher's mind is therefore trained in logical analysis (Broadus 1979:55-56).
- The preacher may consult individuals or groups in the congregation for their input as to the choice of sermon topics and sermon texts, thereby increasing the likelihood of subsequent sermons being relevant to individual and congregational needs (Rossow 1992:88).
- The topical sermon encourages the preacher and the congregation to have concern and to be able to describe contemporary issues and situations.

4.2.4 Summary of Preaching Models

Narrative preaching must be distinguished from mere story telling. It does however include story (Long 1989a:71) containing a series of events that have a beginning, a middle and an end. These elements of time, says Pieterse (1987:166), are linked "by logical relationships, by a causal relationship" artistically arranged in such a way that the story has ultimate effect in its sermonic context, adding that special charm and seductive power to entice the listener to become involved (Janse van Rensburg 2003:56).

Expository preaching is "Bible-centred preaching". That is, it is handling the text "in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Bible writer as it exists in the light of the over-all context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers" (Unger 1955:33). The text of Scripture must be explained in such a way that people understand what God is saying to them (Hughes 2001:69). It is the text

of Scripture that establishes the agenda for the sermon and not some private idea. The preacher “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).

Topical preaching deals with a specific subject which the preacher has begun to develop before he turns to a text to define it. Or it can be said that it is “need orientated rather than tradition orientated” (Duduit 1992:86). This kind of preaching is when the preacher has an idea and then searches for a biblical text (or texts) treating that idea (Rossow 1992:85).

5. TOWARD A NEW HOMILETICAL APPROACH

In this chapter an attempt will be made to gather together the key theological convictions and practices identified in the literature study necessary for an approach to preaching that best brings the listener into an encounter with the Glory of God, in this way inspiring the listeners to greater vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter of God in worship. In certain instances additional material will be added.

Preaching, according to Murray A. Capill (2003:12) “is intended to produce by the grace of God, a deep impression on the hearts and souls of the hearers. It is a divinely ordained means of drawing people to God and compelling them to respond to him.” Those involved in preaching therefore need to be clear on particular theological convictions and practices that facilitate this intention of producing a deep impression of God on the hearts and souls of the hearers.

Theological convictions and practices that have a direct bearing on proclaiming the Glory of God in a faith-inspiring way have been discussed in the preceding chapters and are summarized below in an effort to facilitate the interaction between the literature study and the empirical research that will be carried out as recorded in the next chapter.

5.1 Speaking God’s Words

Throughout its history the one true church founded on the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself being the cornerstone, has believed and confessed that the one true God has “revealed himself, not only in creation and providence, not only in Jesus Christ, but also verbally or informationally” (Reymond 2003:13).

There is a relationship between the human mind and the divine mind that is sufficient to ground the communication of truth from God to humans (Nash 1982:23). Preachers armed with this conviction will be willing to affirm that the

Bible contains propositional truths that form a framework for Christian belief (Wells 1994:86).

In a previous chapter it was shown that there are a variety of theories and models concerning the praxis of preaching, with the more recent emphasis being on the listener. This dissertation certainly does not propose ignoring the listener, but rather keeping the listener and the preacher in the right perspective under God. Having considered the nature of the Glory of God and the resulting weight that preachers and listeners should be giving to the supremacy of God then it can be seen that “if our pursuit in coming to a sermon is primarily to see perceived needs met, to see all questions that are on the table answered, or even give and receive practical help for daily living, then our journey will lead to someone or something other than God getting the glory” (Shaddix 2003:4).

The important and ultimate question then must be, how do we preach (and listen to preaching – a subject for further research not addressed by this dissertation) in such a way as to bring glory to God?

Shaddix (2003:4) answers this question by saying that the mandate for the pastor’s primary weekly preaching ministry is “to rightly expose the mind of the Holy Spirit in every given text of Scripture. Exposure to the truth of God’s word rightly unfolded is the only way that those of us who listen to sermons will ever be recreated into the image of Christ. And recreated people are one of the primary ways God is his glorified in his church”.

If preaching for the Glory of God is clearly an act of worship then what could bring more honour to God than for his people to hear and revere his voice? It is the preacher then that is the primary worship leader in the congregation and the sermon is a significant sacrifice of praise offered by both the pastor in the pulpit and the people in the pew (Shaddix 2003:125).

The preacher holding to the conviction that, in the words of Peter Adam, in his book *Speaking God’s Words* (1997:15-55), “God has spoken”, “It is written”

and “Preach the Word”. These are then the biblical foundational pillars for preaching.

The preacher armed with this foundational conviction will consequently need to make every effort to avoid the following practices which may hinder the proclamation of the Glory of God:

- The minimal use of Scripture with sermons; being light on Biblical substance (Capill 2003:9). The prophet Amos warned of a famine that would cover the land, a dearth of hearing the Word of the Lord (Amos 8:11). Theologian Walter Kaiser is among those who declare the famine is now here saying, “The famine of the Word continues in massive proportions in most places in North America (Kaiser 1999:166).
- Not allowing God’s word to set the agenda for the content of a sermon and thus abandoning expository preaching in favour of giving people what they want (Gilley 2002:115). A half a century ago Merrill Unger (1954:231) saw the dangerous departure from biblical preaching already present and threatening the vitality of the church. Sounding a warning he wrote, “To an alarming extent the glory is departing from the pulpit of the twentieth century. The basic reason for this gloomy condition is obvious. That which imparts the glory has been taken away from the centre of so much of our modern preaching and placed on the periphery. The Word God has been denied the throne and given a subordinate place”.
- Believing that the preacher or communicator has to be “great” for any kind of effectiveness. The emphasis on the communicator confusing the listeners as to being enthralled by man rather than by God (Capill 2003:13).
- Minimize the importance of doctrine. Thus shifting the emphasis away from doctrinal purity in favour of addressing felt needs (Cimino and Lattin 1999:62).

- Have an emphasis in ministry that promotes experiencing God through emotions and mystical experience (Nash 1982:23) at the expense of Biblical content.
- Imparting or downloading information. Thus not seeing that the role of the preacher with the use of God's word is not just about imparting information but giving people a sense of God (Lloyd Jones 1971:91).

5.2 The Pre-eminence of God

Theological convictions on the Glory of God as discussed in a previous chapter must of necessity lead both preachers and listeners to the place that they will at all times need to be ensured, like Paul and Abraham, that in all of their life and practice they seek approval from God and not man. Their supreme desire must be to give Glory to God.

The preacher cannot ignore that glorifying God covers all areas of life, for Christians are to receive each other "for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7). The speaking and ministry of the Christian are to be "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1Peter 4:11). All of life must be for his glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). Our bodies must be kept pure for his glory (1 Corinthians 6:20). The duty in man is fulfilled in the believer who is being changed from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18) (Gordon 1975:733).

Every preacher will have either a God-centred or a man-centred theology. Logically it then follows that when preachers clearly hold the conviction that God is pre-eminent and supreme then they will have a God-centred theology, whereas if preachers elevate man as supreme their theology will be man-centred.

A God-centred theology rooted in the biblical revelation can only lead the preacher to the place where he sees that the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever (Reymond 2003:55). Thomas Watson (1978:6) elaborating on the question of the chief end of man says that “The Glory we give God is nothing else but our lifting up his name in the world, and magnifying him in the eyes of others.” Practically, Glorifying God consists of four things: appreciation, adoration, affection and subjection (cf. Watson 1978:7). Watson (1978:9) adds five reasons why we are to glorify God: God gives us our being, God has made all things for his own glory, God has intrinsic value and excellence, creatures below humans bring God glory following with the question, “do we think to sit rent free?” and we are to bring glory to God because all our hopes hang upon him.

If all these reasons are true and valid for all mankind then it must be of uppermost interest to the preacher. The preacher must be concerned and passionate for the Glory of God. Shaddix (2003:3) agrees that preaching “cannot be driven by a preference, a program, or even a purpose, especially that of asking all the questions people ask. Instead, preaching should be driven by a passion for the Glory of God, a passion jointly possessed by both pastor and people”.

The concern for the Glory of God in the praxis of preaching is something that flows from a biblical perspective of God. This should govern what we intend to accomplish in preaching. Piper (1990:19) maintains that if God aims to exalt Himself then the supremacy of God must be evident in preaching. He elaborates the theme in his book, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, by intentionally using a Trinitarian outline:

The Goal of Preaching: the Glory of God.

The Ground of Preaching: the Cross of Christ.

The Gift of Preaching: the Power of the Holy Spirit.

James Stewart (1972:73) said the aims of all genuine preaching are “to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth

of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.” Thus it can be seen that God is the goal of preaching.

Piper (1990:20) pleads for the supremacy of God in preaching:

That the dominant note of preaching be the freedom of God's grace, the unifying theme be the zeal that God has for his own glory, the grand object of preaching be the infinite and inexhaustible being of God and the pervasive atmosphere of preaching be the holiness of God. Then when preaching takes up the ordinary things of life – family, job, leisure, friendships; or the crises of our day – AIDS, divorce, addictions, depression, abuses, poverty, hunger, and worst of all, unreached peoples of the world, these matters are not only taken up, they are taken all the way up to God.

Speaking of great preachers of the nineteenth century as Robert Dale, John Newman and Charles Spurgeon; John Henry Jowett (1912:96, 98) comments,

They were always willing to stop at the village window, but they always linked the streets with the heights, and sent your souls a-roaming over the eternal hills of God...It is this note of vastitude, this ever-present sense and suggestion of the Infinite, which I think we need to recover in preaching.

This is not a proposal for preachers to get involved in “a kind of artsy elitist preoccupation with philosophical or intellectual imponderables” (Piper 1990:20-21). Spurgeon was not like this in his preaching at all – he was a preacher with popular appeal, His messages, however, “were full of God and the atmosphere was charged with the presence of awesome realities”. Spurgeon said, “We shall never have great preachers till we have great divines” (1972:26).

Piper (1997) expresses a similar passion, “my desire is as strong as ever that God might inflame in you a passion for his centrality and supremacy in your ministry” (www.desiringgod.org). Wells (1993:300) expresses his concern saying, “It is this God, majestic and holy in His being... who has disappeared from the modern evangelical world”. Tim Stafford (1996:29) quotes Leslie Newbigen saying something similar,

I suddenly saw that someone could use all the language of evangelical Christianity, and yet the center was fundamentally the self, my need of salvation. And God is auxiliary to that... I also saw that quite a lot of evangelical Christianity can slip, can become centered in me and my need of salvation, and not in the glory of God.

John Calvin saw the same thing in his day. This can be seen in his response to Cardinal Sadolet who had written to the leaders of Geneva trying to win them back to the Catholic Church after they had turned to the Reformed teachings. The issue in Calvin’s response to Sadolet is, says Piper (www.desiringgod.org) quoting John Dillenberger (1975:89),

Not first justification or priestly abuses or transubstantiation or prayers to the saints or papal authority. All those will come in for discussion. But beneath all of them, the fundamental issue for John Calvin, from the beginning to the end of his life, was the issue of the centrality and supremacy and majesty of the Glory of God. Here is what he said to the Cardinal, “[Your] zeal for heavenly life is a zeal which keeps a man entirely devoted to himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God”. In other words even precious truth about eternal life can be so skewed as to displace God as the center and the goal. He goes on and says to Sadolet that is what he should do – and what Calvin aims to do with all of his life – is “set before [man], as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the Glory of God”.

Benjamin Warfield (1971:24) said of Calvin, “No man ever had a profounder sense of God than he”.

Geerhardus Vos (1980:241-242) asked the question in 1891, What is it about Reformed theology that enables the tradition to grasp the fullness of Scripture unlike any other branch of Christendom? He answers, “Because Reformed theology took hold the Scriptures in their deepest root idea... This root idea which served as the key to unlock the rich treasures of the Scriptures was the pre-eminence of God’s glory in the consideration of all He had created”.

Cotton Mather said, “The great design and intention of the office of Christian preacher is to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men” (1726: v). He based this conclusion on an understanding of Romans 10:14-15 where the good news of the preacher, the peace and salvation he announces boils down to the fact that God reigns supreme.

Piper (1990:23) adds the challenging implication that:

The Lord sends preachers into the world to cry out that God reigns, that he will not suffer his glory to be scorned indefinitely, that he will vindicate his name in great and terrible wrath. But they are also sent to cry that for now a full and free amnesty is offered to all the rebel subjects who will turn from their rebellion, call on him for mercy, bow before his throne, and swear allegiance and fealty to him forever. The amnesty is signed in the blood of his Son.

If it is a significant part of the preacher’s role to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men with the equipped with the message of the offer of the mercy of amnesty, then it is important to consider what it is that compels the heart of God to demand that people submit to his authority (Piper 1990:24). Isaiah 48:9-11 points to the answer when speaking of God’s mercy to Israel, God says,

9 For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. 10 See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. 11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.

This text points to something beyond the sovereign exercises of God's mercy as king. It is that of God's unwavering passion for the honor of his name and the display of his glory.

It can then be said that behind God's commitment to reign as King is the deeper fundamental commitment that his glory will one day fill the earth (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14; Psalm 57:5; Psalm 72:19). This discovery, says Piper (1990:24), has a tremendous implication for preaching.

...for God's deepest purpose for the world is to fill it with reverberations of his glory in the lives of a new humanity, ransomed from every people, tribe, tongue and nation (Revelation 5:9). The glory of God does not reflect brightly in the hearts of men and women when they cower unwillingly in submission to his authority or when they obey in servile fear or when there is no gladness in response to the glory of their King. The implication for preaching is plain: When God sends his emissaries to declare, "Your God reigns!" his aim is not to constrain man's submission by an act of raw authority; his aim is to ravish our affections with irresistible displays of glory. The only submission that fully reflects the worth and glory of the King is glad submission.

This is very much in line with the teaching of Jesus: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and

then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” (Matthew 13:44).

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:5, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.” In verse 6 he elaborates on the essence of his preaching: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. The only submission to the lordship of Christ that fully magnifies his worth and reflects his beauty is the humble gladness of the human soul in the glory of God in the face of his Son.

The preacher armed with this conviction will make every effort to avoid the following practices which may hinder the proclamation of the Glory of God:

- Seeing success from a human and worldly perspective elevating the human above the divine, promoting the experience of people above God as the focal point in ministry (Wells 1994:86).
- Having an emphasis on human feelings where it is believed that God is found in a special kind of feeling (Nash 1982:30).
- Promoting self gratification rather than edification where there is an escape from instruction and submission to that instruction preferring selfless fun (Gabler 1999:16).
- Promoting worship styles that are ego-centric rather than Theo-centric where the human heart is targeted at the expense of giving glory to God (Bloesch 2001:54) and there is no sense of the sacred.

The significant theological conviction that lies at the source of this move away from humans being at the focus of all things to God being the focus and centre of all things is that of God’s passion of His own glory. This conviction is

of such importance in the age we live that it is raised and highlighted as a separate theological conviction in the next point.

5.3 God is the Most Self-Centred Person in the Universe

Reymond (2003:55) states that God loves himself with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength, that he himself is at the centre of his affections, that the impulse that drives him and the thing he pursues in everything he does is his own Glory. This core belief of God pursuing his own glory will position the preacher with an emphasis that aligns with God and not man at the centre of his focus in preaching.

The instructed preacher will know that God created all things “for his own glory” (Isaiah 43:7, 21).

It is precisely this conviction that God created all things for His own Glory that gives us as sinful people confidence in God’s faithfulness toward us in providing redemption through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The community of faith and its preachers must be consumed with this same commitment that God has to himself seeing that “God’s ultimate commitment is to Himself and not to us. And therein lies our security” (Piper 2003:7). Piper’s questions (2003:7-8) regarding God’s action on the basis of his love for his own glory, stating that this love for his glory is, “no isolated note in the symphony of redemptive history. It is the ever recurring-motif of the all-sufficient Composer.” The questions asked include: 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). Why did God create a people for himself? “I created them for my glory” (Isaiah 43:7). Why did God spare rebellious Israel in the wilderness and finally bring them to the Promised Land? “I acted for the sake of my name (Ezekiel 20:14). Why did the Father send the incarnate Son? “To confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Romans 15:8-9). Why did the Son come to

his final hour? “For this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27-28).

The preacher armed with this conviction will make every effort to avoid the following practices which may hinder the proclamation of the Glory of God:

- Having a focus in ministry that has human experience as the focal point (Immink 2004:110).
- Believing that God is primarily concerned about people and consequently developing a mindset that sees God as existing for the benefit of humanity.

5.4 The Transcendence of God

It is helpful to repeat Placher (1996:199) who says that

If Christians believe in God’s transcendence, it follows that we remain cautious about all efforts to explain a process itself embedded in the work of God we recognize remains unknowable to us. We recognize the way in which the biblical narratives keep illuminating our understanding of our lives and shaping the worshipping communities in which we live those 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. This is what it is like to acknowledge the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.

The preacher who holds to the theological conviction of the transcendence of God will convey in his sermons something of the mystery and majesty of God thus avoiding the pitfall of always having answers and comprehensive definitions on everything in the world and heaven above.

The preacher armed with this conviction will make every effort to avoid the following practices which may hinder the proclamation of the Glory of God:

- Eliminating all sense of mystery out of the praxis of preaching and worship.
- Having views of God and practices in ministry that do not convey the weight of his Glory.

5.5 The Light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ

John Piper (2006) speaking at the *Together for the Gospel* conference on the topic *Preaching as Expository Exultation for the Glory of God* (www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/06/042706.html), asks the question: “How are people wakened to the Glory of God and are Changed by it?” The answer to the question contains another of the essential convictions required to proclaim the Glory of God,

One essential part of the answer is given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6. He says, And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit’. To be changed in the way that glorifies God, we fix our gaze on the Glory of the Lord.

Taking the argument a step further he enquires as to how this happens. He again quotes Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 explaining how we behold the Glory of the Lord. “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

We behold the Glory of the Lord most clearly and most crucially in the gospel. So much so that Paul calls it “the gospel of the glory of Christ”. This has implications for preaching, as it means, when we cannot see the Glory of the Lord directly as we will when he returns in the clouds, we see it most clearly by means of his word.

Shaddix (2003:12) uses the word “reporting” as that which describes the task of the preacher. “Reporting about the work of God in Christ is found on a number of significant pages of the New Testament”. Sometimes this reporting is about Jesus’ incredible activity (Matthew 9:26; Matthew 14:1; Luke 4:37; Luke 5:15). There are other times where that reporting has direct relationship to the preaching event. Paul speaking in the context of the role of preaching in the propagation of the gospel in Romans 10:14-21 says, “but they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord who has believed our report?’” These words from the context of Isaiah in chapter 53:5 speaking of the suffering, dying work of the Saviour. Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. “The report”, says Shaddix (2003:13) “of which Isaiah and Paul spoke is the good news of the crucified Christ, the glad tidings of His substitutionary death that we might live. That is what preachers are to report”.

Throughout church history, preachers who have left a lasting impact on the church have known in the words of Michael Horton (2000:10), “the regular proclamation of Christ through the close exposition of Scripture is more relevant in creating a worshipping and serving community than political causes, moral crusades and entertaining services”. “In a strange twist”, says Lawson (2003:26) “the preaching of the Cross is now foolishness, not only to the world, but also the contemporary church.”

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.

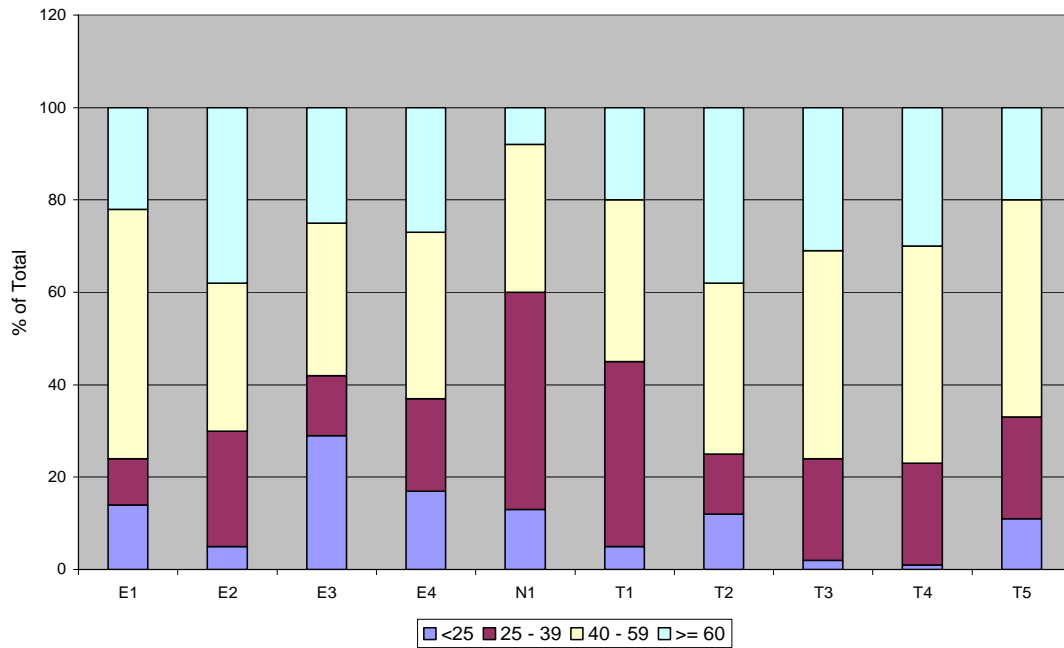
The first phase of analysis consisted of a one-way frequency analysis of all the variables contained in the questionnaire.

6.2.1 One Way Frequency Analysis

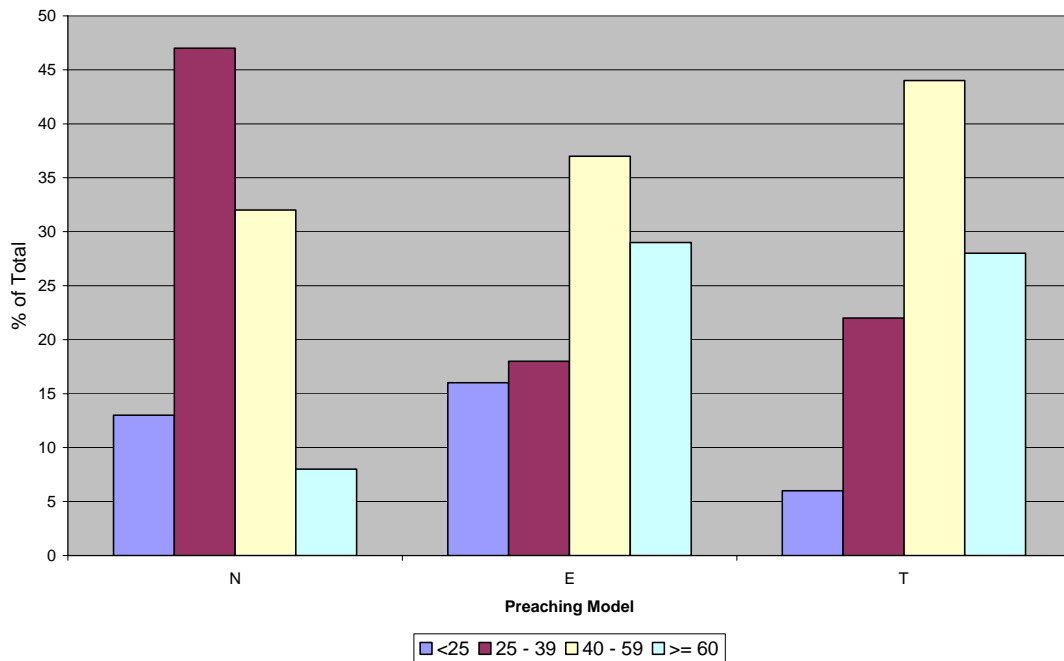
6.2.1.1 Biographical Details

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?

