BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS AND THE VIDEO MEDIUM

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A Practical Theological Analysis of Video as a

Bible Study Communicative Medium

by

Adam D'Arcy Niven

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Supervisor: Prof H.J.C Pieterse

SUMMARY

This dissertation presents a practical theological evaluation of Bible study materials which incorporate the video medium as part of their package. I begin by establishing a focus of practical theology which emphasises the importance of the development of an active reflective sojourning of the practical theologian. I conclude that:

> Practical theology is concerned with establishing and cultivating the rhythm of action and reflection within the experience of the Christian community of faith. This is a process of listening to the Word of God and discerning to address the community of faith through proposing change, with all these tasks operating within a current context of the Christian faith and for the purpose of maintaining and perfecting the Christian community.

Following this, I present the established rhythm of action and reflection by drawing on a narrative of my experience and arrive at a perceived problem with the current development of Bible study materials that incorporate the video medium. The following thesis is proposed:

> The Church has a responsibility to train and equip believers within the context of the relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity. The Church has, and continues, to utilise different media to provide teaching and training on a mass scale. The current products being developed as Bible study materials (especially those incorporating the video medium) are failing to meet this responsibility.

From this position the study then presents a continuing sojourning through a theoretical and empirical investigation to explore the validity of the thesis and cultivate further my active reflection. The theoretical investigation provides three complimentary perspectives for evaluation: Cultural Value Systems; Communication Theories; and Pedagogical Approaches. The empirical exploration includes a Qualitative Document Analysis of the Bible Study Products which is supplemented by Qualitative Interviews of small group leaders from a local church setting.

In conclusion, the thesis is re-evaluated against the outcomes of the study and a proposed change is presented for the purpose of maintaining and perfecting the Christian community. This draws attention to the tension between established cultures and the introduction of new technologies; the importance of a production focussed informed by a theology of small groups; the need for new media to be continually evaluated in their utilisation; and the need to recognise the dominant 'message' communicated by the combination of content and the medium. A closing narrative reflection of my experience is also included to illustrate the ongoing cultivation of the rhythm of action and reflection which this study has encouraged.

Key Terms: practical theology, media ecology, technology, technological society, communication, mass-media communication, pedagogy, theological education, video medium, Bible study materials, small group Bible study/studies, McLuhan, Ellul, Postman, Borgmann

DECLARATION

I declare that *Bible Study Materials and the Video Medium: A Practical Theological Analysis of Video as a Bible Study Communicative Medium* is my own work and has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution.

Adam Niven

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. IN THEORY, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

The Church has never had more access to different types of media with which to carry out its many and varied practices. With the continued developments in technology making the production of previously inaccessible media delivery types now more accessible to those who own little more than a mobile phone, the Church has found itself in a position of having a plethora of media delivery choices. Often however, it is apparent that in selecting a medium for a given purpose, the impacts and influence of the chosen medium on the current praxis receives little attention. There are two predominant approaches in this area.

An instrumentalist approach assumes "that the meaning of a message is generated and determined largely by the person who constructs and produces the message" (Horsfield 2004:25). Such an approach is attractive as it promotes a simplistic model for a communication method. Learn the tools to use the instrument and effective communication will result. The common catchcry of the Church has been "The methods always change, but the message stays the same" (Hipps 2006:29) which Hipps calls the "North Star" for the majority of Christians allowing them to move with culture whilst defending against attacks of heresy (Hipps 2006:29). For those who join together in this mantra each new medium presents a new opportunity to proclaim the 'same' message in a new way. New media are held up as neutral communication tools which will answer the communication problems of the Church.

Against this instrumentalist position the words of Marshall McLuhan continue to protest: "The medium is the message" (M. McLuhan and Gordon 2003:19). It is not simply that a new medium will provide a new communicative tool, but rather, a new medium will completely alter the communication situation. In the extreme, the content of the medium becomes irrelevant in comparison to the reshaping power of the medium itself. This

extreme is usually the realms of those who reject new medium and technologies outright. Some express the view that such tools must certainly be tools of the devil.

In either case, often too many of the nuances of the communication process are ignored. A further example from Hipps illustrates the need for more reflection in this area. Hipps recounts an experience of hearing a sermon delivered via a live video feed (Hipps 2006:150–152). In the sermon the pastor spoke on the "difference between talent and character" and was attempting to convey the message that "ministry is supported by character, not talent" while at the same time the video medium which delivered the pastor to the location, underpinned by a TV paradigm, "reinforces the belief that only talented people with some degree of celebrity can or should preach" (Hipps 2006:151–152). Either extremity would contend that only one of these messages was heard. The extremes of these positions highlight the importance of considering the use of video, as a communication medium, beyond the simple question of: Can we use it?

With the tension present between the two extremities of these positions, there exists a definite practical theological problem concerning the use of different communicative medium within the context of the church. This situation is particularly evident in the production of Bible study materials for use in local small group settings. Such a field presents a meaningful context for a practical theological study as the common addition of video to Bible study resources is still fairly recent and these settings exist for the participant to 'study the Bible' a key communicative text of the church. But before considering this problem further, the task of practical theology needs to be considered to provide a framework for this study.

1.2 THE TASK OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Central to establishing a framework for the task of a practical theological study today is establishing a relationship between theory and praxis (Anderson 2001:14; Viau 1999:xii; Campbell 2000:84). For Schleiermacher, who first developed the area of practical

theology in modern theology (Heitink 1999:4; Anderson 2001:24), practical theology is "the theory of the praxis" (Immink 2005:3). Schleiermacher outlines its tasks as being the setting out of "the method of maintaining (*Erhaltung)* and perfecting *(Vervollkommnung)* of the church" (Campbell 2000:78). The emphasis of Schleiermacher placed philosophical and historical theology as foundational and practical theology became a science of techniques (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:88) that was applied "after all the real work had been done" (Cartledge 2003:2). In this way, theory and praxis are placed in a linear one way position where theory informs praxis, but there is little recognition that the later may, and should, inform the former (Anderson 2001:16; Heyns and Pieterse 1990:88; Heitink 1999:26–27).

Nitzsch, a disciple of Schleiermacher (Anderson 2001:24), introduced a shift away from Schleiermacher's by placing the point of departure within the "actual life of the church, its experience and action" (Heitink 1999:46). This led to his suggestion that practical theology should begin with the employment of the empirical method (Heitink 1999:46). Nitzsh's emphasis, with the suggestion "that dogmatic and empirical knowledge should be correlated" (van der Ven 1998:38), allows the praxis more authority to redefine theory. Perhaps not Nitzch's intention, but this did open the door for the praxis to rise to primacy over theory which creates a linear one way position where praxis calls for theory to be rethought, without theory being permitted to shape praxis. These two opposing linear theory and praxis relationships can be identified in the developments of practical theology within the praxis of pastoral care.

Early in the twentieth century, practical theology continued to develop out of the praxis of pastoral theology concerned with the activity of pastoral care with Edward Thurneysen and Seward Hiltner as key figures in this area (Anderson 2001:24–25). For Thurneysen, pastoral care derived its ultimate definition from "a theology of the Word of God" and "locates practical theology firmly within the framework of scripture, tradition and the

ongoing preaching of the Gospel" (Campbell 2000:80–81). From this position the praxis of pastoral care, and by extension practical theology, "is bound to be subservient to biblical and historical theology" (Campbell 2000:81). Hiltner approaches pastoral care out of two fields: 'logic centred' and 'operational centred' with the latter defining practical theology where "the study of practical functions will produce some theological insights" (Campbell 2000:80–81). This position "is very concerned to earth theology in the human sciences and to allow the insights of contemporary experience in general…to revitalize the church's understanding of its task" (Campbell 2000:81–82) . While not being exhaustive of all approaches and developments in the field of practical theology, these two approaches demonstrate an historic account of theory and praxis being placed at opposing ends of the spectrum.

However, it must be recognised that "there is no such thing as a praxis without theory. Praxis is always co-determined by theory…[and theologians] have to take account of God's deeds, both past and present, and of events in which God encounters human beings" (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:28–29). Barth too "described any distinction between "theoretical" and "practical" as a "primal lie, which has to be resisted in principle" (Anderson 2001:15). The relationship of theory and praxis "is determined neither by a complete separation nor by an identification of the two, but by a bipolar tension filled combination" (Heitink 1999:152) where "theory and praxis are bound together in a critical relationship and can evaluate, confirm or disprove one another" (Pieterse 1987:4). As Veling contends "practical theology suggest we cannot separate knowing from being, thinking from acting, theological reflection from pastoral and practical involvement" (Veling 2005:6).

This bipolar tension points towards the need for a confessional position in moving forward with practical theology which: 1) must acknowledge that theories cannot exist apart from out of an existing praxis; 2) that the existing praxis cannot exist apart from previous

theories (even it these are unacknowledged theories) and 3) that God's revelation cannot be relegated exclusively to either.

To maintain this bipolar tension we would seek to place the praxis for this practical theological study within the "hermeneutic-communicative praxis" (van der Ven 1998:41). Van der Ven demonstrates the importance of this definition of praxis across the four basic functions of the church: 'kerygma', leitourgia', 'koinonia' and 'diaconia' (van der Ven 1998:41–44). Van der Ven outlines that both the texts of the Christian tradition and the real world context in which the hermeneutics is carried out work together to establish meaning, and communication becomes focussed towards the reconciliation of these different positions with both occurring for the sake of a new outcome (van der Ven 1998:48–51). Thus, within a hermeneutic-communicative praxis, practical theology becomes "a place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions and conducts a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical, and practically transforming" (Woodward & Pattison 2000:7).

Despite the criticism that van der Ven is "action-theory" biased (Immink 2005:158), the hermeneutic-communicative praxis still describes a meaningful starting point. Osmer, whilst not using the same terms, places his "normative task" within a "prophetic discernment" framework that considers "theological concepts to interpret episodes, situations and contexts"; "ethical norms to reflect on and guide practice" and "examples of good practice" (Osmer 2008:132–139). "Prophetic discernment is the task of listening to this Word [Jesus as the revelation of God] and interpreting it in ways that address particular social conditions, events, and decisions before congregations today" (Osmer 2008:135). Cahalan and Nieman define these same roles under the terms of "discerning" – the indicative mood of interpreting "what is"– and "proposing" – the subjunctive mood of interpreting "what might be" (Cahalan & Nieman 2008:82–83). Both of these positions summarise neatly how we wish to continue with a definition of the hermeneutic-

communicative praxis. This praxis is the location of listening and discerning (hermeneutics) and of addressing and proposing (communicative).

This definition of the hermeneutic-communicative praxis needs further development to avoid stagnating in a theory-praxis or praxis-theory linear relationship. The key to avoiding a biased approach is locating practical theology within the bounds of the Christian faith. As Immink points, out the "Christian praxis of faith" finds its expression in many and varied activities and these activities have a "double aspect": "they develop and maintain the faith and serve the life of faith" and "they are also expressions and products of faith" (Immink 2005:120). As Colwell contends, "The living narrative which is the Church cannot be truthfully comprehended without reference to the story rendered through Scripture; and the story rendered through Scripture cannot be truthfully comprehended without reference to the living narrative of that story which is the Church" (Colwell 2006:222). To be busy with the work of practical theology is to be grounded within this relationship of Scripture and the community of the faith, the Church. Practical theology is rooted in the Christian tradition and "focuses on a called people who manifest a particular faith through concrete ways of life" (Cahalan & Nieman 2008:67).

The activities of Christian faith are concretely grounded within a "Christian praxis of faith", "through concrete ways of life", and practical theology is brought into view where the experience within the "Christian faith praxis" raises questions of the relationship between theory and praxis. The inescapability of experience is evidenced by the fact that experience is often placed as the starting point for a practical theological enquiry; even where the experience is that of an established theory not matching or failing to transform practice.   For example: Osmer sets out a fourfold interrelated process of practical theology that starts with questioning a situational experience (Osmer 2008:4, 10–11); Lartey proposes a five phase process which begins with experience (Lartey 2000:131–133); Browning sets out his "inner core" "outer envelope" which places experience at the

starting place of the "inner core" (Anderson 2001:10–11). "When experience is broken by some event or other, a process of reflexion is set in motion" (Viau 1999:198).

But there remains the difficult task of establishing a point of departure from where experience has begun its role of setting forth a motion of enquiry. Without a theory, the experience of the praxis cannot be measured as "broken". And likewise without an experience of the praxis, a theory cannot appear "broken". "Life is not a series of discrete responses to dilemmas. Nor do we encounter dilemmas as if we were blank sheets of paper" (Colwell 2006:216). The process of reflexion seeks through a process of inquiry to establish a new situation "wherein the truth of ideas is in a confined relationship to experimentation. This makes [practical theology] a progressive discipline without the least pretension of constituting permanent judgements about experience, since by definition, this experience is in motion" (Viau 1999:199). When experience is seen as being in motion, this requires the definition of practical theology to include a "study/reflection" and "engagement/action" concept of praxis (Branson 2007:115) which places theory and practice into a "rhythm between action and reflection" where both may be occurring concurrently (Branson 2007:115). Therefore, each practical theological study begins before it has 'begun' as previous experiences (of theories and praxis) have already set in motion the rhythm of action and reflection (even if this is somewhat 'ad hoc') which allows awareness of the current "broken" experience. "We encounter dilemmas as the people we are, with our baggage of presuppositions and prejudices, as those who have been shaped by communities with their distinctive traditions and stories" (Colwell 2006:216). This is why practical theology cannot be a 'method' but rather needs to be "a craft in which we continually 'answer and respond' to the call and vocation of apprenticeship and discipleship of God's ways" (Veling 2005:16).

This process of experience in motion, from within the Christian faith praxis, must continue to inform the process of practical theology to ensure the rhythm of action and reflection is

established and cultivated. At the same time this experience in motion cannot be divorced from its existence within some form of current events and concrete settings. Practical theology cannot remain vague and abstract situated only within ideals but "it must return to experience with well developed practical metaphors, guidelines, and responsibilities for life in community" (Poling & Miller 1985:66). Practical theology "does not seek universality or uniformity, but wants to understand the extant realities and actual demands in which faithful discipleship is lived" in its temporal ("present and near future") and spatial ("local and nearby situations") setting (Cahalan & Nieman 2008:79–82). Thus the praxis of practical theology is concerned with "communicative actions which mediate God's coming to people in the world through God's word" (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:51) "with a view to change" (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:50).

From the above discussion on the developments within the field of practical theology three key interlinked areas can be identified which need further development before we can define the task of this study: The Rhythm of Action and Reflection; Listening and Discerning the Word of God; Addressing and Proposing Change in the Faith Community.

1.2.1. The Rhythm of Action and Reflection

As discussed above, practical theology needs to be viewed as "in motion" and this has a significant bearing on how it is understood. Heidegger argued that "we do not stand over the world in order to know it. We are not bare, thinking subjects who reach out to know a world of objects. Rather, we are absorbed and immersed in the world, never over against it as a subject to an object" (Veling 2005:6). This is attached to recognising that "our understandings always emerge from our practices or from the "forms of life" in which we participate" (Veling 2005:6). We are subjective beings, operating within "existential, contextual real-life situations" that influence and shape both our thinking and our action. Freire suggests that we need to have a reflection which is able to reveal the objectives, means and efficacy of our actions to be involved in the task of philosophical reflection.

"Reflection on our actions reveals the theory…the practice in turn acquires a new significance when it is illustrated by a theory" (Freire 2005:103).

When practical theology is concerned with establishing and cultivating the rhythm of action and reflection, practical theology is moved beyond a 'scientific' task, it becomes more than a methodology for investigation and study. As Heidegger puts it in his essay on Science and Reflection:

> Reflection is of a different essence from the making conscious and the knowing that belong to science; it is of a different essence also from intellectual cultivation [*Bildung*]...Intellectual cultivation brings before man a model in the light of which he shapes and improves all that he does…over against this, reflection first brings us onto the way toward the place of our sojourning. This sojourning is constantly a historical sojourning – i.e. one allotted to us – no matter whether we represent, analyse, and classify it historiographically or whether we believe that we can artificially detach ourselves from history by means of a merely voluntary turning away from historiography (Heidegger 1977:180–181).

In this way "sojourning" becomes a key element of the reflective process. In this mode, practical theology can resist the temptation of the modern myth of science and opt instead for a methodology which owns its subjectivity as a confession of its faith that God has been and continues to be at work in history, amongst his people. Barnard's expansion of Latour's concept of "iconoclash" and "image" is helpful to unveil the modern myth of science (Barnard 2010:74–78).

Barnard contends that "Religion, art and science all express themselves in codes, or, in terms of Latour, 'images' that preserve their double character of being *either* human constructions *or* reflection of (objective) truth" (Barnard 2010:74 emphasis in original).

Ambivalence exists in relation to the problem that "the question as to what is truth, cannot be answered without images and at the same time these images do not constitute the truth" (Barnard 2010:76). "Faith, science and art all require the image as produced by people to approximate the truth, written either with or without capital" (Barnard 2010:78). These images are simultaneously "the producers and the products of culture" (Barnard 2010:76). The subjective nature of science is unveiled via it attempting the same task of approximating the truth, even if a closer and more accurate approximation, via the use of images (Barnard 2010:77).

The issue is that images will always be tied to a context, an historical setting, a time and a place. As Barth states "No act of man can claim to be more than an attempt, not even science." (Barth 2001:1). This can be seen even within the context of the natural sciences where what is approximated as truth at one time in the past does not rule out an alternate approximation at some time in the future. Even the most 'secure' concepts and ideas of science are vulnerable to challenge as the future unfolds. "Scientists are not external, objective observers…although, the knowledge they formulate is based, in part, on external facts, it is also deeply shaped and interpreted in light of their own theories, personalities, and sociocultural and historical contexts" (Hiebert 2008:273). "The general structure of understanding is concretized in historical understanding, in that the concrete bonds of custom and tradition and the corresponding possibilities of one's own future become effective in understanding itself" (Gadamer 2004:254). "Theory is no longer regarded as a set of mental constructs that can exist independently of their embodiment in the physical, psychological and social structures of life" (Anderson 2001:21). Therefore, "Science is a pattern of discourse adopted for various historical reasons for the achievement of objective truth, where objective truth is no more no less the best idea we currently have about how to explain what is going on" (Carey 2009:61).

All of this reinforces that "sojourning" in reflection should be essential to the methodology for practical theology. Veling suggests that "For practical theology, this process is known

as a *habitus*, a disposition of the mind and heart from which our actions flow naturally, or, if you like, "according to the Spirit" dwelling within us" (Veling 2005:16).

The implications of this position for the academic venture of practical theology is that any practical theological study should not focus solely on the results or outcome of the study, nor the academic rigour and presentation of the study, but rather on a continued conditioning of a "disposition of the mind and heart". This is no excuse for poor 'workmanship' or not seeking an outcome beneficial for the community of faith based on rigorous investigation which is well presented. But if this is all it produces, without in the process conditioning a practical theologian who will continue to "sojourn" with the bipolar tensions of theory and practice as they arise in the concrete historical context, then there is little purpose to practical theology in its service to the community of faith as the concrete problems of today move towards the concrete problems of tomorrow.

Moltmann's concept of "Christopraxis" whilst concerned primarily with Christology, provides a good direction in this sense:

> This praxis too is not the application of a theory about Christ. It is a way of life, a way in which people learn who Jesus is, learn it with all their senses, acting and suffering, in work and prayer. To know Jesus does not simply mean learning the facts of Christological dogma. It means learning to know him in the praxis of discipleship (Moltmann 1990:42–43).

This study therefore is not concerned with simply demonstrating the skills of a method, a mastery of practical theological tasks, a learning of the facts, but will also seek to demonstrate the continued conditioning of a practical theologian, a 'sojourning' in the rhythm of action and reflection. The rhythm of action and reflection will also mean that this study will not seek to develop a static methodology or model for a practical theological

study, but will instead seek to uphold the "in motion" action of sojourning. A sojourning via an interaction of theories and practices which is humbly seeking to be listening and discerning the Word of God.

1.2.2. Listening and Discerning the Word of God

Our subjective relationship to the world as outlined in the previous section and the need for practical theology to remain "in motion" requires defining the hermeneutic process of practical theology in the active sense. The living and active Word of God permeates Scripture. Right from the beginning where God speaks creation into being (Gn 1:3) to the closing words of promise of the return of Christ (Rv 22:7, 20); God speaks. The history of the Christian faith is rooted in the God whose word is alive and active. If we too continue in this tradition where the Scriptures remain alive (Ac 6:7, 12:24; Eph 6:17; 1 Th 2:13; Heb 4:12; 1 Pt 1:23; 1 Jn 2:14), not constrained to a time, held captive in the past, then "we must think of them as texts that *endure* because of their very ability to constantly engage time" (Veling 2005:39). That is to say that God still speaks; not that God has spoken.

"The condition of being addressed is crucial to hermeneutics" (Veling 2005:31–32). We are called to the active position of listening and discerning rather than the passive position of hearing and accepting. This active position brings into view three areas that will require further exploration:

1. The issue of context.
2. Christ as the Word (*ὁ λογος).*
3. The Holy Spirit as the Helper/Counsellor/Advocate (*παράκλητος*)

1.2.2.1. Hermeneutics and Context

"Hermeneutic work always implies the construction of a bridge between the past in which the text was created and the present" (van der Ven 1998:46). This "time-bridging" as van der Van calls it draws attention to the problem where hermeneutics requires an interaction

with both the context in which the interpreter is situated and the context in which the text was created (van der Ven 1998:46). Van der Van defines the hermeneutic task as having "the meaning that is contained in the text itself…illuminated from the perspective of the present", whilst acknowledging that the "present is not a 'theology-free' situation" (van der Ven 1998:47). He argues that there needs to be a pluralism to the interpretations as the present contexts of interpretation differ and "priority must be given to those who suffer from economic, political and cultural discrimination, lack of freedom, and alienation" in establishing the validity of interpretations (van der Ven 1998:48). However such a position sells the hermeneutic task short.

As Bennett and Rowland point out it's not just the context of the Bible and the present that requires consideration but the "hidden agendas, the vested interests, and the consequent masked ideological distortions" with which the interpreter approaches the text as well (Bennett & Rowland 2006:175). All of which can occur equally amongst those who are downtrodden and downcast and those who are not.

Gadamer states:

> A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He
> projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial
> meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only
> because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a
> certain meaning (Gadamer 2004:269).

Colwell in the same vein contends:

> The issues I identify as inherent within any particular dilemma, together
> with those aspects of the Christian tradition and those stories from
> Scripture that I utilise as means of responding to that dilemma, may
> serve as much to reinforce my assumptions as it may serve to challenge

> them…it is a case of me doing something with Scripture rather than God
>
> doing something with me through Scripture (Colwell 2006:216).

Our tendency to project our own meanings into the text needs to remain in focus within the hermeneutical task. Therefore it is not enough for hermeneutics to operate as a "time-bridging" work of the "now" and "then", but should also be a process which calls the present context into question. Hermeneutics must also seek to bridge the "here" and "there" of the same time, highlighting and challenging our presuppositions, prejudices, paradigms so that we may listen in a new way. "New understanding emerges when scholars are open to hermeneutical experiences in which they become aware of the preunderstandings with which they begin their interpretative activity and are willing to put them at risk in a dialogical encounter with the objects, people or texts they are interpreting" (Osmer 2008:23). "Only when we find our lives rubbing up against difficult truths will we even begin to approach new understandings" (Veling 2005:35).

This places the hermeneutics involved in interpreting Scripture into the realm of expectation where we don't just work on the text, but rather where we are expectant that the text will also work on us (Colwell 2006:216, 218; Veling 2005:43; Gadamer 2004:270–271). However, it also raises the legitimate concern of relativism. Can the text, in our expectation of it operating on us, remain free to operate in any direction? We would have to say certainly not. Whilst we must remain open to the new fresh voice of God as he speaks we must also ground our expectation lest we become "tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (Eph 4:14). As 'Christians', the grounding of our expectation should be in the ultimate Word of God, Jesus Christ.