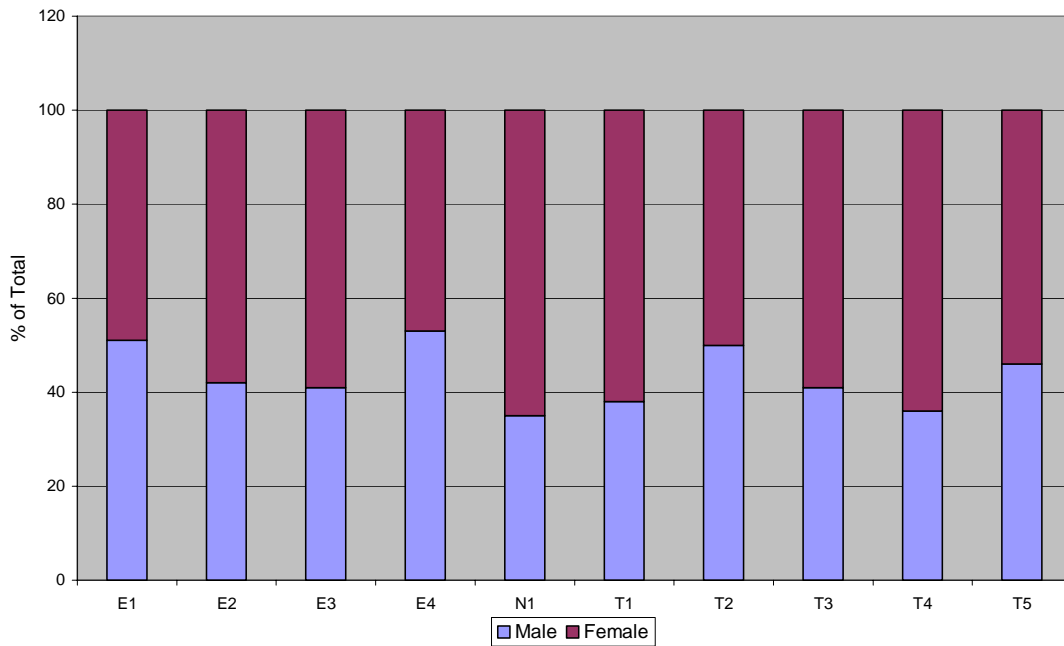


What is your age in completed years?

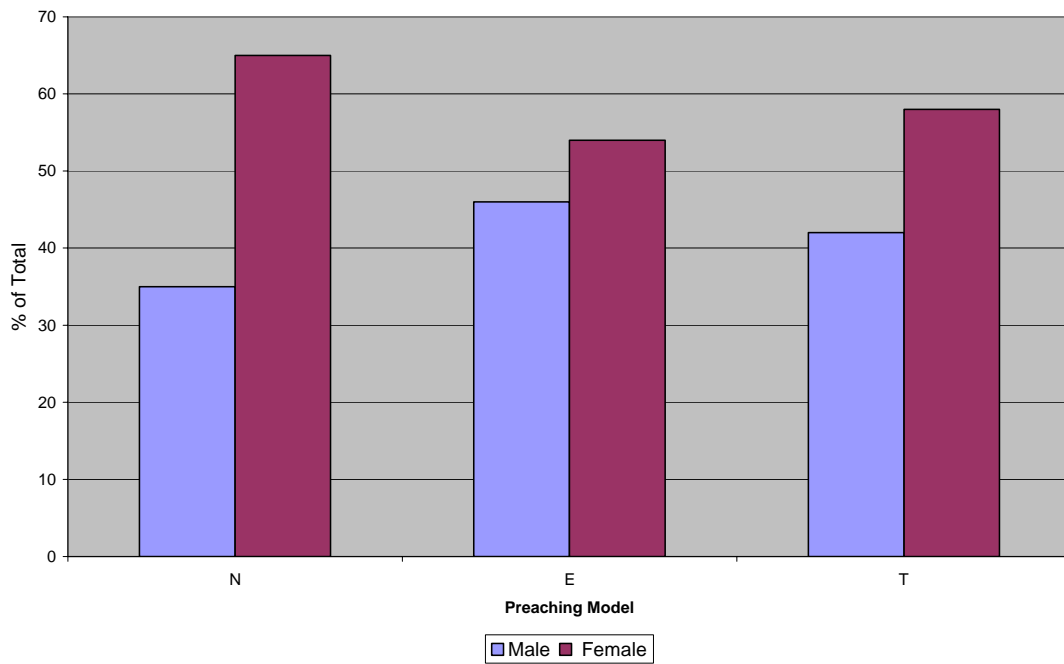


Forty three percent of the total respondents were male and 57% were female. The variation in these trends across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.

What is your gender?



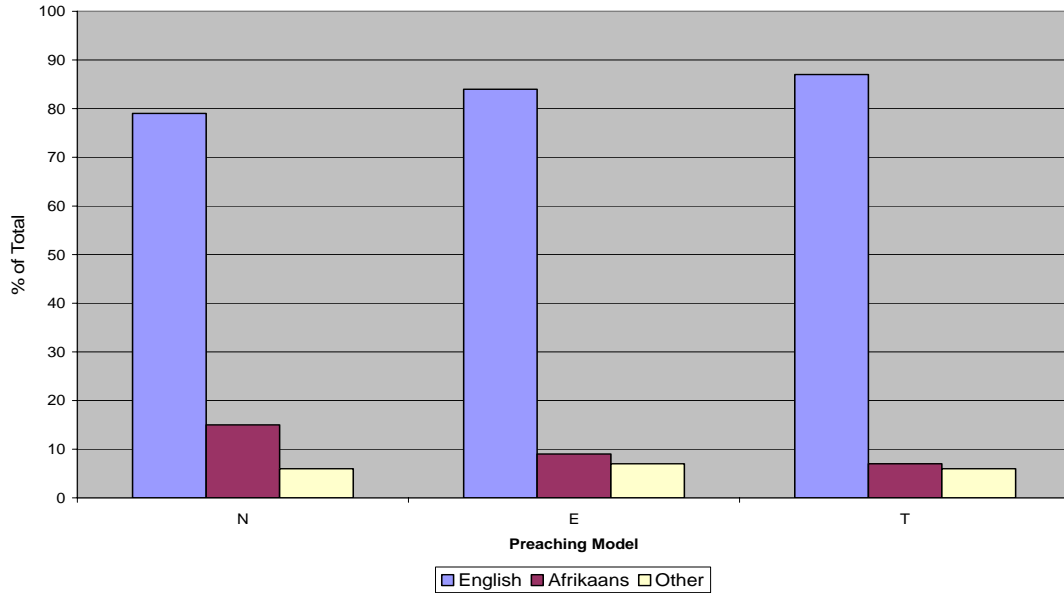
What is your gender?



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

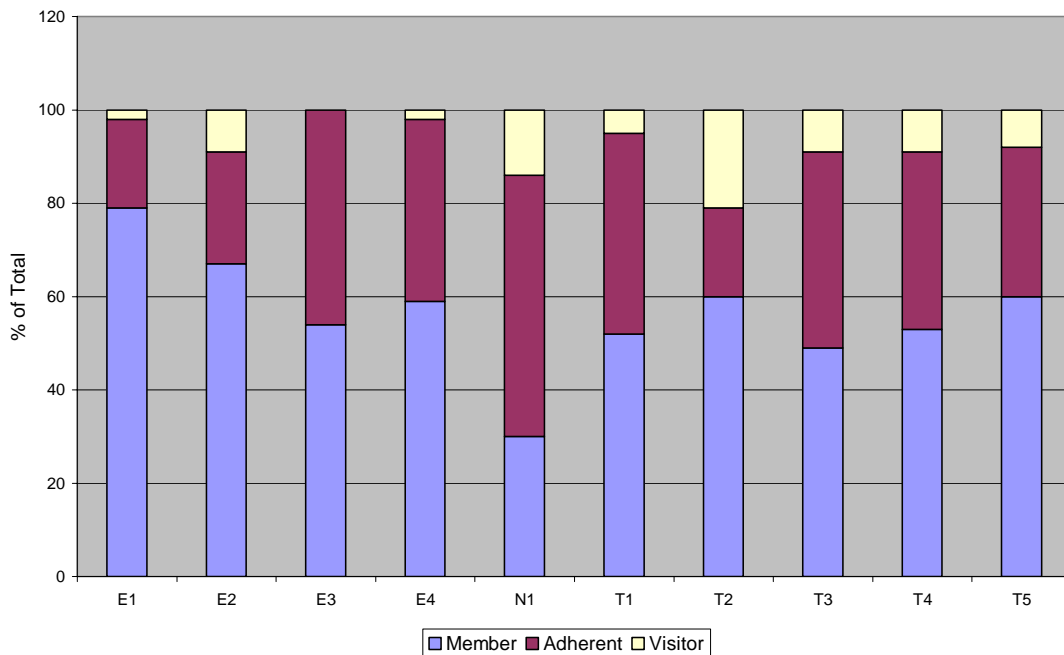
churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graph below.

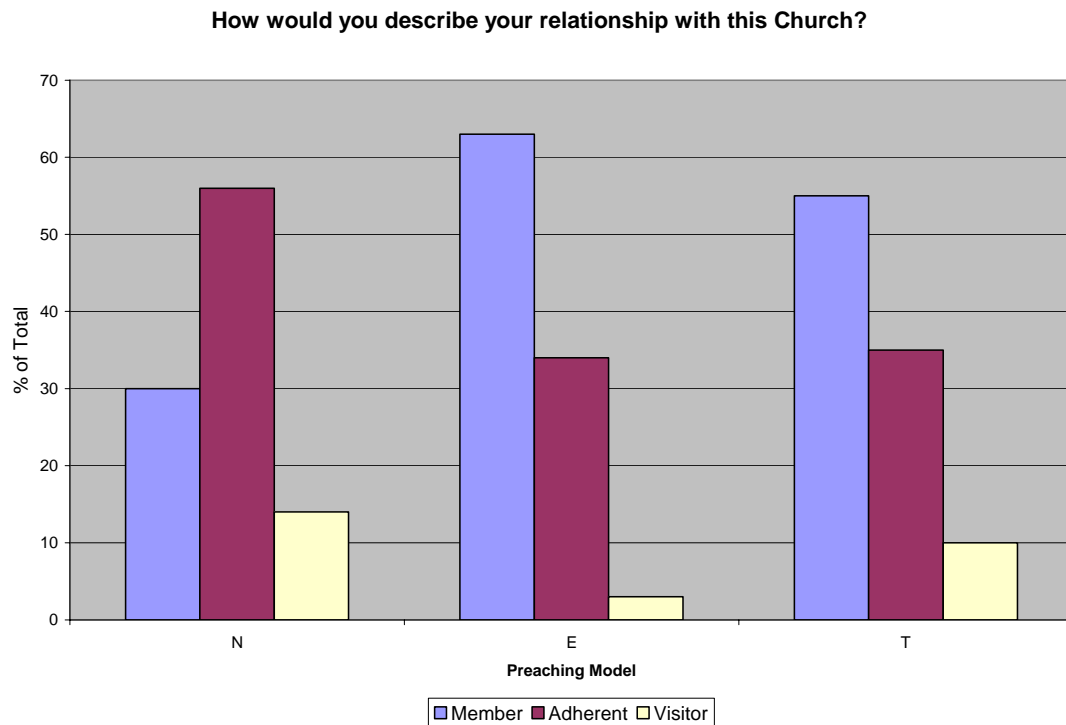
What is your home language?



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.

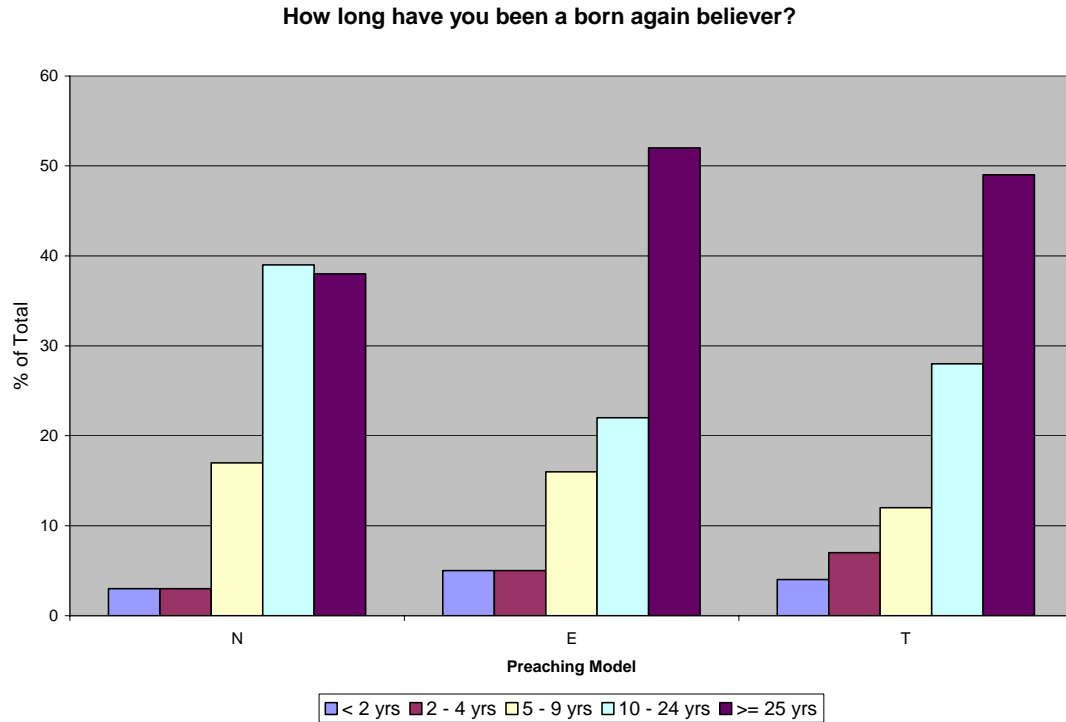
How would you describe your relationship to this church?





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

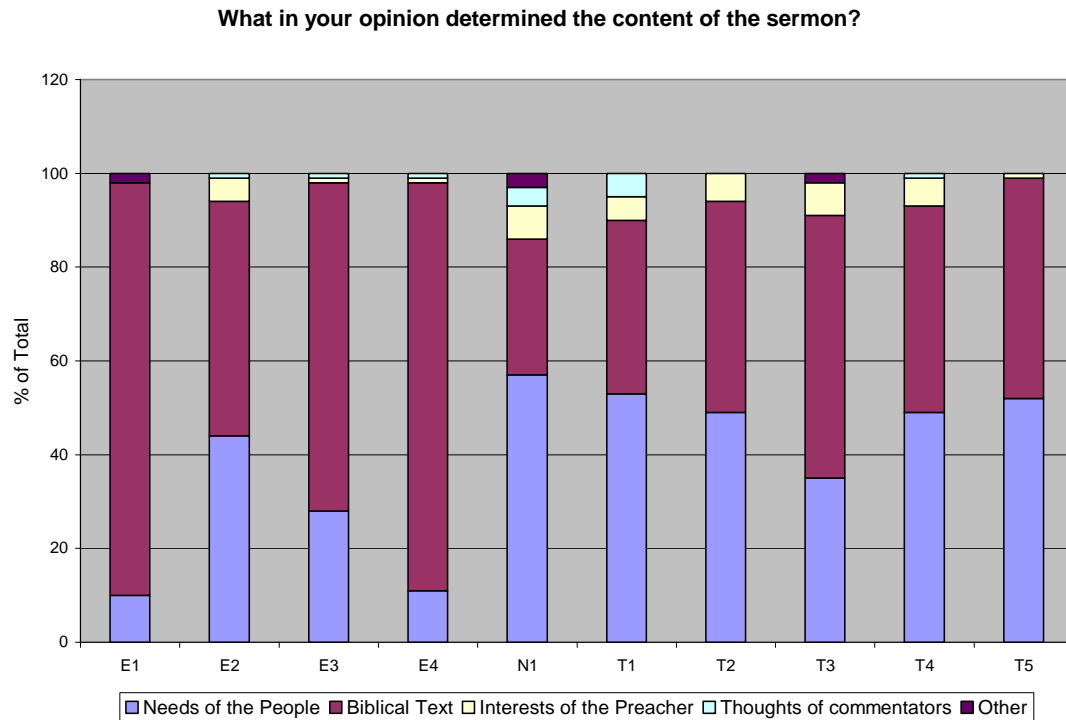
Seventy seven percent of the respondents indicated that the hearing of sermons was always a regular part of their Christian life, 20% usually, 2% seldom and 1% never listened to sermons as a regular part of their Christian life (V9). This same trend was found in the individual churches with almost all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

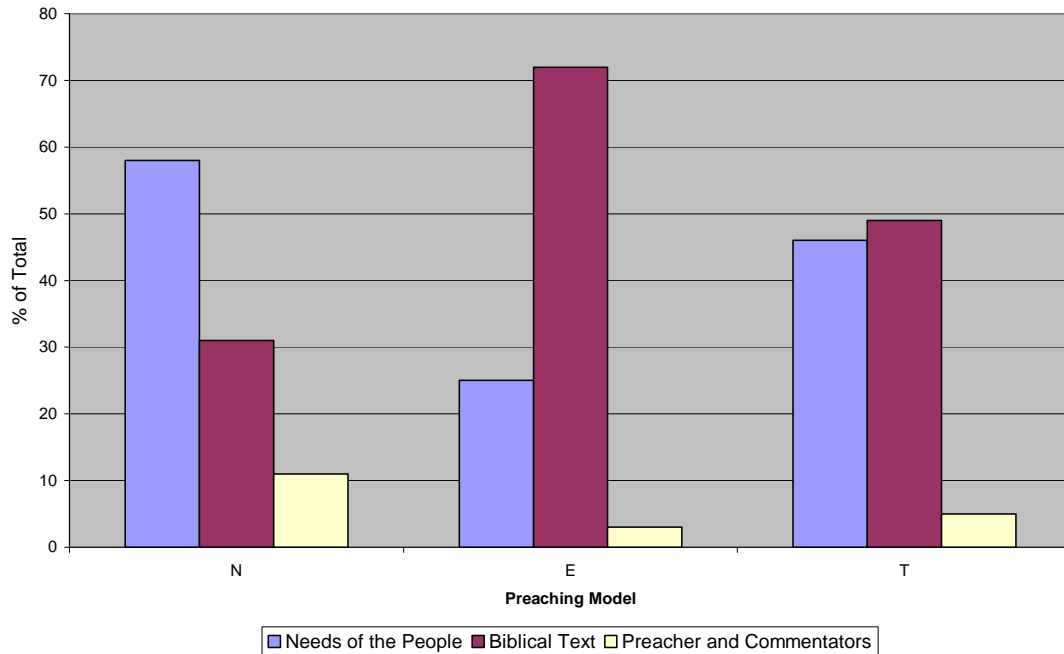
Although 56% of all the respondents expressed the opinion that the Biblical text determined the content of the sermon, 37% felt that the needs of the people set the agenda for the sermon. The variation in these trends across

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



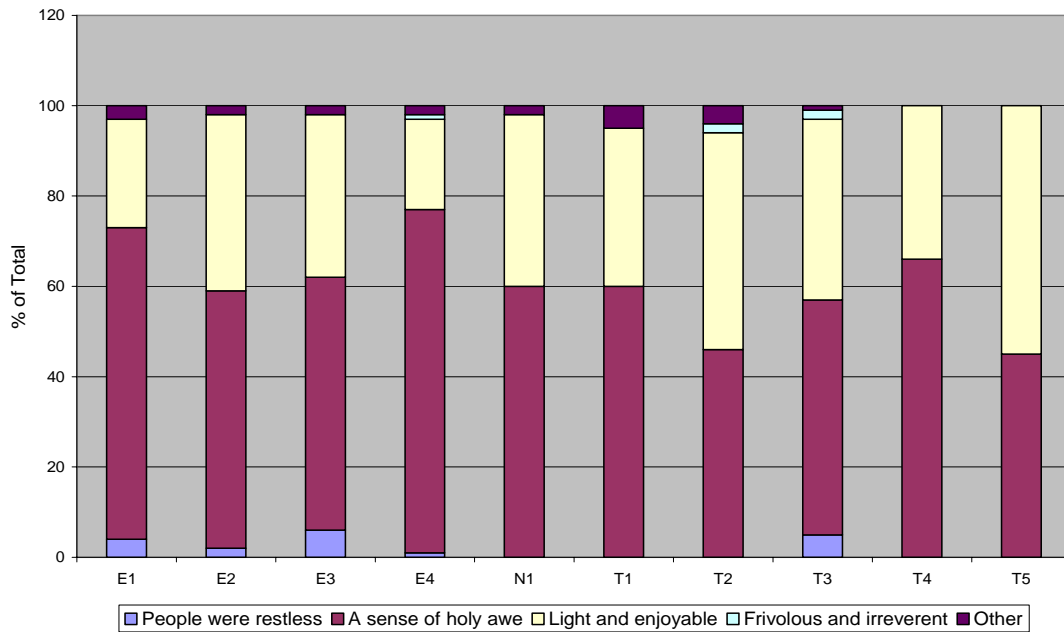
Seventy two percent of the respondents exposed to the expository preaching model held the opinion that the biblical text determined the content of the sermon, whereas 58% of those exposed to the narrative model of preaching held the opinion that the needs of the people determined the content of the sermon.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

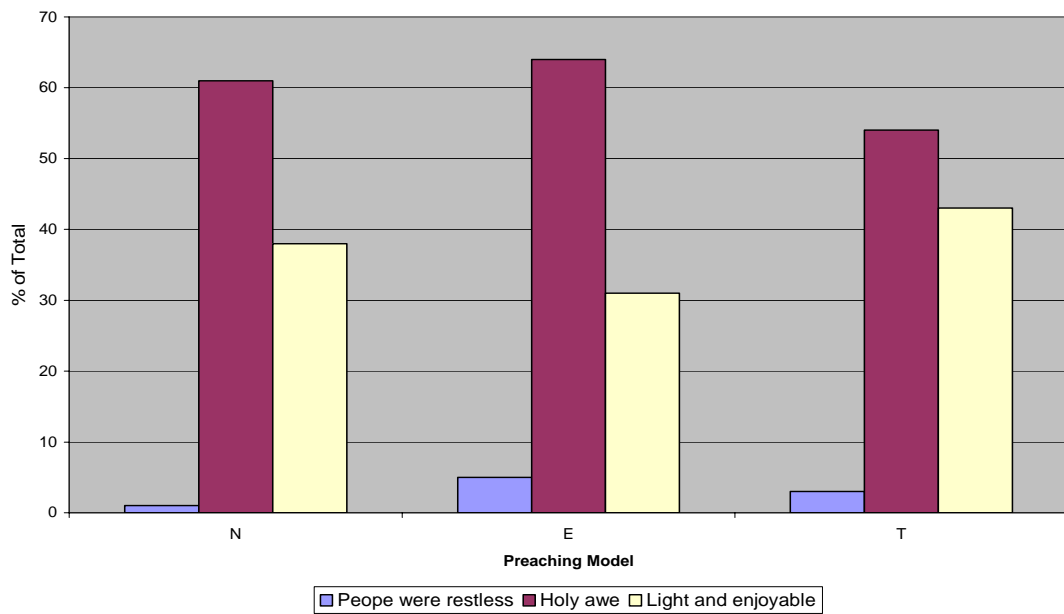


Fifty eight percent of all the respondents described the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon as “a sense of holy awe”, 37% as “light and enjoyable”, 2% as “restless”, 1% as “frivolous and irreverent” and the remaining 2% as other. The variation in this pattern across the individual churches 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?