1.2.2.2.   <u>Christ and Hermeneutics</u>

The Gospel of John in its unique introduction of "Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17) as "the Word", *ό*

λογος (Jn 1:1, 14) who "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14)

transforms forever how it is that people may know God.

In this event:

> Jesus is God's final Word
>
> on the new man
>
> the man open to know God
>
> as He really is
>
> (van Oudtshoorn 1998:124)

The actions of listening and discerning, the hermeneutic tasks, need to be framed within a

Christological paradigm. A paradigm that takes Jesus seriously when he says: "I am the

way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me. If you really

knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have

seen him" (Jn 14:6-7).

"Jesus Christ is the full and unsurpassable revelation of God" which means that "we are

not to look for other words from God alongside of or in competition with this Word" (Osmer

2008:135). Whatever our mode or method in seeking to interpret Scripture it "must be

faithful to the eschatological reality and authority of Christ" (Anderson 2001:37) for it to be

and remain a Christian hermeneutic. In Jesus, the Church confesses that God has "made

known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in

Christ, to be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfilment – to bring all

things in heaven and on earth under one head, even Christ" (Eph 1:9-10). "The Christian

faith confesses that the promises [of God in the covenant] find their fulfilment in Jesus

Christ: he is the content and guarantee of the salvation that has been promised" (Immink 2005:243).

A Christological paradigm positions and focuses the actions of listening and discerning in the dual directions of looking towards the past and the future simultaneously. Veling uses the term "another time" to carry the concept of pointing backwards and looking forwards within the hermeneutic task (Veling 2005:31). He states ""Another time" suggests both a deep remembering and an expectant hopefulness that is characteristic of the historically gifted human spirit" (Veling 2005:31). And it is in this way that we seek to appropriate this term, "another time". Unfortunately, Veling expands his consideration of "another time" in the direction of the past via the history of Israel in relationship to God and religious tradition (pp. 31-37) and in the direction of the future via Ricœur's "proposed world which I could inhabit" (Veling 2005:45–49) without centralising Christ's role in both the past we remember and the future we expect. Without Christ as the normalising factor in our listening and discerning, the risk of the process becoming 'religious' rather than 'Christian' increases.

In looking towards the past, Christ is established as the fulfilment of the promises, especially as the One who brings the forgiveness of sins (Is 33:20-24; Jr 31:30-34; 33:6-9; 50:18-20 Mi 7:18-20), opening the future to justification and eternal life. "The New Testament testimony is filled with joy for the fulfilment of the promise [or covenant]" (Immink 2005:243). "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ" (2 Cor 1:20). In the process of listening and discerning God's promises fulfilled in Christ must remain in view. As Immink correctly states, "The concept of promise implies that God's grace is prior to our faith…and there remains a difference between divine initiative and human reception" (Immink 2005:242).

Ridderbos contends in relation to Paul's Christology:

What has taken place in Christ forms the termination and fulfilment of the great series of divine redemptive acts in the history of Israel and the presupposition of the progress and consummation of the history of the world…God has brought to fulfilment and will yet bring to fulfilment his man- and world- and history-encompassing redemptive work in a conclusive way (Ridderbos 1997:50).

Fee in the same vein contends:

For Paul, therefore, salvation in Christ is a fundamentally eschatological reality, meaning first of all that God's final salvation of his people has already been accomplished by Christ…This essential framework likewise causes Paul to see the church as an end-time community, whose members live in the present as those stamped with eternity (Fee 1996:52).

Christ in his incarnation, death and resurrection has reshaped how it is that the Church is to understand its position in time. The future is both already and not yet (Fee 1996:49–51; Ridderbos 1997:51–53). The hermeneutics of the church in response must seek to listen and discern its current context and situation out of both what has occurred in Christ and the future which will occur when Christ returns. It is this requirement that places the church in dependence on the Holy Spirit in the task of hermeneutics. As Barth states, "when it happens that man obtains that freedom of becoming a hearer, a responsible, grateful, hopeful person, this is not because of an act of the human spirit, but solely because of the act of the Holy Spirit" (Barth 2001:131). In practical theology, the church must continue the confession that her ability to bridge the "now" and "then" and the "here" and "there" must remain grounded in Christ and guided by the continuing work of the Holy Spirit.

1.2.2.3.   The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics

The New Testament testifies to the fulfilment of the covenant, but it also testifies to a new covenant marked by the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. All four Gospels mark the beginning of Jesus ministry with his baptism and the descending of the Holy Spirit in this event. "There is no ministry of Jesus recorded in Scripture prior to his anointing by the Spirit of God at his baptism. It is by the power of the Spirit that he heals the sick, proclaims the good news and casts out demons" (Anderson 2001:43). In Christ, the Kingdom of God breaks into the world in a transformational way where "the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor" (Mt 11:5). And these miraculous events are linked to God's kingdom breaking into the world (Mt 12:28 & Lk11:20; Lk 9:1-3). Jesus miraculous acts and his preaching of the good news "make visible and audible the fulfilment of the promises of the coming of the great era of salvation, things that many prophets and many righteous people in vain desired to see and hear" (Ridderbos 1962:65).

It is this prophetic expectation that establishes the context for the Holy Spirit's continued action in the continued process of listening and discerning. Alongside the prophetic expectation of the in breaking of God's kingdom that would result in people being healed and released from oppression (e.g Lk 4:14-21) was the prophetic expectation that in the new covenant God's spirit would be 'poured out' and the people would be given a new heart (e.g. Jr 31:31-34; Ezk 36:24-27; Jl 2: 28). "Throughout the whole Old Testament the Spirit is spoken of as the creating and renewing power of God, the gift of the New Covenant, the possession of the coming Messiah, and the life principle of the congregation of the future" (Ridderbos 1997:215).

Not only does the Old Testament testify to the Spirit being poured out as an expectation of the new covenant being established, but Jesus also promises that when he returns to the Father, he will not leave his disciples abandoned to their own devices. Rather, he

promises that he will be with his people "to the very end of the age" (Mt 28:20) and that he will send another, a helper/advocate/counsellor (*παράκλητος*) the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:15-27). The New Testament testimony of either Jesus breathing the gift of the Spirit in the upper room (Jn 20:21-23) or the Spirit coming upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:1-4) both speak of the continued in-breaking of the kingdom of God by the power of God. And where God's kingdom is, there exists a tension that calls the people of the Holy Spirit to listen and discern the Word of God in a way that accounts for both the already and the not yet.

Moltmann exposes this dualistic tension. If the kingdom of God is only seen as "the lordship of God in his perfect kingdom" then it is "undisputed and universal; no shadow falls upon it"; but in history "God rules through the word of promise and the Spirit of freedom" (Moltmann 1992:190). Overcoming this tension is achieved by how the rule of God is understood.

> The liberating rule of God can thus be understood as the immanence of the eschatological kingdom, and the coming kingdom can be interpreted as the transcendence of the believed and experienced rule of God in the present. This understanding forbids us to banish the lordship of God to a future world totally unrelated to our earthly, historical life. But it also forbids us to identify the kingdom of God with conditions in history, whether they be already existing or desired (Moltmann 1992:190).

Such an understanding allows the tension to exist without either seeking to establish God's outright rule in the present or rejecting the notion that God's rule can break into the present at all. "The kingdom of God affirms God's present rule and points to Christ's final rule on earth in the future" (Hiebert 2008:278).

For the context of the process of listening and discerning this places the church into a unique position. In the face of the despair of the world, the church is reminded of the hope of the eschatological kingdom that has been established in Christ and confesses that this kingdom can continue to break into this world in the power of the Spirit. In the face of the positivisation of the world – where all is good – the Church is reminded that the kingdom of God is not yet, that Christ will return and the final consummation of the age will occur, and confesses that it is only in the power of the Spirit that <u>what is</u> can be transformed into a sign of God's kingdom and rule. This places all of our different processes of listening and discerning under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

As Veling states, the Scriptures "seek to move our hearts according to the ways of God. They seek to align our lives according to the kingdom of heaven. They awaken our imaginations. They disturb our routines. They offer us a "proposed world" – not simply the world as it is – but the world as it could be, "on earth as it is in heaven"" (Veling 2005:47). This moving, aligning, awakening and disturbing of our hearts, lives, imaginations and routines means that the process of listening and discerning cannot be confined only to our hermeneutics of the Scriptures. All of our hermeneutics, in the wider use of seeking to interpret and understand the different "images" that seek to approximate truth, needs to remain under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who calls us to see the world from a Christological framework, as we seek to listen and discern the God who speaks within the context of our historical setting.

The sense of a "proposed world" also highlights that the role of the Holy Spirit in the listening and discerning process should not be limited to an individual context, but should exist in the community of the Spirit. As Fee points out, the concept of the Spirit in Paul is related to his interaction with a people where God "is creating *a people* among whom he can live and who in their life together will reproduce God's life and character" (Fee 1996:65–66) (see also Eph 2:19-22; 2 Cor 6:16-7:1; 1 Cor 12:12-13). To assume that the process of listening and discerning remains an individual task would reject this notion of

the Spirit at work in "maintaining a necessary and healthy *diversity* in the church" (Fee 1996:71) which allows for our presuppositions and prejudices to be exposed. The community of faith should not simply be an audience to address, but should be invited to play a role in the hermeneutical process.

1.2.3. Addressing and Proposing Change in the Community of Faith

With the focus on the sojourning rhythm of action and reflection in the development of the *habitus* of a practical theologian as the methodological focus of practical theology there is a high risk of practical theology remaining a somewhat individual pursuit which may have no wider implication. The development of a 'practical theologian' in and of itself runs the risk of becoming an introspective process if the area of practical theology isn't grounded in a context beyond that of the individual. In this vein Cahalan and Nieman posit that "rooted in Christian tradition, practical theology focuses on a called people who manifest a particular faith through concrete ways of life" where the "basic task" of practical theology is "supporting and sustaining lived discipleship" (Cahalan & Nieman 2008:67). It is this position of practical theology which provides a meaningful relationship between the 'individual' sojourning of the practical theologian and the community of faith.

"In contrast to the modern, postmodern and post-postmodern emphasis on the autonomous and self-fulfilled individual involved in impersonal relationships, the biblical worldview focuses on deep interpersonal relationships and on the priority of community" (Hiebert 2008:287). By placing the process of "supporting and sustaining lived discipleship" within the "biblical worldview" with "the priority of community" the practical theologian is not only called in their *habitus* beyond themselves, but realise practical theology is impossible without responding to this calling. It is towards the community of faith that the practical theologian must be directed, seeking to address and propose change for the purpose of maintaining and perfecting this community. This "calling"

towards the community of faith for the practical theologian is a call beyond themselves and into dialogue with the community of faith. This occurs primarily in two ways.

Firstly, from the sojourning of each practical theologian, specific areas of speciality and interest will be established and pursued. It is within these areas that the practical theologian has a responsibility to address the wider community of faith and propose change in the more specific praxis areas which have been an integral part of the sojourning. The practical theologian must remember that "practical theology is the branch of theology that considers those actions designed to ensure that God's word reaches people and is embodied in their lives" (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:1). In these areas the practical theologian plays a dual role in attempting to expose the presuppositions and preunderstandings of the community of faith as well as seeking to engage with the community to allow their own presuppositions and preunderstandings to be exposed by the community of faith.

This informs the second dialogical element. Each sojourning practical theologian should be seeking to invite others into their own sojourning in the rhythm of action and reflection. As Heyns and Pieterse correctly point out, practical theology extends beyond pastors and is "vitally important" for all Christians (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:1–2). Veling states that to be busy with practical theology is "to follow the way of Christ…to become disciples, followers, listeners and doers of the Word, people of faith, people who walk the paths of God, people who seek to know and practice the purposes of God, who desire God and the *ways of God*" (Veling 2005:240–241). Not a description restricted to the exclusive world of academics or pastoral specialists, but rather one that encompasses all Christians. To understand practical theology in this way is to contend that encouraging others into sojourning should form part of each practical theologian's task; actively inviting dialogue which intentionally seeks, and expectantly awaits, the Holy Spirit's voice as the community of faith sojourn together.

1.3 SUMMARY

From the discussion above, we would define practical theology as follows:

> Practical theology is concerned with establishing and cultivating the
> rhythm of action and reflection within the experience of the Christian
> community of faith. This is a process of listening to the Word of God
> and discerning to address the community of faith through proposing
> change, with all these tasks operating within a current context of the
> Christian faith and for the purpose of maintaining and perfecting the
> Christian community.

This definition places practical theology firmly within a "communicative actions" field of engagement which is "focussing on manifestations of the encounter between God and people and between human beings, and on the transmission and strengthening of the Christian faith in the church and society" (Pieterse 2003) where the "existential, contextual real-life situations" in which these "communicative actions" occur is preserved (Pieterse 2003).

In this study, the "communicative actions" are those of mass communication, specifically related to the production and distribution of Bible study materials which make use of the video medium. Continuing the focus of a sojourning rhythm of action and reflection the methodological approach will be to present a process of both measuring the actions of the church in the context of this study and reflecting on those actions in the light of numerous different theories and concepts related to the area of mass communication. In this study these two processes will co-exist. This study won't develop one ideal theory to test against an empirical praxis, but rather will interact critically with both theories and practices simultaneously which may inform a new way forward. It is hoped in this process that both the theory may inform the praxis as well as allowing the praxis to challenge the theory.

This study will therefore present a snapshot of a sojourning rhythm of action and reflection which has interacted with the context of the current situation; evaluated the current context in the light of the now and not yet kingdom as established in Christ; and sought to allow the Holy Spirit to challenge and disrupt via continued interaction with both Scripture and the community of faith. For this reason, this study will include two narrative sections relating my story to this study. The first narrative section embeds the problem that this practical theological study will interact with in the history and experience of the researcher. This allows the reader access to the sojourning of action and reflection which has led to the belief that a problem exists and the reason for, or goal of, the study. The second narrative will conclude the study by encapsulating the future directions of sojourning inspired by this study as well as some reflection on the process of the study itself and the ways in which it has led to the encouragement of others into the sojourning rhythm of action and reflection. This study will also seek to propose a new way forward in relation to the specific area of the production of Bible study materials.

The above is outlined in the following structure summarising the study to follow.

Chapter 2 – Mass Communication in the Rhythm of Action and Reflection

I will commence this chapter as mentioned above with a narrative section which outlines the problem that this practical theological study will interact with, the history of the researcher which has led to the belief that a problem exists and the reason for, or goal, of the study. This section will also indicate to the reader different presuppositions that I will bring to this study.

Following this, I establish the boundaries of the praxis under the rhythm of action and reflection in this study and the key areas that will require further investigation. I then present the empirical research project which will provide the praxis research for this study, providing the reasons for selecting this form of empirical research and its value to the process.

Finally, I present a summary of the overall approach that I have taken in completing this study which includes: a literature study; a qualitative document analysis and; a qualitative interview.

Chapter 3 – Bible Study Materials Critically Evaluated

In this chapter I present for each of the key areas identified in Chapter 2 the results of the literature study, the qualitative document analysis and the qualitative interviews as related to the overall approach. This chapter provides the foundations for the final chapter of this study.

Chapter 4 – Into the future

In this final chapter I will present three different sections. The first will present my response to the results of Chapter 3 in considering the production and distribution of Bible study materials which incorporate new media such as video. The second will propose a practical approach to trial a new possibility for producing a Bible study product taking into account the first section of this chapter. The final section will comprise a concluding narrative which includes some reflection on how this study has led to the encouragement of others into the sojourning rhythm of action and reflection and the future directions of sojourning inspired by this study.

2. MASS COMMUNICATION IN THE RHYTHM OF ACTION AND REFLECTION

2.1 WHAT IS THE PROBLEM AND WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

The best place to start this story is not at the beginning but rather in the middle. When I was aged around twenty four, I was married, had two kids and had a secure job. Along with my wife, I had been involved in youth ministry within a local church of approximately sixty people for the past six years, including running Bible studies and youth events. The youth ministry had a leadership team of six, including my older brother, his wife and two other men from the church about 10 years my senior and who had been leading the youth group while I was a participant. My wife and I had also been involved in a small group run by another of the men from our local church for about the past 8 years on and off. He had trained at a theological college and was a Professor of Constitutional Law at one of Brisbane's Universities. He was also about 10 years our senior.

At this time, we decided to take a break from our ministry and consider the idea of me completing theological training to a Bachelor level. In the end, it was decided that we should pursue this, but we needed to remain open to where this pursuit might lead. At this point it is pertinent to include a couple of personal details to provide some context to this decision as well. I was, and still am a musician, and at this time had been involved with playing in and managing a local ska band. This situation had proven to be influential in a number of our decisions to allow this to continue. We felt with the decision we were making we needed to be prepared to let this go. At the time I was also employed as an industrial electrician, which was a great job in many respects, but I felt that due to electricity being governed by mathematics my job lacked a certain 'creative' element which I really felt I needed to include in anything I was going to commit to in a more long term way.

These elements led to us moving from Brisbane to Perth to study at Perth Bible College. As we sought an institution at which to study we looked for a place that might present some options in the way of engaging my 'creative' side. However, whilst being a musician, I have always been adamant that the best way to grow to loathe music is to do it for a living. This shortened the list of possible places to study as most institutions which had some 'creative' element focussed in the area of music. The one institution we found which provided a creative element which wasn't music was Perth Bible College, with its creative focus grounded in video production, web design and creative writing. And as they say, the rest is history, and we relocated to Perth.

 It was this move that in many ways brought the problem into the light and placed it in a more defined way into the praxis of practical theology; but it cannot be said that this move was where the rhythm of action and reflection started which has led to this study. The problem was exposed due to the geographical relocation which brought with it a new local church setting and also a more focussed theological reflection through study at a theological institution. However, in reflecting on our situation, I find that the rhythm of action and reflection was something that had already been encouraged and established.

As we settled into our new local church setting and became involved in a small group Bible study setting both my wife and I would discuss the differences between our previous and current settings. In our small group some of the key differences we noted were (in comparative terms setting the new against the old):

- Studies were mostly run using mass produced materials, sometimes incorporating video, where we had not used these materials in the older setting.
- A more 'surface' engagement with the Scriptures as often the answers to questions asked by the materials were quite easy to find, where previously we

were often presented with questions which didn't have a quickly found answer in the text.

- The 'Bible study' section of the small group being seen as something to 'get through' to get into the more relational side of sharing with each other, where previously the Bible study was a key part of relating together as we wrestled with what the text might have to say to us, both individually and as a group.

- No engagement with other theologian's ideas on what a text may be about, where previously we were introduced to different writers from throughout church history.

- Most of the process of discussion revolving around the implications of what was presented, where previously discussion was spent around what the text may be saying, including discussion of how different interpretations could lead into different implications from the text.

As my wife and I reflected on our new situation it allowed us to see our previous context in a different way. We had not 'noticed' some key things of our previous context until situated in a new experience as our previous context was our 'norm'. One of the key things that we noticed was how all three of the men mentioned above from our previous context had influenced our disposition towards God's word and the world. It was not only within our small group setting that we were challenged to be reflecting on God's word and what it meant for us in our contextual setting, but also as we met together in discussions around youth leadership.

Each time we would meet as youth leaders we would not only discuss the pragmatics of the situations facing us, but also be encouraged to be reflecting on God's word and the theological implications which may be impinging on the situation and our response to it. For example, if someone had read a new book on youth leadership, or attended a conference, and was brimming with new ideas, each of these different ideas would undergo a process of thoughtful reflection. The leadership structures, the focus of our

youth ministry, what programs we would and wouldn't run, would all be continually evaluated and rethought against what we were experiencing in our youth ministry. At a number of key times our experiences led us back to reflect on our theories and theologies in relation to youth ministry. In many ways I had been introduced to a crude from of practical theology before I would have even been able to name it, let alone attempt to define it!

In relation to this study, the awareness of a "broken" experience (as mentioned in section 1.2) has come about via an experience which has brought about a conflict between both my theological presuppositions and different practical experiences. Those theological presuppositions, which were encouraged and developed in my previous local church, are that there is a call for the Church to train and equip believers within the context of the relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity (Eph 4:11-16, 1 Cor 12 -14, 2 Tm 3:10 - 4:5). My new practical experiences began to raise questions of the current mass produced Bible study materials, especially those which employed the video medium, as to whether they work in opposition to these presuppositions. At this stage, without completely realising it, I was beginning to recognise a practical theological problem.

My exposure to practical theology continued to develop as I progressed further in my studies at Perth Bible College. In my third and fourth years via my involvement in the Supervised Field Education unit, I was formally introduced to the field of Practical Theology. In this unit we were required to carry out a practical theological study using a simplified Zerfass model of developing an ideal theory, gaining field based experience in the area to reflect on current praxis, and proposing a change model (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:35). This unit allowed me to begin to define in more concrete terms what I had been encouraged to be involved in with my experience of leading youth ministry in our previous local church.

In the second year of this unit, I worked with a local Christian evangelist and teacher filming and producing a video series of a teaching course that he had previously run on youth camps and in other settings. I had originally intended to develop my own Bible study resource incorporating the use of video, but I was asked if I could film and produce this project and knew I wouldn't be able to complete both projects within the time constraints. Therefore, I placed my ideas on the backburner and focussed on working to produce this product. This meant that my ideal theory study focussed on developing an ideal theory for the development of a Bible study series, but my empirical praxis became that of working as a producer on someone else's product and this shifted the focus of the resultant study. Whilst this shift occurred in that study, the desire to move towards producing Bible studies incorporating the video medium (and potentially other medium) still remains. This desire is driven by a concept I have to create a product which incorporates video to present problems and questions rather than provide answers; and to utilise the DVD menu structure to allow the video segments to respond more specifically to the answer the group prefers from a number of possible answers. But my previous and (to in my mind) incomplete study has produced some observations which would benefit from further reflection before venturing into the practical task of developing this product.

One observation was that the video medium has moved from a non-existent part of these materials to something which now appears to be an essential part of many Bible study materials that are published. This raises some initial questions such as: What is driving the need for the video medium to be incorporated? Does incorporating the video medium impact on the small group setting? If so, in what ways could the setting be altered?

A second observation was that often the video element was used as a repetition or persuasive instrument to reinforce what was being 'said' by the creators of the product. This raises further questions such as: What communication models are influencing the current products? What power structures are in operation? How is the audience viewed in the process of meaning-making?

A third observation of this study was that whilst this medium has grown as a requirement, often the materials don't invite the viewer to engage with the content but rather only with the implications. This raises a set of questions more related to these products as a key 'teaching' tool in the church setting: What are these products attempting to achieve in teaching participants? What is the pedagogical approach of these products? What modes of learning do these products currently encourage? How do these products fit with a discipleship model of learning?

Since completing my Bachelor of Ministry degree I have been employed at Perth Bible College and part of my employment is related to the area of video media. These elements included filming of classes and developing a pedagogical approach to external studies and also teaching in two units related to video production within the context of the local church. This situational context has continued to direct my path in the area of the video medium and how it is utilised in both a local church context and also in a theological educational context. So this practical theological study not only will influence the direction I take in looking to produce a Bible study product, but also will impact on and be impacted by these other areas.

In summary, the problem being explored in this practical theological study is captured by the following thesis statement:

> The Church has a responsibility to train and equip believers within the context of the relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity. The Church has, and continues, to utilise different media to provide teaching and training on a mass scale. The current products being developed as Bible study materials (especially those incorporating the video medium) are failing to meet this responsibility.

The goal of this study is to continue the dispositional rhythm of action and reflection related to this problem and in the process to address the Christian community proposing an alternative which seeks to continue to perfect and maintain that community by seeking answers to the following questions which have arisen from the previous action and reflection:

1. What are the cultural value systems which are promoted and encouraged by the different media, particularly the video medium, in the production of these materials, and what response may be required to promote a culture of a relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity?

2. What communication models and/or theories are evident in the production of these materials and what communication models or theories should influence the production of these products to encourage a relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity?

3. What pedagogical paradigms or approaches are evident in the production of these materials and what pedagogical paradigms or approaches should influence the production of these products to encourage a relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity?

Having now presented the problem and the goal of this study it is time to begin that process by defining the boundaries of the praxis under the rhythm of action and reflection and presenting the empirical research that will inform it.

2.2. BOUNDARIES OF THE PRAXIS

In establishing the boundaries of the praxis for this study, they have to allow room for critical reflection on both the key areas which related to the action of producing these

products, as well as the resultant actions in groups utilising these products. As we are seeking to address the previously stated questions, it is also important that the boundaries of the praxis can accommodate reflection in these areas. Reflecting on the "communicative actions" (Pieterse 2003) needs to have an ability to consider the interrelated communication setting, and the work of Altheide provides some fertile ground in responding to this problem. Altheide states:

> Changes in communication media have altered social processes, relationships, and activities as information technology expands to mediate more social situations. While it is commonplace among social theorists that the message reflects the process by which it was constituted, they have paid much less attention to how social activities are joined interactively in a communication environment, and particularly how the techniques and technology associated with certain communicative acts contribute to the action (Altheide 1995:1–2).

In response to this problem Altheide proposes what he refers to as an "ecology of communication" (Altheide 1995:2) which "is intended to help us understand how social activities are organized and the implications for social order" (Altheide 1995:9). Altheide's ecology of communication has three dimensions: "(1) an information technology, (2) a communication format, (3) a social activity" (Altheide 1995:9). Information technology is the "external devices and procedures that are used in helping create, organize, transmit, store, and retrieve information" (Altheide 1995:11). Communication format "refers to the selection, organiszation, and presentation of experience and information" (Altheide 1995:11). And where any activity involves information and IT theses will "inform the temporal and spatial focus and configuration of the resulting action" (Altheide 1995:14). What Altheide correctly contends is that media criticism must be able to operate across the interrelated nature of the mass media communication event.

Woods and Patton contend in a similar direction with their threefold approach to "faithful media criticism" (Woods & Patton 2010:11–13). As they state:

> faithful media criticism [should be viewed] as a type of social criticism that addresses (1) the *content* of the media itself, and how such content affects individuals, groups, and organisations in society; (2) the communication *technology* (or channels) that distribute songs, novels, newspapers, movies, and other cultural products or artifacts to large numbers of people in society; and (3) the practices and process of various social *institutions* that surround and regulate the channels of communication and determine how and when content is delivered (Woods and Patton 2010:13 emphasis in original).

Woods and Patton's three categories that require addressing for "faithful medium criticism" are not dissimilar to Altheide's in their intention to broaden the horizon of a social criticism of communication. However, Woods and Patton's approach provides an improved opportunity to bring the proposed questions into alignment with the key areas that need to be addressed. The three key areas as presented by Woods and Patton provide a broad framework to which the three proposed questions offer a more specific and targeted direction. The rest of this section presents the interrelationship of the proposed questions and the key areas of the content, the technology and the institutions in more detail and demonstrates their importance within this study.

2.2.1. Cultural Value Systems

As previously presented, this area seeks to address the following question:

> What are the cultural value systems which are promoted and encouraged by the different media, particularly the video medium, in the production of these materials, and what response may be required to

promote a culture of a relational community interacting with the Word of

God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity?

This question is related to Woods and Patton's area of institutions. They argue that "the North American dominant consciousness – and one that likely applies to most Western capitalist cultures – is *consumerism*, characterized by a cycle of acquisition-consumption-disposal…[that] further proclaims a messianic promise in technological advancement" (Woods & Patton 2010:4–5). Further to that, the "dominant consciousness" is an operational entity, "composed of the core values and beliefs that dominate the way we live, the way we understand and make sense of the world and our place in it, our understanding of who has power and who is powerless, and our understanding of how things work and how they should work" (Woods & Patton 2010:4).

The concern of Woods and Patton is that within this dominant consciousness media "perform a priestly function" (Woods & Patton 2010:3) that mediates and connects us to the broader cultural beliefs and that "priestly mass media informally, and chiefly, sanction our culture's ethos of consumerism" (Woods & Patton 2010:6). This is no different for the Christian mass media producing context. Media products are not created in a vacuum and thus unless there is an intentionality to the cultural value systems which impact and impinge on the media product that is produced the most likely outcome will be a deviation towards the dominant culture's ethos of consumerism.

The difficulty is considering how it might be that the dominant culture may be challenged, shaped and perhaps even changed. Crouch from the position of Berger and Luckmann (1991) suggests that "Culture is not just what human beings make of the world; it is not just the way human beings make sense of the world; it is in fact *part of the world* that every human being has to make something of" (Crouch 2008:25 emphasis in original). As Crouch points out, seeing culture out of this framework places a particular focus on our understanding of culture; no one makes culture. "Culture, in the abstract, always and only

comes from particular human acts of cultivation and creativity…[where] specific products of cultivating and creating…are what eventually, over time, become part of the framework of the world of future generations" (Crouch 2008:28). Those specific products can open up new cultural possibilities and they can also close down older cultural realities and therefore culture "defines for us the horizons of possibility and impossibility" (Crouch 2008:29). So in reflecting on the production of Bible study materials it is important to consider both the culture that has been established which defines those horizons and also cultural horizons those products open up and close down.

The Western capitalist cultural value system is the situational praxis of the materials which will be considered in this study; as they are created within and for this cultural setting. This being the case some attempt needs to be made to consider: what the driving values of this system might be; how this cultural value system may relate to a Christian cultural value system; what cultural value system is reinforced by these products; and what possible changes may encourage an alternate cultural system. These products need to be considered as cultural artefacts; products of cultivation and creativity that are becoming a part of the framework of the world now and for generations to come. Therefore the cultural value systems which they reinforce and the relationship of those cultural value systems to the Word of God must be reflected upon.

2.2.2. Communication Theories

As previously presented, this area seeks to address the following question:

> What communication models and/or theories are evident in the
> production of these materials and what communication models or
> theories should influence the production of these products to encourage
> a relational community interacting with the Word of God so the
> community may grow in discernment and maturity?

This question is related to Woods and Patton's area of technology. They argue "that technology is not neutral" (Woods & Patton 2010:11). They point out that as human creations different media technologies will "nurture the values and biases of their human inventors…[and] that each communication technology has its own unique way of capturing and presenting reality to audiences that involves a structural bias in its communication" (Woods & Patton 2010:11–12). These two points cannot be ignored and challenge "one of the most popular assumptions in the church today: "The methods always change, but the message stays the same"" (Hipps 2006:29). "Churches, having a longstanding tradition of proclaiming, linear forms of communication, in which media are merely instruments of dissemination, hardly seem capable of handling this crisis" (Feijter 2007:24). And it would seem that an instrumentalist approach still remains a common paradigm of Christian communication (Morgan 2004:95; Smith 1992:198; Schultze & Woods 2008:28–29).

Communication models and theories either intentionally or unintentionally influence the production of Bible study materials. The production of such materials must continue to seek to communicate from models and theories of communication which take into account the new communication media which are being utilised as well as what it means to be Christian communicators.

Feijter excellently traces the some of the recent changes in communication theory (Feijter 2007:99–144) arriving at the following conclusion:

> Early mass communication research viewed communication as the
> linear transmission of information and the audience as a mass of
> passive receivers, who are – literally – at the end of the line.

> Most recent insights from reception and audience ethnography put the
> audience in the front line by underlying their active role in the use of

media in daily life and their capability to resist media

influence…Communication is no longer an instrumental matter, but in

essence characterized by consultation, participation and interactivity

(Feijter 2007:144).

Soukup also identifies these two main perspectives, passive audience vs active audience when considering "the issue of audience understanding of messages" (Soukup 1997:91–107). Like Feijter, he contends that "a middle position sees audience understanding emerge from an interaction between messages and audience members" (Soukup 1997:91). Both Soukup and Feijter reinforce the dialogical emphasis which is required in understanding communication and we would agree that this must remain in focus. Without the transmission of a message there is no role for the audience to play. On the other hand, when only the audience is the 'meaning makers' of the message then the one sending the message bears no responsibility for what it might be that the audience constructs. This also brings into the boundaries of praxis the power relationships which are in negotiation in the communication process. So, in reflecting on the production of Bible study materials it is important to consider this dialogical construct and the power relationships in contention between the message senders and message receivers, especially in relation to the medium utilised.

This study will focus on the praxis of both the print and video medium which are common to these Bible study products. For this praxis some consideration will need to be given to: what biases exist within these different communication media; what concepts of a Christian communication model or theory should be applied; how are, and how could, the producers and audience be involved in consultation, participation and interactivity; and how an alternate communication model or theory may provide an alternate approach to producing such a product. These products are seeking to carry out a communicative action which should be seeking to encourage a relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity. The

communication models and theories need to be reflected on to ensure they support this purpose of the communicative action.

2.2.3. Pedagogical Paradigms and Approaches

As previously presented this area seeks to address the following question:

> What pedagogical paradigms or approaches are evident in the production of these materials and what pedagogical paradigms or approaches should influence the production of these products to encourage a relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity?

This question is related to Woods and Patton's area of content. They argue that most Christians approach media criticism from one of two perspectives, both of which place the majority of their focus on the content of the medium which leads them to suggest the three area focus which we are following here (Woods & Patton 2010:8–13). From the previous section it can be seen how the instrumentalist approach fits with a content criticism focus of the church. The assumption is that the content is 'good' as it is Christian and therefore the only question is related to how it is packaged in a way to meet the demands of the new medium.

In the specific case of producing Bible study materials, it is questionable if the content of these materials has been assessed from a critical perspective as the assumption is that the content must be good as it is Bible content and does not contain "morally questionable content" such as sex, violence and profanity (Woods & Patton 2010:9). But such an assumption fails to recognise the pedagogical nature of the content of these products and to consider some of the unique implications of a theological pedagogical approach.

Hess is correct to contend in relation to "understanding the biblical witness" that:

It means nothing if we don't allow the script [the biblical text] to become part of us to such an extent that we no longer know where the text ends and our lives begin. Learning and teaching within communities of faith ought to carry with it a mandate to support this integral commingling of the divine and human narratives…We need teaching and learning in communities of faith to be about *knowing how*, not simply *knowing that*…[recognising] that knowing in this way requires participating, that mere information does not equal real knowledge (Hess 2005:15 emphasis in original reflecting emphasis of (Tilley 2000) quoted in Hess).

Not dissimilar is Schultz and Schultz who argue that:

Our people [the Church] don't need to be told *what* to think. But they desperately need to learn *how* to think in a Christian context…We help our people grow not by giving them all the answers, but by helping them learn to think on their own. When they learn the process of finding God's direction in their lives, their learning becomes portable. They're able to learn and grow even when teachers aren't around (Schultz & Schultz 1993:89 emphasis in original).

Whilst not exhaustive of this field, Hess as well as Schultz and Schultz indicate the importance of reflecting on the content of the Bible study materials from a pedagogical perspective. Bible study materials are unlikely to contain content that is identifiable as 'bad' due to its sexual, violent or profane nature. But content that seeks to tell people what to think or to know that may not be as beneficial as content which encourages people to think on their own and know how. So, in reflecting on the production of Bible study materials it is important to consider how the content is developed to invite people to

participate in learning in a developmental way, which encourages them to move towards maturity.

This study will focus on the praxis of Christian education delivered in an external or distance context. For this praxis some consideration will need to be given to: what pedagogical paradigms or approaches appear dominant in the current content of these materials; what might constitute a Christian pedagogy; what challenges does the mass delivery by external/distance method present; and how might the content be presented or structured to support a Christian pedagogy. These products are seeking to carry out a teaching role which should be seeking to encourage a relational community interacting with the Word of God so the community may grow in discernment and maturity. The pedagogical paradigms and approaches need to be reflected on to ensure the content of these products provide a teaching resource which empowers the community to grow in discernment and maturity.

2.3 THE EMPIRCAL APPROACH

Having established the boundaries of the praxis for this study an empirical approach needs to be developed which is able to provide relevant empirical data to evaluate the action element of the rhythm of action and reflection. The empirical task seeks the answer to "What is going on?...[by] gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts" (Osmer 2008:4). Such information is gathered under the broad categories of either quantitative or qualitative research (Osmer 2008:49). "*Quantitative* research gathers and analyzes [sic] numeric data to explore relationships between variables. *Qualitative* research seeks to understand the actions and practices in which individuals and groups engage in everyday life and the meanings they ascribe to their experience" (Osmer 2008:49–50) where the "intention of such research is to provide detailed description of the social contexts under investigation" (Cartledge 2003:69).

As this study is situated in the latter it is appropriate to apply a qualitative research approach to the empirical part of this study. This is best carried out via two separate qualitative studies: a "qualitative document analysis" (Altheide 1996) of the Bible study materials under consideration and a qualitative half structured interview of users of such materials seeking to elicit "participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions" (de Vos 2005:74).

2.3.1 Qualitative Document Analysis

As outlined above in section 2.2.2 the traditional focus of research in relation to communication has focussed either on a passive or active audience paradigm, and this has influenced the approach to empirical research in the area of media criticism. Traditionally, the focus has either been on a content analysis, normally with a quantitative study, or on the impact media had on an audience gathered normally via audience observation or focussed interviews (Altheide 1996:3–5) which "stress media "effects" rather than their relationship to, or embodiment in, culture" (Hoover 2006:10).

Altheide's "qualitative document analysis" (QDA), also referred to as "ethnographic content analysis" (Altheide 1996:13–14) provides a research method which seeks "to capture the meanings, emphasis, and themes of messages and to understand the organization and process of how they are presented" (Altheide 1996:33). "Interest is not primarily in the immediate impact of messages on some audience member, but rather two aspects of the document: (a) the document process, context, and significance and (b) how the document helps define the situation and clarify meaning for the audience member" (Altheide 1996:12).

This method is underpinned by the three concepts "consistent with the symbolic interactionists' perspective": context, process, and emergence (Altheide 1996:9). Context refers to seeking to understand the "social situations surrounding the document in question…even independently of the content of the document". Process refers to "how

something is actually put together" taking into account the situational factors which impact on the process. Emergence refers to how the "meaning and message of a document…become more clear through constant comparison and investigation of documents over a period of time" (Altheide 1996:9–10). These three concepts of context, process, and emergence have a direct correlation to the questions which this study is addressing. Context correlates to the area of cultural value systems. Process correlates to the area of communication theories. Emergence correlates to the area of pedagogical paradigms. Whilst these boundaries are not so clear cut in reality, Altheide's QDA method provides an accessible empirical approach for the analysis of the Bible study materials themselves.

There are twelve steps in Altheide's QDA process which are broken down into five stages: "(a) documents, (b) protocol development and data collection, (c) data coding and organization, (d) data analysis, and (e) report" (Altheide 1996:23). The twelve steps are outlined in Appendix A under the five categories above. Chapter 3 will present a summary of the outcomes related to stages as they relate to the three areas of: cultural value systems; communication theories; and pedagogical paradigms.

I have chosen to focus on 8 products which have become available between 2002-2010. The details of the selection of these products are provided in section 3.5 below. The selected products are:

- *The Purpose Driven Life*
- *Six Steps to Talking About Jesus*
- *No Plan B*
- *No Perfect People Allowed*
- *Calling Charlie*
- *NOOMA*
- *They Like Jesus but not the Church*

- *Just Faith*

2.3.2 Qualitative Interview

As the QDA includes the researcher in a "reflexive and highly interactive" (Altheide 1996:16) process it is important to also attempt to discover or explore if the assumptions of the researcher exist in a broader, but not dissimilar context. As presented in section 1.4, the current study has come about from series of experiences, and it is a worthwhile process to explore if others have similar questions even if their experiences are not identical. A qualitative half structured interview of current users provides an avenue for moving "beyond preconceived perceptions and evaluative judgements" (Osmer 2008:64). Carrying out these interviews also serves the purpose of opening an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak through the community of faith to challenge the researcher as presented in section 1.2.2.3.

Following Osmer's "descriptive-empirical" task, with an emphasis on exploring if the assumptions of the researcher are witnessed in a wider context, I have undertaken a number of interviews using a number of standard open questions included in Appendix C. These questions have been developed out of both the literature study and QDA process as related to the three key areas of this study and seek to explore the participant's attitudes towards the materials in relation to these areas and the experiences which have contributed to these attitudes. This places these interviews within an "explorative-explanatory" (van der Ven 1998:126) framework.

The "theological-conceptual model" of van der Van (1998:131–134) provides a methodological approach to these interviews as they are concerned "with a theoretical structural correspondence…between the model and empirical reality" (van der Ven 1998:131) where the researchers assumptions are "the model". As this is the case, the "concepts or variables, relationships between the concepts or variables, and the research units" (van der Ven 1998:131) require explanation.

To establish the concepts or variables which require consideration the experience of the researcher which has led to this study require reviewing. Section 1.4 presents key information related to this review allowing the following key variables to be established:

- The time of experience of the praxis of a Bible study as the researcher's timeframe is approximately 16 years

- The participants previous experience of the praxis of a Bible study being both with and without the use of these materials since this was a key factor in exposing the problem under investigation

- The participants implicit or explicit exposure to a Practical Theological methodology as the informal exposure to this was adequate to suggest that something was 'broken'

- The participants cultural familiarity with a Westernised cultural setting as this is the primary cultural context and market for these resources, and

- The participant's resulting attitude towards these Bible study materials across the three key areas of this study.

These variables are categorised and mapped as follows as per van der Ven's definitions and relationship structures (pp. 132-133):

Independent Variable: Length of praxis experience (X)

Intervening Variable: Alternate experiences within praxis (with/without materials) (A)

Westernised cultural exposure (B)

Moderator Variable: Practical Theological exposure (P)

Dependent Variable: Attitude towards materials (Z)

P

X → A & B → Z
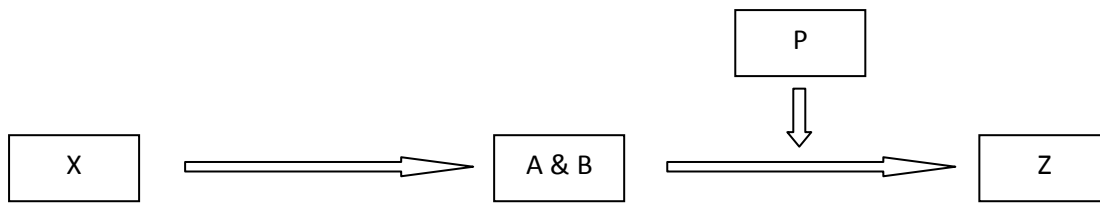
The 'Length of praxis experience' is the key fixed independent variable that is important as an ability to be informed by a longer term of experience is required to evaluate the context across years of difference. The 'Alternate experiences within praxis' and 'Westernised cultural exposure' are the key intervening variables as experience of and exposure to, or lack thereof, will lead to a differing 'Attitude towards materials'. This occurs under the influence of the moderating variable of 'Practical Theological exposure' which has the capacity to alter the relationship. Our assumption is that without this moderator, a pragmatic relationship with theory often exists where the attitude is: if it is 'working' it must be good.

Having established the key variables, identified their type and mapped their relationship, deciding on a suitable research unit is possible. At the local church which I attend, smaller Bible study groups form a regular part of the activities and have for an extended period of time. Periodically, over the last few years those groups have been encouraged to all use the same Bible study product, which have contained a video component. The church is also situated in a Westernised cultural context and is comprised primarily of attendees from a Westernised cultural background. I have decided that this setting provides a suitable population to consider as: small groups have been a part of the church activities for an extended period; it is an environment where such materials have been considered for use even if not used by the group meaning alternate experiences may have occurred; and the Westernised cultural context is the norm even if there have been other cultural exposures.

Within the setting of small groups two distinct categories of attendees exist: participants and facilitators (or group leaders). This variable wasn't considered as a key variable as a participant with long term experience of the praxis represents the researcher's position, and can just as legitimately form attitudes towards these materials dependent on the other variables. However, as a facilitator is required to be making decisions on how they lead the group, and what materials they use to facilitate this, it is more likely that they will have formed more concrete attitudes towards these materials. For this reason, I decided to focus on interviewing those who are current leaders, and prioritised those leaders based on their 'Length of praxis experience'. This information in relation to this variable and interview participants is presented in the following table:

Length of Experience	Number of Participants
<5 years	0
5 to 9 years	1
10 to 14 years	2
15 to 19 years	0
>20 years	5

2.4 THE OVERALL APPROACH TO THE RHYTM OF ACTION AND REFLECTION

To provide clarity to the methods for approaching this study and to outline their interconnectedness it is worthwhile to provide a brief outline of each part before moving into the study itself in more detail.

The literature section of this study is seeking to identify the possible lines of tension which exist within each of the key areas by interacting with both sociological and theological

writings related to that area. It is important at this point to realise the tension relationships which may be present in this area. They are:

- Tension between a sociological position and a theological position

- Tension between a position in one of the areas (e.g. a theological position against a theological position)

- Tension between an unbalanced combination (e.g. a sociological and theological position against a theological position), and

- Tension between a balanced combination (sociological and theological support for both positions).

Whilst all of the possible relationships may not be encountered, it is important not to discount the possibility of their existence prior to the literature study.

After these lines of tension have been established, it is possible to carry out a QDA in relation to these tension lines. The QDA section of this study operates in three ways:

- To explore the possible lines of tension questioning their validity and relationship to the products

- To seek to establish the position of the more current products (2005 – 2010) along the valid lines of tension, and

- To asses if there is any perceived progressive movement along the line of tension across the full period (2002 – 2010).

Once this area has been completed, it is possible to complete the interviews to extend the boundaries of the study in two ways:

- To explore the possible lines of tension questioning their validity and relationship to the products, and

- To explore the validity of the QDA in both positioning and assessing the progress of movement along the lines of tension.

Whilst these occur in a linear sequence – literature - QDA - Interview – no one section of the study holds a primary position of power. Any section may, and it is anticipated will, call into question the outcomes from another section. It will be from evaluating and interacting across all of these areas that a new direction might be proposed. In the end, judgements will need to be made as to what changes may be required in both areas of theory and practice.

The method of this study is illustrated diagrammatically below:

Literature Study
Seeking possible lines of tension

Sociological & Theological
← ───────────────────────────────── →
Lines of Tension

QDA Empirical Data
Questioning possible lines of tension; the products current position; and any perceived movement over the period under consideration.