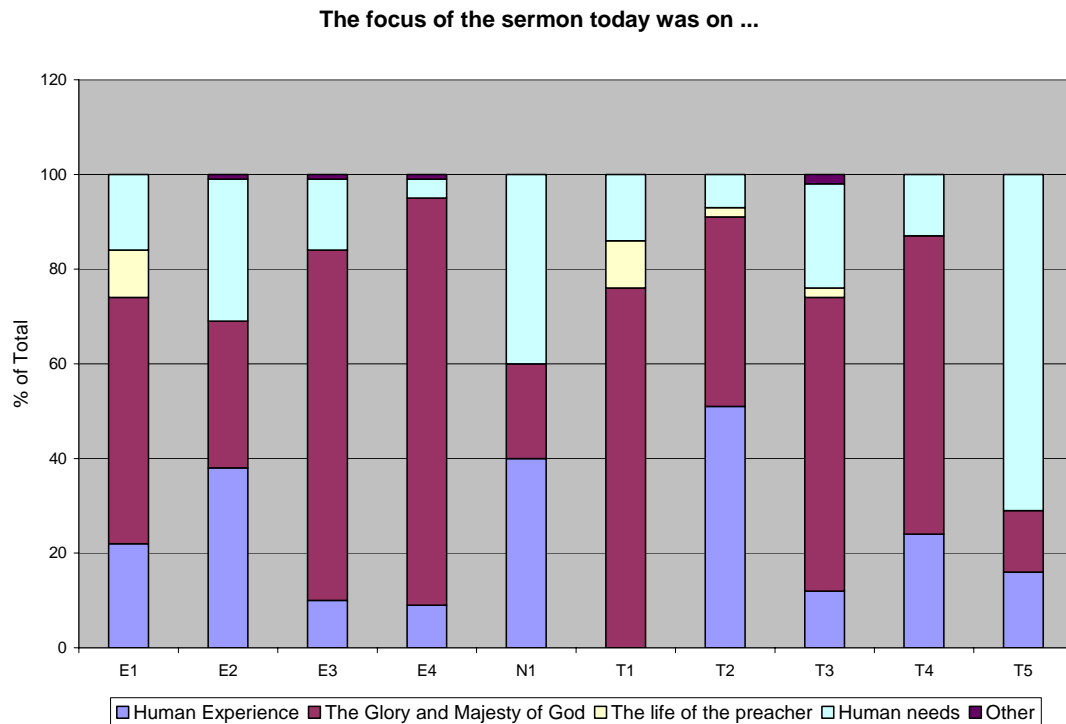


6.2.1.4 The Focus of the Sermon

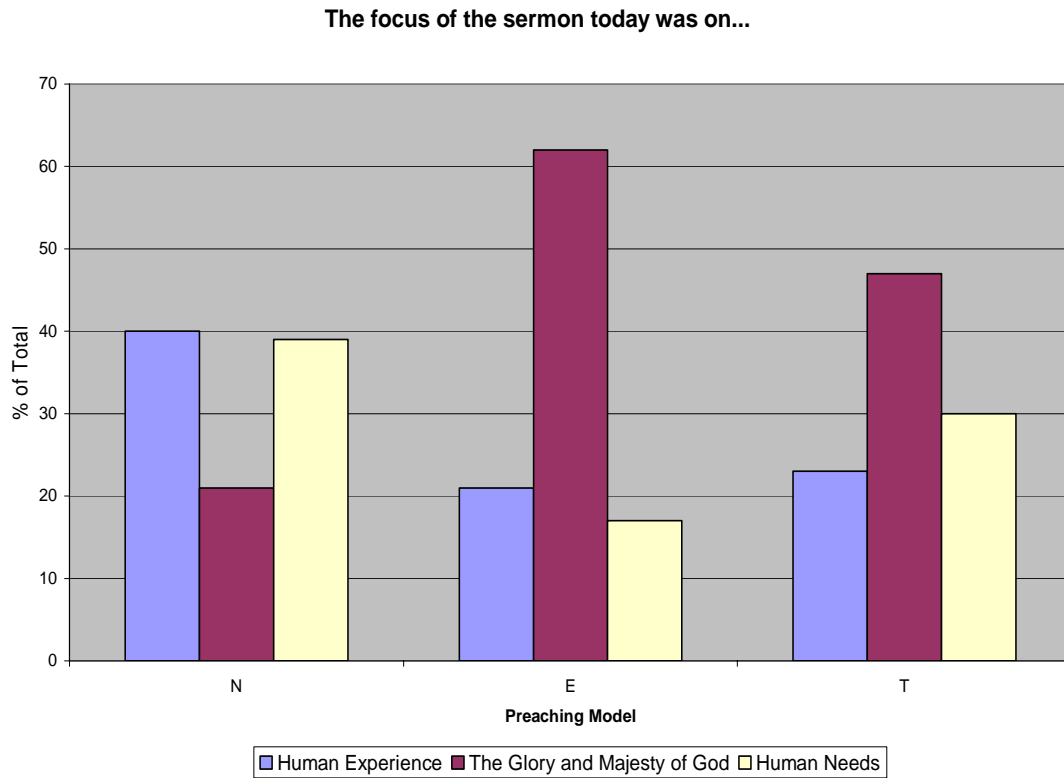
Fifty one percent indicated that the focus of the sermon was on “the Glory of God”, 22% on “human experience”, 25% on “human needs, 1% on the life of the preacher and 1% on other.

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.



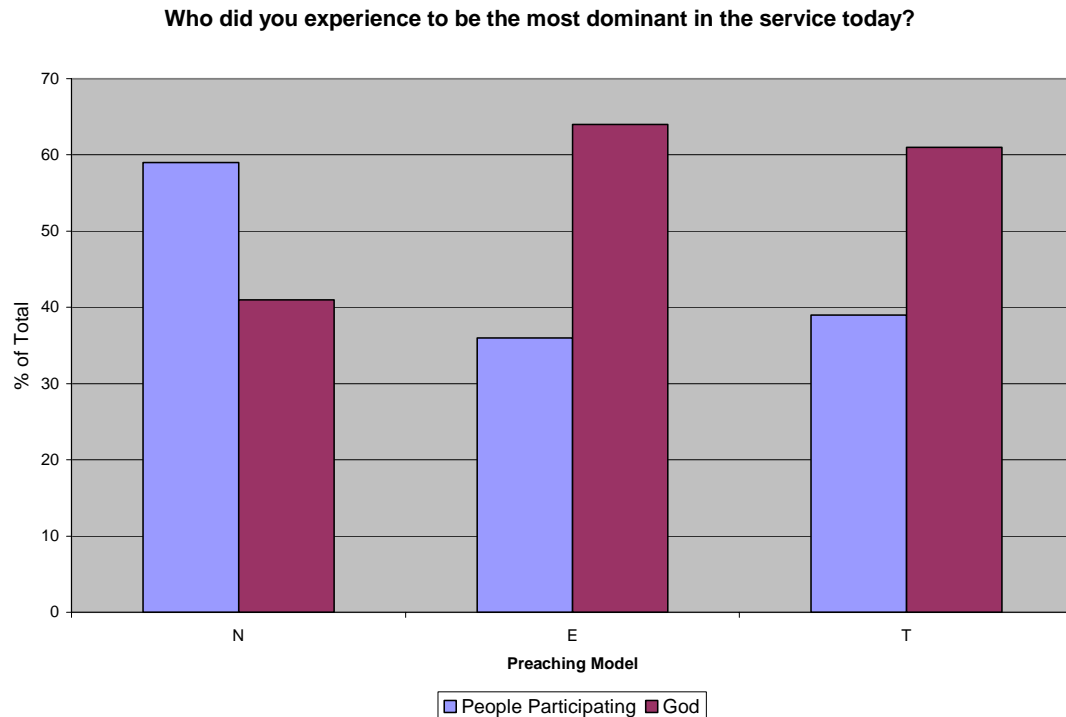
It is noted that the expository and topical grouping of churches had most respondents indicating the focus of the sermon being on the Glory of God. The narrative grouping indicated the opposite.



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.

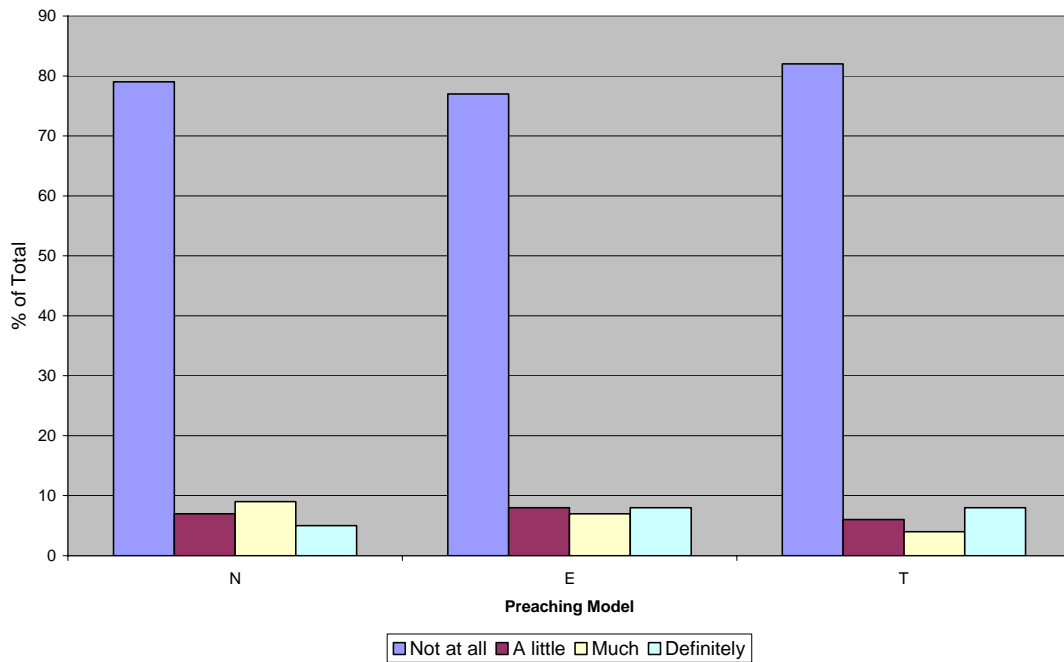
	God	Jesus	Christ	Atonement	Cross
E1	19	1	10	0	0
E2	16	6	1	0	0
E3	10	17	16	0	3
E4	21	15	2	0	2
N1	4	1	0	0	0
T1	8	17	11	0	3
T2	17	1	2	0	0
T3	28	13	6	0	0
T4	12	2	6	0	0

Table 3

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

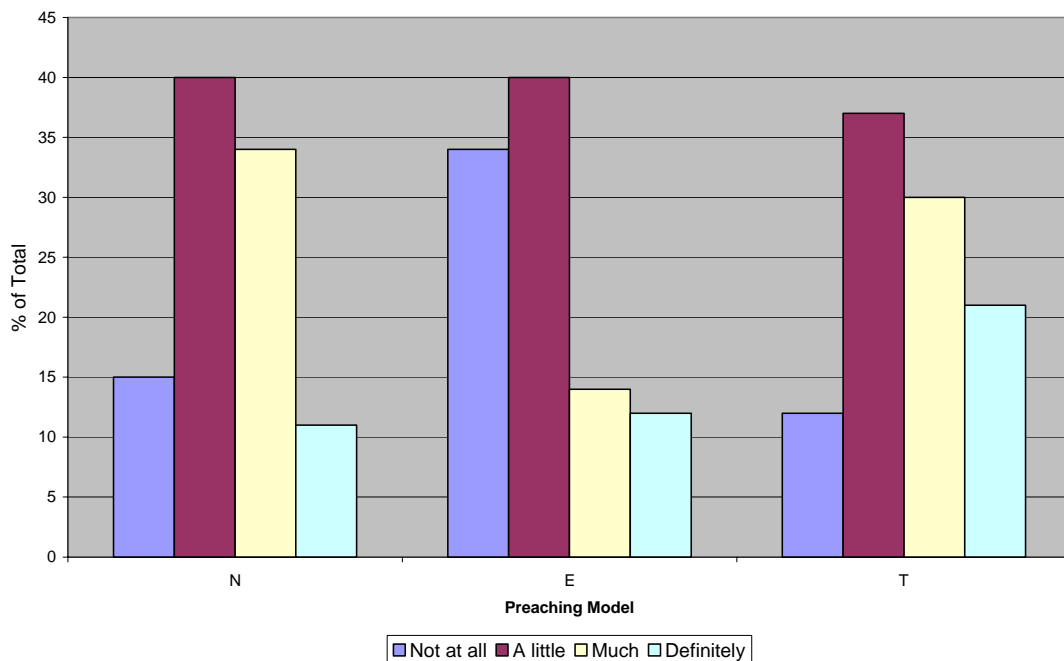
By far the majority of respondents exposed to each of the preaching models did not find the sermon to be an ordeal to endure. This is an indication that listeners generally appear to be satisfied with a broad spectrum of preaching style and content. This does prompt the question as to whether the listeners 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

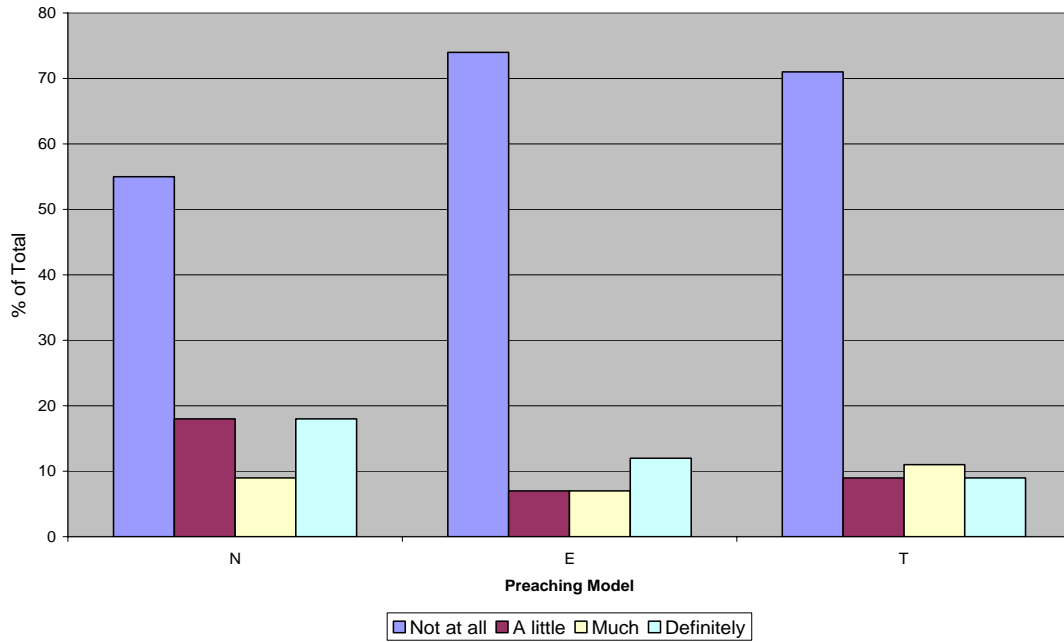


Those exposed to the expository preaching model indicated that the sermon today was less entertaining than those exposed to the narrative and topical models.

The sermon today was very entertaining

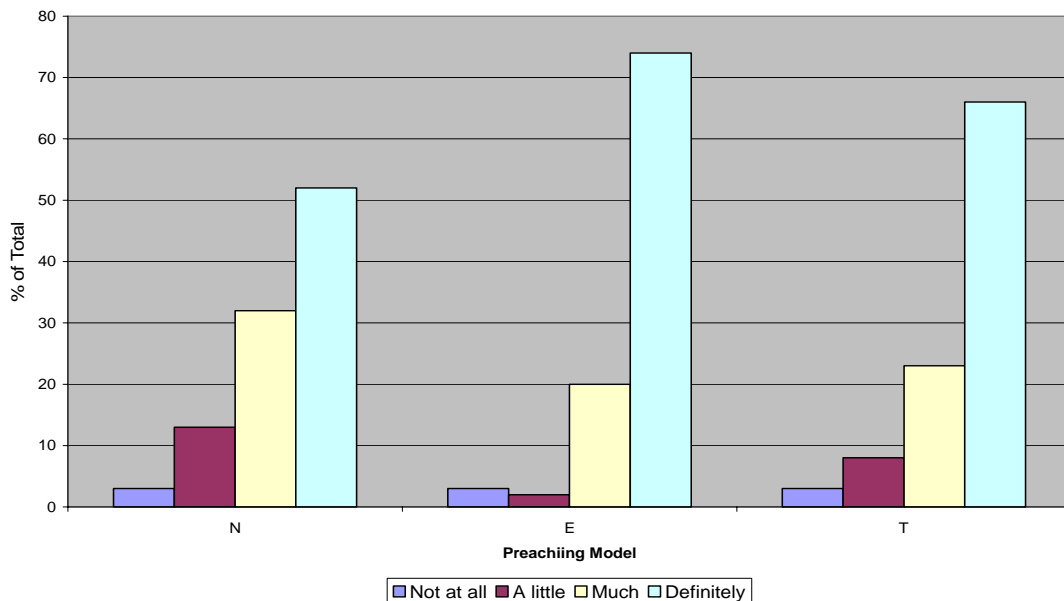


The sermon today was light on Biblical substance

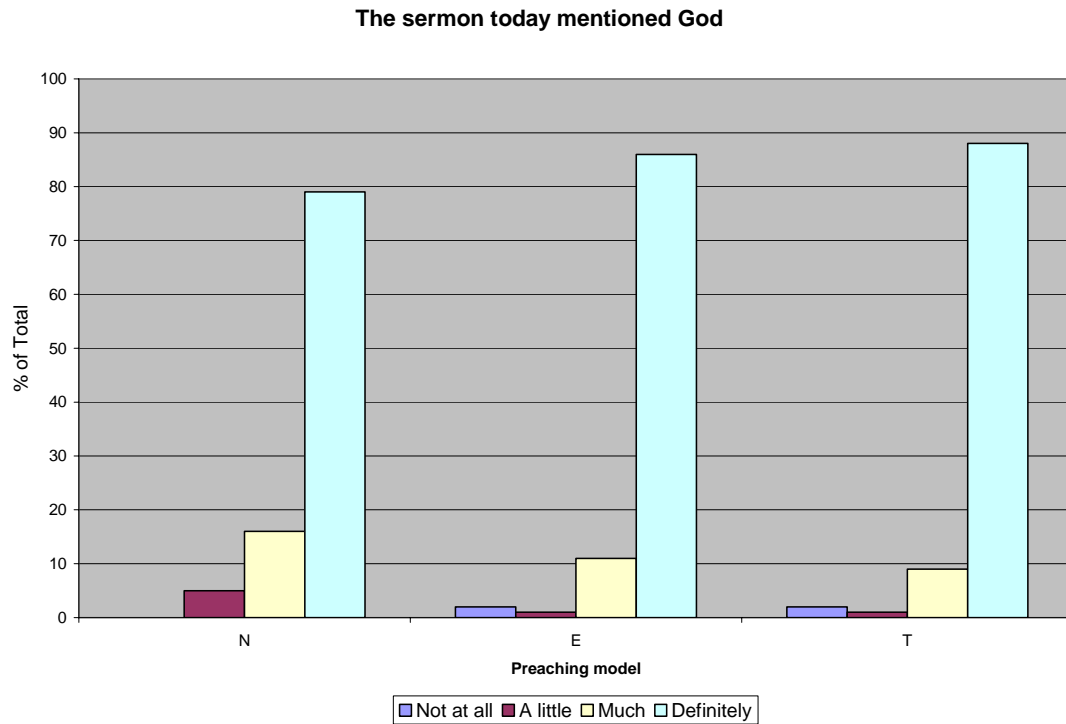


Even though 55% of the respondents indicated that the narrative sermon was not light on biblical substance it is noted that more respondents i.e. 74% and 71% indicated that the expository and topical models respectively were not light on biblical substance. The graph below shows a similar trend in terms 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

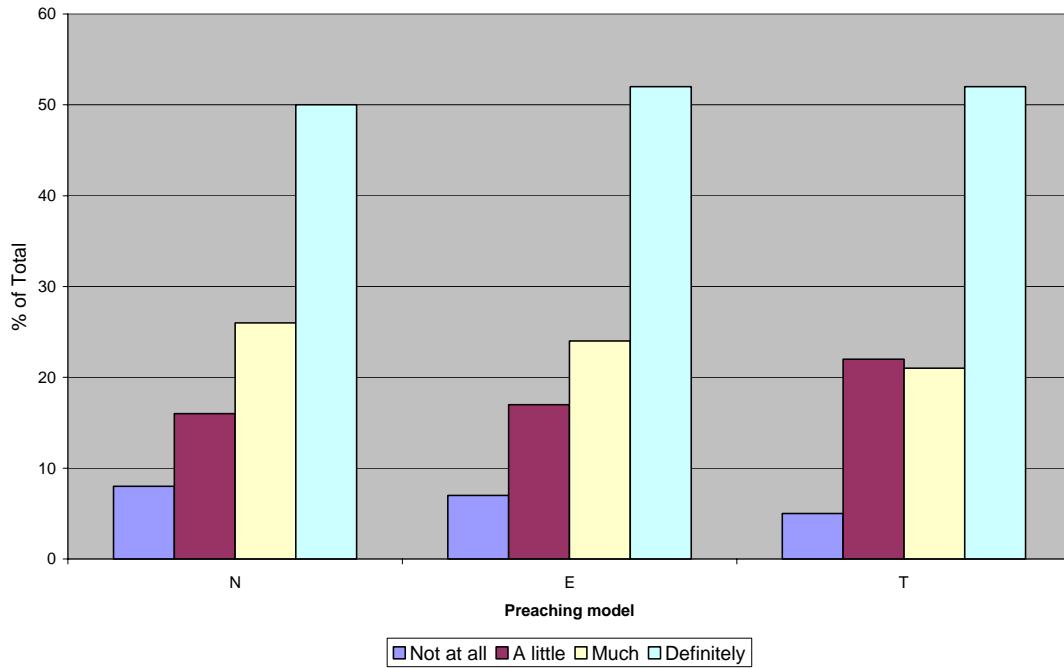


An analysis of the actual sermon manuscripts verifies that all the sermons preached mentioned God. See table 2 above.