Interview Empirical Data
Exploring validity of QDA empirical data and Literature Study outcomes
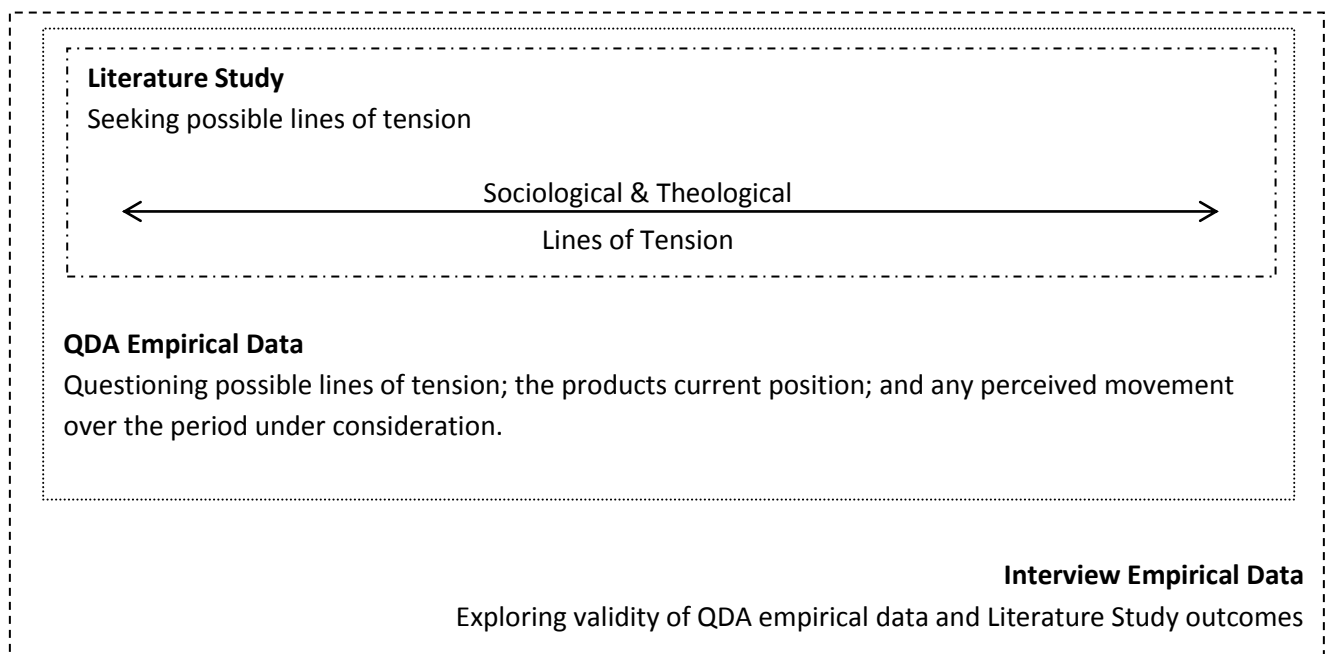
3. BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS CRITICALLY EVALUATED

To stimulate the following evaluation of Bible study materials produced for a mass market it is worthwhile to briefly consider and acknowledge the inter-related nature of the three separate areas under which the exploration will occur. In carrying out a media related culturally situated criticism it is difficult to overlook the work of Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan has had a differing relationship in terms of his influence in the area of media. In the 1960's and 70's McLuhan grew in influence as a critic of media (Hipps 2006:30–31). However, by the late 1970's McLuhan's approach of utilising "aphorisms, probes and metaphors became increasingly baffling" and McLuhan's ideas were "consigned to the attic of pop culture history" (Hipps 2006:30–31). Whilst McLuhan's approach is still often seen as frustrating or maddening (Levinson 1999:25), as time moved on "many of the changes McLuhan had predicted became clearly observable and took on an eerie familiarity" (Hipps 2006:32) and McLuhan again demands to have a voice at the table.

McLuhan's "professed preference for exploration over explanation, for demonstration via metaphor rather than logical argument, and his presentation of ideas about media in small packets" (Levinson 1999:4) should be seen as McLuhan's invitation to enter the process (McLuhan & Gordon 2003:xi). On a personal level, it has been an introduction to the work of McLuhan which has encouraged and stimulated further thought and investigation and has played a significant role in the direction of this study. Whilst the work of McLuhan will infiltrate different specific areas of this study, an overall introduction to McLuhan will assist in situating the research which follows.

McLuhan states:

> All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their
> personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical,
> and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched,
> unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the message. Any understanding

of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the

way media work as environments. All media are extensions of some

human faculty – psychic of physical.

The wheel

…is an extension of the foot

the book

is an extension of the eye…

clothing, an extension of the skin…

electric circuitry, an extension of the central nervous system

Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us unique ratios of sense

perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think

and act – the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change,

men change. (McLuhan, Fiore, & Agel 2001:26–41).

This brief quote, spread across 16 pages in the original, including photos and graphics to

enhance what is being said and how it is being said, provides an insight into McLuhan's

provocative style. It also draws attention to the interrelated nature of the process the

previous chapter has taken some diligence to separate. It would be a difficult task to seek

to understand the cultural value system without understanding the cultural artefacts

(medium) and the contents they carry (message). At the same time, it would be difficult to

seek to understand the cultural artefacts and their contents without understanding the

cultural system in which they have come into being. And so whilst we will be looking at

this study under separated categories, it will be impossible for the three areas not to

impinge on each other. This is something which McLuhan, and others, have sought to

bring to the surface in their probing and investigation of the world in which we live and the tension between its power to shape us and our power to shape it.

3.1. CULTURAL VALUE SYSTEMS

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the situational cultural praxis that is under consideration in this section is the Western cultural setting. In this section we will trace and present key elements which have encouraged the development of and reinforce the maintenance of the "dominant consciousness" of "consumerism" (Woods & Patton 2010:4). In so doing, we will identify the key lines of tension which exist within the cultural value system of the Western cultural setting.

3.1.1. Establishing the Lines of Tension

As previously alluded to in section 2.2.1 above, seeking to understand culture requires that the specific cultural artefacts are examined (Crouch 2008:25–29). For Crouch there are five key questions which need to be answered:

> What does this cultural artifact [sic] assume about the way the world is?
> What does this cultural artifact [sic] assume about the way the world should be?
> What does this cultural artifact [sic] make possible?
> What does this cultural artifact [sic] make impossible (or at least very difficult)?
> What new forms of culture are created in response to this artifact [sic]?
> (Crouch 2008:25–29).

These five questions are not dissimilar to McLuhan's tetrad; a "heuristic device" which can be utilised "by anyone, anywhere, at any time, about any human artefact" (McLuhan & McLuhan 1992:7). McLuhan and McLuhan refer to the tetrad as "laws of media [which] are intended to provide a ready means of identifying the properties of and actions exerted upon ourselves by our technologies and media and artefacts" (McLuhan & McLuhan 1992:98). The tetrad consists of four questions asked of each artefact:

What does it enhance or intensify?

What does it render obsolete or displace?

What does it retrieve that was previously obsolesced?

What does it produce or become when pressed to an extreme?

(McLuhan & McLuhan 1992:7)

McLuhan and McLuhan suggest that "in tetrad form, the artefact is seen to be not neutral or passive, but an active logos or utterance of the human mind or body that transforms the users and his ground" (McLuhan & McLuhan 1992:99). The strength of either of these questioning approaches for examining the cultural artefacts is as McLuhan and McLuhan suggest, that while "Western Old Science approaches the study of media in terms of linear, sequential transportation of data as detached figures (content); the New Science approach [the tetrad] is via the ground of users and of environmental media effects" (McLuhan & McLuhan 1992:85). Whilst these questions provide a starting point it is important that they are placed within a cultural evaluative framework to further focus the approach.

As Gordon (McLuhan & Gordon 2003:xi) and Watson (Innis 2008:xvii) both point out, the work of McLuhan was influenced by that of Harold Innis, particularly in linking media's impact on cultural settings. Innis in his seminal works on communication, *Empire and Communication* (1950) and *The Bias of Communication* (1951) traces the historical relationship between the dominant communication media and subsequent civilisations which are developed. Innis states that "a medium of communication has an important influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and over time and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence in its cultural setting" (Innis 2008:33). Postman suggests, Innis tried to show that "new technologies alter the structure of our interests: the things we think *about*. They alter the character of

our symbols: the things we think *with*. And they alter the nature of community: the arena in which thoughts develop" (Postman 1993:20).

Innis' work traced an extensive time period beginning in Egypt ~4000 BC and working through to his current day (1950's). In his historical analysis, Innis arrived at the concepts of "space" and "time" biased media which lead to resultant civilisations which contained characteristics of cultural emphasis. "Media that emphasize time are those that are durable in character, such as parchment, clay and stone…Media that emphasize space are apt to be less durable and light in character, such as papyrus and paper" (Innis 2007:26). Whilst Innis developed these dichotomies across a range of characteristics and may have been attempting a "new grand synthesis" McLuhan's concentration was on the sensual "eye vs. ear" (Innis 2008:xix).

For McLuhan, the concept of a dichotomy between the sensual – eye vs. ear – provided a key metaphor for media critique. McLuhan utilises this dichotomy in assessing the introduction and rise to prominence of the phonetic alphabet "in which semantically meaningless letters are used to correspond to semantically meaningless sounds…[which generates] a sharp division in experience, giving to its user an eye for an ear" (2003:119–120). McLuhan's extends this sensual concept with his famous aphorism "the medium is the message" which can only be understood in terms of medium as the "extension of ourselves" (McLuhan & Gordon 2003:19) where (as already quoted) "all media are an extension of some human faculty" (McLuhan et al. 2001:26).

McLuhan's key argument in this area was that culture shifted sensually from the ear to the eye in moving from an oral based culture to a print culture (McLuhan et al. 2001:44–50); but with the rise of electronic technology (albeit that of the 1960's-70's) McLuhan suggested "we are back in acoustic space" (McLuhan et al. 2001:63). McLuhan is not alone in suggesting that our current Western cultural milieu is in a transitional phase to a new era (Postman 1993; Borgmann 2003; Ellul 1990; Dawn 2003; Babin 1991; Hipps

2006); but the acoustic space of this new era, whatever it may be called, cannot be the same acoustic space of an oral based culture. Print and the written word continue to have a place within the electronic setting but the printed physical page is no longer the dominant medium. What needs to be considered is what are the cultural distinctives of this new era, which we will call the "device age" (Borgmann 2003, 1987).

The difficulty of this task is that the device age is still in its infancy. The telegraph, telephone, radio, television, computer, internet, mobile phones, internet capable smart phones, are all devices instrumental in accelerating the move into this age. This means we are most likely no more than 150 years into this era at the most with the introduction of the telegraph in the mid 1800's. And considering the exponential growth of devices in the later part of the 20th century, it is more likely we are closer to 40 to 50 years into this era. The infancy of the digital age requires that some of the key shifts which occurred in the movement from an oral to literate era are utilised to inform which areas may benefit from closer scrutiny in the current era shift. To maintain the focus of this study on mass communication of a teaching content, the areas to be considered are restricted as much as possible to information storage and transmission processes.

One of the key concepts in relation to the shift from the oral to the print era is the movement of information storage and transmission out of an inter-personal relational context. As Ong posits, in an oral culture "you know what you can recall" and without the ability to store what is known within a text "sustained thought in an oral culture is tied to communication" (Ong 2002:33–34). Unlike the oral, "writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for 'objectivity', in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing" (Ong 2002:45). This change in information storage and transmission has had an impact on the cultural setting. As Hipps points out continuing this same argument: "in a predominantly oral culture, one in which communication is based on face-to-face oral speech, there is no means for storing information or knowledge

outside the mind. As a result, once knowledge is obtained, the culture depends upon the community to both retain and repeat that knowledge…As writing becomes the dominant communication system, people no longer need the community to retain teachings, traditions, or identity" (Hipps 2006:53).

These observations bring the first line of tension into clear focus:

Community   vs   Technology

In an oral culture, the connection between information storage and transmission is the community to which the information or knowledge belongs. In a post-print culture, the connection between information storage and transmission is the technology which stores and transmits it. The shift into the device era has served to reinforce the technological focus.   As Postman puts it, in this era "information appears indiscriminately, directed at no one in particular, in enormous volume and at high speeds, and disconnected from theory, meaning or purpose" (Postman 1993:70). This in turn impacts on the cultural setting, reinforcing certain directions and reducing others. We suggest that this line of tension can be extrapolated via the following underlying tensions:

Community	**vs**	**Technology**
Relationship	vs	Individualism
Interconnectivity	vs	Productivity
Complexity	vs	Efficiency
Engagement	vs	Distraction
Participation	vs	Consumption

In terms of this key line of tension and the five underlying supporting tensions, we would argue that this tension primarily is a tension between a theological position (community) and a sociological position (technology). The metaphor of the Church as the body of Christ emphasises her relational interconnectivity (Christ as head and members as the different parts), in a complex relationship of engagement and participation where the goal

or *telos* is that the body grow in maturity and fullness in Christ (e.g. Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 10:14-22; 12:12-31; Ephesians 2:14-18; 4:1-16; Colossians 2:6-3:17). Technology, we will argue, instead suggests that the goal or *telos* is progress, that our individual lives benefit most from productivity and efficiency which allows us to be distracted in lives of consumption. McLuhan's comment that "the only perfect union of medium and the message had occurred in the person of Jesus Christ" (Schultze 2006:70) should be a reminder that God's ultimate act of communication was not via a technically superior medium but was an incarnational event.

As Schultze illustrates, in terms of the North American paradigm, "evangelistic hopes blended powerfully with the nation's technological dreams and its ongoing industrial progress. Faith *and* technology became faith *in* technology, and eventually it was hard to distinguish between missionary activity and technological innovation" (Schultze 2006:13 emphasis in original). This is not a unique situation to the North American context and is easily recognised within the Western paradigm. The shift towards a "faith *in* technology" is what Ellul refers to as "the technological bluff" which:

> consists essentially of rearranging everything in terms of technical progress, which with prodigious diversification offers us in every direction such varied possibilities that we can imagine nothing else…a demonstration of the prodigious power, diversity, success, universal application, and impeccability of techniques…[where] technique is regarded in advance as the only solution to collective problems…or individual problems…and because at the same time it is seen as the only chance for progress and development in every society (Ellul 1990:xv–xvi).

What Postman refers to as "technopoly" which includes:

the belief that the primary, if not the only, goal of human labor [sic] and thought is efficiency; that technical calculation is in all respects superior to human judgement; that in fact human judgement cannot be trusted, because it is plagued by laxity, ambiguity, and unnecessary complexity; that subjectivity is an obstacle to clear thinking; that what cannot be measured either does not exist or is of no value; and that the affairs of citizens are best guided and conducted by experts (Postman 1993:51).

What Borgmann refers to as "the device paradigm" in which a device:

makes no demands of our skill, strength, or attention, and it is less demanding the less it makes its presence felt…Of all the physical properties of a device, those alone are crucial and prominent which constitute the commodity that the device procures…The emphasis lies on the commodious way in which devices make goods and services available (Borgmann 1987:42).

And what Hipps refers to as "the ecology of media" in which:

communication media often serve to remove the walls of time and distance. As a result, formerly separate worlds collide, creating entirely new cultural ecologies. Electronic culture has broken down major walls as we extend ourselves in a global embrace…this has a profound effect on the way we as Christians practice community and imagine our mission in the world (Hipps 2006:40).

The work of Ellul, Postman, Borgman and Hipps provide a platform for considering the elements of these underlying tensions of Community and Technology.

3.1.1.1 Relationship vs. Individualism

This line of tension is best seen as residual of the movement from an oral to literate based cultural setting which released information storage and transmission from its relationally embedded setting. In agreement with what is already presented above in this regard, Postman states: "Orality stresses group learning, cooperation, and a sense of social responsibility…print stresses individualised learning and competition, and personal autonomy". In his more detailed examination of television, Postman suggests that "Typography fostered the modern idea of individuality, but it destroyed the medieval sense of community and integration" (Postman 2006:29). In a conclusive statement on the impact of the printed word Postman states that:

> to engage the written word means to follow a line of thought, which requires considerable powers of classifying, inference-making and reasoning. It means to uncover lies, confusions, and overgeneralisations, to detect abuses of logic and common sense. It also means to weigh ideas, to compare and contrast assertions, to connect one generalization to another. To accomplish this, one must achieve a certain distance from the words themselves, which is, in fact, encouraged by the isolated and impersonal text (Postman 2006:51) .

Hipps presents the following to illustrate the same point:

> Regardless of what is being communicated, the printed word quietly whispers subliminal messages *(you're an individual)*. The subject matter could *(you are objective)* be anything. Regardless of the content, we are *(think abstractly)* powerfully shaped by the form *(think rationally)* of the words alone (Hipps 2006:53).

The cultural value system of the printed word increased the value of the individual as separate from the community. The individual no longer required a relational context for engaging with new information; they could instead gather new information as a private exercise from a printed text. This shift in cultural value system "put forward a definition of intelligence that gave priority to the objective, rational use of the mind and at the same time encouraged forms of public discourse with serious, logically ordered content" (Postman 2006:51). In other words, "at the heart of the Enlightenment is the printed word" (Hiebert 2008:197).

Borgmann expands the shift of the public-private divide within the rise of modernism, suggesting that "capitalism began to destroy the substance of the village community, and secularism began to supersede the cultural authority of religion and feudal order" (Borgmann 2003:38) which over time has led to the situation where ultimately the private becomes a space "occupied by one consumer" (Borgmann 2003:41). Ellul also follows a similar broader focus on the conditions which gave rise to the technological milieu suggesting that one condition, "possibly the most decisive…is the plasticity of the social milieu" involving the "disappearance of social taboos and the disappearance of natural social groups". The latter of which is rooted in "the defense [sic] of the rights of the individual" which result in the individual reinforced as "the sole sociological unit" (Ellul 1967:47–52).

The rise of the individual in all cases undergirds the current shift into our device era, by whatever title they refer to it. As Schultze (2006:61–62) and Hipps (2006:54–55) point out the rise of the individual focus has altered the current focus of the Gospel message placing the salvation of the individual in isolation from community of faith. What appears clear right throughout the biblical cannon is not just the individual, but the community. The emphasis on the people of God, as children of God, requires that the individual is understood as part of a larger inter-related context. This theme is continually apparent within the New Testament letters, that the people must realise they are part of something

bigger than just themselves (e.g. Rm 12; 1 Cor 12-14; 2 Cors 6:14-7:4; Gal 6:1-3; Eph 2:19-22, 4:1-6; 1 Pt 2:4-12; 1 Jn 1:7-14). In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between relationship and individualism needs to be evaluated.

3.1.1.2 Interconnectivity vs. Productivity

This line of tension is best understood in terms of the shift in information transmission from the "means to an end" to becoming the "end" in and of itself. Information storage and transmission entered a new phase with the development of the telegraph which has only continued with the proliferation of new devices. "The telegraph removed space as an inevitable constraint on the movement of information, and for the first time, transportation and communication were disengaged from each other…The telegraph made information into a commodity, a "thing" that could be bought and sold irrespective of its uses or meaning" (Postman 1993:67). "Prior to the telegraph, information tended to be local, rooted in a context, and wrapped in history to provide meaning and coherence" (Hipps 2006:67). With the introduction of the telegraph, information entered into the realms of profit driven productivity which encouraged information to be valued regardless of the means it may serve, but simply as an end in and of itself.

Ellul posits in terms of productivity that the "industrial or postindustrial organization and technical or computerized society are not for the purpose of creating consumer goods or enhancing human life and well-being but solely for the producing of profit" (Ellul 1990:317). Productivity is linked to the relationship of input against output where "productivity rises when output increases faster than input" (Ellul 1990:307). But when there exists "appropriate techniques that have no chance of success because they will not yield maximum profits" (Ellul 1990:318); profit's dominant role is unveiled. As information entered into the setting of the telegraph, the challenge became to make "context-free information" (Postman 2006:65) a valuable product or risk its demise.

The answer to this challenge was the newspaper which "came to depend not on the quality or utility of the news they provided but on how much, from what distances, and at what speed...Only four years after Morse opened the nation's first telegraph line…the Associated Press was founded and news from nowhere, addressed to no one in particular, began to criss-cross the nation" (Postman 2006:67). "Prior to the telegraph, information was gathered for the purpose of deepening our understanding and wisdom" (Hipps 2006:67). With the telegraph the definition of information "rejected the necessity of interconnectedness, proceeded without context, argued for instancy [sic] against historical continuity, and offered fascination in place of complexity and coherence" (Postman 1993:69).

The result was that as all information gained a value regardless of its interconnectedness to the "possibilities of action" (Postman 2006:68) of those to whom it was transmitted. No longer was information important based on its possibility of action but rather "the situation created by telegraphy, and then exacerbated by later technologies, made the relationship between information and action both abstract and remote" (Postman 2006:68). This was not the case previously with oral cultures where instead information was classified based on its usefulness (Ellul 1990:327) in "situational, operational frames of reference…close to the living human lifeworld" (Ong 2002:49). For those to whom the information is transmitted the "challenge becomes figuring out how to prioritize and find meaning" (Hipps 2006:67) out of "an uninterrupted flow of mixed material about everything and nothing" (Ellul 1990:329). Having more and more information does not provide any direction for deciphering that information (Ellul 1990:276–280).

The temptation is to respond to this problem of mass information by simply adding more information, the "right" information, rather than seeking to enhance the ability of people to decipher and discern the information they have access to. The former is far more productively attractive than the latter. Firstly, to enhance discernment and deciphering different and interconnected viewpoints across issues are required to be presented and

allowed to be thoughtfully considered by the 'audience'. This is a far harder task to accomplish than presenting one position and reinforcing it with the logic which supports it, ignoring any viewpoints which may generate tension or uncertainty with the position. Secondly, as the interconnectedness of information and action become divorced and individualism triumphs over community, providing a reinforcement of what is already known becomes a far more profitable enterprise than questioning the status quo.

In this milieu, information's value becomes its ability to provide the service of supporting the individual rationalised position. When this becomes the case, the interconnectivity of information and action is diminished. The individual's desired type of information is unconnected and unrelated information which 'preaches to the converted' and arrives in small manageable parcels. This serves to reinforce a productivity mindset, where the value of transmitting information is not to deepen understanding or wisdom via drawing out the interconnectivity of information and action, but rather the reinforcement of accumulating knowledge which protects an established position and therefore doesn't alter action.

This requires a balance by recognising the value of "Practical knowledge [which] glues individuals to the concrete with no intellectual capacity apart from an operational one" (Ellul 1990:141). Often in a rationally dominant Westernised context, faith in Christ has become congruent with a rational decision, a statement that the individual believes in Jesus. Against this the New Testament consistently affirms a faith that is alive and active (a life transformed) in deeds lived out of the belief that Jesus has changed everything (e.g. Mt 25:31-46; Jn 15:1-17; Rm 12:1-21; Gal 5:16-26; Eph 4:17-24; Ja 2:14-26). From this perspective information needs to be intrinsically linked with the action response which it calls forth. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between interconnectivity and productivity needs to be evaluated.

3.1.1.3 Complexity vs. Efficiency

This line of tension is best understood in terms of the increased speed associated with information storage and transmission which emphasises the destination over the journey. This line of tension is similar to the interconnectivity vs. productivity line of tension above but contains an alternative perspective. Whilst as Postman states "the principal strength of the telegraph was its capacity to move information" (Postman 2006:69) the page or the person remained the key storage devices. The process of retrieving information could still remain an arduous task requiring information to be sent (albeit instantaneously) from one location to request subsequent information from another location; the required information source (person or page) would then need to be located and the subsequent information sent in response to the request. Thus productivity – read profit – could be lost dependent on the speed at which the entire process could be completed.

This illustrates the subtle alternate perspective of this line of tension. Productivity is linked to ensuring the end result is valuable, efficiency is linked to achieving the end result in the fastest possible manner assuming this will increase productivity. As Ellul points out reason or "rational judgement" in the techological context both increase awareness of "new and different means" but also "selects from the various means at its disposal with a view to securing the ones that are the most efficient" (Ellul 1967:20–21). The focus on efficiency results in a celebration of "saving time" resulting in "going fast" becoming a value of its own (Ellul 1990:258). In Borgmann's terms this is the "notion of availability" which becomes the dominant attractive feature of "the progress of technology" which results in the replacement of the "traditional thing" with the "more advanced device" as "human life at any one time is full and complete…[the result is] we have discarded something old to make room for the new" (Borgmann 2003:16).

Even more telling in this regard is Borgmann's observation in relation to the "technical liberation from toil and misery" characteristic of the Industrial Revolution "was then and is

still being regarded as freeing a space and time for human flourishing" (Borgmann 2003:76). His astute observation is that "What has most always been overlooked is the fact that technology has not only made room for pleasure but has also invaded and occupied the liberated space" (Borgmann 2003:76). Common sentiment seems to reinforce that "experience shows that the more time we save, the less we have. The faster we go the more harassed we are" (Ellul 1990:258). It is therefore questionable that efficiency remains as the predominant measure of value. When time is seen as "an adversary over which technology could triumph" the result is that there is "no time to look back or to contemplate what was being lost" (Postman 1993:45). "Formed by science, technique, and the media, our thinking is not global and complex, like reality – it is disabled" (Ellul 1990:221) because "technique moves much too fast for reflection, which is complex" (Ellul 1990:345).

In terms of seeking to create materials which encourage people into reflection on God's word (whether in a group setting or as an individual) providing the most efficient way to achieve this works against the process of reflection. Reflection requires time, space, and a recognition of the complexity of what is being reflected on. In other words, seeking to make it an easy and accessible task to reflect on God's word is questionable in terms of its ability to encourage a reflective posture at all. In terms of a group setting, it is questionable that if the leader of the group does not need to prepare (i.e. the material can be used without pre-reading/preparation), that the leader is actually capable to then facilitate the group towards reflective and in depth discussion.

In terms of the role of those in leadership, training and teaching within the context of the Church, the New Testament points towards those roles seeking to build the maturity of others under their care; that the roles are given and gifted to the Church that the body may grow in strength and maturity (e.g. 1 Cor 3:1-23, 10:23-11:1; Eph 4:1-16; Heb 5:11-

14). In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between complexity and efficiency needs to be evaluated.

 3.1.1.4 Engagement vs. Distraction

This line of tension is best understood in terms of the ease of access to information storage and transmission which undervalues a process of growing in knowledge and understanding. The final two lines of tension are brought into focus well by the work of Borgmann in terms of his comparison of what he terms "a thing" and "a device" (2003:31). Based on Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's *The Meaning of Things* which accounts a "sociological analysis of an important segment of our material setting, the home", Borgmann presents the notion of "commanding reality" and "disposable reality" (Borgmann 2003:28). Borgmann utilises the area of music from the study of Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton to illustrate his point and it is summarised in the table below (Borgmann 2003:28–33):

Reality Type:	Commanding	Disposable
Specific Item:	Instrument	Stereo
Attributed Value:	Symbol of life-style (past or future)	Useful and dependable
Ease of Use:	Arduous to master	Effortless
Coverage:	Limited range (only what is known/able)	Abundant range (any recorded artist)
Item Type:	Thing	Device
Demand:	Skilled and active engagement	Everywhere and easily available
Result:	Practice – Commanding Reality	Consumption – Disposable Reality

Borgmann concludes that:

> material culture in the advanced industrial democracies spans a
> spectrum from commanding to disposable reality. The former reality
> calls forth a life of engagement this is oriented within the physical and
> social world. The latter induces a life of distraction that is isolated from
> the environment and other people (Borgmann 2003:33).

Ellul concurs arguing that there is "human dissociation produced by techniques" (Ellul 1967:398) and Postman agrees that "the trivialization of significant cultural symbols is largely conducted by commercial enterprise" (Postman 1993:165). Instead of families and friends who would gather around an instrument in the home to share in a symbolic and valuable activity of listening or even singing together, it is nowadays far more common to see the individual isolated in the world of their iPod soaking in any symphony they desire.

The concepts of engagement and distraction are generated out of the demand generated. A "thing" requires that we are engaged in the situation, utilising some skill or activity in the process. A "device" does not require us to utilise a skill or activity. This is expanded further by Borgmann in terms of "communities of celebration" which are "centered [sic] on some concrete thing" involved in "a joyful engagement with the physical presence and radiance of that thing" (Borgmann 2003:46–47). For Borgmann there is a combination which enhances the ability for communities of celebration to develop: human involvement and the environment. The more active the role the human is required to play and the less the environment of the activity is "accidental or contingent on efficiency" the more likely an engaged communal celebration will occur (Borgmann 2003:48–49).

The current cultural value system with regard to human activity as was touched on in the last section is one of disconnection. McLuhan's concept of the "global village" (McLuhan & Gordon 2003:129–131; McLuhan et al. 2001:63–67) is best understood as a "tribe of individuals" (Hipps 2006:72) where "despite the retribalizing force of electronic media, our culture remains intensely individualistic" (Hipps 2006:108). While our individualised reach and potential for the number of relationships increases with each new device, "in virtual community, our contacts involve very little real risk and demand even less of us personally" (Hipps 2006:111). The point Hipps makes is that the less a relationship demands, the less it requires engagement and the result is a "cotton candy community" which is much more likely to result in a distracted existence under the illusion of being engaged (Hipps 2006:111). The ability to identify between activity and engagement has become crucial within the device age where activities in a "virtual community can feel just as real as physical community, but the social, spiritual, and emotional realities do not provide the same kind of connections" (Hipps 2006:114).

This also illustrates the environmental element to which Borgmann alludes. Borgmann contrasts environments which are either "focussed" or "diffuse" (49-50). In focussed environmental settings, it matters where the activity takes place and there is therefore intentionality to either creating or selecting the appropriate setting. This then encourages the activity to enter further towards an action of engagement. For relationships in the virtual realm, efficiency in having the relationship becomes a key element. With the continual stream of "status" updates one can receive from an environment such as Facebook or Twitter, it is not surprising that these become little more than distractions – information that hasn't been requested, given to all and sundry within the "friends", often with little or no conceivable reason.

The environmental element is not only restricted to the virtual environment. In the example of a jogger, choosing to jog outside instead of on a treadmill inside will create a different engagement in the activity of jogging. They will be required to be aware of where they are jogging so as to return as required. They will be required to be aware of the different surfaces on which they may be jogging so as not to cause injury. They will have to decide if they wish to encounter particular settings or avoid others and then plan the appropriate route. They will be aware of their isolation if one is jogging through a remote field, or of their participation in an ongoing world if jogging in an urbanised setting where they are coming across "others" carrying out similar or different activities. In jogging on a treadmill the jogger may start or stop at any time, their environment remains constant, and most likely, instead of being engaged in the act of jogging, the jogger is most likely distracted by the television.

It is this "inconspicuous and elusive quotidianity of the technological culture" (Borgmann 2003:15) which can cause the "narcotic effect that disposable reality has on people" (Borgmann 2003:34) to be overlooked. For the setting of the Bible study materials it is important to consider the demands which are placed on the participants, and the environments which are encouraged. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between engagement and distraction needs to be evaluated.

3.1.1.5 Participation vs. Consumption

This line of tension is best understood in terms of the commoditisation of information storage and transmission into a desirable product rather than an ongoing event. As Dawn puts it: "We have learned to desire only the final *product*, the commodity, and not to value the *process* of work, which has instead become the device" (Dawn 2003:53). This line of tension as outlined above is the resultant posture which

engagement or distraction invite. Borgmann contends that: "In the modern universe of abundance and availability our contact with the world is reduced to effortless and inconsequential consumption. The availability of commodities is necessarily accompanied by a loss of depth and disclosure of what once occupied the place of the commodity" (Borgmann 2003:86–87).

Ellul also recognises this when he states that "happiness now consists of meeting needs, assuring well-being, gaining wealth and also culture and knowledge. It is not an inner state but an act of consumption" (Ellul 1990:259). One thing has again been replaced by another and the problem is that the impact of the other is not always recognised, and especially not recognised as consumption. Postman and Weingartner's (1969:6) challenge to the reader to imagine the removal of "all the electric and electronic inventions that have appeared in the last 50 years" in the reverse order to which they appeared helps illustrate this point. This challenge, carried out now over 40 years since it was issued, does not raise the same problems as it did in the original setting where eventually the electric lights, refrigerator, heating and air-conditioning would all have been removed (Postman & Weingartner 1969:6). In terms of the current setting, if devices were removed based on their first entering the home rather than their latest version or type, even the television would still remain. So whilst the authors of this thought experiment 40 years ago suggested that "you would have to be a totally different person from what you are in order to survive for more than a day" (1969:6); this is no longer the case.

In carrying out this thought experiment now, what one begins to realise is how many devices have entered our existence within the last fifty years. It also highlights how despite having a device which carries out the task, there is a continued replacement pressure as new and improved versions enter the marketplace. As replacement versions these devices are best classified as "gadgets" as "they did not respond to

any need" and "it entails an application of high tech for almost zero utility" (Ellul 1990:262). The result is that "technique produces more technique whether it makes sense or not, whether it is needed or not. We are pressed to buy it" (Ellul 1990:263). This pressure comes as technology extends "the limits of availability" (Borgmann 2003:21) sold by two promises: ""Now you no longer have to…" – the promise of liberation – and "Now you can…" – the promise of enrichment" (Borgmann 2003:121).

What is often overlooked in these promises is that these new devices or commodities replace what was previously present. Thus just because "Now you no longer have to…" doesn't mean you shouldn't still. And just because "Now you can" doesn't mean you should. The tendency of the device era to replace community with technology encourages the consumption of each new device without considering that it may be our real participation that is being replaced. Hipps is correct to contend that "Scripture calls us to something more. It invites us to move beyond our mobility, computer screens, and cell phones and to participate in authentic community marked by proximity and permanence, shared memories, and corporate dreams for the future" (Hipps 2006:122).

It is possible in following the Western cultural value system that the Bible study materials that are being produced are not encouraging participation in authentic community but rather events to be consumed for the primary benefit of the individual. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between participation and consumption needs to be evaluated.

3.1.2. Seeing What We're Missing

The importance of investigating the area of Cultural Value Systems in this study is that as Schultze suggests; becoming "unswervingly committed to progress and so favourably disposed towards the latest media technologies" (Schultze 2006:35) risks elevating the

wrong assumption "that being technologically "backward" will lead…[to] a negative form of cultural exile" (Schultze 2006:35). Investigating the Cultural Value System is not a matter of seeking to reject it out of hand, but rather to open our vision to the concept that:

> Technology enables, but it also disables; in the process of making some
> worthwhile things happen, it prohibits other good things from taking
> place – even things that are primarily matters of the spirit or habits of the
> heart (Schultze 2006:41).

3.2 COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Section 2.2.2 above has previously introduced the concept that communication models and theories will intentionally or unintentionally influence the production of the Bible study materials under investigation in this study. This is the case as communication theories are operative in two ways: as "descriptive maps *of* human communication…[and] prescriptive maps *for* communication" (Schultze 2000:47). This is a somewhat cyclic view of communication theories, but none the less a valuable one. How communication is understood will shape how we seek to utilise the different tools of communication.

3.2.1 Establishing the Lines of Tension

In terms of communication theories the landscape is somewhat large. Littlejohn contends that "Scholars have made many attempts to define communication, but establishing a single definition has proved impossible and may not be very fruitful" (Littlejohn 1999:6). For example, Bluck suggests that Harold Laswells five W's – who, says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect – provides a succinct summary of the common elements of communication and then points out that this theory has been represented in many different ways (Bluck 1989:6–9). Yet Schultze contends that Laswells definition "is a classic example of the failure to take human motives into account" (Schultze 2000:52), and fails to see communication in all its complexity.

Fortner suggests that what is missing is uncovering the assumptions which underpin the communication theory:

> For instance, theorists assume that humans are passive vessels or active interpreters. They may assume that communication is about the movement of information or the dialogic sharing of meaning. They may assume that the originator of a message is the proper judge of its success, or that those who receive a message are more appropriate judges. They may assume that a message has only one meaning (that intended by the initiator in an exchange) or that multiple legitimate interpretations are possible (Fortner 2007:26)

What is identifiable in the way Fortner presents these underlying assumptions is that they can be categorised under what Carey posits are the two main conceptions in relation to understanding communication: "a transmission view of communication and a ritual view of communication" (Carey 2009:12). We would agree with Fortner and Carey and suggest the key line of tension in communication theories is:

Ritual/Cultural Theories   vs   Transmission Theories

Carey suggests that transmission theories are "defined by terms such as "imparting," "sending," "transmitting," or "giving information to others." (Carey 2009:12) and cultural theories by "terms such as "sharing," "participation," "association," "fellowship," and "the possession of a common faith." (Carey 2009:15). Combining these different terms of definition with Fortner's set of assumptions we contend that this key line of tension is best developed by the following underlying lines of tension:

Ritual/Cultural Theories   vs   Transmission Theories
Cultural Formation   vs   Information Transportation

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Empowerment} & \text{vs} & \text{Power Maintenance} \\
\text{Conflicting Medium Potential} & \text{vs} & \text{Unidirectional Medium} \\
& & \text{Potential} \\
\text{Negotiated Meaning} & \text{vs} & \text{Transferred Meaning}
\end{array}$$

In terms of this key line of tension and the four underlying supporting tensions, we would argue that this tension line has both theology and sociology in tension with themselves. Altheide points out that:

> while it is commonplace among social theorists that the message reflects the process by which it was constituted, they have paid much less attention to how social activities are joined interactively in a communication environment, and particularly how the techniques and technology associated with certain communicative acts contribute to the action (Altheide 1995:1).

In this statement, what is presented is a sociological view of communication which seeks to draw forth an alternate view to the predominant paradigm. Carey also, whilst suggesting that the "basic orientation to communication remains grounded, at the deepest roots of our thinking, in the idea of transmission" (Carey 2009:13), seeks to encourage interaction with "a minor thread" (Carey 2009:15) by inviting an interaction with the "ritual view of communication" (Carey 2009:15).

However, this is not just a sociological view in tension, as in Carey's observations of both sides of the tension line he identifies that both directions owe an indebtedness to religion in the establishment of their key elements (Carey 2009:12–16). For the transmission view, Carey suggests that the evangelistic fervour "at the onset of the age of exploration" (Carey 2009:13) led to communication being viewed as the means to help achieve "the establishment and extension of God's kingdom on earth" (Carey 2009:13). In terms of the North American context, "Twentieth-century evangelical Protestants were unequivocally

the major advocates of religious uses of mass media, particularly of evangelistic efforts to convert the unsaved" (Schultze 2006:62). Woods and Patton point out this attitude remains alive within those who "are among the first to adopt new media technologies in the service of Christ's Great Commission to spread the gospel of faith" (Woods & Patton 2010:8–9).

For the ritual/cultural view, Carey suggests it is an older view and owes its religious connection to the traditions which "highlight the role of prayer, the chant, and the ceremony" (Carey 2009:15) where the "maintenance and construction of an ordered, meaningful cultural world" (Carey 2009:15) are paramount. Horsfield similarly agrees that whilst the ritual/cultural view "challenges previous understandings and power structures of Christianity as a coherent movement…in many ways it recovers many aspects of how Jesus communicated" (Horsfield 2004:30). The focus becomes "the communication of spiritual knowledge, the creation of shared religious understanding, and the building of local faith communities" (Schultze 2006:86).

In terms of the study of communication there is a traceable timeline in the development and emphasis of these overarching views based primarily in how the audience is understood in the communication process (Feijter 2007:100). However, whilst the timeline emphasis has been moving from transmission towards ritual, transmission continues to remain a dominant paradigm (Carey 2009:12; Schultze 2000:50–51; Horsfield 2004:24–25). To investigate the tension lines above in more detail, the focus of what follows will explore how the audience is perceived within these tension lines.

3.2.1.1 Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation

This line of tension is best understood in terms of the principle purpose of the communication for the audience. This line of tension relates predominantly to the two ideas of the motivations for the communication and the desired outcomes of the communication for the audience. One way to seek to enlighten the motivations and

desired outcomes which can be difficult to discern, is to consider the focus of measuring those concepts in relation to what is considered successful communication (Bluck 1989:71–73).

Fortner contends that from an information transportation paradigm communication is

> fundamentally a process by which information (message or meaning) is transferred (or transported) from one person to another and in which the success of the exchange is judged on the basis of how effectively (or efficiently) the information/message/meaning of the originator is reproduced by the recipient…it is the intent of the message's originator that is the key to knowing whether or not communication works (Fortner 2007:60).

From this perspective "the purpose of communication research [or measurement] is to predict what factors will determine the effect of a given message on particular persons in specific situations" (Schultze 2000:50). Such measurements are usually focussed around quantifiable factors which can provide a meaningful data set for analysing the success of the communication (Schultze 2000:46; Bluck 1989:73). For example, the success of an evangelistic event can be measured by the number who respond to the alter call. A large number of respondents equates to a successful communication of the Gospel, a small number of respondents equates to unsuccessful communication and thus may require alterations.

Such a view of communication still remains as a dominant paradigm within the Christian context and Horsfield points out there are at least four key reasons for its dominance. These are the simplicity of understanding this approach allowing focus on the strategy; the idea that by learning the techniques the results are achievable; it aligns with the proclamation predominant in churches allowing an easy translation of activities into the

media field and it assumes the message meaning is determined by the one producing the materials (Horsfield 2004:24–25)

The collective attractiveness of these reasons within the Christian context unveils the key motivation which lies behind an information transportation approach. The key motivation is achieving the outcomes of the communicator, in whatever shape these outcomes may take. Thus an information transportation understanding of communication is defined as successful by the communicator when it achieves their pre-determined purpose. This is not wrong *per se*, and we would suggest that all communication does contain some element of this motivation. But as Feijter correctly states, "Churches structuring communication to this instrumentalist [information transportation] view overemphasize the power of the communicator and the message. At the same time, they overlook the frames of reference that audiences and individuals use to interpret a message" (Feijter 2007:252). The information transportation view often fails to recognise the complexities and difficulties in human communication and the hard work required in communicating with each other (Schultze 2006:86–87).

If what Fortner draws attention to in the scriptural account of God as communicator is considered, successful communication is measured in different terms.

> What God does is take care with his communication, focus on relationship with his audience through such practices as reinforcement, repetition, and consistency, and trust those with whom he seeks communion…What is perhaps amazing about the stories of communication in the scripture is how consistent they are in emphasizing the relationship God sought with his creation. (Fortner 2007:62).

What is evident then from Scripture is that God's primary motivation for communication was the establishment of communion with his people. God has continued to seek a people who will live in community with him. Considering this viewpoint, communication "is not merely a means to proclaim but to connect and nurture; not merely to convict through a call to conversion, but to establish and continue the loving relationship and intimate connection with the creator that he has attempted throughout human history to develop" (Fortner 2007:65). Successful communication should not then be measured only via quantifiable terms, but by qualitative terms as well. This motivation of communication from a Christian perspective requires a commitment of concern for the audience and how the communication is seeking to connect, nurture, establish and continue the audience's relationships in community with each other and God. Successful Christian communication needs to be measured beyond an information transportation approach focussed only on if the message was delivered successfully and also question the cultural or ritual practices which it encourages to develop within the setting of the community of faith.

In developing Bible study materials the purpose of the communication will be shaped by the underlying theories of communication. As has been demonstrated above, these theories will shape the desired outcomes of the materials in relation to the audience to which they are directed. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between cultural formation and information transportation needs to be evaluated.

3.2.1.2 Empowerment vs Power Maintenance

This line of tension is best understood in terms of how the communicator seeks to engage in the negotiation of power within the communication process. Altheide puts it bluntly that it is now taken for granted that "power and ideology are implicated in all media content, and conversely that power is exercised through communication channels and formats. Ideas, interests, and ideologies are clothed in communication logics and formats" (Altheide 1995:101). He continues by challenging that it is not "illegitimate agents" but

"legitimate agents" which "pose the greatest challenge" in relation to social control (Altheide 1995:111). In the realm of communication, it is not a level playing field, and especially in terms of mass produced and mass mediated communications where there is not equal access to have a voice (Carey 2009:67). Even with an ever increasing ability to communicate into a mass environment via the increased accessibility of medium production tools and the internet, there still remains the legitimised voice upheld by publishing and production institutions. For example the perceived value of the blog site of a published author against a non-published author.

Our concern here is not to argue that such power situations should be overturned, but rather to question how the communication theory in action is seeking to utilise that power, or perceived power it may have. Ellul in his work on propaganda suggested that whilst "perhaps 90 percent" of people within a Western cultural setting know how to read people are inclined to either "attribute authority and eminent value to the printed word" or to do the opposite and "reject it altogether" (Ellul 1973:108). While Ellul may overstate what occurs with the printed word, when a transmission focus of communication is upheld, achieving an audience attitude of attributed authority and eminent value become a meaningful objective to pursue. When successful communication is measured in terms of the successful transmission of a message, achieving and reinforcing a position of power to ensure a message is most likely to be accepted becomes a valuable intention.

Against this, Bluck argues that "anything in which power is used over, rather than shared with" (Bluck 1989:66) is not Gospel supported communication and that it is only "so far as the speaker or sender is willing and able to risk losing control and allow receivers to shape the dialogue, even to reject it, [that] "Christian" communication is taking place" (Bluck 1989:71).

Schultze puts the same emphasis in the following way:

> God's communication through Christ is a monumental reversal of how we normally think about the role and purpose of symbolic power…Christ's ministry was not a quest for celebrity, it did not reflect a yearning for symbolic domination, and it was not a means by which to boost the authority of established social institutions. Jesus did not *take* symbolic power as much as he *gave* it to the powerless; his earthly ministry culminated in the cross itself, the greatest symbol of liberation in human history (Schultze 2000:100).

Whilst research in the area of mass communication has shifted towards establishing the role the audience plays, which has questioned the perceived power of a mass communication (Feijter 2007; Hoover 2006; Soukup 1997; Fortner 2007), this does not excuse the producers of mass communication products within a Christian context from considering their intentions in relation to power. As Fortner contends, "If the world sees communication as a means to control others, and Christians approach communication on the same basis, then they will see it, of course, as a means of control" (Fortner 2007:120). Instead, Fortner suggests that we remember that "God eschews coercion, trickery, fancy persuasive appeals, choosing again and again the straightforward, yet seemingly weaker approach of grace, question, demonstration, waiting patiently for his creation to interpret and understand, and to choose to love him better than they love themselves" (Fortner 2007:115–116). .

The dominant information transfer models of communication reinforce a one way transaction in terms of mass-mediated communication.   This, in turn, reinforces a dominant power relationship where only one speaks/communicates and the other listens. Against this, Fortner would suggest that "one foundational aspect of communication for Christians is to use dialogues whenever possible and to use the principles of dialogue even when it is not possible" (Fortner 2007:120). Feijter also posits that a "dialogical, relational and empowering outlook" is required to establish "a form of communication

which is biblically grounded" (Feijter 2007:315). For Feijter "This outlook is inviting, open ended, non-manipulative, confronting and it takes account of human dignity, human freedom and personal responsibility" (Feijter 2007:315). Dialogical communication theories "care about who is allowed to participate in a community's communication" (Schultze 2000:143).

Dawn goes so far as to contend that "True communication is not merely an exchange of information, but the embedding of whatever is discussed within a rich personal relationship" (Dawn 2003:14). Such an overstated position fails to engage with the complexities of the communication which occurs across a range of different media. Whilst it is not the same as face-to-face communication, it is possible for communication to occur outside of personal relationship. In the Westernised cultural setting, it is not enough to simply seek a return to a world without mass-mediated communication, as this does not provide a response which takes the embedded nature of this communication seriously enough.

Related to this is how the power of mass-mediated communication is understood. If mass-mediated communication has taken on the role of establishing the myths of society as some suggest (Schultze 2000:124–126; Woods & Patton 2010:2–4) then understanding the power relationships within this context cannot be ignored. Schultze contends that in the place of the dominant "four major roles" of mass communication: "informing the public, entertaining audiences, persuading consumers, and educating citizens" we need to be aware of the "priestly" and "prophetic" role that these communications play (Schultze 2000:124). The "priestly" role is that which "powerfully confirm and exploit what a tribe wants to believe" (Schultze 2000:127) and the "prophetic" role is that which "truthfully challenge a culture's beliefs" (Schultze 2000:131). Whilst Schultze focuses predominantly on mass media communications occurring outside of the Christian production field he contends that "Christian media can be just as strongly

priestly, and just as weakly prophetic, as mainstream media" (Schultze 2000:132). Those seeking to communicate Christianly via mass-mediated communication need to recognise that the main power of mass-mediated communication has been shown to be the priestly role where "change of attitude is the rarest result of mass communications" (Smith 1992:172).