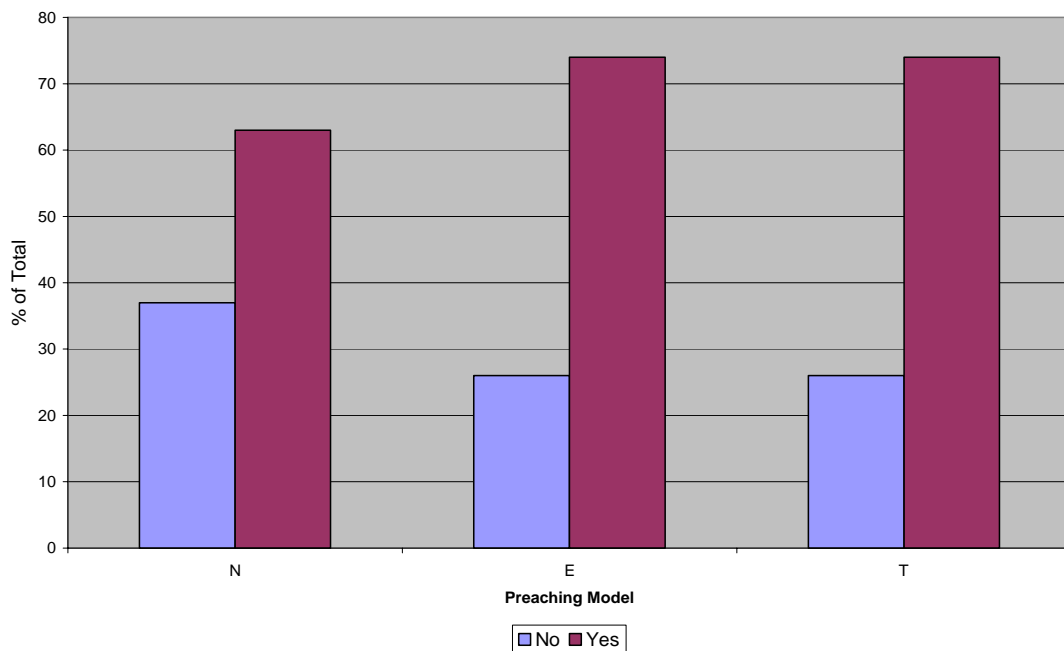
Whereas at least 50% of the respondents exposed to all 3 models indicated the sermon focusing on the cross of Christ, the actual analysis of the sermon manuscript does not verify this perception with only E4, E3 and T1 mentioning the cross of Christ.

The sermon today focused on the cross of Christ



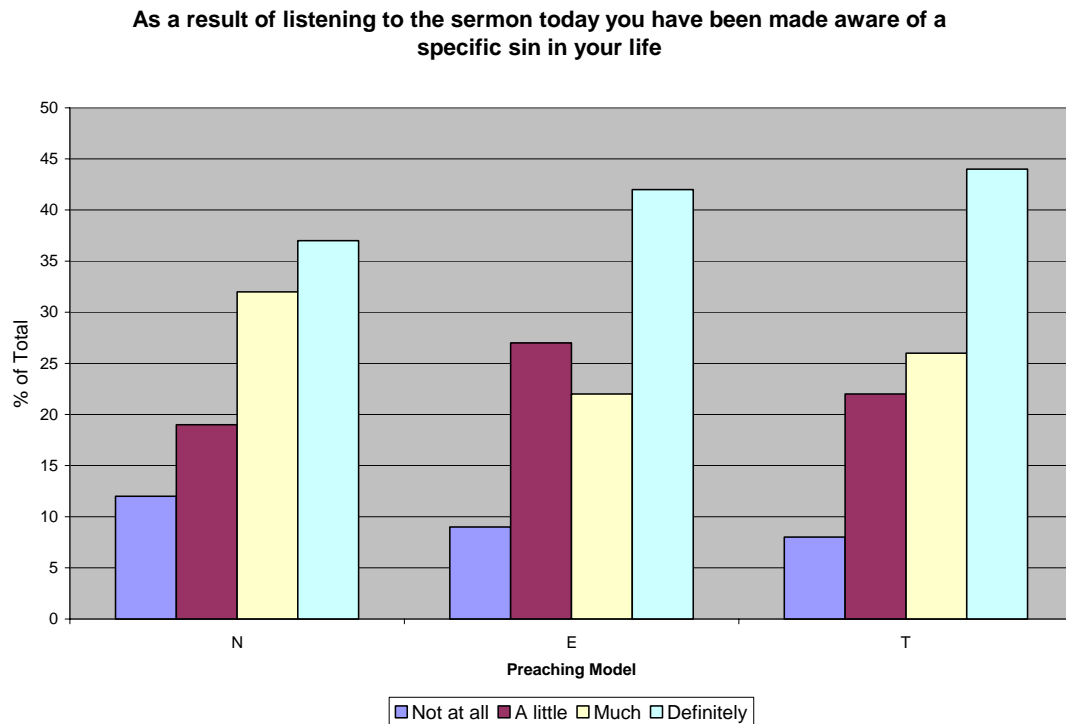
Eleven percent of all respondents indicated that the sermon today did not at all promoted the mystery of God, 16% indicated a little, 24% much and 49% definitely indicated the sermon today promoted the mystery of God.

The sermon today promoted the mystery of God



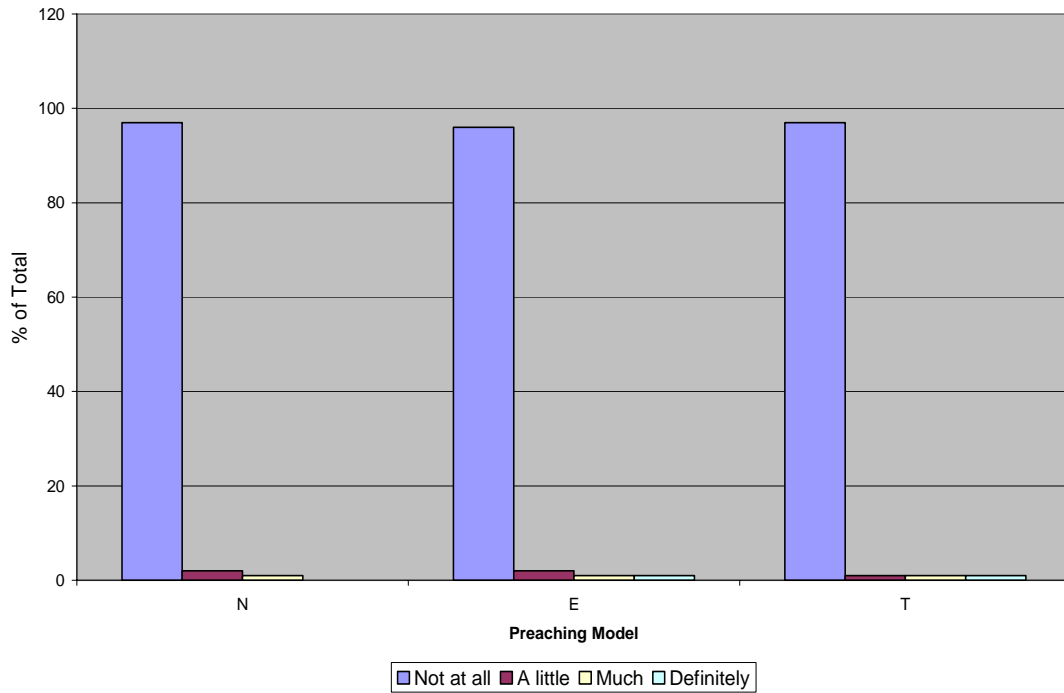
6.2.1.7 The Respondents' Experience as a Result of Listening to the Sermon

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



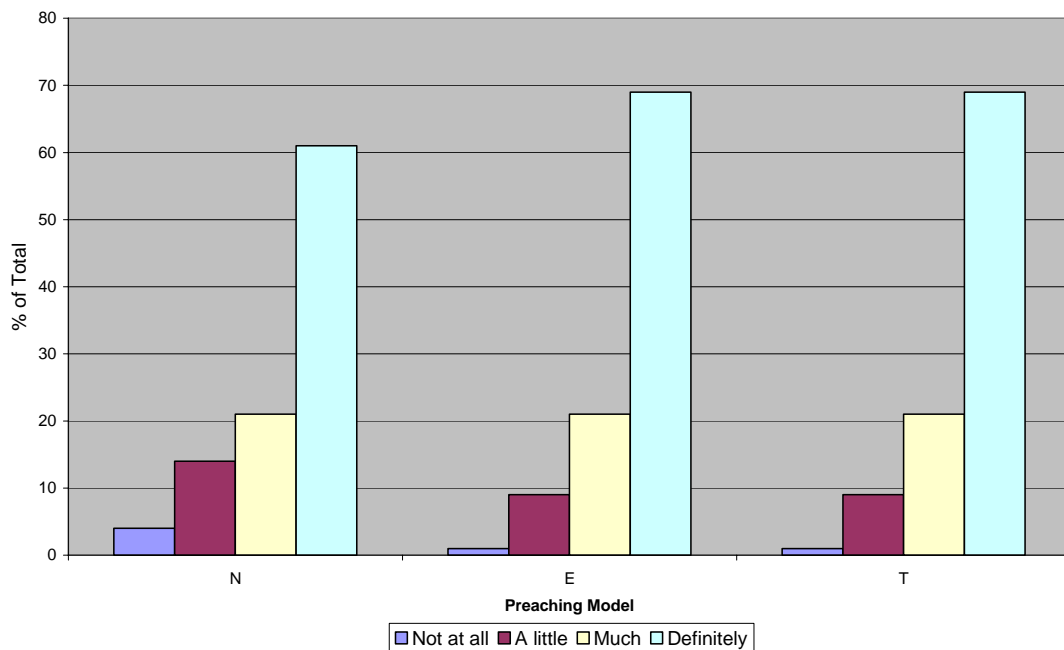
Although 67% of the respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon today they had been made aware of a specific sin in their lives, 96% of all respondents were not offended by the sermon preached. This does indicate openness by the listeners to be confronted with challenges from the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

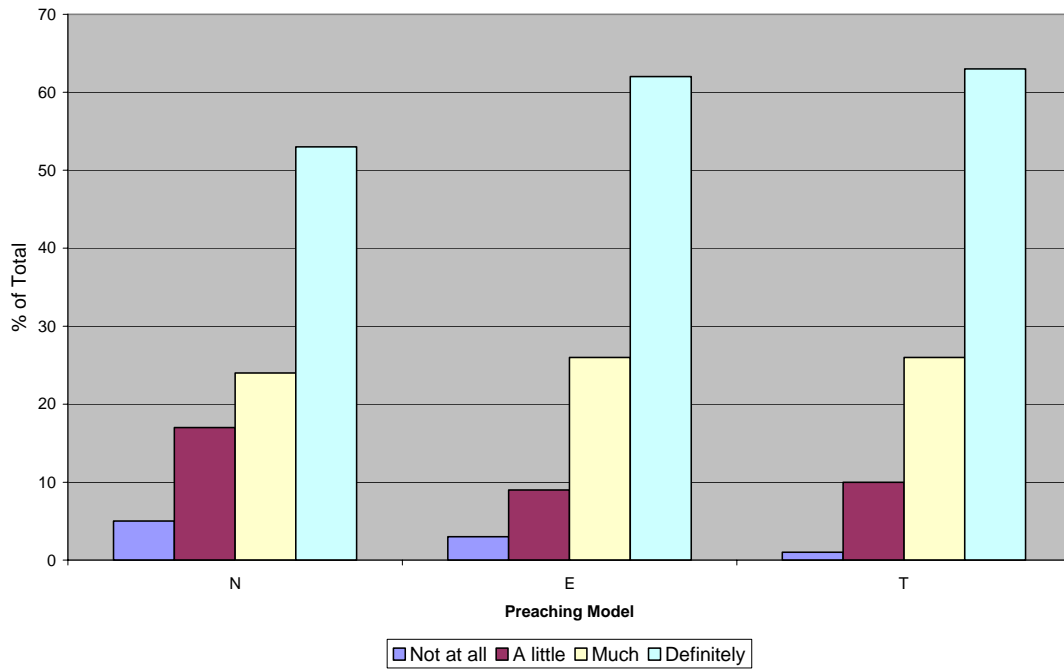


Fifty two percent of all the respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they definitely had a glimpse of the Glory and Majesty of God, 31% much, 14% a little and 3% not at all.



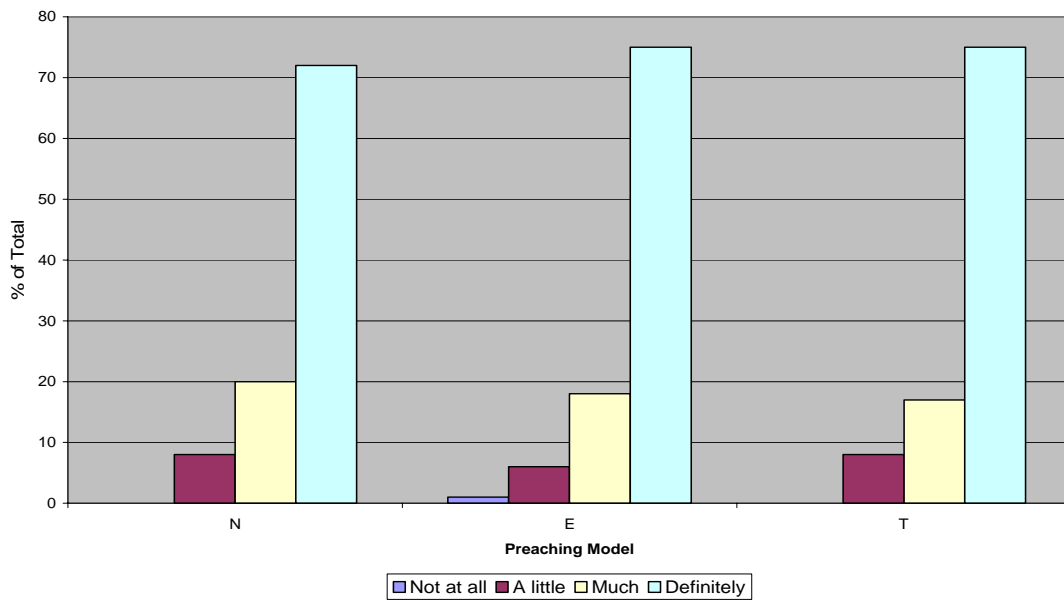
Sixty two percent of all the respondents were as a result of listening to the sermon definitely made more aware of God, 26% much, 10% a little and 2% not at all.

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



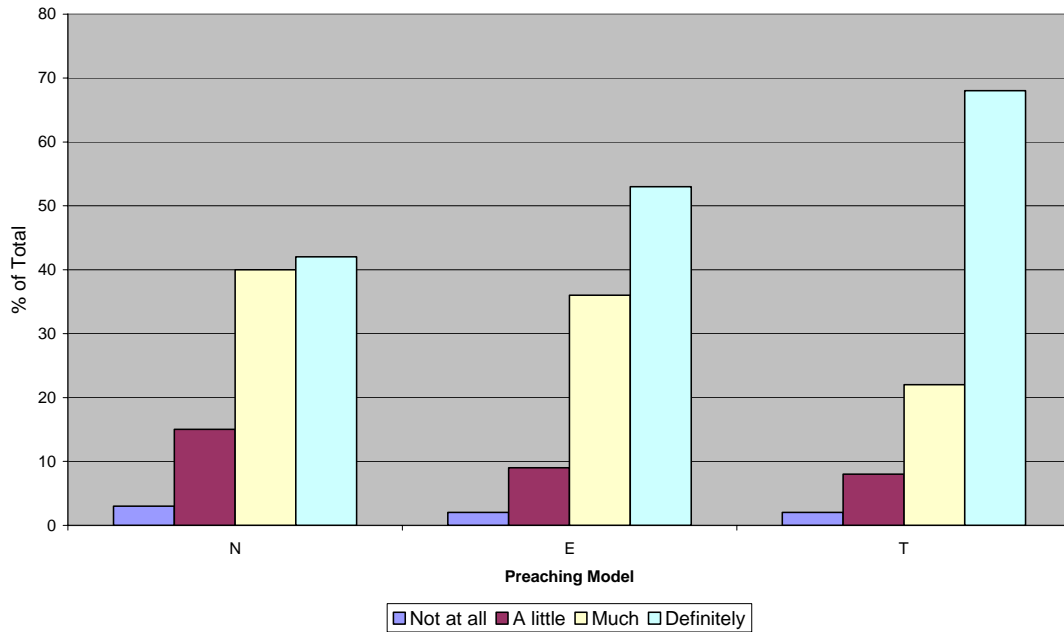
Seventy four percent of all respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they had definitely heard from a great God, 18% much, 7% a little and 1% not at all.

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



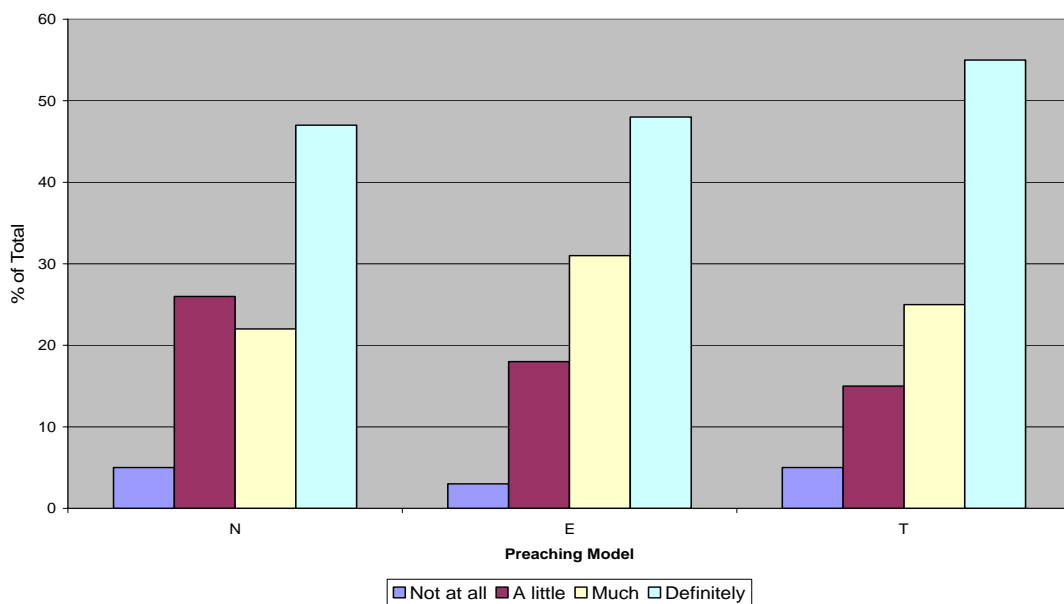
Fifty eight percent of all the respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they had heard from a great communicator, 30% much, 9% a little and 3% not at all.

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



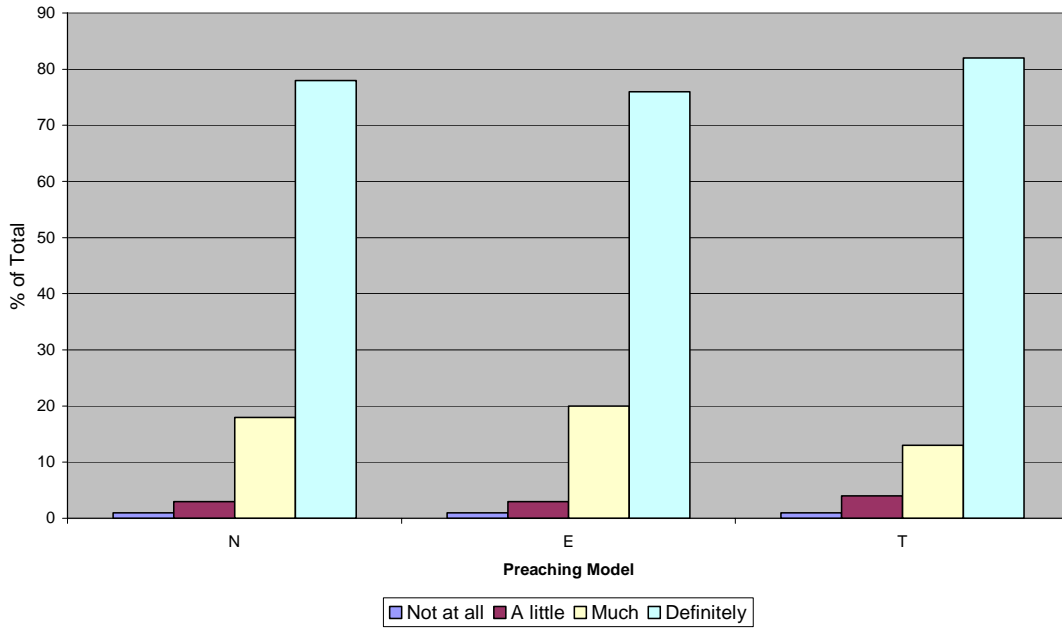
The 3 graphs below indicate that the respondents exposed to all three preaching models were very positive about their perception of the preachers' relationship with God.

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.