Understanding that the most powerful use of mass-mediated communication is likely to be to confirm the beliefs of the tribe this then unveils the underlying temptation within mass-mediated communications to "preach to the choir" rather than to operate prophetically. This again fits within the tension of power maintenance and empowerment. To operate prophetically risks rejection, a loss of power, for the sake of empowering the other to see with a larger vision, what it may be that God intends. Even a short survey of the biblical prophets illustrates how they "were considered laughingstocks by the general public and often subjected to harsh treatment" (Woods & Patton 2010:23). Remaining focussed on power maintenance rules out risking rejection by entering vulnerability and empowering others to challenge, test, evaluate and possibly reject the message.

How power is understood and allowed to operate in the informing communication theories operating in the production of Bible study materials will influence the resultant product. This will shape how the audience is invited, or not invited, to engage in the relationships of power. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between empowerment and power maintenance needs to be evaluated.

3.2.1.3 Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential

This line of tension is best understood in terms of how the communicator views the role the communication medium will play in altering the potential for engaging with the audience. Woods and Patton suggest that whilst there has been a lot written to demonstrate the non-neutrality of technology and communication media, the two predominant North American responses to media criticism "pay little attention to the

media technology itself" (Woods & Patton 2010:11). This tension line however is established between those who pay little attention and those who have begun to pay attention and are able to recognise the conflicting potentials within different medium. McLuhan's aphorism "the medium is the message" is one of the influencing voices which has invited the development of this area often referred to as media ecology. It is rare to find an author writing in the area of media ecology who does not in some way refer to McLuhan and this, his most infamous aphorism. Much of McLuhan's concepts in this area have been discussed above (section 3.1.1 especially) and therefore our attention in this section will focus on others who have contributed in this area.

Dyer suggests that media do three things: "they communicate meaning, they create new cultures, and they shape our thinking patterns" (Dyer 2011:117). Dyer contends that newer communication media tend to remove formality, make the action of communication easier and increase the speed with which the communication action can occur (Dyer 2011:118–122). All of which alter the social environment. Altheide, in a similar way, argues "that the involvement of information technologies and communicative formats with activities shapes and changes those activities" (Altheide 1995:213). Babin posits that like a person who lives in the forest is shaped by that environment, so too, a person who exists within the electronic world is shaped by that environment (Babin 1991:41). "Electricity and everything that flows from it (light, television, computers, interconnected equipment) take the human being into a vast network which, by invading every part of the person, leads him or her inescapably to become part of that whole and to take its shape" (Babin 1991:41). Hipps also suggests that "the *forms* of media and technology – regardless of their *content* – cause profound changes in the church and culture" (Hipps 2006:23). However, Hipps follows this statement with another that is just as important: "The power of our media forms has created both challenges and opportunities in the ways the people of God are formed" (Hipps 2006:23). Such a statement brings into view the conflicting potentials of a medium – challenges and opportunities.

The second of Hipps' statements provides an important focus which is required to prevent the changes different media forms bring from being approached with either a positive or negative determinism. Mitchell broadly categorises these more deterministic approaches as either iconoclastic (negative) or iconographic (positive) and challenges the assumptions each of these positions can represent (Mitchell 2007:34–40). However, Mitchell appears to be much more scathing of iconoclasts than iconographers. Finding fault with iconoclasts who become more focussed on "attacking the 'idol'" than considering the opportunities provided, suggesting they often "yearn for an imaginary golden age" of a previous medium of which they are more familiar (Mitchell 2007:37–38). Whilst going on to praise the iconographers who are able to maintain a critical stance yet don't "refuse to reject wholesale media technology" and instead "recognise different media's potential" (Mitchell 2007:40). What is missing is an ability to recognise that potential is in and of itself not a neutral mechanism which provides only a positive outcome.

As has been pointed out by those iconoclasts like Ellul and Postmann (as identified by Mitchell) and McLuhan, Borgmann and Hipps (as presented above) is that potential for one thing will indefinitely result in a lack of potential for another. Smith too contends in a similar vein:

> Extending media must narrow the signals employed. Literature cannot extend kinesic, olfactory, temporal, tactile, or audio signals. Radio is even more limited. Television can extend a wider range of signals, but there is still an inevitable narrowing that results in something different from the original experience. The transmission may be so condensed, due to the restriction of time alone, that the result is a caricature of reality. Complex issues, emotional questions of loyalty and commitment, simply cannot be fully portrayed (Smith 1992:170).

Whilst Smith's assessment may be viewed as a negative determinism by some, it needs to be seen that the key point being made is not that only negative outcomes are possible, but rather, that any medium has its potential shaped by the characteristics of the medium. A book may increase the potential for systematically unpacking a complex rational philosophical theory; allowing the reader to re-read and re-evaluate the text enabling it to be grasped and committed to memory so that the reader can clearly articulate the theory for others; yet the potential for the theory to be accepted may be reduced. The same theory, presented via an oral presentation, may increase the potential for the audience to accept the theory, due to the charisma, professionalism and confidence of the presenter; yet they may only be able to provide the 'gist' of the theory to others and never be able to articulate it clearly.

Alongside this must remain the recognition that potential does not only assume a positive direction. It is possible for a potential to operate in a positive direction in one context and a negative direction in another. For example, reaching a larger audience is not always a positive potential. If one is desiring to construct an intimate communication environment constructed in the setting of relational trust, the potential of reaching a larger audience becomes either irrelevant or possibly destructive to such a desire if it is pursued.

Again those like Ellul, Postmann, McLuhan, Borgmann and Hipps seek to draw attention to the naivety of assuming potentials are only positive. This may indicate why these authors are often accused of a negative determinism. They refuse to accept that potential only ever operates in a unidirectional positive fashion. For example, Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* can be seen as an overstated criticism of the medium of television, where television becomes an unredeemable medium. Alternatively, it can be seen to draw into conversation the conflicting potentials of the medium which are often overlooked by those drawn to utilise the medium predominantly by the "positive" potentials.

For example Postman suggests that:

> the television screen itself has a strong bias toward a psychology of
> secularism. The screen is so saturated with our memories of profane
> events, so deeply associated with the commercial and entertainment
> worlds that it is difficult for it to be recreated as a frame for sacred
> events…Both the history and ever-present possibilities of the television
> screen work against the idea that introspection or spiritual
> transcendence is desirable in its presence (Postman 2006:119–120).

Such a statement can be reconstituted in terms of potential to say that television has the
potential to convey the sacred in terms of a commercial and entertainment paradigm and
in-so-doing make it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain the sacred.

Another example is Borgmann's statement on the written word where he suggests:

> Writing sets aside the fluidity, inflection, evanescence, the embodiment
> and context of speaking and leaves us with a rigid, permanent, and
> detached piece of information. In fact, writing extricates information
> from persons and contexts and sets it off against humanity and reality
> (Borgmann 1999:46).

This statement can again be reconstituted in terms of potential to say that writing has the
potential to remove information from the particular personal context in which it developed
and place in a totally other context where it confronts the reader and their concepts of
humanity and reality.

The difficult task is testing and evaluating the validity of the conflicting potentiality claims
being made. If "electronic media culture has a natural bias towards efficiency,
entertainment and consumption" (Hipps 2006:160) where "media condition the
structuration and tempo of daily life, the norms, languages, and contexts of social and

cultural discourse" (Hoover 2006:265) then the potential for a medium to increase efficiency, entertainment and consumption must be engaged alongside the other potentials which a medium may provide. Fortner contends that "the difficulty that Christians have faced in their efforts to use communication technology to proclaim the gospel is that they have been too eager to see its potential for evangelization and too reluctant to examine its consequences for communication or its impact on the exercise of power" (Fortner 2007:106). In terms of television and preaching, most specifically television evangelists, Postman suggests:

> They have assumed that what had formerly been done in a church or a tent, and face-to-face, can be done on television without loss of meaning, without changing the quality of the religious experience. Perhaps their failure to address the translation issues has its origin in the hubris engendered by the dazzling number of people to whom television gives them access…This is a gross technological naiveté (Postman 2006:118).

All of these point to the need for Christians to operate from communication theories which take account of the symbiotic nature of the media ecology. Cardoso suggests that the current

> communicational paradigm seems to be built around a rhetoric essentiality built on the importance of moving image, combined with the availability of new dynamics of accessibility to information, with new roles of innovation ascribed to users and with profound changes in news and entertainment…This communicational model does not replace the previous models, but articulates them, producing new forms of communication and also enabling new forms of facilitation of individual

empowerment and, consequently, communicative autonomy (Cardoso 2008:618).

The response to this environment requires the ability to recognise the complexities which new communication media introduce into a communication environment and the conflicting potentialities which are introduced.

Communication theories are developed in a dependent relationship to the interaction with the range of potentials provided by different medium. Bible study materials will be produced shaped by the understanding of these potentialities. Utilising different medium will create a range of potentials, however, a naïve engagement with these potentials, containing only "positive" potentials unattached to context, fails to integrate the complexities of the potentials. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between conflicting medium potentials and unidirectional medium potentials needs to be evaluated.

3.2.1.4 Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning

This line of tension is best understood in terms of how the communicator sees the relationship of meaning-making between the communicator and the audience. Hoover suggests that:

> Influential theorists of late modernity hold that the conditions of contemporary social life enforce on individuals a set of responsibilities they did not have in the past. Whereas once social and cultural structures and other arrangements could be depended on to provide plausible and compelling ideals, values, and resources for social life, today those same arrangements have broken down, for a number of reasons, some of which are rooted in the emergence of the media age (Hoover 2006:38).

The result is that "in our individual practices of meaning-making, we see ourselves as both at the center [sic] of the process, and autonomously responsible for generating that process" (Hoover 2006:52). This line of tension extends between those communication theories which contend "that people actively interpret their experience by assigning meaning to what they see [or experience]" (Littlejohn 1999:199) and those which have "conceptualized the audience as relatively passive consumers of messages that influence their behavior [sic] and understanding in predictable ways" (Soukup 1997:95). However:

> Research is increasingly discredited if it distances or divorces the media from the everyday living, working, spending culture of the people who absorb the programmes and products, and the economics and ideologies of those who control them…[communication theories increasingly] stress the cultural context of process and the nature of communication as a non-stop negotiation of shared meanings between sender and receiver (Bluck 1989:45).

Ricœur engages with this tension in relation to the movement from a spoken word to a written word. "Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text, which results from the disconnection of the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text, of what the author meant and what the text means" (Ricœur 1976:29–30). Ricœur's point here is to draw attention to what occurs as the "text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author" (Ricœur 1976:30). For Ricœur "the authorial meaning becomes properly a dimension of the text to the extent that the author is not available for questioning…The authorial meaning is the dialectical counterpart to the verbal meaning, and they have to be construed in terms of each other" (Ricœur 1976:30). Ricœur is, at this point, drawing attention to the new dialogical setting established in the process of moving from the spoken word to the written word. The readers as they engage with a text are simultaneously confronted by the paradox of the

author's meaning(s), grounded in its original context, and authorial meaning(s), grounded in the text itself. Ricœur then moves to consider the position of the hearer where "the problem of the meaning of the text becomes as paradoxical as that of the authorship. The right of the reader and the right of the text converge in an important struggle that generates the whole dynamic of interpretation" (Ricœur 1976:32).

Ricœur's engagement draws attention to the complexities of moving from the spoken word to the written word. It encourages the recognition that as Fortner puts it:

> however carefully messages are crafted, the meanings they carry are polysemic – that is, laded with a variety of possible legitimate interpretations (or meanings). And the different contexts within which messages are encountered, and the different symbolic constructs that are used within these contexts to understand and evaluate these messages, provide the basis for quite diverse understandings (Fortner 2007:127).

To clearly summarise this point he states: "while message constructors *may* control the nature of what they intentionally construct, they do not control the interpretation made by the audience of that message, or of any message that they did not purposely construct" (Fortner 2007:129 emphasis in original). The interpretation of the message remains a dialogical task between the crafter of the message and those that receive it. It is "an activity of discernment that is exercised in the concrete exchange of messages between interlocutors, and that is modelled on the interplay of question and answer" (Ricœur 2008:52–53). Habermas in a similar way contends:

> Coming to an understanding [*Verständigung*] means that participants in communication reach an agreement [*Einigung*] concerning the validity of an utterance; agreement [*Einverständnis*] is the intersubjective recognition of the validity claim the speaker raises for it…[where]

participants are always expressing themselves in situations that they

have to define in common so far as they are acting with an orientation to

mutual understanding…The background of a communicative utterance

is thus formed by situation definitions that, as measured against the

actual need for mutual understanding, have to overlap to a sufficient

extent (Habermas 1981:121 Vol. II).

As can be seen by this minimal engagement with the works of Ricœur and Habermas, the study of hermeneutics provides a fertile ground for ensuring that communication theories engage seriously with the tension which exists between the polysemic possibilities of meaning of the author, the text or the audience. "Programs/texts do carry meaning, meanings which their creators did in fact intend. Audiences for their part do actively negotiate meaning, based on, for example, their positioning, their prior experience, and their needs" (Soukup 1997:103).

Fortner contends that despite all this "we have become content to see communication as the exchange or even one-way transfer of information…[whereby] communication is seen as merely the transportation of information by efficient technological means" (Fortner 2007:78–79). Fortner suggests the transferred meaning idea is reinforced by the devaluing of "real-time, face-to-face communication as traditionally defined" by the rise of those "efficient technological means" (Fortner 2007:78–79). This may not be completely persuasive on its own, but when coupled with the idea that these communication theories form "the backbone of the mass-persuasion industries of advertising and public relations"(Schultze 2000:51), the ongoing popularity of transferred meaning theories of communication is reinforced. The success of the advertising industry to encourage "superficial communities of consumption" (Schultze 2000:114) is not only existent in the secular cultural environment. "Christian consumption communities encourage the rise of influential para-church celebrities who are more interested in selling their products than in

nurturing faith or building local community" (Schultze 2000:115). A focus on transferred meaning does not encourage "ways to achieve interactivity (dialogue, negotiation, involvement) as completely as we can, even when using what are otherwise one-way media technologies" (Fortner 2007:245).

Negotiated meaning cannot be ignored when considering a communication interaction. Willingness to enter into such a communication relationship will inevitably also be influenced by how the power relationships are understood and exercised. Transferred meaning communication theories will endeavour to maintain power in an effort to construct the most influential message with the aim of transferring that meaning to the audience to achieve the desired outcome. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between negotiated meaning and transferred meaning needs to be evaluated.

3.2.2   Seeing What We're Missing

The importance of investigating the area of Communication Theories in this study is that as Fortner suggests; "when we are dealing with communication theory, it is not merely a question of positing one theoretical construct against another, but of pitting one intellectual community with its assumptions, definitions, ideological functions, methodological principles, and rhetorical constructs – against another" (Fortner 2007:11). Investigating Communication Theories is a process which like the investigation of other theories recognises that:

> Since no theory is without assumptions, biases, and social climate, if Christians uncritically adopt particular theoretical postures, they are also accepting these aspects of it. But not all such assumptions, biases, or social climates are equally compatible with a Christian worldview. Some are actively hostile to it…[where] the result of our lack of attention to the theoretical dimensions of the phenomenon of communication from an

explicitly Christian perspective is that we have legitimized perspectives developed under assumptions that are fundamentally different from our own (Fortner 2007:31).

3.3 PEDOGOGICAL PARADIGMS

Section 2.2.3 above has previously introduced the concept that the content of Bible study materials is unlikely to be critically evaluated if it is approached from the popular approach to evaluating content as "good" based on its lack of morally questionable content. There are of course other evaluations which may be made in this area which may label content by terms such as fundamental, liberal, or heretical. But these evaluations also fail to recognise that the predominant content of these materials is not the subject matter, but rather pedagogical paradigms and approaches that will be applied to any subject matter. Pedagogical paradigms and approaches will shape how the content of the Bible study materials is constructed, and those pedagogical theories will encourage the development of particular learning environments.

3.3.1   Establishing the Lines of Tension

As presented in section 2.2.3 above, one of the key issues in this area is the environment that is encouraged to develop via the construction materials which illustrate to the participant what is the focus of learning. Again the voice of McLuhan returns with his most popular aphorism (Levinson 1999:35); "the medium is the message". As Levinson points out whilst the clear connection of the impact of the medium being greater than the impact of the content is recognised, the different nuances of this aphorism are often missed (Levinson 1999:35). When for McLuhan "The effect of the medium is made strong and intense just because it is given another medium as "content"" (McLuhan & Gordon 2003:31) it is clear that he is not discounting the importance of considering the content, but seeking to alter the perspective from which is it viewed (Levinson 1999:36–37). Thus, to understand the different media is to open the window to understand the content which

they carry, as the content is "none other than a prior medium, tamed from its former wild, invisible state, and brought to lie now on our carpet in full view" (Levinson 1999:37).

Postman and Weingartner pick up on this same theme and deem that McLuhan's "the medium is the message" is a "restatement, in alliterative language, of [John] Dewey's belief that "we learn what we do." (Postman & Weingartner 1969:17). They contend that:

> From this perspective, one is invited to see that the most important impressions made on a human nervous system come from the character and structure of the environment within which the nervous system functions; that the environment itself conveys the critical and dominant messages by controlling the perceptions and attitudes of those who participate in it…It implies that the critical content of any learning experience is the method or process through which the learning occurs (Postman & Weingartner 1969:17–19).

Smith also argues in a similar way that "too much of our thinking about education (including much recent talk about worldviews) sees education as a matter of disseminating information precisely because it assumes human beings are primarily thinking things" (Smith 2009:18). Smith's alternative, becomes

> a matter of thinking about how Christian education shapes us, forms us, molds us to be a certain kind of people whose hearts and passions and desires are aimed at the kingdom of God (Smith 2009:18) [where] education is not primarily a heady project concerned with providing *information*; rather, education is most fundamentally a matter of *formation*, a task of shaping and creating a certain kind of people (Smith 2009:26 emphasis in original).

From this perspective it is clear that "as educators, we're successful only when our students' learning results in real-life action, in changed lives" (Schultz & Schultz 1993:21).

Similarly, whilst focussed on the industry of higher education, Sullivan and Rosin contend "Higher education contributes most to society and is most faithful to its own deepest purposes when it seeks to use its considerable intellectual and cultural resources to prepare students for lives of significance and responsibility" (Rosin & Sullivan 2008:xv). Taking this into account we would suggest that the key line of tension be expressed as:

Formative Pedagogy   vs   Informative Pedegogy

It needs to stated immediately that a formative pedagogy does not exclude information, but what will be demonstrated below is that by focussing on the method, the process of learning, the environment encouraged, information is understood in different ways dependent on the focus of the pedagogy. What needs to be established to move towards identifying the underlying lines of tension is the competing "religious" educational landscape. Smith contends that "education is not something that traffics primarily in abstract, disembodied ideas; rather education is a holistic endeavour that involves the whole person, including our bodies, in a process of formation that aims our desires, primes our imagination, and orients us to the world" (Smith 2009:39). Hess suggests that "most religious learning takes place in a wider cultural context where even the symbols and stories we place at the heart of our faith are told and interpreted in ways religious communities rarely access, let alone actively engage" (Hess 2005:1). Taking this into account the pedagogical approach needs to engage education within a wider scope than where "teaching and learning become essentially a process of transfer and reception" and instead recognise that "knowledge is a dynamic, relational process, rather than a static, isolated quantity" (Hess 2005:6). We contend that this key line of tension is best developed by the following underlying lines of tension:

Formative Pedagogy   vs   Informative Pedegogy

Educational Environment   vs   Subject/Content Focussed

Focussed

Discernment	vs	Accessible Knowledge
Praxis Theory Dynamic	vs	Operational Theory

In terms of this key line of tension and the three underlying supporting tensions, we would argue that this tension line has both theology and sociology in tension with sociology. Banks asserts that in terms of graduate theological education since the mid-eighties the discussion has "raised more overt *theological* questions about the aims and purposes of the whole enterprise" (Banks 1999:10 emphasis in original). Banks joins this theological approach as he attempts to ground his theological educational theory via a theological analysis of the biblical accounts of "ministry formation" (Banks 1999:12). It is also apparent that "many Christian schools, colleges, and universities – particularly in the Protestant tradition –have taken on board a picture of the human person that owes more to modernity and the Enlightenment than it does to the holistic, biblical vision of human persons" (Smith 2009:31). These positions indicate that pedagogy within the Christian context, whilst more recently challenging its assumptions theologically, has in the past taken on the dominant sociological pedagogical emphasis. The reintroduction of a theological paradigm for critiquing the pedagogy is, as will be demonstrated in the discussion below, challenging the dominant sociological pedagogy.

However, the Christian context is not alone in its criticism of the currently dominant sociological pedagogy. Postman and Weingartner in arguing for what they call the "inquiry method" contend that:

> What students mostly do in class is guess what the teacher wants them to say. Constantly, they must try to supply "The Right Answer"…What all of us have learned [in a schooling education environment]…is that it is not important that our utterances satisfy the demands of the question (or of reality), but that they satisfy the demands of the classroom

environment. Teacher asks. Student answers. (Postman & Weingartner 1969:20–22).

Against this they suggest that:

> Once you have learned to ask questions – relevant and appropriate and substantial questions – you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know. (Postman & Weingartner 1969:23).

Morrow and Torres contend that the works of Freire and Habermas carry four "shared themes" in their approaches to "education and critical social theory" (Morrow & Torres 2002:14). The fourth of which is "a dialogical and reflexive understanding that has profound implications for formal and informal educational activities…[where] transformative action can be carried out only be participants who construct their own collective learning process as part of changing their relationship to the social world" (Morrow & Torres 2002:16).

Sullivan and Rosin contend that:

> the educational practices of today's universities and colleges typically focus overwhelmingly on teaching analytical or critical thinking – that is mastering procedures for describing particular events and objects in terms of general concepts. The relation of this training to students' struggles for meaning and orientation in the world, let alone ethical judgment, is all too rarely given curricular attention or pedagogical emphasis…Fortunately, today's academy is stirring with signs, as yet faint but clear, of a new interest in how we prepare students to respond to complex situations, both as professionals and as citizens (Rosin & Sullivan 2008:23).

The critical questions being raised against the more formalised structures of education demonstrate that even in the sociological context the predominant pedagogical theories are being scrutinised. Whilst most of the discussion in this context revolves around the more formalised educational settings such as schools, colleges and universities, the relevance of this discussion for the present evaluation of pedagogical paradigms is that the key focus about which the discussion revolves relates to the goal or objective of teaching. To further develop the tension lines indicated above we will consider them in terms of the goal of the pedagogy employed.

3.3.1.1 Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed

This line of tension is best understood in terms of the goal of education as being either to develop an environment which encourages the process of learning or to pass on a set portion of information. Smith argues that how the learner is understood will shape how it is that the educational environment is shaped. Smith contends:

> we need a nonreducationistic understanding of human persons as
> embodied agents of desire or love…The point is to emphasize that the
> way we inhabit the world is not primarily as thinkers, or even believers,
> but as more affective, embodied creatures who make our way in the
> world more by feeling our way around it (Smith 2009:47).

Smith's point is that "we are not conscious minds or souls "housed" in meaty containers; we are selves who *are* our bodies; thus the training of desire requires bodily practices in which a particular *telos* is embedded" (Smith 2009:62 emphasis in original). Reaching this point enables the recognition of how the "specific configuration of cultural practices and institutions function as liturgies, as pedagogies of (ultimate) desire" (Smith 2009:72–73). Smith defines "liturgies as rituals of ultimate concern: rituals that are formative for identity, that inculcate particular visions of the good life, and do so in a way that means to

trump other ritual formations…liturgies are ritual practices that function as pedagogies of ultimate desire" (Smith 2009:86–87).