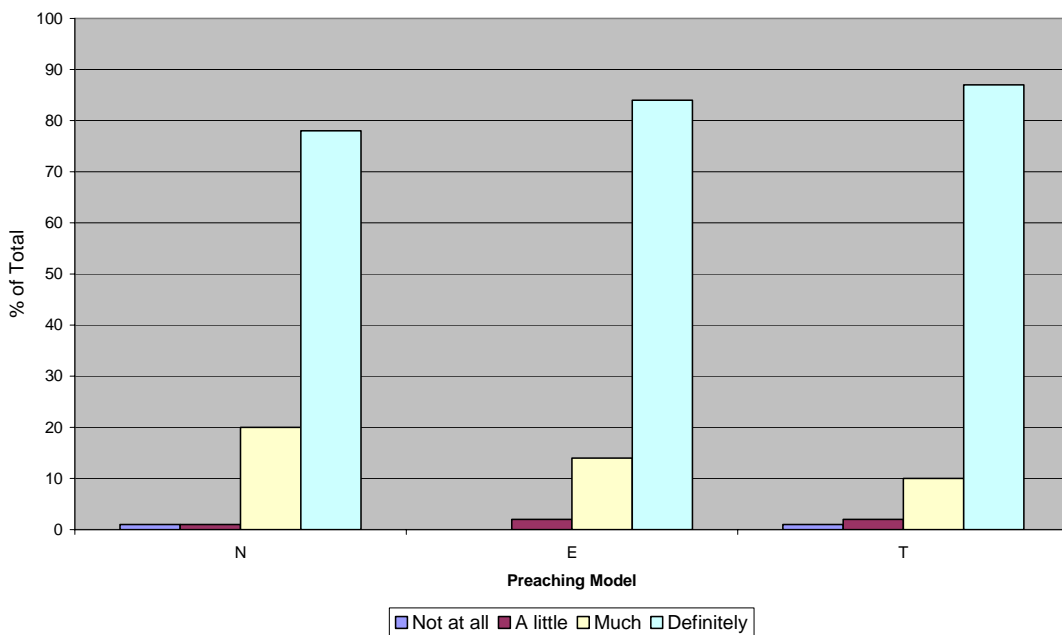
Seventy nine percent of all respondents indicated that as a result of listening to the sermon they definitely sensed that the preacher is in touch with God, 17% much, 3% a little and 1% not at all.

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.

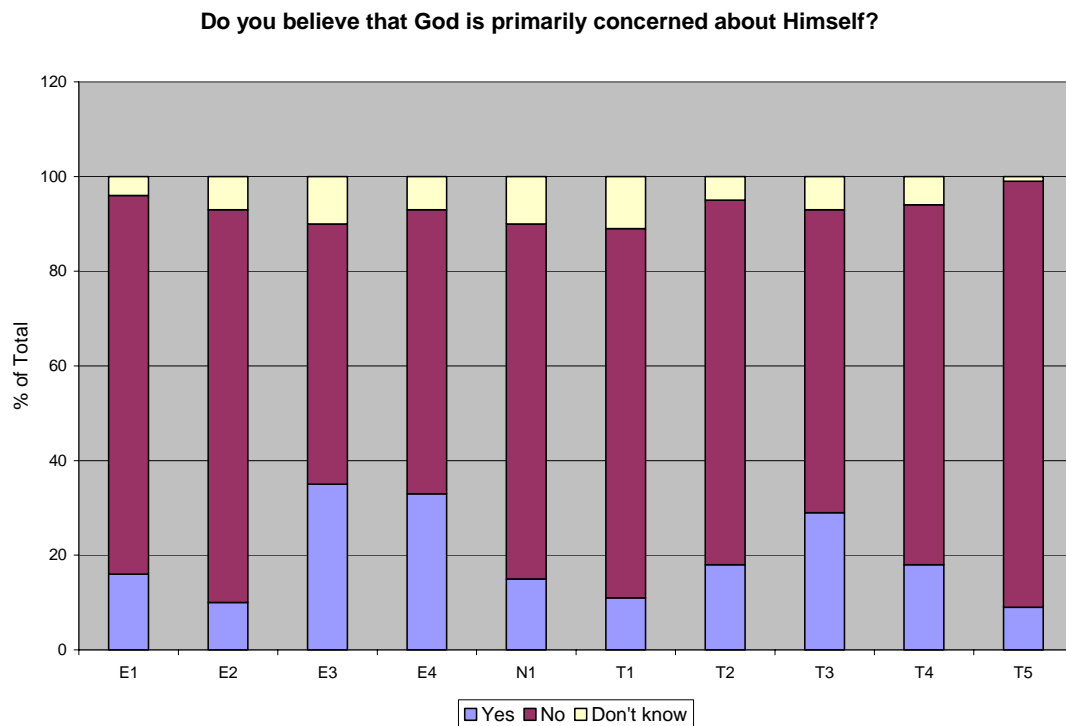
As a result of listening to the sermon today you sensed the preacher's commitment to the Glory of God



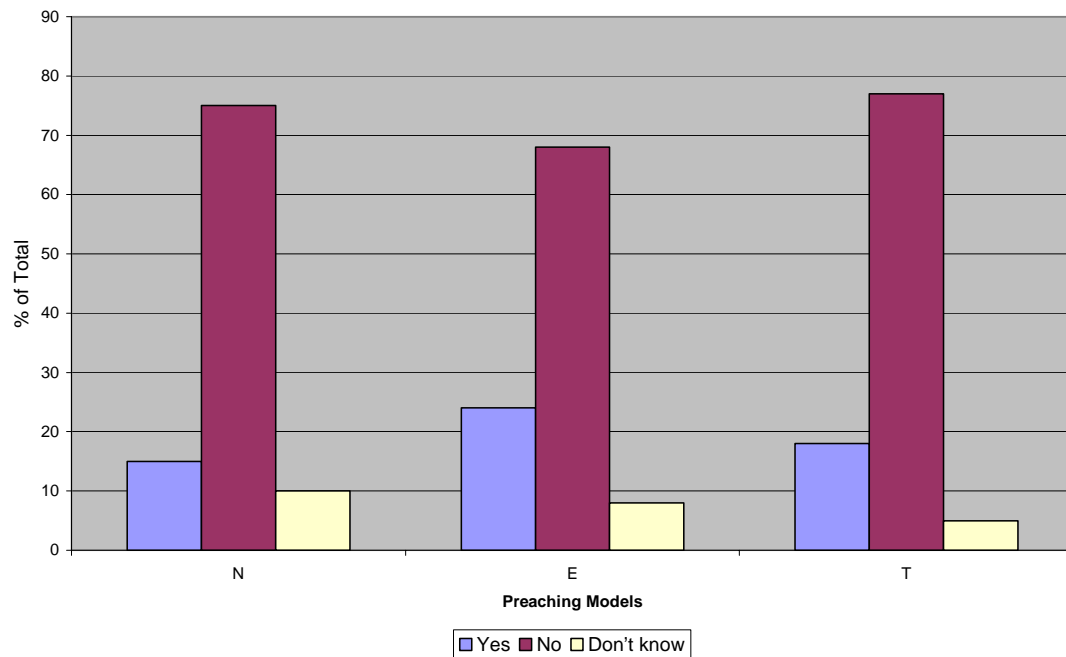
6.2.1.8 The Respondents' Understanding of God's Passion for his Own Glory

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?

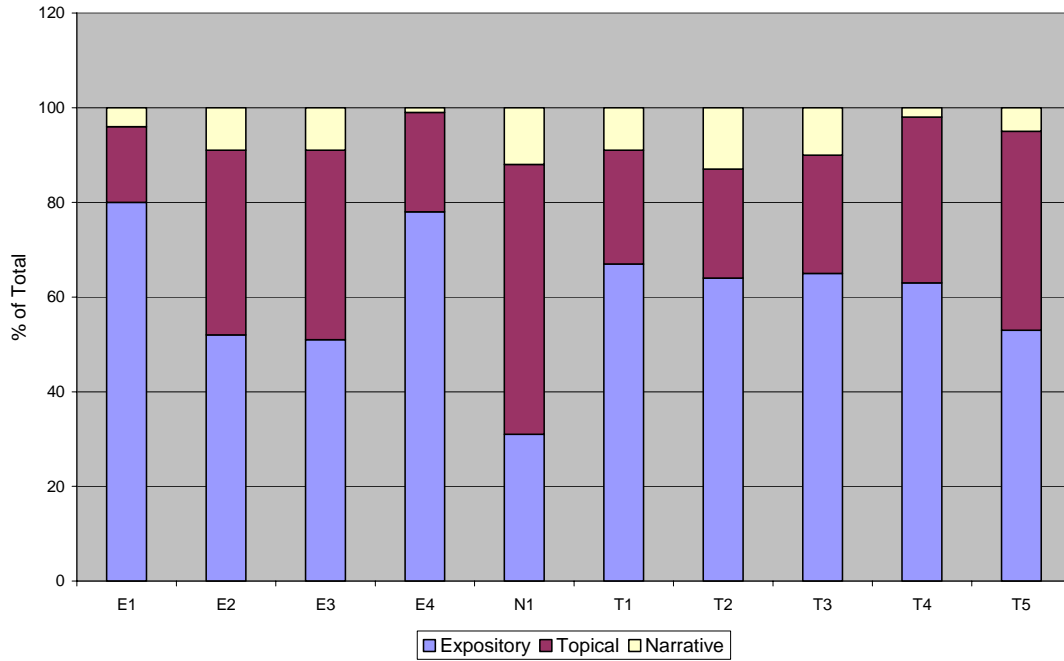


6.2.1.9 The Respondents' Preferred Preaching Model

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

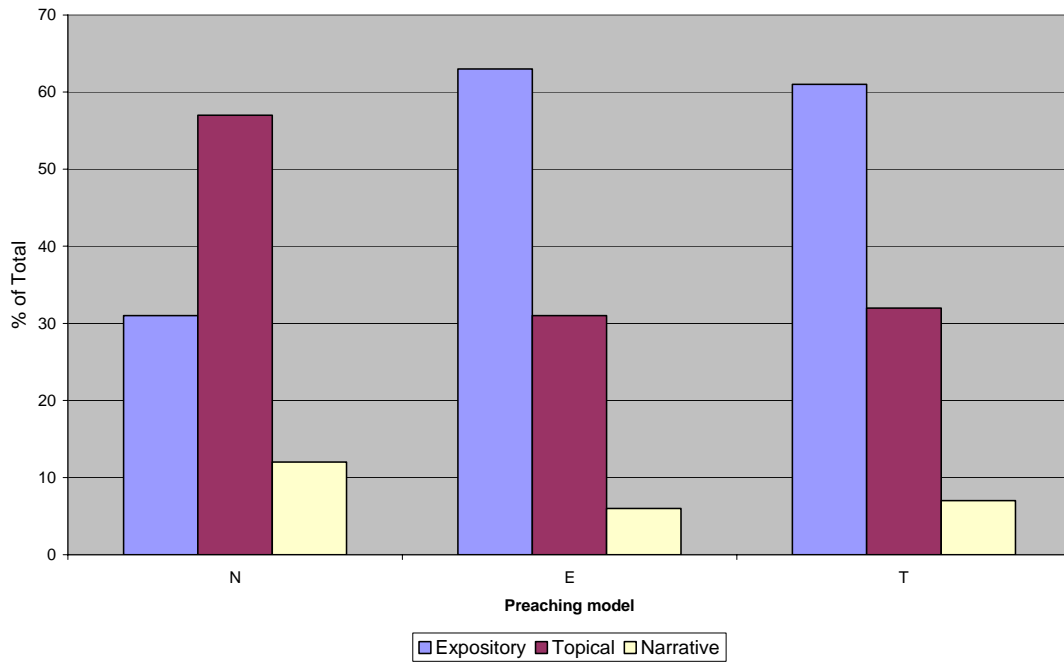
The variation in these trends across the individual churches surveyed as well as the churches grouped according to preaching models used are depicted in the graphs below.

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.

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9. APPENDIX 1 – QUESTIONNAIRE: PREACHING

Respondent number

V1

Answer all the questions by drawing a circle (O) around a number in a shaded box or by writing your answer in the shaded space provided

1. What is your age in completed years?

--

V2 5

2. What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2

V3 8

3. What is your home language?

English	1
Afrikaans	2
Sotho	3
Zulu	4
French	5
Other (specify)	

V4 9

4. To which population group do you belong?

Asian	1
Black	2
Coloured	3
White	4
Other (specify)	

V5 11

5. How would you describe your relationship with this Church?

Member (officially applied)	1
Adherent (in regular attendance)	2
Visitor (occasional attendance)	3

V6 13

6. How long have you been a born again believer?

	Years		months
--	-------	--	--------

V7

--	--	--

 14

7. How long have you been a member of this Church?

	Years		months
--	-------	--	--------

V8

--	--	--

 17

8. Is the hearing of sermons a regular part of your life as a Christian?

Not at all	Seldom	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

V9

--

 20

9. What in your opinion determined the content of the sermon?
(choose one answer only)

The needs of the people	1
The Biblical text	2
The interests of the preacher	3
The thoughts of various commentators	4
Other (specify)	

V10

--	--

 21

10. What model of preaching do you prefer?

Expository (consecutive studies though the Bible)	1
Topical (current issues)	2
Narrative (story)	3

V11

--	--

 23

11. How would you describe the atmosphere during the delivery of the sermon? (choose one answer only)

People were restless	1
A sense of holy awe	2
Light and enjoyable	3
Frivolous and irreverent	4
Other (specify)	

V12

--	--

 25

12. The sermon today...

		Not at all	A little	Much	Definitely		
01.	was too long	1	2	3	4	V13	27
02.	was very prescriptive	1	2	3	4	V14	28
03.	was full of advice	1	2	3	4	V15	29
04.	was an ordeal to endure	1	2	3	4	V16	30
05.	was filled with life application	1	2	3	4	V17	31
06.	was Biblical but lifeless	1	2	3	4	V18	32
07.	was very entertaining	1	2	3	4	V19	33
08.	was light on Biblical substance	1	2	3	4	V20	34
09.	clarified the Biblical text	1	2	3	4	V21	35
10.	Scripture was frequently quoted	1	2	3	4	V22	36
11.	mentioned God	1	2	3	4	V23	37
12.	exalted Jesus Christ	1	2	3	4	V24	38
13.	focused on the cross of Christ	1	2	3	4	V25	39
14.	was filled with weighty truths about God	1	2	3	4	V26	40
15.	promoted the supremacy of God	1	2	3	4	V27	41
16.	promoted the moral purity of God	1	2	3	4	V28	42
17.	promoted the mystery of God	1	2	3	4	V29	43
18.	promoted the presence of God	1	2	3	4	V30	44
19.	promoted the closeness of God	1	2	3	4	V31	45
20.	promoted the grace of God	1	2	3	4	V32	46
21.	promoted the pleasure of knowing God	1	2	3	4	V33	47

13. The focus of the sermon today was on
(Choose one answer only)

Human experience	1	V34			48
The Glory of God	2				
The life of the preacher	3				
Human needs	4				
Other (specify)					

14. As a result of listening to the sermon today

	Not at all	A little	Much	Definitely		
01. you are inspired to love God more	1	2	3	4	V35	<input type="text"/> 50
02. you are more determined to submit to the will of God	1	2	3	4	V36	<input type="text"/> 51
03. you have been made aware of a specific sin in your life	1	2	3	4	V37	<input type="text"/> 52
04. you are inspired to worship God	1	2	3	4	V38	<input type="text"/> 53
05. you are going to change something in your life	1	2	3	4	V39	<input type="text"/> 54
06. you were offended	1	2	3	4	V40	<input type="text"/> 55
07. you had a glimpse of the glory and majesty of God	1	2	3	4	V41	<input type="text"/> 56
08. you were made more aware of God	1	2	3	4	V42	<input type="text"/> 57
09. you felt your soul was nourished	1	2	3	4	V43	<input type="text"/> 58
10. you have heard about a great God	1	2	3	4	V44	<input type="text"/> 59
11. you heard God speaking to you	1	2	3	4	V45	<input type="text"/> 60
12. you sensed the preacher's dependence on the Holy Spirit	1	2	3	4	V46	<input type="text"/> 61
13. you sensed the preacher is in touch with God	1	2	3	4	V47	<input type="text"/> 62
14. you sensed the preacher's commitment to the glory of God	1	2	3	4	V48	<input type="text"/> 63
15. you have heard from a great communicator	1	2	3	4	V49	<input type="text"/> 64
16. you were delighted to receive something from God	1	2	3	4	V50	<input type="text"/> 65

15. Who did you experience to be the most dominant in the service today? (Choose one answer only)

The worship leader	1	V51	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	66
A musician	2				
The preacher	3				
God	4				
Other (specify)					

16. Do you believe that God is primarily concerned about himself?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

V52

68

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. Your assistance in this is greatly appreciated

Charles De Kiewit

10. APPENDIX 2 – NARRATIVE SERMON: N1

Theme: Forgiveness

Introduction.

Would like to do it by way of telling a few stories.

One of the most telling times in my ministry. The story of forgiveness and regret – couple who turned to each other to seek forgiveness.(M & T)

On a personal level – as a young teenager – this is the way that I experienced forgiveness when Brain Human a colored man put his arms around me and told me that he loved me in the Lord. Here was a person who was so hurt by all that had happened and the color of my skin should have been an offense to him. I will never forget that morning when a person of a different skin color showed me the love of God.

There are other times, what do you say to a teenage girl at summer camp who tells you all that her step father had done to her, taking away her innocence. Forgiveness.....

Last year – my visit to the holocaust museum – Corrie Ten Boom. I was silent when I got to the bottom. I could never forgive.

1993 – St James the massacre

These are big moments. Moments of wonder and amazement. What brings individuals like these to this place of forgiveness.

- Forgiveness from the most deep and intimate
- Forgiveness to the level of petty

As you sit here this morning this topic is of relevance to each of us. Each one of us have needed to receive or to give forgiveness. For some of us it is just

too difficult. It is just too hard. Some of us cannot forgive ourselves. Some of us wish that that person or that group of people would just forgive but it seems as if this is just not going to be a possibility.

On google – 32 500 000 hits I think that this topic must then be reasonably popular.

We Christians just have another way of being;

What drives a man who has lost his wife in an attack like this to say over national TV we forgive you for what you have done? The kingdom that we have is not the kingdom of this world. There is a different set of rules that governs the way that we live our lives.

Jesus' disciples asked him how to pray – the story you will find in Matt 5 one of the lines of what we call the Lord's prayer

- forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What is this connection with forgiveness? What is this connection between forgiveness and our relationship with God? Why is it that God places such a high value on this one?

Matt 18 the story of a man who owed a king a lot of money and found grace – yet went out to demand from another what he owed.

Luke 6 forgive and you will be forgiven.

I think it is because of what forgiveness does to us.

It affects my capacity to relate to others.

- this can become a obsession.
- All that you talk about
- All that you think about

- How the other part is so wrong and that you are right in feeling the way that you do.

It affects our capacity to relate to God – there is a break

If you have something against your brother

Matt 5:23-24

23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

NIV

11. APPENDIX 3 – EXPOSITORY SERMON: E1

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

SUNDAY 13 August 2006

Matthew 13:1-23

Introduction

There is no farmer who doesn't know that farming is both a challenging, difficult work as well as richly rewarding

- Looks over virgin soil – sees opportunity
- Begins the work of cleaning the land, preparing the soil – so that planting can begin
- Faces many challenges, including pests, lack of rain
- But sense of great reward at harvest time when months of hard work and patient working pays off.

It is much the same when it comes to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God

- There are challenges, obstacles, disappointments
- But in the end there is always a harvest of righteousness gathered in.]

This is what the parable of the sower is all about

- Highlights responses of peoples hearts to ministry of the Word
- Not all is a positive response
- Reasons given to why this is so
- But there is always fruit in ministry

The parable is indicative of the response Jesus received to His ministry

- Many heard – not all believed

- Some did for a while – then fell over
- But some knew the mighty, powerful, transforming work of God in their hearts and became fruit bearing Christians – led to a harvest of praise with God!

Now why is this parable important for us today?

- Reminds us not to be discouraged and disillusioned by the preaching of the Word in a time when it is not popular
- Living in a day and age when people not interested in preaching of Word

2 Timothy 4:3-4

- The church and pastors are being tempted to abandon the preaching of the truth in order to appeal to the itching ears of people – prefer to be entertained than to submit themselves to God's Word. Therefore the culture is no longer impacted by the Word of God (if you think I am over exaggerating listen to David Wells, 'The bleeding of the evangelical church, p8')

What we have here in parable of sower is encouragement to persevere in preaching and teaching.

Now this is a marvellous parable

- One of seven parables in **Matthew 13** related to the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Theme of the Kingdom repeated (**vs 11, 19, 24, 31, 44, 45, 47**)

What is the Kingdom of Heaven all about?

Jewish concept – intervention of God to restore His people's fortunes and liberate them from the power of their enemies.

- Their great hope for the future yet John the Baptist preaches that “... *it is at hand*” (3v1) and Jesus in these parables dispels the idea that it would be a political emancipation
- Nothing to do with the defeat of the Roman army
- Rather it has to do with his Word reigning in people’s hearts
- His rule as their King would be by their submission to the Word in their heart
- Now Jesus was a great teacher
- Sermon on the Mount unparalleled in excellence
- Gave meaty sermons, rich in doctrinal content, illustration and application
- Here He employs another method of teaching – through more parables (13 v 3)

Why Parables?

Some might say “*it’s a good way – people like to hear stories*”

- But more to it than that!
- You see concealed within the story there was deep and spiritual and moral truth conveyed
- If you wanted to uncover that deep spiritual truth you needed to dig for it eg. Gold digger – unearth and dig deep, squirrel – gather nuts and then crack them open to get edible food
- So then was a dual purpose to a parable.

On one hand – it held rich reward for the earnest inquirer and seek after truth – the mystery of the Kingdom would be revealed.

On the other hand – to the careless, negligent and sceptic it would conceal the truth and further seal the willingly ignorant in unbelief (13 v11-13) i.e. Willingly refusing to believe will lead to further spiritual impoverishment and unbelief while earnestly desiring to know more will lead to further light and blessing.

That is the effect of Word of God – double edged sword – cutting like a surgeons scalpel in order to restore but also destroying in judgment upon those who refuse to hear.

Point : God's Word is not to be trifled with. A great responsibility is placed on the hearer to respond correctly.

- The fact that some do not respond well to the Word is not a reflection on the weakness and powerlessness of the Word but rather on the sinful, fallen nature of the human heart.
- Now Jesus encountered different responses to the Word He preached – tells a parable that illustrates their responses.
- Here He is in a boat just off the shore – large crowds before Him on shore – tells them a number of parables.
- He begins with the parable of the sower.

Story as follows:

Sower – wide, liberal scattering as work along path.

Seed fell in different places

- Some on path – birds ate
- Some in rocky places – soil shallow – scorches
- Some among thorns – choked plants
- Other good soil – well nourished – good

Designed to invoke a response, a request for further meaning – yet most shrugged shoulders – disciples however, sought the meaning and they were rewarded

As we look at parable – answer 3 questions

- Who is the sower?
- what is the seed?

- What kinds of soils are there?

1. Who is the Sower?

- In context Jesus is the sower – healing sick and teaching **(9:35)**
- Parable of weeds He identified Himself as the sower **(13:37)**
- Here he was as the sower once again scattering the seed of the Word
- What we see here is Jesus interpreting His own ministry
- Perhaps His disciples were concerned that His messianic Kingdom was not coming in with a blaze of glory – in fact some opposition already to Him **(12:24)**
- Here Jesus gives them a dose of realism – about the nature of His mission.

Gordon Keddie: *“His kingdom was coming with seeds, not swords, with thoughts, not trumpets; with changed lives, not conquered capitals”*

- The sower, farmer was Jesus
- But by implication the disciples themselves and everyone of God’s labourers of the Gospel, who declare the Word in truth are sowers too **(1 Corinthians 3:9)**

Therefore whether head of household, Sunday School teacher, H.G.F. leader, preacher, teach Word – sower.

2. What is the Seed?

Luke 8:11 – *“The Word of God”* – message *“message of the Kingdom”* – message that is gospel central i.e. Jesus Christ is presented as the King of grace and glory who delivers the sinner from captivity and reigns in their hearts through the truth.

Therefore, the seed is not just an aspect of the truth, teaching upon a particular subject, but the truth of God's Word related to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now this is important

- Some who teach from the Word of God – yet dry, academic, no life – why? Not Christo-centric, no pointer to the person of Jesus and when Jesus is not lifted up and magnified, the Spirit does not work in saving power.
- Some can talk endlessly about a certain point of doctrine eg. End times, Future of the Jews, the law but of little use to souls if Christ Jesus is not presented.
- Can teach children – stories of Bible – moral lessons – if not pointed to Christ – then missing the mark

The seed is the Word of God as it is related to gospel.

The whole of the Word from Genesis to Revelation is all about the gospel – the Kingdom of God

- About kingdom ruined by sin
- About kingdom pictured and promised in Old Testament e.g. sacrifices, Messianic prophecies
- About kingdom regained and restored through Jesus Christ
- About kingdom fully realised at return of Christ

If cannot point children, people to Christ in the Word then don't preach, teach at all!

That is what the seed is. The Word of God as it reveals the glory of Christ in the gospel (from Genesis to Revelation)

But now let us turn our attention to the main focus point of the parable – that is the different kind of soil in which the seed falls.

3. What are the Soils?

(a) *Soil in General*

The world, the human race

Specifically – the hearers of the gospel.

The Word must be scattered over the world

Problem – not all receive the Word

Have bad soil and good soil

- Bad Soil – 3 types
 - Path, rocky places, thorns
- Good Soil – farmers ploughed field

Purpose of Parable:

Highlights difference between believers and unbelievers as far as Word goes.

But also a challenge to believers to examine our hearts to see whether we are what we profess to be.

○ **Bad Soil Hearers (v19-23)**

Path (vs 4, 19)

Well trodden, hard – hearts hard

Do not understand, do not grasp – Word has no place in their hearts.

2 Reasons why this may be :-

Careless – in one ear out the other

Eg. attend Sunday School, church, hear gospel exhortations -
hardened to appeals

Cynical – purposefully harden their hearts

Sceptical, bitter or angry toward God

Criticise the Bible, criticise Christians, despise the gospel that is shared with them

To both careless and cynical – Word snatched away by evil one.

‘snatched’ – thief grabbing a handbag with precious belongings and running off – sudden swift, lost everything valuable.

So the Word which is precious and contains blessing to those who receive it is snatched away.

Note – activity of Satan when Word is preached.

Not hidden in a hole in ground

Looking to see which hearts are careless

Cynical and as quick as a flash – there to rob them of the truth

That is the first hearer – indifferent, careless, cynical.

The Rocky Places (vs 5, 20-21)

These are the superficial

Shows real appetite for a while

Sits under Word, in beginning excited, talks about it, even joy

Then heat gets turned up, hard times – there is trouble and persecution and they bail out! Not there anymore!

What was the problem?

Has no root

Know importance of roots – drink up water and nutrients.

These lives not embedded in Word

Felt nice for a while – no real staying power

The Thorny Soil (vs 7, 22)

Person is governed by materialistic goals and desires

Main interest is acquiring wealth, more concerned about his earthly retirement than his heavenly rest

Half-hearted, double-minded, divided interests

When he hears the Word – mind is not there – thinking about his worldly cares, his business, next deal, how to extract the debt owed to

himself etc.

Word finds no place in the heart full of the thorns of materialism.

Therefore the worries and cares of this life choke the seed of the Word
– no spiritual life and growth.

So these are the different kinds of responses to the Word as far as
negative responses go.

Those indifferent, superficial, worldly

Now all that might tend to be a bit discouraging, but it is meant to do
the opposite - to deliver us from unrealistic expectations and
discouragement when we see people come and hear the Word of God
and turn away.

So often we can take it personally – we must not!

This is what happened when Jesus taught

Will happen to every faithful preacher and teacher of Word, every
evangelist

But parable doesn't end there, does it?

Wonderful positive response to Word

- **Good Soil (vs 8, 23)**

Why is it good soil?

Ploughed, fertilized, prepared

Ready to receive the Word

Of course we know

Heart needs to be first prepared by the Holy Spirit before it can receive
the Word

It needs to be ploughed

So the heart needs to be prepared by the gracious moving of the Spirit

Such a person given 'an ear to hear' as he listens. Only because of
God's sovereign grace.

Such a person responds to the Word

Notice – not only hears – understands

Heartfelt response – action, obedience, fruit

What is producing the fruit?

The Word of God that is powerfully at work – it germinates in mind and heart, grows, changes and transforms the person.

Able to overcome sin, remove sinful thoughts and practices, character transformed, begins to put his gifts to work, bringing forth fruit.

Why? Power of the Word **Psalm 1**

Word rooted and growing – cannot be stopped, dynamic, powerful, not mechanical, but life of its own.

That is of tremendous encouragement. Preach the Word, Teach the Word, watch its power unleashed.

Many try to grow church in superficial manner e.g glitz and glamorous means – no real power. End up fighting for an organization rather than the truth.

Don't have to help the Word – like a lion – unleash it – watch it get to work devouring falsehood and liberating captive souls to sin.

You see this parable ought to give us great encouragement, great confidence in the ministry of the Word.

Conclusion with Application

Notice varied fruitfulness (**v 23b**)

- To encourage us to long to be more fruitful
- Make use of every opportunity to grow, attending services, reading, studying Word of God prayerfully and diligently

Urges is to

Examine hearts.

What kind of hearer am I? What kind of soil are you?

Am I careless when it comes to God's Word – switch off, allow the Word to go in one ear and out the other.

Is there some superficiality – give appearance of loving Word – no real impact in life i.t.c. hardship. Own desire carry you away – not rooted in God's truth.

Are you governed by worldly mindset – more concern about home, pension than about eternal well-being of soul?

What a reminder to bow before the Lord Jesus – say *“Sanctify me by your truth. Your Word is truth. Search my heart, remove all hindrances to the reception of your Word. Grant grace to receive Word, understand it and grow.”*

12. APPENDIX 4 – TOPICAL SERMON: T1

SUNDAY MORNING 13th AUGUST 2006

09h00

Communion Service

Scripture Reading : 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

PROCLAMATION AND DEDICATION

Introduction

I was given a book this week entitled "*The Lord's Supper is a Celebration of Grace*". This once again reminded myself that the communion service has a two fold picture

- Looking back on Christ's life and death and
- Looking forward to His second coming.

This double or two-fold picture is one sermon which you and I are preaching each and every day with all the people you and I come into contact daily either physically and/or telephonically. Whether we realise it or not, we are enacting this sermon of celebration. This simply service is not only a time of celebration, but also a 'memorial service'.

Now the word 'memorial' is not a strange word to all of us. The world is full of memorials, for example, 'the Cenotaph' in London, 'the Arc de Triomphe' in Paris, 'the Victorian Memorial' in Washington, as well as places of historical events such as the Normandy Beaches and Gettysburg Battlefield etc. They are all powerful reminders and testimonies that those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice do matter to us today.

Many of us here today continually remind ourselves of departed loved ones on special days and occasions.

So here this morning we gather to celebrate and remember what Jesus has done for us some two thousand years ago, To meditate and to begin to realise what it cost God to send His only begotten Son, and the terrible sufferings Jesus suffered, as well as the agonising death of crucifixion.

Alas we must not just dwell on these terrible yet wonderful thoughts. We must proceed further and see the victory that was won for us at Gethsemane when the cry went out through all the Universe *“Why seek ye the Living among the dead – He is not here – He is risen”*. Yet things do not stop there Jesus ascended to be with His Father and we have the Holy Spirit to lead, to guide, to comfort, to encourage, to help us all through life.

Having said all this, what does this verse really mean?

1 Corinthians 11:26 “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes”

I wish to look at two questions :-

1. What does the Lord’s supper teach us about Christ’s Death
2. What does it mean to proclaim Christ’s Death

1. What does the Lord’s Supper teach us about Christ’s Death?

This celebration shows us very clearly a dying Saviour for sinners. This was the great work that Jesus came to do as the Saviour of the world for you and for me. The Incarnate birth, the wonderful and magnificent ministry would count for nought if Jesus had not submitted Himself to death on the cross. Yes the manner of the birth, and the ministry is important, but it is the redemptive work on the cross that secured the redemption for sinners such as you and I.

The death was a violent death – a cruel death, not only a cruel death but a conquering death. Conquering by the very fact that Christ's death put '*death to death*'. No wonder God turned His back on His Son when He saw the filthiness of sin, that even Jesus cried out "*my God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?*". Oh! The mercy that God has for us. Oh! The love that Jesus has for us, Here was the demonstration of grace in its fullest meaning.

What does the Lord's Supper teach us about Christ's death? The answer is very simple.

God in His mercy saw the miry sin that we are in and brought in the plan of redemption through the love of His son Jesus, so that we might be reconciled to God once again.

Grace – wonderful Grace. The Lord's supper is not a funeral remembrance of a departed one, but an exultant anticipation of a returning Conqueror

2. What does it mean for us to proclaim Christ's death at the Table?

Do you know or realise that it is possible to come to the Lord's table with the sense what the Lord's supper teaches about Jesus' death, but it is something else to proclaim the Lord's death with eternal gratitude for the sacrifice for me and you that is so unworthy. Just spend a minute or two and note **Firstly that we must grieve over our sin**. It was our sin that took Jesus to the cross, in order that our debt to be cancelled in order to be redeemed. Therefore we must constantly remind ourselves that we are crucified with Him.

Gal 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ"

Secondly, that we must rejoice in Christ. If we believe that Jesus' death is available for our deliverance from eternal damnation, then we can only but rejoice in the Lord. This then ensures the Lord's supper is a 'feast' and not a 'fast'. Paul says in

Romans 5:11 *“We also rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation”*

John 3:16 gives us the full reason why we should be rejoicing at the Lord's Table.

Conclusion

What is the challenge this morning? What and how must I respond to the Lord this morning? The answer is, that we are to live day by day as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Yes, I do know that there are hypocrites in the church, yes I realise that many call themselves Christians and they are not etc etc, but we must not look at others, let's look at ourselves. Are we living in continuing obedience and devotion – the Bride – is fully adorned in all her finery and beauty then the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon us? Then revival will begin, then we will see souls being turned to the Lord, then we will make an impact in this community.

Let us get our hearts in tune with Jesus, let our lives show the mercy and love of Jesus, and there is no telling how much the Lord will use you. Will you not come to Jesus now? Will you not allow Jesus to have complete control of your life now?

13. APPENDIX 5 – TOPICAL SERMON: T2

Title: Living by God's principles (even when it doesn't make sense).

Passage: Daniel Chapter 1

Living by God's Principles (Even when it doesn't make sense)

Introduction

We live in a pretty mixed up world.

Terror scare in UK.

Rape, violence, corruption, fraud etc.

A world where Christianity seems to have less and less influence and say.

How are we to live? The world we live seems so far removed from that of the Bible. Can we really expect it to guide us through the mine field that we call life?

Today's world certainly has it's unique challenges but the characters of Scripture faced some pretty amazing situations themselves. None more so than a young man named Daniel and his three friends. It's a time in the Old Testament that closely parallels many of our own situations. Israel and the followers of Yahweh do not have control over their own destiny. They are a minority in a hostile world. The legal and social system was at best indifferent and at worst openly hostile towards their beliefs and practices.

It is with this in mind that we turn to Daniel and his friends for help and motivation to take a stand in this world of ours.

In Chapter 1 we'll see Daniel and his friends living according to God's principles in spite of the pressure of the world.

Next week we'll go to Ch 3 where Daniel's three friends are faced with trusting God when it seems ridiculous.

Finally we'll go to Ch 6 and see how Daniel deals with the pressure to compromise.

Background on Babylon

In 612BC Babylon conquered Assyria and in 605BC they defeated Egypt and became the ruler of the known world.

Following the victory over Egypt Nebuchadnezzar deals with Jerusalem in a brief siege. It's a devastating victory. The temple is ransacked and articles taken as a demonstration that the Babylonian gods were clearly superior to those of Israel.

Ashpenaz, chief of Nebuchadnezzar's court officials is instructed to collect a human tax in the form of some of Jerusalem's brightest young men. Amongst whom were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Daniel, the author and main character in the book is to live and have influence in Babylon for nearly 70 years. He will serve under three Babylonian kings and will go on to serve under Cyrus, the king of Persian who defeats Babylon. Throughout this he maintains his faith and witness.

But that's getting ahead of ourselves. Let's take a more detailed look at Daniel and his friends and their introduction to their life in Babylon.

Standing on principle.

The situation is simple. The young men are slaves. Treated well because it suits their new masters but slaves nonetheless.

Their training has two key purposes, to remove their heritage and beliefs and to assimilate them into the beliefs and thinking of the Babylonian king.

It starts at a most basic level with the teenagers being renamed.

They are then placed into training and it is there that an issue arises that Daniel chooses to take a stand on. FOOD!! Some might say that's ridiculous.

These were Jews, inheritors of the Pentateuch, the Law of God given to Moses with all of its dietary guidelines. There may also have been the issue of food sacrificed to idols. And so Daniel and his friends take a stand.

Daniel 1:8 But **Daniel resolved** not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

A principle is at stake. (1:8)

“not to defile himself with royal food”

A resolution is made. (1:8)

“Daniel resolved”

A stand is taken (1:8)

“he asked the chief official for permission”

Faith is required.

“12 Please test your servants for ten days”

God honours the keepers of the principle (and blesses others).

DA 1:15 At the end of the ten days they looked **healthier and better nourished** than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

DA 1:17 To these four young men **God gave knowledge and understanding** of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could **understand visions and dreams** of all kinds.

DA 1:18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he **found none equal** to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, **he found them ten times better** than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

NOTE: that this was a three year training program and while Daniel and his friends are vindicated in their stand they still remain slaves in Babylon for the next 70 years. Vs 21 “Cyrus”. But their story is a testimony to God’s ability to take those who are faithful to his principles and use them to influence society.

Application

We live in world that seeks to press us into it’s mould, hence Paul’s warning in Romans 12 not to be conformed to it’s pattern.

- It’s a dog eat dog world.
- Every man for himself.
- Time is money
- “But everyone does it.”
- If it feels good, it must be.
- Survival of the fittest.

The demands on our time, resources, ethics, values and beliefs are constant.

Some of God’s principles for today:

- Servant leadership (Matt 10:42-45)
- Sowing and reaping (Hos 10:12)
- It is better to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)
- Love your enemies. (Luke 6:35)
- The first shall be last and the last shall be first. (Luke 13:30)
- Beatitudes - Blessed are the meek (Matt 5:3-11)
- Do not worry about tomorrow. Seek first the kingdom of God. (Matt 6:25-33)

The challenge of Daniel and his friends is whether we’re prepared to live by the principles that God has set out for us.

First we need to know what the principles are. We need to be students of the Word of God and it’s truths.

We then need to resolve to stand by the principles in Scripture.

Then we need to be creative about how we take our stand.

We need to be willing to trust that God is the rewarder of his people. Knowing who God is and believing his trustworthiness is the cornerstone of our faith.

Each situation will be unique and there are no simple formulas to where and when we'll be tested. We will need to be alert and will need to tap into the wisdom of God to know how and when to stand.

What are the situations you face?

Have you compromised and failed? There is forgiveness in Christ. *1 John 2:1*
But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Have you taken a stand? Be encouraged to persevere with your resolution. Trust that God will vindicate you. If not in this life, there will be reward in heaven.

May God use each one of us to stand for His kingdom and testify to the truth of His principles.

14. APPENDIX 6 – TOPICAL SERMON: T3

Introduction

“Did you get it all this morning?”

Did you really

Do we get it all each morning?

Are we totally fulfilled as believers?

If SO... then why is it that we are never content?

We kind of move from one high to the seeking the next one

The cycle is like this – it starts young

- If I can just be picked on under fourteen team
- When I make that IF I can just get onto the first team
- If I can just get that girl
- If I can get just get that jacket then I will be there – then I will be respected
- I get the jacket and after a month I cannot even believe that I invested all that energy into having the jacket

And so it never stops

New phone (2 months later – I would rather have a different one)

New car

And so we never get it all – and life is defined by the drive to get it all – or we just give up trying

Christians are no different –

Jesus said “I have come to give you life and life to the full” (John 10:10)

But we do not have it we are always looking for it – caught in the rat race to discover something that will be “Good, pleasing and Perfectly right for me” – something that I no longer will need to look for something else to fill me

Some thing that brings hope and a future – but it never seems to happen

Questions: I thought Christianity would fill that drive BUT since coming to know Christ the drive to be filled has not been quenched – in fact if I had to be honest I am no different to the non believer.

So is all we have gained is

Heaven as apposed to Hell

BUT Jesus said (John 6:34) “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty

He also said (John 10:9) “I assure you, I am the gate for the sheep,” “All others who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. Wherever they go, they will find green pastures.

I think the mission Jesus called the Church to fulfill is a mission of hope – a mission that is different from that of the worlds – It is about green pastures

I think that there is a good pleasing and perfect way to be discovered that will bring hope to our nation

Rom 12:1-2 say

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

So if we are able to transform our minds we will enjoy the good pleasing and perfect will of God

Transform – means to change

ILL: When I came into the room every night I transform the floor

Seriously: To give it a new look

- I see it as taking a computer which operated on a dos system and replacing it with windows – we have transformed the computer

This is what I am feeling God is doing in our age as he rises up a missional minded church

- God is moving the church from earthly mindedness to Kingdom minded
- We are either going to join this move or we are going to be left behind

1. Jesus was a Kingdom Minded and this was enough for him – he never looked for more or was not satisfied

The Kingdom message was central Jesus' message of hope

Luke 9:10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, ¹¹ but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

“The Kingdom of God is like a man scattering seed...

“The Kingdom of God is like a mustered seed

“The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field

The Kingdom drove him

Luke 4: ⁴² At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”

He clearly established the urgency of the Kingdom

Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

He wanted to transform the minds of his followers – to Kingdom thinking

Matt 6:9 “This, then, is how you should pray: ”“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be our name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The work he gave them was Kingdom centred

Luke 9:1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. ⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. ⁵ If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.” ⁶ So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

Jesus was about the Kingdom

Why all this detail: The point I want to make is that Jesus wanted to transform the minds of his followers from being earthly focused to being Kingdom focused

He was and he wanted his people to be

Jesus wanted to transfer His character and priorities onto this followers

The idea of transforming the mind – from the old self to the new self is one of having the earthly mindedness replaced with that of the Kingdom – then we will know God’s good pleasing and perfect will

2. What does it mean to be Kingdom minded?

This is when we have the mind of Christ in us

When we speak of The Kingdom we speak of

- that which brings glory and honor to God
- where God is and where God is seen
- something that is now present and evident in our lives
- something that is to come - the future speaks of a place where we will feast with the Lord

Luke 13:29 ²⁹ People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

ILL: Kingdom minded people are able to look beyond the earth to the hope of the Glory to come

Like Paul who writes

Romans 8:17 His Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ, because we have suffered with him.

2 Tim 2:12 If we don't give up, we will rule with him.

3. What are the Character traits of Kingdom minded people

For us to understand what the Character traits are lets look at a contrast

With Money

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Earthly minded | - Are never satisfied with what they have |
| Kingdom minded | - live with the “daily needs” attitude and use the excess to invest into other Kingdom building |

With things they have

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Earthly minded | - It is mine |
|----------------|--------------|

Kingdom minded	- it is God and is on loan to me to build His Kingdom
With Time	
Earthly minded	- I will give God time on Sunday
Kingdom minded	- All my time is his
With people	
Earthly minded	- What can I get out of them or what can they give me - Think only of themselves (well most often)
Kingdom minded	- how can I be used to bring God's Kingdom in this persons life • How can I serve you • How can I meet your needs
With decisions or hardships	
Earthly minded	- How can I make the best out of this situation?
Kingdom minded	- What is God wanting to achieve in this situation
With opportunities	
Earthly minded	- What can I gain from this
Kingdom minded	- How can I build Kingdom in this
With Church work	
Earthly minded	- What is my church giving me
Kingdom minded	- What does God want me to add to his Kingdom
With Work ethic	
Earthly minded	- I will only do what is easy and suits me
Kingdom minded	- Whatever it takes

With leadership

- Earthly minded - How do I look (my Church, My Bible study)
- Kingdom minded - How do I serve and how does Christ look

So Character of a Kingdom minded person will be

I exist for God

Establishing Gods work on earth is my goal, vision, passion

Other mater more than myself

God's will be done

I am available

I own nothing

Rom14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

If we are Kingdom thinkers we read the Lords prayer in a whole new way

Kingdom is central to the Lords pray

Matt 6:9ff

These is no doubt in my mind that Jesus called us all to be Kingdom Builders

He never called us to go to church

To attend a cell group

To have church conflicts

To get our way

He called us to build HIS Kingdom

I am left wondering if we are doing this or if we have got so lost in doing the things that this world has told us to do

I am left wondering if Christians would be "getting it all" if we start focusing on the Kingdoms needs and not our own

I am left wondering how much of an impact we would make in Africa if the Kingdom were our priority

I am left wondering would we have all we have if the Kingdom was really our priority

I am left wondering what the Lord thinks about how we spend our time, energy and resources?

I am left wondering if I am really a KINGDOM minded Christian
OR am I just religious

Jesus said Matt 11:11

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

Peter upon you I will build my church and the Gates of hell will not prevail against it

15. APPENDIX 7 – TOPICAL SERMON: T4

1) Submission = {Equality} (v.21)

Context of Eph:

Arranged marriages of the one hand and loose morals on the other. The principles that God lays down are for our success. Live according to God's Law and you will always win! No matter what your specific situation.

→ Male + Female = Man = Image of God (**Gen.1:27; Gal.3:28,29**). It is not a question of who is better, but of how can we achieve God's purpose together. How do we accurately express our Submission to God and one another so that God gets all the glory and together we get the job done (cf.Prov.31).