This understanding brings into sharp focus that the practices which are encouraged and established within the educational environment will reinforce and shape what are considered to be "ultimate desires". Rosin and Sullivan also contend for a "practical reasoning" approach to, in their case, higher education which "looks on knowledge, including representational knowledge, as founded on participation and engagement with the world…[that all knowing] takes places within particular knowledge communities, defined by specific cognitive practices" (Rosin & Sullivan 2008:103). Rosin and Sullivan see the academy as "disposed primarily towards *bodies of knowledge*…[devoting] most of its pedagogical effort to disseminating disciplinary frameworks for arguing and knowing" (Rosin & Sullivan 2008:94 emphasis in original). They contend that the academy "must learn to acknowledge and embody three additional commonplaces: *identity*, *community* and *responsibility*" (Rosin & Sullivan 2008:94 emphasis in original). They go on to define these terms in the following way:

> The topic of *identity* expresses the reflective and formative dimension of education. It points to the ways in which persons are formed, through institutional and social engagement, as they participate in evolving traditions of knowing…This process of formation takes place through *community* with others. Participation with others populates the imagination with models of what it means to engage the natural, social and cultural contexts of action. These are the contexts through which the person lives up to her *responsibility* for others and for the values of the community (Rosin & Sullivan 2008:94 emphasis in origninal).

Rosin and Sullivan challenge the primary subject/content focus of the academy, suggesting that a broader educational dialogue is required. In a similar vein, Bramer

points out the renewed focus on spiritual formation within the field of Christian education after the recognition that "theological seminaries had been caught in a long drift towards scholastic theology" during the 20th century (Bramer 2010:334). Pazmiño posits that the renewed interest in spiritual formation after the 1960s in Christian education "followed from redefining education more broadly than an exclusive focus on schooling and formal education. Increased exploration of the processes of socialization and enculturation resulted in an interest in both non-formal and informal education" (Pazmiño 2010:357). Some of this focus has been presented in the section above, but it does involve a critical shift towards the position that "the role of the educator is not to "fill" the educatee with "knowledge," technical or otherwise" (Freire 2005:112). Rather it is focussed on introducing "the learners to the methodological exactitude with which they should approach the learning process, through which the objects of learning are knowable" (Freire 1998:33). The focus is on the formation of an ongoing learner.

At the same time, in seeking to encourage the development of an ongoing learner, care needs to be taken not to push this goal to the point where the result is "the person who has learned how to learn but otherwise knows nothing" (Borgmann 1999:206). Borgmann's concern is that by developing education shaped by "information technology", the result is that:

> the student becomes the sovereign who can choose the material, the
> method of presentation, and the time and place of
> studying….Digitization and electronic transmission, storage, and
> processing make every kind of information controllable and available.
> Hence it seems backwards and inconsistent to leave any information
> shackled to the inertia of analog media, to the immobility of a definite
> place or the inconvenience of a particular time (Borgmann 1999:204–
> 206).

What needs to be considered in the light of Borgmann's concern is how the development of an ongoing learner should influence the shaping of the learning environment. Such a position resists "the rhetoric of recasting education within the framework of information technology" (Borgmann 1999:207) via critically evaluating the educational environment encouraged by the introduction of alternate teaching technologies. As we have presented above, the cultural values of the information technology environment need to be considered as they are not, by necessity, positive for establishing a pedagogical paradigm. Technologies cultural values of individualism, productivity, efficiency, distraction and consumption, as suggested above, should not be assumed to develop a vibrant educational environment. To evaluate this further will require engaging with the primary role which is taken over by the information technology.

An informational pedagogy, which has a subject/content focussed approach to education establishes an environment where the "teacher transfers information, and the students receive it…it is very clear who the teacher is – the one who provides the bridge for the "pure" content of the subject to the amateurs" (Hess 2005:6). From such a perspective "it is very clear that knowledge is something that is transferable via teaching "tools," and you can begin to see how a teacher might be replaced by a computer program or some other machine" (Hess 2005:6). The teacher is easily reduced to a transmitting medium that is replaceable by any other medium without this replacement having any residual educational impact. Such a view presents education as consisting of three elements: the content; the transmitter; and the student (Hess 2005:6). The content, even though it may alter over time, remains a constant as that which the student needs to possess. The student then is either one of two categories: a student who possesses this content or a student who does not possess this content. This results in the transmitter becoming the lone hope for improving the student's ability to move from the latter position to the former. Therefore improving the accessibility and reinforcing the reliability of the transmitter are attractive avenues for improving the educational process.

This view of education is not dissimilar to the information transportation concept of communication which was explored above, and Hess draws attention to the interrelation of the two (Hess 2005:21–35). In doing so she contends that "we need to integrate digital technologies into theological pedagogies by understanding that our foundational pedagogies are not instrumental. That is by understanding how deeply relational and embodied learning is…that learning…is at its heart about practice" (Hess 2005:32).

This requires a formational pedagogy which is educational environment focussed and moves from a three element view to a four element view consisting of: the teacher; the content; the methods; the student (Postman & Weingartner 1969:33; Freire 2004:93); where "the critical, exacting, consistent educator…will understand educational practice in terms of the relationship obtaining among its various components" (Freire 2004:93). Pazmiño maintains a three element focus for education, but identifies the three "inter-related" elements as content, persons and context where "education is the process of sharing content with persons in the context of their community and society" (Pazmiño 2010:359). While reducing the educational elements to three, Pazmiño manages to avoid the transferring of knowledge approach by leaving the teacher and student as undifferentiated.

It is clear from either of these approaches that by altering any one component, the relationship is altered, and a new educational environment is established. Therefore Hess is correct to encourage that when introducing digital technologies into the educational environment they be utilised by "giving people access to digital technologies in ways that deconstruct instrumental assumptions and by encouraging expressive uses of digital technologies" (Hess 2005:32). Hess also raises legitimate concerns about moving the current line of thought to reject out of hand information technologies in the education environment. Hess challenges: "Why should we automatically assume that leaving home or work and entering a physical space labelled "classroom" should in some way automatically enhance learning?" (Hess 2005:65).

Such a question keeps central that a key part of developing Bible study materials is to be critically engaged with the pedagogical theories to evaluate how learning can be enhanced. Subject/content focussed materials will most naturally gravitate towards an instrumental, information transportation concept of education, and this can be despite recognition that communication theories have critically challenged such a concept. Educational environment focussed materials will be developed cognisant that the practices which they encourage contribute to the shaping of the educational environment, and in so doing, contribute to the formation of the learner. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between education environment focussed and subject/content focussed materials needs to be evaluated.

3.3.1.2 <u>Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge</u>

This line of tension is best understood in terms of the goal of the educational environment to either encourage the development of an ongoing learner equipped with skills of discernment or to be used primarily as an environment for passing on information. Postman and Weingartner put it this way in terms of their suggestion to embrace "the inquiry method":

> The inquiry method is very much a product of our electric age. It makes the syllabus obsolete; students generate their own stories by becoming involved in the methods of learning. Where the older school environment has asked, "Who discovered America?" the inquiry method asks, "How do you discover who discovered America?" The older school environments stressed that learning is being told what happened. The inquiry environment stresses that learning is a happening in itself (Postman & Weingartner 1969:29).

While the claim that such a method "makes the syllabus obsolete" may be an overstatement of a learner focussed approach to education, it is such an overstatement

as any syllabus constructed for an inquiry method approach "implies a commitment on the part of the educators and teachers that respects the critical consciousness of the learner" (Freire 1998:36).

Freire clarifies his concern for the goal of education in the following:

> Any attempt at mass education, whether associated with professional training or not…[must] possess a basic aim: to make it possible for human beings, through the problematizing of the unity being-world (or of human beings in their relations with the world and with other human beings) to penetrate more deeply the *prise de conscience* of the reality in which they exist. This deepening of the *prise de conscience*, which must develop in the action which transforms reality, produces with this action an overlaying of basically sensuous knowledge of reality with that which touches the *raison d'être* of this reality (Freire 2005:97–98).

For Freire education must strive to extend "ingenious curiosity" to the point where it becomes "epistemological curiosity" (Freire 1998:37). He contends:

> Curiosity as restless questioning, as movement toward the revelation of something hidden, as a question verbalized or not, as search for clarity, as a moment of attention, suggestion, and vigilance, constitutes an integral part of the phenomenon of being alive…human curiosity, as a phenomenon present to all vital experience, is in a permanent process of social and historical construction and reconstruction. It's precisely because ingenuous curiosity does not automatically become critical that one of the essential tasks of progressive educational praxis is the promotion of a curiosity that is critical, bold, and adventurous (Freire 1998:37–38).

From this perspective, a key focus in education is encouraging the learner's ability to engage in a self-critical process. "In criticizing itself, ingenuous curiosity, becomes "epistemological curiosity," as through greater methodological exactitude it appropriates the object of its knowing" (Freire 1998:37). Postman and Weingartner present a similar position. "Contrary to conventional school practice, what that means is that we want to elicit from students the meanings that they have already stored up so that they may subject those meanings to a testing and verifying, reordering and reclassifying, modifying and extending process" (Postman & Weingartner 1969:62).

The importance of such a focus on the development of a learner able to continue in an ongoing self-critical process becomes increasingly apparent in considering the current cultural context. Ellul presents this situation in the following way:

> We are deluged today by a flood of data, by an uninterrupted flow of mixed material about everything and nothing. Now we have to distinguish between the information which comes to us from outside by way of the senses…and the data that are directed at us by the procreators of information who want it to reach us and want to make us receive it. On the one side data come from the natural world; on the other they are fabricated by other people with a view to making us do something (Ellul 1990:329).

As we have already discussed extensively above, this isn't a culturally neutral situation. Nor is Ellul alone in "a rising sense of alarm about the flood of information that, instead of irrigating the culture, threatens to ravage it" (Borgmann 1999:213). Ellul, in this instance, argues that the result is the traits of "disinformation through excess of information…[leading to] a broken vision of the world…[where] we become exclusive consumers…[with] a confused sense of impotence" (Ellul 1990:329–332).

Ellul goes on to critique television as "one of the chief forces that exercises fascination in our society…[which] affects the psyche and the personality" (Ellul 1990:332). Ellul suggests that programs (or information) delivered by television must obey the "essential law of television: They must go quickly, not give long explanations, contain dramatic turns of events, dramatize; the setting and encounters are the important thing" (Ellul 1990:336). Freire also critiques the "language of television" within which "the world is cut down to a village. Time is diluted. Yesterday becomes today. Tomorrow has already come. Everything is done at high speed" and where "the more we sit in front of it (barring exceptions like holidays when we just want to switch off), the more we risk being confused about the real nature of the facts" (Freire 1998:123–124). Postman uses the example of the television commercial to illustrate a similar contention.

> The commercial asks us to believe that all problems are solvable, that they are solvable fast, and that they are solvable fast through the interventions of technology, techniques and chemistry…Moreover, commercials have the advantage of vivid visual symbols through which we may easily learn the lessons being taught. Among those lessons are that short and simple messages are preferable to long and complex ones; that drama is to be preferred over exposition; that being sold solutions is better than being confronted with questions about problems (Postman 2006:130–131)

Postman goes on to suggest that there are "three commandments that form the philosophy of the education which television offers" (Postman 2006:147). Those commandments are:

> *Thou shalt have no prerequisites.* Every television program must be a complete package in itself. No previous knowledge is to be required…*Thou shalt induce no perplexity…*a perplexed learner is a

learner who will turn to another station. This means there must be

nothing that has to be remembered, studied, applied or, worst of all,

endured. It is assumed that any information, story or idea can be made

immediately accessible, since the contentment, not the growth, of the

learner is paramount. *Thou shalt avoid exposition like the ten plagues*

*visited upon Egypt…*Arguments, hypotheses, discussions, reasons,

refutations or any of the traditional instruments of reasoned discourse

turn television into radio or, worse, third-rate printed matter (Postman

2006:147–148)*.*

The television has arguably been joined by the rise of the computer, and coupled with that

the internet. This in turn raises different information situations. Postman would suggest

that

Computers make it easy to convert facts into statistics and to translate

problems into equations…the computer's emphasis [is] on speed and

especially its capacity to generate and store unprecedented quantities of

information…the computer argues, to put it baldly, that the most serious

problems confronting us at both personal and public levels require

technical solutions through fast access to information otherwise

unavailable (Postman 1993:119).

Borgmann in a similar evaluation of the development of information technology contends

that:

The disburdenment from the constraints of time, place, and the

decisions of other people is the unique accomplishment of modern

technology and finds its everyday realization in consumption. Supported

by the machinery of technology, consumption is the unencumbered

> enjoyment of whatever one pleases. The pleasures of consumption
>
> require no effort and hence no discipline (Borgmann 1999:207).

This statement makes it comprehensible that Borgmann would realise that "since in cyberspace prodigious amounts of information are easily available, it seems foolish to commit information to memory" (Borgmann 1999:206). However, Borgmann also has the capacity to suggest in terms of higher education being reshaped by information technology that often "hopeful clamor gets in the way of calm reflection" (Borgmann 1999:207). Borgmann's contention is that the bodily engagement which ensures that information exists within the reality of time and space should not be so easily discarded (Borgmann 1999:208).

This information and technological detour provides a reminder that discernment is a demanding process which requires a critical capacity to develop within space and over time.   It recognises that "many automatic dispositions become part of our adaptive unconscious because we consciously, intentionally choose to participate in practices and routines that will train the unconscious in this way" (Smith 1992:81). Participating in practices of accessible knowledge tend to reinforce what has been described above where solutions are simple and the main problem is locating the answer. What is required is "a paradigm shift in how we teach" where learners are encouraged to "ponder, wonder, imagine, and problem-solve" (Schultz and Schultz 1993:93)

The new information technologies available underline the need to be critically engaged with the pedagogy they may reinforce as "the teaching of contents cannot be separated from the moral formation of the learners" (Freire 1998:39). Using Bible study materials predominantly to allow there to be accessible knowledge reinforces an informational pedagogy by operating to make the transfer of knowledge as undemanding as possible. By recognising the demands required to develop discernment, Bible study materials will be developed "that spurs ingenuous curiosity to become epistemological curiosity,

together with a recognition of the value of emotions, sensibility, affectivity and intuition" (Freire 1998:48) . In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between discernment and accessible knowledge needs to be evaluated.

3.3.1.3 Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory

This line of tension is best understood in terms of the goal of education to unveil for the learner the context of their reality or to see education as the bastion of providing rationality for action. What comes into focus in this tension line is the ethical responsibility granted to the learner. Freire and Habermas frame this within "the conditions of possibility of individual autonomy" (Morrow & Torres 2002:116).

> The initial foundational premise of Freire and Habermas is that human autonomy and higher levels of cognitive and moral reasoning can be realized only through interactive learning processes. Rationality is not ultimately a property of an isolated ego or self…but rather the cumulative outcome of communities of inquiry and embodied social practices…[and] a second shared premise is that becoming self-conscious of educational activities marks a decisive phase of human evolution because it unleashes previously suppressed possibilities for reflexivity (Morrow & Torres 2002:116).

Freire states that "autonomy is a process of becoming oneself, a process of maturing, of coming to be. It does not happen on a given date. In this sense, a pedagogy of autonomy should be centered [sic] on experiences that stimulate decision making and responsibility" (Freire 1998:98). Without this, "education "anaesthetizes" the educatees and leaves them a-critical and naïve in the face of the world" (Freire 2005:135). Such education "inhibits creativity" as "creativity does not develop within an empty formalism, but within the praxis of human beings with each other in the world and with the world. In

this praxis action and reflection constantly and mutually illuminate each other" (Freire 2005:134).

Remaining open to this concept of education requires a shift in how education is approached. Smith is correct to criticise the concept of a Christian worldview when it "is identified primarily as a set of doctrines or a system of beliefs" (Smith 2009:31). As Smith argues such an approach "reduces Christian faith primarily to a set of ideas, principles, claims and propositions that are known and believed" (Smith 2009:32). The natural trajectory then is attached to an anthropology which seeks to establish the theory as the primary driver of action and the church "adopts a stunted pedagogy that is fixated on the mind…[where] the church simply tries to feed different ideas through the same intellectual IV" (Smith 2009:43). This is what underpins the operational theory concept as it develops in a way that begins with the theory, and its transfer, and introduces action only as the outcome which occurs when the theory becomes operational.

The focus in this pedagogical paradigm is that what matters is having the right theory, as this will lead to the correct actions. In this vein Hess contends, "Far too often we engage in conversations across differences – whether ecumenically or in interfaith dialogue – from the arrogant position of having the truth rather than from the humble position of confessing that the Holy Spirit is ever at work in the world, continuing to reveal God to us" (Hess 2005:54). Hess's emphasis is to bring the theory into question from the posture that recognises that "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:12). This posture remains open to the revelation of God which may challenge both held theories and practices in the context of reality. Hess continues:

> As much as Martin Luther fought to keep hold of critical reason in
> relation to scripture it was also he who helped to liberate scripture from
> the tyranny of an elite educated class of interpreters. Bible studies that

are open circles of inquiry, shaped by the evaluative criteria of a

historically grounded tradition but open to the emerging questions and

life experiences of contemporary readers, exemplify this "open-ended,

self-reflexive dialogic turn of mind" (Hess 2005:55).

Education approached from this perspective recognises that:

Being a disciple of Jesus is not primarily a matter of getting the right

ideas and doctrines and beliefs into your head in order to guarantee

proper behavior [sic]; rather, it's a matter of being the kind of person

who loves rightly – who loves God and neighbour [sic] and is oriented to

the world by the primacy of that love (Smith 2009:32).

Such a statement is not dissimilar to what was presented earlier in terms of practical theology by Veling which is restated here. To be busy with practical theology is "to follow the way of Christ…to become disciples, followers, listeners and doers of the Word, people of faith, people who walk the paths of God, people who seek to know and practice the purposes of God, who desire God and the *ways of God*" (Veling 2005:240–241). Therefore we would suggest that practical theology, as we have defined it above provides a pedagogical paradigm which needs to be maintained.

Using Bible study materials to present and reinforce a theory in the hopes that by doing so will result in an operational theory, reinforces an informational pedagogy. Such a position places theory and praxis in a linear one way relationship where theory informs practice, but not the reverse. As has been presented extensively above in developing a definition of practical theology, what is required instead, is an ongoing dynamic between theory and praxis. In the empirical investigation of the Bible study materials and those utilising them, the tension between theory praxis dynamic and operational theory needs to be evaluated.

3.3.2   Seeing What We're Missing

The importance of investigating the area of Pedagogical Paradigms in this study is that as Smith suggests; "behind every constellation of educational practices is a set of assumptions about the nature of human persons" (Smith 2009:27). Investigating Pedagogical Approaches is required to recognise:

> Christian education has absorbed a philosophical anthropology that sees human persons as primarily thinking things. The result has been an understanding of education largely in terms of information; more specifically, the end of Christian education has been seen to be the dissemination and communication of Christian ideas rather than the formation of a peculiar people (Smith 2009:31).

3.4. SUMMARY OF LINES OF TENSION

The area that has been traversed in this chapter has set out and established a number of theoretical lines of tension which require empirical investigation. These tension lines are repeated below.

For the Cultural Value Systems:

Community	**vs**	**Technology**
Relationship	vs	Individualism
Interconnectivity	vs	Productivity
Complexity	vs	Efficiency
Engagement	vs	Distraction
Participation	vs	Consumption

For Communication Theories:

Ritual/Cultural Theories	**vs**	**Transmission Theories**
Cultural Formation	vs	Information Transportation
Empowerment	vs	Power Maintenance
Conflicting Medium Potential	vs	Unidirectional Medium Potential
Negotiated Meaning	vs	Transferred Meaning

For Pedagogical Paradigms:

Formative Pedagogy	**vs**	**Informative Pedagogy**
Educational Environment Focussed	vs	Subject/Content Focussed
Discernment	vs	Accessible Knowledge
Praxis Theory Dynamic	vs	Operational Theory

What is required to continue this sojourning of action and reflection is to turn now to the Bible Study Materials themselves and seek to establish if these lines of tension are identifiable and if so, if there are common positions in terms of these lines of tension which are identifiable.

3.5 QUALITATIVE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Having established the lines of tension above, the eight sets of materials were evaluated to ascertain how the materials related to these lines of tension. The full analysis data are presented in Appendix B. The key themes and results which were identified by the process are presented below.

3.5.1 Process Overview

As outlined above, the five categories of Altheide's Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA) method was utilised to complete this part of the study. Part (a) and (b) were partially

completed prior to beginning this study. As stated in section 2.1, I had previously examined some of these types of materials as part of my undergraduate studies. This examination was primarily from a communication theory perspective and arrived at the following conclusion:

> Each of these resources focuses on the transfer of pre-set information, not inviting the viewer to disagree or interact with this information, but rather to simply respond in a particular way once the information is transferred. The DVD element serves only to reinforce the preset message. Each series by being focussed on providing the answers or understanding is actually removing the need for people to think about the content and instead encourages people to accept the content and only think about or discuss how the content should be applied.

This conclusion has provided the initial direction for the problem which has been developed further in this study. It also provided an opportunity to become familiar with the process and context of the information source and to become familiar with a number of examples. I had examined some packages with a set of protocols and arrived at the conclusion above.

Within this study I have then revised the protocols. This has included the addition of the Cultural Value Systems and Pedagogical Paradigms as categories to investigate as well as a refinement of the Communication Theories category. This study has also arrived at a theoretical sampling rationale for materials for evaluation "to select materials for conceptual or theoretically relevant reasons" (Altheide 1996:34). The materials were selected to include:

1. Materials from different publishing houses

2. Materials designed for small group settings

3. Materials designed not for evangelistic or outreach purposes (e.g. Alpha)

4. Materials produced in Australia as well as North America

5. Materials which the Interview Participants may have had contact with (i.e. they had been run within the local church or the local church had copies available for small groups to use).

Once the selection criteria were complete the lines of tension above were used to develop the data collection sheet and the selected materials were evaluated. Following this a process of data analysis was completed and the results of which are reported below.

3.5.2 Overall General Observations

Prior to looking at the three specific categories of this study there were some observations worth noting.

3.5.2.1 Topical Studies

All of the eight materials evaluated were topical studies rather than a study of a biblical book. An analysis of the materials stocked at the two local Christian bookstores in Perth indicated this trend as well. This resulted in a varying interaction with biblical texts. Often biblical texts were used primarily to provide support for the topic and the participants were encouraged to approach the text with a pre-set agenda of the topic. Whilst it is important to engage with different topics from a Christian framework it is also important to ensure that participants are also encouraged to engage with the Bible beyond just looking for what it might say about a topic to ensure the Bible is permitted to speak on its terms.

3.5.2.2 Assumed Activities of Small Groups

While not all materials assumed a small group existed, all materials were similar in their activities for the small groups to carry out. This appears to be based on an assumption

that small groups already exist, or an understanding of the benefits of small groups, and the materials are then being designed to provide materials for those groups. This would suggest that rather than firstly establishing a theology of, or reasons for, small groups and what their key contributions to the life of faith are, it is assumed this already exists and the materials are not then designed by necessity to strengthen those key contributions.

3.5.2.3 Materials will Achieve an Outcome

Seven of the eight materials suggest that the course will achieve a set of outcomes related to the topic. Things like creating a church culture to bridge to the post-modern world; strengthening the 5 purposes which form the blueprint for life; or learning how to live in an unequal world. This suggests that the focus of the materials is predominantly not related to outcomes for the small group itself apart from the topic. A long term growth in the maturity of the participants appears less attractive than selling the results of a short course. This focus, coupled with the assumed activities, suggests that getting the results of the short course has a higher priority than the longer term benefits a small group setting may provide.