"The trouble with marriage is not the institution but the personnel"

(Jas.1:17) Every good and perfect gift ...

"Success in marriage is not so much about finding the right person as it is being the right person."

"Church" – a fem noun!

5 stages of Christ's Love (vv.25-29)

(5:23) "Saviour" – Therefore submission to Christ ...*grateful acceptance of His care...power to care, not to crush* (J.S.)

(Ps.128:3)

Vineyards required long-term intensive care (Isa. 5:1-7; Mark 12:1). The soil was first dug and cleared of stones and a wall (or hedge) erected to discourage predators (Ps. 80:12-13; Song of Sol. 2:15).

Vines required heavy annual pruning (Lev. 25:4; John 15:2), hoeing (Isa. 5:6), thinning and support of fruit clusters, and sometimes irrigation (Isa. 27:3). Intensive labor heightened expectations of the harvest and made loss of the vintage a bitter disappointment (Isa. 5:2; Deut. 28:39).

Used symbolically, the vine was the emblem of prosperity and peace among the ancient Hebrews.

Flourishing vineyards meant peacetime; war's devastation was represented by a ravaged vineyard: walls broken, vines choked by thorns, branches trampled by wild beasts (Isa. 5:5-6; Ps. 80:12-13).

NB does not equal Inferiority (Phil.2)

2) Submission = {Dignity} (v.21)

Submitting to one another is not a loss of dignity but a demo of it!

"...out of reverence for Christ" - Act of worship!

We are created to Worship God therefore we are most human when we worship Him by serving one another.

Shows greater dignity and freedom than an individual who cannot bear to be a helper and partner to anyone but themselves. (Stott).

It is the higher way, it is Christ's way – the right to imitate Christ Himself (Eph.5:1).

3) Submission = {Harmony} (vv.22-25)

In the word "wedding" "We" comes before "I"!

(cf. Chp.6 – Sp. Warfare).

Harmony in the home creates stability in the fight (J.S.)

"A house divided against itself cannot stand" – Jesus

Sadly, looking our for #1 = last place!

Harmony does not = Uniformity → Orchestra ...

"Tunnel of Conflict" (Warren). NO such thing as harmony without conflict . Its how we handle it.

"Happily ever after is not just a myth, it's a tragedy!"

4) Submission = {Freedom} (vv.25-31)

"submit" – (mid. Voice). "Agape" – sacrificial love that sets us free.

~The bondage of false expectations ...

We complain when our spouse does not "pull their weight" but its not our business! (Remember your vows!)

~The bondage of Immorality/ Adultery (sticky tape)

“One flesh” - the trouble starts when we try to decide which one!

5) Submission = {Maturity} (vv.17,18)

“be filled” - (pres. Permissive passive imperative).

3 Evidences of being filled with the Spirit: -

joyful, thankful, and submissive.

A consequence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is fulfilling your role in your relationship with God & your spouse.

It is critical that we make this connection. Common denominator in all my relationships is me! The strength of my relationships is a very clear indicator of who is in control of my life.

CONCLUSION

Our understanding of marriage reflects our understanding (or lack thereof) of Christology ...

Irrefutable evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit:

Joyful, thankful, and submissive.

“Pilgrim Psalms”

Family units would travel to Jerusalem to worship together.

Blessing of God on whole families, family worship – if you don’t have “family altar time” please make it a priority. Pick a time, a night of the week where you spend time together in Bible study and prayer. Listening to my boys pray simply and honestly is a precious memory I will never forget!

→ David Brown 26 yrs later!

(what an awesome day that was!)

It is always fruitful to work in submissive obedience to God.

It is always a blessing to eat the “fruit” of our labour. Hand-outs cause tragic loss of dignity.

Cf. Ruth & God's provision for the poor. They had to labour in the field and pick up the "gleanings" it was not handed to them! Ruth received from Boaz, after he had observed her hard work.

Olive plants "*peculiarly luxuriant*". (symbol of Israel).

The tree became a symbol of fertility (Ps. 128:3), beauty (Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6), divine blessing (Deut. 7:13), peace and bountifulness (Gen. 8:11), and it was inextricably associated with Jesus (the Mount of Olives [Mark 14:26; John 8:1]).

- olive branch as symbol of peace (**Gen.8:11**).

"King of the trees" (Jdg.9:8)

Oil used in coronation ceremonies of Kings.

Used as: fuel, medicine & food.

The "trap" of temporal blessings.

Winning the lotto has proven to be the worst luck some people have ever had! (causes strife in relationships and often bankrupts people).

(Ps.1)

What is the whole deal with the peace of Jerusalem?

Should we pray for a city, a people who do not acknowledge God in His full revelation in Christ. How should we pray for them? When will there be peace in Jerusalem? Only when they worship the Prince of Peace!

Those who are truly holy are truly happy.

Pursue happiness, but we will never find it. Pursue holiness and happiness is a delicious by-product. Joy is even better!

The fear of the Lord – that is true blessing!

16. APPENDIX 8 – EXPOSITORY SERMON: E2

COMMANDMENTS OF BLESSING

SERMON NINE

“Nothing but the truth”

Exodus 20:16

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour”

I am reminded of the man who went rather fearfully to the dentist to have a tooth extracted and just as the tooth was about to be pulled, he gave the following clear instruction to the dentist. “I want the tooth the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth”. At the same time he told hold of a rather strategic part of the dentists anatomy and said to him, “We’re not going to hurt each other now are we?”

Today we are not going to be speaking about a tooth, but about the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth and what God expects of us in this area of speaking the truth. In this day and age it is very rare to find someone who consistently speaks the truth and who can be depended upon to do so. In an age where truth has become relative and there are many different shades to the truth, at times it is almost difficult to distinguish fact from fiction and the line between truth and lies and deceit, has become blurred.

In this ninth commandment God gives a very direct and clear instruction about not giving false testimony against a neighbour. The context of this instruction is a court of law in which one has been summoned to act as a witness. This narrow application of the Law in the Old Testament is expanded upon in the New Testament; as is the case will all of these commandments. Paul picks up on this commandment and writes in Ephesians 4:25,29, “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body.....Do not let

any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen". Paul takes the narrow Old Testament commandment about testimony in a court of law and expends its application to all of our lives and all our interactions with others. I've entitled this message "nothing but the truth" because this is God's desire for us as well as his channel of blessing into our lives. A life that is characterised by truth is a blessed life. I want to invite you to join with me as we look at this together this morning.

1. PROBLEM WITH TRUTHFULNESS

The problem we have with being truthful is simply that it does not come to us naturally and that our natural orientation is one of being untruthful. The psalmist highlights this problem in Psalm 58:3, "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies". You don't have to teach a child to lie when it comes naturally. The prophet Jeremiah also understood something of the condition of our hearts when he notes in Jer 17:9. "The heart is deceitful above all things...". Deceit implies untruth and lies and there is nothing more deceitful the prophet suggests than our very own hearts. Jesus on one occasion said of those who did not follow him in John 8:44, "You belong to your father the devil and you want to carry out your father's desire...he is a liar and the father of lies". These may be difficult words to accept but if we are going to do anything about the state of our hearts then we need to recognize ourselves for what we are. Our natural orientation then is to deceive and to lie. The problem with this orientation is that it destroys both the people we are lying against as well as ourselves. We may well destroy the reputations of those we lie against but we also destroy our own integrity because the reality is that these lies are ultimately shown up for what they are and our integrity is destroyed. The wise writer of Proverbs notes in 17:20, "he whose tongue is deceitful falls into trouble", and in 26:28, "A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin". The

consequence of lies and deceit are hurt and brokenness, hence Gods commandment to speak the truth. I am sure each one of us have experienced the pain of being at the receiving end of someone's lies. Have we however not been guilty of lying against someone else? The problem with the sin of lying is that one sin inevitably leads to another as we have to lie and lie again to cover up the first lie. What a burden this becomes. Mark Twain once said that you do not have to have such a good memory if you tell the truth, because a liar must have a good memory. As sinners, the problem of lying is one that we all grapple with.

2. PICTURE OF PERFECT TRUTHFULNESS

As I have often mentioned, God never gives to us an instruction that he himself does not imitate and give us a perfect example. The Scriptures are pregnant with the truthfulness of God's person and character. In Num 23:19 we are told, "God is not a man that he should lie" and in Hebrews 6:18, "it is impossible for God to lie". In terms of Jesus Christ we are told of him in John 1:14, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth" and John 14:6 Jesus describes himself as "the way the truth and the life". In terms of the Holy Spirit he is called in John 14:17, "the Spirit of truth" and in John 16:13 Jesus says of the Spirit, "He will guide you into all truth". The triune God is a picture of complete truth. All that he is, does and says is motivated by his character that is truth. This stands in contrast to Satan whose name means the deceiver and his described as being the father of all lies. It is for this reason that he can be trusted and relied upon. This is God's desire for each one of us that our lives be characterised by truth. This has become a possibility with the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit within our lives.

3. PRACTISE OF TRUTHFULNESS

Having looked at the problem of truthfulness, the picture of truthfulness, I want us to look practically at the practice of truthfulness. How do we do this on a

practical basis? The Word offers two significant pieces of advice in this regard.

3.1 Power of the Spirit

We can only live a truthful life when we are walking in step with the Spirit of truth who lives within us. This life of truth is about being true not only with those around us, but also with ourselves, and with God. In John 16:13 Jesus says that the Spirit will guide us into all truth. Not only does the Spirit guide us but he also convicts us when we do not speak the truth enabling us to confess this sin and have our relationship with God restored. Not only does he convict us of the truth but the Spirit also gives us the courage and the confidence to speak the truth when perhaps we may be fearful to do so. We cannot live a life of truth apart from the Spirit of God.

3.2 Motivated by love.

Paul speaking about the unity of the body in Ephesians 4 instructs us in 4:15 that we are to “speak the truth in love”. We can sometimes use the truth as a weapon to break someone down and to serve our own purposes. Paul makes it clear in Eph 4:29 that whatever we say must be aimed at building one another up in love. Deceit and lies break down, but the truth spoken in love is able to build a person up. The truth at times can be painful and cause discomfort but when shared in love with the person’s interests at heart it can be used to bring about healing and restoration.

CONCLUSION

Jesus once said that the truth shall set you free. It sets you free from the burden of guilt when you are living a lie. It sets you free to be real and honest as you talk the truth in love. As we walk, talk and live in the truth of God’s light, we will experience the blessed life. The Psalmist understood and experienced this. Notice what he says in the psalms.

Psalm 26:3, “I walk continually in your truth”, 119:30, “I have chosen the way of truth”. David knew this to be the secret of his blessing. What about you?

17. APPENDIX 9 – EXPOSITORY SERMON: E3

Parables About the Kingdom of Heaven

#5 The Parable of the Hidden Treasure - Matthew 13:44

13 Aug 2006

Morning Service

Does God ask too much of us sometimes? Are the claims of the gospel too great? Luther used to say that God asks the impossible in order that we would lean on Christ for the strength to say yes

The parable (v44)

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Interpretation

No interpretation. It's interpretation is similar to the others and especially similar to the previous parable about the mustard seed that grew.

1. What's the parable about?

1. Hidden treasure— last time saw the phrase "leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of measures of meal. We are fascinated by hidden treasure, buried treasure and treasure maps and the pot of gold at then end of the rainbow and when we get older that works out into playing the Lotto and trying to win at Caesar's palace. [Crossword puzzle that I could not complete but guaranteed a holiday]. Sticker spot.

2. Discovered treasure- No value in a hidden treasure story where the treasure is never found.

3. The threat- The land in which he found the treasure wasn't his. Under rabbinic law if a workman found a treasure in a field and lifted it out, it would belong to his master, the field's owner; but here the man is careful not to lift the treasure out till he has bought the field. The parable deals with neither the legality nor the morality of the situation (as with the parable of the thief in the night) but with the value of the treasure, which is worth every sacrifice.

4. Resolution of the threat- He sells all he has and buys the field and, of course the treasure.

Imagine: The friends of this man must have shaken their heads when they saw that everything this man owned was up for sale. More frustrating than this was the fact that when he was asked by his friends what he was doing, he refused to answer them at all. It was a subject that he was determined not to discuss with anyone. Was he leaving? Would they wake up one day to find that their friend was gone. Was he mad? He seemed rational. His prices were reasonable and consistently priced. There was no indication in any other way that he was losing his marbles. But why wouldn't he say anything? What man is his right mind, sells everything, his house, his car, gives up his job for this prolonged and 'everything must go' extended sale?

2. What does the parable mean?

2.1 Who is the man? Is he Jesus or is he any human being?

2.1.1 Jesus

Field is the world. The purchase of the field refers to Christ's work on the cross to provide salvation for the sins of the whole world. The treasure is the church and the cost of winning her was very great even Jesus own death.

Heb 12:2

“Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:2 NKJV)

2.1.2 Any human being

Agree: Reasons: Speaking only to disciples here. And the other parables deal with the gospel and in the case of the first parable, the sower, deals with different responses to the gospel-so to here. V36 “when the crowds left and went into the house. And the disciples came to him.” This is for disciples ears only.

2.1.3 What is the treasure?

Review of parables and the theme or focus of each in order to determine if there is a common thread that strings all the parables together.

Sower – the gospel and its effect

Weeds – opposition to the gospel and the final conclusion

Mustard seed – the gospel will achieve God's purpose in making a mature church

Yeast – the gospel will achieve God's purpose in making a pure church

Treasure – the treasure of the gospel in Jesus Christ

Main Focus: Those who are convinced of the importance of salvation, will give up everything to win Christ, and eternal life.

2.2 Notice the two words; 'with joy'

This wasn't drudgery, or a slog and a chore. He wasn't sad or depressed or distressed as to how much work he had to do to sell everything to get enough money to buy the field. No trouble, no unhappiness, no sadness. No! With JOY!

He was persuaded that there was a "treasure hidden in the field," which would amply repay him, if he bought the field, however great the price that he might give. He was convinced that *he had found a thing of great value*. He was satisfied that *it was worth a great present sacrifice to make this thing his own*. Others might wonder at them. Others might think him foolish for paying such a sum of money for the field. But they knew what they were about. He was sure that he was found a great bargain.

3. What do we learn about the 'kingdom of heaven'?

3.1 There is no greater treasure than Jesus Christ

No eye has seen—"He is our treasure and our great reward, our hope and our glorious king."

3.2 Joy is found in making the treasure yours and not in other things

"¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Mt 6:19-21 NKJV)

“³³ "Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Lu 12:33-34 NKJV)

Where is your treasure? In Jesus or in what your possessions?

Does Jesus ask too much? Rich young ruler

“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” (Mr 10:21 NKJV)

The man who built bigger barns

Lu 12:21 "So [is] he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Paul

Faith in Christ is described as treasure:

2Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

He describes Jesus Christ as the one ³ “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col 2:2-3 NKJV)

3.3 We have no joy when we have no treasure

If this man in our story had not discovered the treasure he would have gone on with his humdrum life without every having the joy that comes from

Maybe we lose our joy when we consider the cost is too great

Compare that with some of the faces of Christians you might have met this week. Compare that in fact with your own face as you woke up and realised it was Sunday and it meant meeting with Jesus, listening to His voice. His voice tells you today, dear believer, dear child of the Great King, have joy. Listen to what He says to all his disciples in Jn 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Are you weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care. Take heart. Yours is the greatest treasure on earth and in heaven. His name is Jesus. His Name is mighty Saviour. Prince of Peace. Even the angels tell us, “Do

not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all people, for there is born to you, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord... Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to all men." Therefore, "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me."

Listen to Bishop J.C. Ryle,

Behold in this single picture, ***the conduct of a true Christian explained!*** He is what he is, and does what he does in his religion, because he is *thoroughly persuaded* that it is worth while. He comes out from the world. He puts off the old man. He forsakes the vain companions of his past life. Like Matthew, he gives up everything, and, like Paul, he "counts all things loss" for Christ's sake. And why? Because he is convinced that Christ will make amends to him for all he gives up. He sees in Christ an endless "treasure." He sees in Christ a precious "pearl." To win Christ he will make any sacrifice. This is true faith. This is the stamp of a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.

4. Application

Consider all things as nothing compared to the great treasure of Jesus Christ Phil 3:8 (NLT) "Yes, everything is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as rubbish, so that I may have Christ."

4.1 What are the all things here. I have 4 listed in increasing difficulty.

4.1.1 Aspirations- my dreams of my future

4.1.2 Possessions-all I own and ever will

Bruce Wilkerson – Focus on the Family- shared that twice he had felt as if God was asking him to give up his house. Sold his house and gave the money to ministry. Twice.

4.1.3 Family- all the ones I love

4.1.4 Self- all that I am

4.2 Life is selling to gain

Explain – where are we? Have we discovered the treasure? Have we bought the field yet? We have yet bought the field. We're still selling possessions. Day by day, we sell to gain. We count the next things loss. We sell all we have and are. Day by day to gain the treasure. Yes, you've seen the treasure. But right now, its auction time. The hammer sounds day by day. Yes Lord, you first. Yes Lord, this must go.

4.3 If you feel the cost is too great then you have not understood the great treasure that Jesus is- discover the treasure again

Jesus wants you completely, dreams, possessions, family relationship, most of all, you.

Read Foxes book of Martyrs pg.

18. APPENDIX 10 – EXPOSITORY SERMON: E4

Mark 11v12 – 21

13 August 2006 am

A bad day or a gracious warning?

Introduction

In the reading of this passage, have you found yourself wondering if these incidents of the fig tree and the temple seem **somewhat out of sink** with the gentle and compassionate nature of the Lord Jesus Christ?

There have been those who have in fact **rejected the fig tree incident** claiming it is false – they say that it does not belong in the gospel. Listen to the conclusion reached by NT scholar **TW Manson**:

“It is a tale of miraculous power wasted in the service of ill temper (for the supernatural energy employed to blast the unfortunate tree might have been more usefully expressed in forcing a crop of figs out of season); and as it stands, it is simply incredible.”

William Barclay agrees, adding, *“The story does not seem worthy of Jesus. There seems to be a petulance (crabbiness / ill temper) in it”*.

They say this can't be true because it seems to them that Jesus is acting **like a spoiled child** who did not get his own way.

Are these people right?

If we **stand on the word** that claims that *“all Scripture is God breathed... then they cannot be right. These incidents are true; they did happen – Jesus was saying something to those people.*

They are included in the gospel by the Spirit of God because **God has something important to say** – even to you and me here today.

1. How then do we understand these incidents?

A closer look at the passage **helps with a solution**. Notice that the fig tree incident “sandwiches” (11v12 – 14 & v 20 – 21) the temple incident 11v15 – 19.

- **The fig tree and the Temple incident are connected.**

The **two are connected** and cannot be interpreted in isolation from each other, to do so will end up in error, interpreting either then in isolation from the other leads one in the wrong direction.

Mark mentions that **the tree did not bear** anything more than leaves ...*because it was not the season for figs* (v13). Now if it is **not** the season for figs why curse the fig tree for not bearing figs?

This detail is a **clue** for the reader to look beyond the surface and to see its symbolic meaning. The incident **is not just** about a particular unfruitful fig tree;

- **It has to do with the temple and the people of Israel.**

Jesus had **the day before** made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He had received the hallelujahs of the people, he had wept over the city (*Luke 19v41*), and then...

Mark 11:11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Having looked around at everything **he saw what was going on**. He must have seen the fruitlessness and the corruption of what the people were doing at the temple.

That then **provides the context** for the return journey back to the temple the next day...

Mark 11:12-13 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs.

This then provides **a perfect illustration** of what he saw at the temple. The fact that this particular fig tree had luxuriant foliage, but bore no fruit portrayed exactly what Jesus had seen in Jerusalem.

2. Implications

2.1 God does not tolerate gainful false advertising?

The tree gives **the impression** that it might have some fruit for the picking - something to eat for the hungry and needy traveller, but on closer examination it is fruitless.

It is actually just **like the temple** giving the impression that it is a place dedicated to the service of God, but actually it is not God who is being served or worshipped.

Instead it is **the priestly hierarchies** who are the ones benefiting from the religious activities in the temple.

There **may well be an apparent** vitality or richness of religion and liturgy **but** if it is without the fruit of the Spirit and God centeredness – then God will not be honoured but provoked to anger and wrath.

Is this warning message something we need to hear in our day? I believe it can apply in at least three areas:

- **Cultural or notional Christianity**

Many in the so called **Christianized world** have been baptized or christened, many belong to churches and denominations, some even involved in doing Christian things - but it is all external.

Many people are involved in varying degrees with **outward forms** of Christianity.

They show the leaves, but leaves without the fruit will add to their condemnation.

There **must be fruit** from our hearts, and fruit in our lives. We must show the fruit of repentance toward God, we must exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and demonstrate true holiness in living.

Without this fruit we will **only sink further** and further in to lost ness and separation from God forever.

- **Organized religion**

Are there any individuals (leaders), churches, para church or even mission or mercy organizations present today where their **activities operate under the Christian banner** but they are not true to what they claim to stand for?

There may be those **who claim** to be sent by God and who claim they serve God and His kingdom **and yet** they do not in any way promote the glory of

God or the good news of Jesus Christ – *came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.*

Instead those who drive these so called ministries are themselves feathering their own nests, enriching themselves (money, status or applause) at the expense of God's work and name.

Are there any situations that **exploit the name of Christ and his church** for their own benefit? This is a serious matter and provokes the judgment of God. For God will not and does not tolerate gainful false professions of faith.

- **Man centred ministries**

Are there people in the pew and pulpit who promote and participate in “ministries” that **pay lip service to God and the gospel** of the Lord Jesus Christ but are “in it” to serve their own religious wims and fancies?

There are those situations where the **focus is on the people** and God is seen to be nothing more than a “genie” that must provide on call.

We must note that Jesus **curse the fig tree** thus providing the disciples with a graphic prophetic lesson.

Mark 11:14 Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

2.2 God will judge and destroy all “attractive” but “empty religion”

The **disciples heard** him say it and then the next morning **they see** with their own eyes the effectiveness of his curse and spoken word of judgment.

Mark 11:20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

You will know when **Jesus finally died on the cross**, giving his life as a ransom for many (more next week when we focus on his action at the Temple)

...Jesus breathed his last. 38 the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15v38)

And then in **AD 70** the temple was destroyed never to function again!

And then finally, **that day** when he will judge all ungodliness

2 Peter 3:7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

God will indeed **judge and destroy** not only that which is obviously evil like Satanism or stuff from the occult **but he will also** judge and destroy all the attractive self serving empty religion that so easily deceives and leads astray.

Conclusion

It is a good thing in the light of the warning here about false and selfish religion that **Jesus is on his way to the cross**. It is there that he will give his life as a ransom for many.

It is there that we can see and experience his love, mercy and grace... for it is while we were sinners Christ died for us.

Again though this message today He **calls us to repent**, to turn from our empty shells of religion to true faith and trust in God.

19. APPENDIX 11 – TOPICAL SERMON: T5

40 Days of Community

“Why We Need Each Other”

And we're going to start our 40 DOC with a message that really is pretty radical. It's the exact opposite of what you've been taught your entire life. But God says, "If you will do what I tell you to do, you will never again have to deal with loneliness. You'll be able to overcome fatigue, fear, failure, and frustration. Your life will be so much easier if you'll just do it the way I planned for you to do it." The anecdote to all of those things is the **concept of community**.

Now we love our independence. We have been taught that happiness is the result of independence, and that if I'm financially independent, if I'm relationally independent, if I am independent in every way, then I will be the happiest. And yet, we have never had more unhappy people, and suicide rate continues to go up. Why? Because that's not the answer. The truth is, happiness does not come from being independent, isolated, living your life with all the barriers up and all the masks and keeping people at an arm's distance. That's not the way to be happy. Happiness comes from **interdependence**, from community.

Notice what the Bible says there on Romans 12:5. "*Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other and each of us needs all the others.*"

We do need each other. We just don't realize how much we need each other because we are taught independence. Now during '40 Days of Purpose' that we did two years ago, the big idea was that God put you on this planet for **five reasons** and we talked about those five purposes that God put you on earth to fulfil. That's the big idea.

Let me give you a bigger idea. You cannot fulfil any of those five purposes **on your own**. You can't do it by yourself. It's impossible. God wired you and wired all of us in such a way that we can only fulfil His purposes for our lives

in community, in his family, in relationship to each other. We need each other. That's the big idea we're going to look at for the next 40 days.

Now, today I'm going to give you a little introduction. And we're going to look at ***why we need each other***. The five reasons why you need a church family, and more than that, five reasons why you need to be in a small group with a few other people who you get to know on a deeper level than just casual acquaintance.

The Bible gives us 5 reasons:

1. I need others to WALK with me. In other words, I need people to help me grow spiritually. The Bible says in Colossians 2:6-7 (ESV), "*Just as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.*"

Now the Bible often calls your spiritual life, your walk. It calls it "the Christian walk" or "the spiritual walk." Why? Because life is not just a sit-down thing, it's a journey. You're always growing. You're always moving. There is a destination to get to. And the Bible says that as you walk through life, God wants you to do certain things.

Now throughout scripture it tells us, particularly in the New Testament, we're to walk in the light, walk in love, walk in obedience, walk in the Holy Spirit, we're to walk as Jesus walked, and walk in wisdom. In many ways the Bible tells us how to live this kind of life. But one of the important things is this: **God never intended for you to walk through life alone**. Never. Now let me make this clear, this has nothing to do with whether you're single or married. We have single adults who are in this church, who are actively involved in community. They're not walking through life alone. And we also have people in this church, who are married, and desperately lonely. So marriage is not the anecdote. Community is the anecdote.

Now some of you say, "Well what's wrong with walking alone? I like to walk alone. I prefer to walk alone. I get my own way when I walk alone." Well, that's part of the problem... you're not learning cooperation. You're not learning

relationships. You're not learning love. God says, "I want you to walk through life with other people close in relationship with you," and he says it for three reasons. You might just write this in the margin.

Number one: **It's safer**. It's safer when you walk with others through life. There's safety in numbers. It's a whole lot less risky. Have you ever had to walk through a dark alley at night by yourself in an inner-city area? It can be quite frightening. It's safer to walk with others.

Second, **it's supportive**. It keeps you from giving up. When other people are walking with you, they keep you going. Have you ever done a marathon where you're running and, all of a sudden you get a stitch in your side, and you want to give up? And you want to give up but if other people are walking or running with you, then you keep on going. There's an old Zambian proverb, 'When you run alone, you run fast. But when you run together, you run far.' The life that you live is not a 50-meter sprint, it is a marathon and you want to run far.

And number three, **it's smarter**. You'll learn a whole lot more when you go through life with other people close to you. I'm not just talking about casual friends. I'm talking about people who are in true fellowship with you.

And so sometimes, if you're just walking alone, you may be walking in the wrong direction and nobody's there to tell you. The Bible says in the multitude of counsellors, there is safety. And so it's smart and it's supportive and it's safe.

One of the things as I said that you learn by going through life with a few close intimate friends is you learn things that you wouldn't learn any other way, like cooperation and like how to get along. You see, the number one goal in life is learning to love God. The number two goal is learning to love other people. Why? Because God is love and God wants you to be like him. So he says, "I want you to practice learning to love."

Now when you walk with other people, have you noticed that people walk at different paces? Have you ever tried to walk with your husband or wife around

the lake or something, and it's always slow down or speed up or something? We have different styles of walking.

But we all walk at a different pace and so when you walk with others, you have to learn cooperation. Now look at this next verse, Genesis 2:18, *"It is not good for man to be alone."* That's the first thing God said after he created Adam. Everything was perfect, but he said, "It is not good for man to be alone." God hates loneliness. You can bank on that for the rest of your life.

And so, he created two groups. He gave you a **physical family** and a **spiritual family**. The physical family that you grew up in, and the spiritual family that you live your life in, because your physical family doesn't last. They die, and they move away and things like that. So you need a spiritual family, and that is the church. And actually, your spiritual family is going to last a whole lot longer than your physical one because it's going to go on forever and ever into eternity. God's safety net is his family. Notice Hebrews 10:25 says this, *"Let us not give up the habit,"* that means you do it all the time, *"The habit of meeting together, instead let us encourage one another."* I need people to encourage me in my daily walk. And he says, "How do you do that?" He says, "By meeting together."

Now that verse there, he's not talking about what we're doing right now. He's talking about community. Folks, this is not community. This is a crowd. And so, you don't have community in coming here to worship. Community is what happens when you're with three or four or five or six or maybe eight, maybe at the most ten or so other people. You get more than ten people in a group, somebody usually stops talking, and so you stop relating. You see, you could be in a crowd, you could come to church every week for years and still be lonely because you never know anybody.

Now would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to LONELINESS**. We need a few people in our lives that we know really well, and they know us really well. And we all need a place, we need a group, where we can practice relationships and really learn to love.

[Music break] *Stuart to sing*

Now that's what we're going to talk about for the next 40 days: What the world needs now is love and we don't often even know what love is all about. We don't know really how to relate to each other. We don't know how to build great, healthy, strong, lasting relationships.

Now notice what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14, there on your outline, it's talking about when you get together and it says this: *"When you gather, each one of you be prepared with something useful for all, sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight. Take your turn with no one person taking over. That way... you all learn from each other."*

Now question, does that sound like something we do here on Sunday morning? No, we don't do that. I don't say, "Anybody got a poem?" "What happened at work this week?" "Can I pray for you?" We don't because this is too big. This is not a community. This is a crowd. What I just read, there's only one place that can happen: In a small group. Church for worship, house to house for fellowship, and you need both to be a balanced believer, and to be healthy spiritually.

Now what is the goal here? When you walk through life, you need a small group of believers walking through life with you. And that's the goal, Ephesians 4, the next verse, *"As each part does its work,"* that's all of us in the body of Christ, *"It helps the other parts grow. So Christ's whole body,"* that's the church, *"is healthy and growing and full of love."* That's what God wants. He wants us all to grow, and he wants us all to be full of love.

And how do we do it? We get in the situation where everybody can help each other on a personal basis. Now that's what '40 Days of Community' is all about and during '40 DOC,' I want everybody to get in a small group. I'm talking about 100% of our church.

Now so far in our church, 40 people have said, “I’ll open up my home during ‘40 days.’” In fact if you said, “I’m going to open up my home,” will you stand up right now. Give them a hand.

Now these people want you in their home. So if you’re not in a group yet, speak to one of them or see the lists outside.

The Bible says this in 1 Peter 4:9, “*Open your homes to each other without complaining.*” Yeah, okay, complaining. Question: What’s your complaint? What excuse have you been using for not opening up your home? “Well, it’s too dirty.” Well, Martin will come help you clean it. Just invite him over. He is a very fast cleaner. You say, “Well, it’s not big enough.” Well, is it big enough to hold three people, maybe four? That’s all you need for a group. Just get some friends... get some people who owe you money. Invite them over. Use that leverage. You say, “Well I don’t know if I want to do it... I don’t like my neighbours.” Well, don’t invite them. I’m not telling you that you have to invite people you don’t like. No, find people you like. People you work with, you go to school with, people who are friends, relatives or neighbours or something like that. Some of you say, “Well Mike, nobody would want to come.” Are you kidding? Do you realize that in every human being’s heart there is a longing for belonging? Inside, everybody wants relationships. Nobody wants to be lonely. That’s why solitary confinement is the worst form of punishment. We were made to belong. And that’s why people join all sorts of stupid causes, just to belong to something. And they’re looking for an opportunity to get to know other people.

Let me give you an example: Two years ago when we did ‘40 Days of Purpose,’ we had 200-230 people in our church involved in a small group. And you were all encouraged to invite someone to come to a small group. People who would not come to church, but would come to your house. And in one week here, we went from 200 people in small groups to over 600 people in small groups. From 23 small groups to 74. Don’t tell me people aren’t interested. They are. They’re interested.

All right, that’s the first reason why we need each other because I need people to walk through life with me.

2. I need others to WORK with me. Do you know that the Bible says God put you on earth to do certain things? And you need other people to help you do those certain things? The Bible says in Ephesians 2:10, “*God made us to do good works, which he planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.*”

Before you were even born, God decided what talents you were going to get, what natural abilities, what gifts, what background. He decided what country you would be born in. He decided all of these things because he has a certain thing that he wants you to do with your life, “your good works.” And that is called your ministry. Anytime you use the talents God has given you to help other people, that’s called ministry or service. It’s helping other people. But God doesn’t want you to do it by yourself or you’ll get worn out, he says you need other people to work with you.

And remember, that life on earth is practice for heaven, for eternity. And in heaven, you’re going to do four things, and one of them is serve God. God says, “I want you to practice serving while you’re on earth.”

Now in heaven, nobody’s ever going to get tired doing their work because we will all share it together. And everybody just has a little part; you don’t have a whole lot. You’ve just got a little part to do in heaven and so, you’re never going to get tired.

Now on earth, you’re tired all the time. In fact, you were tired probably coming to church this morning. And the reason you’re tired is two things: 1) You try to do it all, and 2) You try to do it all by yourself. God never meant for you to do that. He meant for you to have other people in your life. So you’re not trying to do it all, and you’re not trying to do it all yourself. No wonder you’re exhausted all the time. You’re not in community. You don’t have other people helping you.

Now God tells us why we need others to work with us. Look at the next verse, Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, “*Two people are better than one because they get more done by working together.*” You know that’s true. You always get more done by working with other people.

Now, I would be a basket case if I had tried to do all the ministry here at WBC by myself. But I have Steve, and George and Linda and the Elders and of course many of you. All with different assignments. Nobody's good at everything. We need each other. And the key is you need people in your life who are strong at things you're weak at.

To quote Rick Warren, "Snowflakes are frail but if enough of them stick together, they can stop traffic."

Now I can't do a whole lot on my own, and you can't make a very big impact on the world on your own either. But you know, you get enough snowflakes together, they can do something. And in this church, we've got between 600 and 700 snowflakes. That'll stop something. Better yet, it'll start something.

And God says, "I want to use you." You see, there's this myth, the Mother Theresa myth, of the lone person going out there to save the world on their own. That's not what Mother Theresa did. Mother Theresa had an army behind her of other sisters. She had an army of other people helping in the streets of Calcutta. You see, together each of us... together, can make a difference if we each just do a little part. It's not a big thing. It's just a little thing.

The reason why you're so exhausted is you don't have anybody helping you. Would you write this down on your outline: **Community is God's answer to FATIGUE**. Did you see the movie *Witness* where the Amish build a barn together in one day? The whole community turns out. Everybody does a little bit and the thing's done like that.

During '40 Days of Community,' we're going to take on a number of projects as a church. If everybody in our church got in a group and every group gave about **two hours** to this project, you have no idea what could be accomplished. It just isn't that hard.

Galatians 6:10 says this, *“Every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith,”* that’s the church. You see, God uses ordinary people.

All right. I need people to walk with me and I need people to work with me.

3. I need others to WATCH OUT for me. I need people who will defend me, who will protect me, who will stand up for me when I need somebody to stand up for me, who will help me stay on track, who will warn me. I need people to watch out for me.

Philippians 2:4 says this, *“Look out for one another’s interests, not just for your own.”* Now that’s a countercultural statement because in South Africa, everybody says, “It’s all about me. It’s all about my rights, my needs, my interests, my hurts, and the rest of you, forget you because really it’s all about me.” And yet the Bible says, “Look out for one another’s interests.”

Have you ever seen any of these ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ signs in some areas? That’s a sign of community. It says we watch out for people here. We take care of each other. If you go on holiday for a week or two, you probably tell your neighbour, “I’m going to be gone for a while. Would you keep an eye on my place?” Because we all want our stuff looked after. So we ask our neighbour. “

Well, let me ask you, do you have anybody looking out for your soul? Because your soul is more important than your stuff. Is there anybody who is helping you out in your spiritual journey? Who’s watching out for you? To make sure that you’re still growing? To make sure that you’re not getting discouraged and depressed and feel like giving up?

You see, the fact is we all have blind spots. There are things in our lives that we can’t see, that only other people can see. I mean if you have a taillight that goes out; you’re never going to know it. Somebody’s got to tell you, “You’ve got a taillight out.” If you’ve got lettuce in your teeth or meat on your face, friends don’t let friends have meat on their face.

So we need people who watch out for us, who love us, who go, “Hey you know, you’ve got a little food right here. Get rid of it.” That’s why we need each other.

I need others to watch out for me. The Bible says this in Hebrews 13:1, “*Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord’s followers should.*” Christians ought to take care of Christians. People in the church ought to take care of other people in the church. It says, “Keep being concerned about each other.” That means be vigilant. You don’t just do it once. You just keep on doing it. You know in a war, everybody has to stand guard duty at some point, where everybody else is asleep but you stay awake to watch out.

Did you know that you have a great enemy? His name is Satan. And he hates you and wants to defeat you, he wants to mess up your life, he wants to hurt you, harm you and make you totally ineffective. He wants you to miss God’s will. He wants you to waste your time. And every morning before you wake up, he’s planning how to get you to waste your day, to get angry, to get impatient, to get lustful, to get worried, to get fearful and all these other things, to get depressed. And he’s going to pull whatever works on you, on you.

There were some reports put out on the 9/11 tragedy. It’s pretty fascinating reading, listen to this section and tell me if it doesn’t apply to your spiritual battle with Satan every day because you have an enemy too. Listen to this, “*We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined and lethal,*” well that applies to the devil to, “*The enemy rallies broad support by political grievances but its hostility towards us and towards our values is limitless. Its purpose is to rid the world of religious pluralism. It makes no distinction between military and civilian targets; collateral damage is not in its lexicon.*” Satan doesn’t care who he hurts if he hurts you, hurts your friends, hurts your children, hurts your parents.

You see, Satan’s objective is he wants to hurt God. But he can’t hurt God. God can’t be hurt. So what does he do? He hurts God’s children. If you couldn’t hurt me, what would you do? You’d go after my wife or my kids. And so, Satan can’t hurt God, so he tries to hurt God’s children.

The report continues, *“We did not understand how grave this threat really was,”* and most Christians don’t either. *“Now we didn’t adjust our policies and our plans and our practices to deter or defeat it,”* and most Christians don’t either. *“The test before us is to sustain the unity of purpose, and meet the challenges now confronting us. We need to design a balanced strategy for the long haul to attack terrorists while at the same time, protecting ourselves against future attacks.”* Now did you get that? They say not only do we need to protect ourselves from a future attack; we have got to go after them.

And when it comes to spiritual battle when you’re fighting the devil, it’s not just protecting yourself, but it’s also go after him. Now, most of the time, we’re defeated. Let me say, the devil doesn’t wear a red suit with a tail and pitchfork and come up and say, “Boo!” How does the devil work in your life? Habits, you can’t break. Hurts, you can’t forgive and let go of. Hang-ups you can’t change. Problems, circumstances, relationships that mess up your life; it’s all indirect, and he’s always trying to mess you up that way.

And most of the time, we’re defeated. Why? Because we try to fight it on our own, by ourselves. And you’re never going to beat the devil on your own. Never. You need other people in your life who are watching out for you. The Bible says this in Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NLT), *“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back to back and conquer, and three are even better for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”* That’s why you need a small group.

Question: Who’s watching your back right now, spiritually? Is there anybody in your life who is so close that they are helping you and making sure you don’t fall into the typical traps that mess us up? Anybody like that? If you don’t have that person, I pity you because you’ve got a big bull’s eye on your back for the devil.

Here’s another question: Who’s back are you watching out for? You can’t expect anybody to watch out for you if you’re not watching out for anybody else? If you care enough about anybody else, you’ll say, “You know what? I’m going to be with you through thick and thin.”

While living in Margate I used to dive for crayfish. Now, everybody knows that you never swim in the ocean by yourself. Never. You take a buddy with you because you never know if you're going to get caught a riptide. You don't go through life by yourself.

Even the pros need someone watching their back. And you do too. Would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to DEFEAT**. The Bible says this in Ecclesiastes 4:10, *"If one person falls, another can reach out and help but people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble."* Now this is one of the values of small groups. It gives us support.

I need people to walk with me through life and I need others to work with me and I need others to watch out for me.

4. I need others to WAIT AND WEEP with me. What am I talking about here? I need people who are going to be there in the inevitable crises of life. When I'm waiting for the bad news or when I'm weeping, when I got the bad news, I need people in my life.

Now as your pastor, I feel this one very deeply because I see it often in our church. There are many situations in life that nobody should ever have to go through alone. Nobody should ever have to sit alone in a hospital, waiting during a life or death surgery. No woman should have to wait alone while she's waiting for a lab test from a problem pregnancy. No one should ever have to wait for the news from the battlefield alone. No one should ever have to sit in the home, waiting for the identification the body of a loved one who just had a heart attack in your home. They shouldn't have to wait alone. No one should ever have to stand at an open grave alone. No man or woman should ever have to spend the first night alone when his wife dies or her husband dies. And no man or woman should have to spend the night alone when the wife walks out, or the husband has walked out. I could go on and on and on.

We were not meant to face the crises of life alone. Now the fact is some of these things are going to happen in your life. And only a fool would go through life unprepared for what they know is inevitably going to happen. You need

the support network in your life now because you don't know when the crisis is going to come, when the earthquake's going to happen... you need that support group, those three or four... you don't need a lot, you don't need a hundred but you do need five or six people in your life who are going to be there when you need them. And the time to prepare is now.

Now God says that the safety net he planned for your life is a group of believers who are committed to you. The Bible says this in 1 Peter 3:8, "*You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other.*" Now when you go to hospital, you don't want the whole church to visit you. In fact, that would not be a good idea. But it would be nice to have five or six people visit you, and to say, "We're praying for you. We're going to be here."

I've have said many times, I could not make it without my own small group, the 10 people in my group. This last year alone we've been through all kinds of personal and family crisis you could imagine and they were there to wait for each other, and to weep with each other.

Here's God's plan, 1 Corinthians 12:26, "*If one member suffers, all suffer together.*" You know, there have been a number of cases where people have died at home in bed and nobody discovered them for days and some instances weeks. How tragic that they had no relationships in life who missed them. Imagine the despair, nobody should ever have to die alone.

Would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to DESPAIR**. The Bible says, "*Be happy with those who are happy and weep with those who weep*" Romans 12:15. You party when people have a celebration and you weep when they have a tough time.

By the way, people often don't know what to do with tears in a small group. And they'll be sitting in a small group and then somebody starts crying for one reason or another. Let me give you a little tip: Tears are always the tip that it's time to stop and pray. When tears come, it means it's time to stop and pray for that person. Tears are time to pray.

You don't have to fix people's problems. When they're going through a crisis, they often don't want advice anyway. They just want somebody to be there. You just sit there and be quiet with them. You don't have to say anything profound, usually we get in trouble when we start talking. Just be there with them. They don't need a lot of advice. Just be there with them.

The Bible says in 1Thessalonians 5:11, "*Encourage each other and strengthen one another.*"

There's one other reason why you need other people in your life and it is:

5. I need others to WITNESS with me. What does that mean? Well, God has a plan for your life and he has a purpose and he has a mission. And you have a life message that God wants you to say to the world and your life message, if you don't share it, it won't get shared.

Now that's kind of scary sometimes, sharing your life message with the world. That's why you need other people in your life. I need people to help me fulfil the mission that God put me on earth to fulfil. Now there's great power in a group witness. When people come in here and they look around and they go, "Whoa, look at all these people! Something must be going on here."

But how do we witness? What's the best way to witness to people who don't know the love of Jesus Christ yet? Well I'm going to tell you and it'll surprise you. **It's by loving other believers.** That's what Jesus said. Look at the Bible. Jesus said in John 13:35, "*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*" Notice he said, "Your love," not for me, not for God, he said, "Your love for one another," for other people in the family of God, is the proof that you're in the family of God. If you don't love other believers, you have every reason to doubt 'Am I in the family?' Because he said, that's the proof. One of the ways you know that you've stepped across a line and you're in God's family is do you love the other people in it? He says, "That's how you know."

You see, the thing that proves to the world that we're Christ's followers is not our buildings, not our music, not our sermons, it's our love for each other. And

during the next 40 days, we're going to start a revolution of love right here that is going to reach out to the community around us. 2 Timothy 1:7 says this, *"The Holy Spirit doesn't want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong and to love them and enjoy being with them."* That is like 'Invite them into your house!'

I love you folk; I really do. I want to ask you again, "Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you?" I want to guarantee you something. If you will get in a small group just for six weeks and invite someone else who maybe does not know Jesus to join you to they watch these videos. I'll help you be able to answer that question, "Yes, at the end of 40 Days, somebody is going to be in heaven because of me." You don't have to be afraid about it. We're going to do it together.

Would you write this down: **God's answer to fear is COMMUNITY**. The Bible says, *"You're working together and struggling side by side to get others to believe the good news,"* Phil.1:27. That verse has the two goals of '40 Days of Community' in it. *"Working together side by side,"* we want to deepen the community in our church, *"to get others to believe the good news,"* to reach out to the community around our church.

We all need each other. We need other believers to walk with us, to work with us, to watch out for us. We need other believers to wait and weep with us, and we need them to witness with us.

Remember the commitment card you filled in last week? **(Click to last slide)** I want to ask you again that you would clear your calendar as much as possible for the next 40 days. If you do, I guarantee you. You're going to look back on these next 40 days and say, "That was the turning point in my life." We want this church to be all about community. And God has chosen you, the people right here to make history. I don't want you sitting on the sideline. God didn't bring you to this church, at this time to watch it happen. He brought you here to be a part of what's going to happen. He brought you to this church for this purpose. Let's pray.