3.5.2.4 Access to Expert

In terms of the video medium only two of the materials did not seek to draw attention to the credentials of the presenter (Calling Charlie and NOOMA), but NOOMA still has Rob Bell in the title, suggesting that this is in some way important to know. In four of the materials the author is the presenter, affirming their expertise on the topic being presented. Calling Charlie and NOOMA were the two standout materials in terms of utilising the video medium in a creative way, Just Faith was the next closest in this regard. The six other materials were predominantly used to provide access to the expert speaker/s. Whilst they did contain some advantages of the video medium (e.g. different locations, images, input from others, etc) the main content consisted of the presenter delivering to camera from a set location. This suggests that the main advantage of the

video medium is to provide access to the expert presenter, allowing participants to hear and see the presenter, rather than just read what they have to say.

3.5.2.5 <u>Discussion of Implications</u>

There was a similarity in the discussion questions for the materials consisting predominantly of discussion questions revolving around the implications of the presented content. That is, they didn't seek to interact with the point of the content as much as they did to interact with the implications of the point being made. A lot of the discussion questions were also related to the experiences of the participants against the point/s being made. A lot of the discussion questions were phrased in a way which allowed those questions to be answered without discussion, often having a set answer the materials were seeking. This reinforces that these materials assume that discussion forms a key part of the small group's activities. It suggests that despite discussion questions clearly having a particular answer it is anticipated that the group would spend time discussing to arrive at this answer.

These overall observations do also provide input across the three categories now presented in more detail.

3.5.3 Cultural Value Systems

3.5.3.1 <u>Community vs Technology</u>

Overall it appears that the value of technology is above that of community. In assessing the materials it is clear that predominantly the materials haven't been designed to reinforce the importance of community, but have been developed to utilise technological means. The addition of video has in most cases done little more than allow the participants to interact with the 'expert' in an audio/visual way. The expert comes into the living room of the small group to share their expertise. There is no way for the participants to respond to the expert and the materials accompanying the video predominantly reinforce what the expert has said or will say. There is minimal evidence

that the materials have been designed to reinforce the importance of the community of faith in the expression of the small group. Instead, at times, individuals are given the primary responsibility of holding their positions, even if this is against the group position, without engaging with how the individual and communal relationship in the context of the Christian faith is called to build each other up in maturity.

The role of the group leader is significantly reduced and at times could be usurped by the materials. The materials don't provide encouragement for reinforcing actions of the group leaders in their roll of leading a group. There appears to be an assumption that a group leader is no more than a 'facilitator' and there is no gifting or other requirements in character of those leading in this position. Whilst some materials speak of the importance of the group leader, these are often quickly moved aside as the materials take over responsibility for leading the group and the leaders task is little more than keeping things 'on track'.

3.5.3.2 Relationship vs Individualism

In the materials only one section of one package would actually require more than one person to complete. Whilst all the materials have a set of discussion questions these are often able to be answered by an individual and so whilst discussion would add an extra element, the materials could be completed as a reflective exercise by an individual. The materials as mentioned above appear to assume that the group values relationship and interaction rather than seeking intentionally to build relationship. The individual as a participant can be seen as more valuable than the group. Some materials even contend that what you think is more important than what others think. Whilst the individual cannot and should not be discounted, Christianity must be careful not to assume the cultural value systems of the autonomous individual. More could be done to increase the reinforcement of the importance of the Christian community of which the participant is a part.

3.5.3.3 Interconnectivity vs Productivity

The main focus of the majority of the materials is to get the point across as effectively as possible. There is limited engagement with alternative positions to the one being presented. Four of the materials simply do not engage any other positions. Three do engage with other positions but to deconstruct those positions, which it seems are assumed to be the common positions of the target audiences. From this deconstructive process the position of the materials is then reconstructed. The most effective in moving towards a position of interconnectivity is the *They Like Jesus but not the Church* materials, which instead of seeking to provide the answers, look to generate a 'problem' for participants. Participants are encouraged to evaluate alternate positions and how they arise, and how they may need to be further engaged with.

3.5.3.4 Complexity vs Efficiency

In terms of complexity and efficiency the discussion sections provide the best insight. Whilst the time for discussion overall obviously has a high value as it makes up a large proportion of the time of the session, the time for each question is low. Assuming an approximate timeframe of one hour for those materials which do not indicate a timeframe, the result is each discussion question being allocated 3-5 mins per question for discussing. Such a timeframe may not allow significant discussion to develop if there is pressure to complete the materials that week. It is unlikely that 3-5 mins is sufficient time for in-depth discussions to develop and it is more likely surface discussion will result. The way questions are written and the timeframe allowed for each question suggests that there is a focus on efficiency of moving through the content rather than providing time for reflection and discussion. This could reinforce that answers are generally easily found and there should not be too many complexities in finding answers for generated problems or questions.

3.5.3.5 Engagement vs Distraction

Only one of the materials could be identified to have indicators that it was a 'thing' rather than a 'device'. Again it was *They like Jesus but not the Church* which if not restrained to the timeframe suggested, would require a significant amount of engagement by participants. In not looking to provided answers it reinforces the need for participants to engage with the topics. There are some in-depth questions in the materials which do not have simple answers, even though Kimball's responses to these more difficult questions is provided in an appendix to assist leaders. *Calling Charlie* and *6 Steps to Talking about Jesus* were the next closest to being described as a thing. *Calling Charlie* required participants to discuss the content being presented and not just the implications of that content and not all video sections were used to make a point. Some video sections were presented to instigate a good discussion and encourage participants to explore their beliefs against the presented position. *Six Steps to Talking about Jesus* as it dedicates a large portion of the time of the session to studying biblical texts, illustrates the importance of engaging with these texts in a more than surface manner.

Predominantly the materials are devices to consume. They are an 'easy' way to run a small group and most could be facilitated by someone with little or no experience in leading small groups. There is minimal preparation, they are easy to use (if you can operate a DVD player and follow a study booklet), they give clear guidance on what to do, there is minimal chance that differing positions are encouraged, questions have mostly straightforward answers or are based in experience which makes them safe as answers of experience are unlikely to be challenged as 'wrong' as this may offend the participant.

3.5.3.6 Participation vs Consumption

There are some indications that there is a trajectory towards participation and continued growth in maturity. *Calling Charlie* and *Just Faith* provide extensive encouragement for exploring the topics further. In this way they do place the course itself as an introduction into the topic with the hope that the course will inspire further investigation by the

participant. *They Like Jesus but not the Church* again places the ownership of how to respond into the hands of the participants. They are not provided with the answers but are rather encouraged on how they may seek out how to arrive at a position.

However, for the materials apart from *They like Jesus but not the Church* and *Calling Charlie* the possibility of being excluded by the 'expert' is high. It would not be unlikely for participants to develop the position that the expert knows best and thus rely on what they say instead of seeing the value of what they may add to the discussion. This could result in a more consumptive position of the materials.

3.5.4   Communication Theories

3.5.4.1 Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories

It is evident that the key focus of the materials is on transmitting the theory of the topic which they have developed. *They Like Jesus but not the Church* is the most focussed beyond simply conveying a pre-set amount of information. This package appears to have considered the value of generating a cultural setting in the small group which realises its own responsibility for engaging with the Word and the world.

Apart from this package the others are predominantly geared towards having participants take on the information presented rather than seeking to generate and create a cultural ritual space of communication within the small group setting. The packages have worked to establish the content they wish to deliver, and it seems at times the content they wish to deconstruct, and have then sought the best way to ensure their content is transferred to participants.

3.5.4.2 Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation

The two main actions which are in all the materials are watching the input of an expert and then having this input discussed by the participants. Not all discussion is open and some discussion is predominantly 'you' focussed. Discussion is given extensive direction

and provides minimal time for each question to be discussed. The culture which this would establish in a group over time would be the requirement for an expert to provide input for the group to follow. There would be an expectation that discussion would result in a clear answer to the posed question. It would appear that predominantly the materials are seeking to transmit information more than they are seeking to establish a cultural communication setting which encourages participants to be involved in a dialogical environment. Whilst discussion is encouraged, it is mostly encouraged to reinforce what has been said, rather than to encourage participants to enter into dialogue.

3.5.4.3 Empowerment vs Power Maintenance

Power maintenance was the predominant position of the materials. The materials mostly presented alternative positions only to deconstruct or to belittle them. The materials are mostly presented by 'experts' and have a responsive focus. This can be summarised as: Now that you have heard this, how will you respond? The Bible is used as the validation device for the positions presented, but for those materials deconstructing other ideas, the biblical basis (even if distorted) for the deconstructed idea, is not engaged with.

Most of the materials have pre-set information that they wish to communicate and the aim is to have the participants accept that information. There were two exceptions. *Calling Charlie* does not reinforce the presenter as an expert. He is not introduced and who he is isn't linked to what it is he presents. Participants are encouraged to consider the content and not just the implications of it and the segmented sections of video are an attempt to establish a dialogical relationship between participants and the presentation. *They like Jesus but not the Church* doesn't seek to impose a set position on the issues raised, even though seeking to convince that the issue raised is important and requires a response is a clear part of the materials. Participants are also encouraged to work towards solutions rather than having a solution being presented to them in the materials.

3.5.4.4 <u>Conflicting Medium Potentials vs Unidirectional Medium Potentials</u>

Generally the media potentials are utilised in a unidirectional mode. Potentials of the media have been identified and these have been pursued. The most obvious is providing access to the expert/s. Others include things like emotional engagement through imagery and music, memory enhancement via location settings for presentations and animations to provide creative interest. There is minimal evidence that the materials seek to increase the dialogical interaction which is obviously reduced by mass-mediated communication. There is minimal evidence of seeking to reduce the potential for the mass-mediated communication from becoming established as valuable based on it being mass-mediated communication. For example, the potential of usurping of the local leader of the small group appears not to be a concern of the materials against the potential of the materials to reach a large audience.

3.5.4.5 <u>Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning</u>

In the main, alternative positions are not presented, or if they are, they are presented so as to be rejected or deconstructed. Often these alternative positions appear to be the assumed position of the target audience. Therefore, it seems what the materials are attempting to do in these cases is to show the participants that they are wrong, prior to the materials then correcting that error. This isn't a negotiation of meaning and at times the power of the deconstruction of a position would make it unlikely that a participant would feel comfortable to suggest that the deconstructed position may have validity.

In general, Scripture is used to validate the positions presented. As mentioned above, it is not used in the deconstruction process. The materials don't engage with why particular deconstructed positions may have arisen (even if they have become distorted) and the biblical basis for those positions in their original conception. Predominantly the way Scripture is used is as a proofing of the position put forward. Some of the materials use Scripture as proof texting for their positions and ideas, taking text and using it without

regard for its original or textual context. Only *Six Steps to Talking about Jesus* and *They Like Jesus but not the Church* considers more extensive passages of Scripture and how they might be interpreted.

3.5.5 Pedagogical Paradigms

3.5.5.1 <u>Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy</u>

Overall, the focus of the materials is that of an informative pedagogy, where an expert to student relationship is reinforced to allow the expert to transfer the information that the student requires. The materials have been designed predominantly so that the group leader becomes either superfluous to the on-screen leader or at least of secondary importance. With the group leader being usurped by the on-screen leader the result is that participants are encouraged to become passive learners taking on what the expert has to present. There is little evidence that participants are encouraged to be involved in a formative process, apart from the new content being formative.

3.5.5.2 <u>Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed</u>

Predominantly with the expert to student relationship being encouraged the subject/content that the expert has to deliver becomes the key focus. The main types of activity are covering the main points, remembering or recalling the main points, and responding to the implications of the main points. The *6 Steps to Talking about Jesus*, which contains extensive Bible study sections, has very 'find the right answer' type questions focussed to reinforce the content being presented.

There were two exceptions. *Calling Charlie* which sought to generate something of a dialogical learning experience; reinforced the importance of the group and the group leader; and provided more explorative discussion questions without obvious answers. *They Like Jesus but not the Church* sought to generate problems for participants and leave participants to then look to resolve the problems which had been raised by the materials. Some direction in terms of how to respond to the more difficult questions was

given by providing the opinion and reasoning of the author; but there is a lot of encouragement not to just take on the position of the author.

3.5.5.3 Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge

The two standouts in this area again were *Calling Charlie* and *They Like Jesus but not the Church*. The former raised questions which invited participants to evaluate the presuppositions that they hold which may influence the positions they hold and also provided discussion questions which included the complexities of real world situations. The latter provided difficult questions, questioned how participants might respond to legitimate questions of their held position, had open questions with no obvious pre-set answers and also used the discussion questions to raise questions of what had been presented by the presenter on the video.

Apart from these two, there was a minimal engagement or attempt to encourage discernment. The materials were mostly focussed on providing access to the information on the topic that the producers where wishing to convey. *Just Faith* did have an end of session reflection section including 3 questions for reflecting on the session which could encourage a thoughtful process: what's new?; what's unresolved still?; and how to respond? These are useful questions, but could be a token gesture after the rest of the session has been focussed otherwise.

3.5.5.4 Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory

Predominantly the materials were theory to action focussed. The content is presented and then the question of what actions should occur as a result is the main focus. The materials had things like an end of session challenge; illustrations of how the content may be put into practice or a discussion of the implications of the content. There were some exceptions which did indicate some praxis and theory interaction. These included things like having participants carry out activities within the small group setting to engage with the praxis of the content; inclusion of presenters who were active in a praxis relevant to

the content; having an emphasis on the participants experience in directing discussion; having the interaction of belief and action explored via dramatisation; encouraging ongoing reflection of the content in relation to the praxis of the participant; and using those outside the church to raise topics and problems of the church, illustrating the theory praxis tension.

3.6 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Having established the lines of tension above the eight half structured interviews were carried out. The full analysis data are presented in Appendix C. The key themes and results which were identified by the process appear below.

3.6.1 Process Overview

Participants were selected based on the criteria outlined in 2.3.2 above. After the *Overall General Observations* (based on the participant details section of the interviews) the results will be presented as follows for each of the three categories:

> 1) Overall analytical summary for category
>
>> a) The question(s) under each category sub-section
>>
>> b) A sample of responses for each question(s)
>>
>> c) An analytical summary of the findings of the sub-section

3.6.2 Overall General Observations

Prior to looking at the three specific categories of this study there are some observations worth noting.

3.6.2.1 Predominantly Male Representation

Of the eight interviews completed all had a male respondent. One interview had a married couple who co-led their small group. This is most likely a representation of the position of the local church which whilst not prescribing to an official position, women are not encouraged to teach men, which results in a predominantly male teaching praxis.

3.6.2.2 <u>Experience Prior to Popularity of Video Medium</u>

The age group of the participants and the time in terms of experience with participation in small group bible studies, indicate that all participants have experienced a small group Bible study prior to the introduction of video to the packages. This means that materials of this type were a 'new' addition to what had been previously experienced. These materials did not represent the usual way that participants would run their Bible studies.

3.6.2.3 <u>Limited Experience with Video Packages</u>

Despite their growing prevalence there was a limited amount of packages which participants had had experience with. Some participants had only used those run as church wide campaigns and would not use the materials otherwise. Whilst a number were happy to use them, there wasn't a comparative representation of those groups using a lot of the packages.

3.6.2.4 <u>Alternative Attitudes Towards Materials</u>

In terms of the participant's attitudes towards the materials, these were split with four indicating an overall satisfaction with utilising the materials; two indicating they would prefer not to use them; and two indicating an uncertainty to the materials. Despite this mix of attitudes towards the materials, there were still some common themes identifiable which related to the categories being evaluated.

3.6.3   Cultural Value Systems

3.6.3.1 <u>Community vs Technology</u>

Overall it would appear that within the group of interview participants the level of their experience within the praxis has enabled them to operate primarily with a focus on the group and its relationships as the driving factor for establishing the small group culture. Despite identifying within the materials a number of indicators which do suggest the materials themselves are designed predominantly towards the technology end of this line of tension, they also indicate that the group has an inherent ability to determine the

conditions of interaction with the materials. It is clear, that as participants have a long experience within the praxis, they have been able to work in opposition to the cultural value system which is reinforced by the technological tendency of the materials. This both affirms that the materials do tend towards the technology end of the line of tension and that an established group, with an established cultural value system, can combat these tendencies within the materials.

The responses do indicate, however, the importance of the role of an established group cultural value system in this process. It would be possible, that based on the technology cultural system identified by participants, to suggest that beginning small group Bible studies by providing these materials may establish the group with an alternate cultural value system to that of already established groups which then introduce the materials.

3.6.3.2 <u>Relationship vs Individualism</u>

Can you describe how the group relates to each other when you use materials with a video component? Particularly consider how it might be different from times when they aren't used.

> *"Less interaction. What the man in the video says is "gospel""*

> *"…there is a sense where people look to the guru who is presenting on the video in a different way than they look to someone in the group"*

> *"It's not that dramatically different"*

> *"…um, there is obviously a long period of quiet as you watch the video…I would say there is a lot more passionate discussion when there is video material"*

> *"The group finds the video to impact on the ability of the group to enter into discussion"*

There was a split in responses to this question with four responses indicating that the introduction of a 'guru' alters the dynamic of the group reducing the likelihood of discussing alternatives to what is presented, one indicating that video alters the dynamic to both reduce interaction as the video plays but encourages passionate discussion and three indicating there is no noticeable difference. It would appear that there is a distinct possibility for the materials to alter the interaction of the participants but this has not increased individualism within the study groups of participants. Despite the ability of the materials to be completed without other group participants, the commitment of the groups to each other may reduce the ability of the materials to encourage/generate an individualised approach to these cultural settings.

3.6.3.3 <u>Interconnectivity vs Productivity</u>

In what ways do you think these materials encourage your group to explore the different positions on a passage or topic and the contexts which may have had a role in how those different positions arose?

> *"…vid doesn't allow people to ask questions of the one putting the point of view forward…real living people facilitates exploring other views in a way that vid doesn't…"*

> *"You are sort of confined to what the disk is all about and it is narrow…or it can be narrow"*

> *"Whenever you choose something which comes out of a different tradition than your own then you're always going to have ideas which are going to challenge people…"*

> *"…when we get a video it comes from a different position at times and that can be helpful to see things from a different angle"*

"…I don't think they are open to discussion in the materials…and in our group it introduces another voice…"

It would appear that whilst participants agree that the materials themselves predominantly do not provide alternative positions for exploration there is a distinct possibility that the materials position will not match that of the group. This allows the group to explore an alternative position as presented by the materials dependent on the group culture.

3.6.3.4 Complexity vs Efficiency

What level of expectation do you think there is when using these materials to complete them in the timeframe suggested?

"High expectation…there is a 'pixel leader' and they are the one who is really the leader of the DVD sessions"

"A DVD expects you to do one session in one session"

"I think it is a high expectation…"

"No, not at all"

How comfortable would you be to encourage a longer discussion if you knew it would mean not completing the set session that week?

"We run a very flexible group so if people felt there was still a lot of heat in this fire we could come back to it later"

"I would be very comfortable to let discussion go as much as possible, but when you have a course that has a number of weeks I have a tendency to be thinking we've gotta get through this…"

"I would be more comfortable pushing over to next week with a book than a DVD"

"I'd definitely be happy to let a study go over to the next week if discussion was going well"

"We've always thought that what is going on with the group members is more important than the materials so we are more than happy to carry discussion over"

There was a mixed response in terms of the expectation for completing sessions within the suggested timeframes, with some believing there to be high expectation and others not identifying this same expectation. Despite this, there does appear to be an indication that the group sets the terms which influence the amount of pressure that exists to complete a session. Most responses saw the value of allowing the group discussion to continue, even if it meant not completing the set session, but it appears the group dynamic plays a role in the comfort levels for interview participants to allow this to occur. It does appear that for most the group dynamic does allow the leaders not to be dictated to by the materials.

3.6.3.5 Engagement vs Distraction

Can you describe the demands or expectations you find placed on you to prepare to run a study with these materials? Particularly consider differences from how you would prepare if not using these materials.

"I think there is much less preparation when getting ready for a DVD session"

"I think there isn't a lot of difference. We work as a group to prepare. Everyone needs to prepare for what we are covering"

"They are easier…with the video ones, I will maybe watch the video or read through the book that comes with it but in general it is a bit easier and there is less preparation time…maybe a tenth of the time I would normally take"

"If not running a vid I will go through the study guide…if using one…and go over the passages and run through the study first myself. I will add/subtract or modify questions. I do not do this with DVDs. Maybe coz with a DVD I don't feel like I am the actual study leader…There is a sense with the DVD that the flesh and blood study leader is relegated to an obedient side kick who gets to field question time after the study is complete"

"Normally I would look up different books and different commentaries as I prepare for a session…If it's a video I try and watch it before to know what is going to be said, and then I would normally go along with what is being said"

"It certainly seems a lot less preparation with a video…they've done the work…"

"certainly from the those American ones they are just very clear on here's the outline, this is what your do, this is what happens if someone says this…there's virtually no…or very minimal expectations of what I've got to do as I can just go "There's the questions"

It is clear that the materials reduce the preparation time and expectation. The participants predominantly don't prepare in the same way when running a package as they consider the materials to have completed this task. There is a process of familiarisation which most participants indicated they would try to complete, such as pre-viewing the video materials. There is an indication that participants felt they handed the responsibility of this task to the producers of the materials, and their role as a group leader is altered in the process.

3.6.3.6 Participation vs Consumption

What contribution do you think materials such as this make towards enabling participants to mature in their faith?

"all the ones I've sort of seen have been more topical rather than going through a book of the Bible…I think working with the Bible helps people mature in their faith, and not just doing topical studies"

"As the leader of the group I do the extra work to try and help people not just be naïve and to encourage them to think deeper. This doesn't happen with the video materials in our group"

…the ones that are most likely to do that are ones that push people back to reading their Bible rather than replace reading the Bible…so the ones that send you back to look at the Bible in more detail would be the ones most likely to have a bigger impact on people's maturing in faith"

"I don't think it is ideal to run these materials…I'm not against using the materials, but I think we need to continue to train leaders of groups…it is about training leaders in the art of theological reflection and small group leadership to see maturity encouraged"

"My personal feeling is that it would tend to encourage…I would call it laziness, in terms of exploring for yourself…we try to share the leadership around the group and it it's just a DVD pack you just bung it in and press play"

The predominant view is clear that these materials are not designed to encourage the ongoing growth of maturing in the faith. There appears to be a clear link made between how participants view their role in encouraging a more in depth theological reflective process and the resultant encouragement towards maturity. There is also a link between how the materials engage interaction and engagement with the Bible and how this will impact on encouraging maturity. Currently it would appear that the materials experienced have not led participants to be confident that running such materials in long periods would encourage growth in maturity.

3.6.4   Communication Theories

3.6.4.1 <u>Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories</u>

There is an overall indication that the participants perceive the materials to be more focussed on transmitting information than encouraging a cultural communication environment. Again, the culture of the already existent groups has resulted in participants working to maintain that culture despite the materials design towards a transmission emphasis. There are indicators that the communication power relationship is utilised by the materials and this is something which participants have had to actively engage to encourage group participants to engage in the communication process. There is possibly a tendency for groups to have an accept/reject engagement with the materials which appears to result from a combination of the transmission emphasis of the materials and the cultural focus of the groups. It does appear that this could enhance the 'priestly' function of the communication where those which agree with the group's position are accepted and reduce the 'prophetic' function of the communication where those which disagree with the group's position are rejected. It is understandable that this would occur when the materials are predominantly seen to be trying to transmit their content rather than engage the group in a negotiation around it.

3.6.4.2 <u>Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation</u>

How would you describe the encouraged actions of participation for group members when using these materials?

> "During the "play time" very little. After "play time" high. But when the interaction is high the "pixel leader" isn't there to interact"

> "It's mostly watching TV. You just watch it then it's finished. You might say "That's nice what was said", but there isn't normally a lot of discussion"

> "for many people it is fairly passive…they will sit and absorb…"

"In the small group setting the actions encouraged are to answer questions…and sometimes it seems the key is to get the right answer so that you can move onto the next question…"

"They have to watch the video part. Usually there is discussion and evaluation of what has been said"

"The stuff that I recall using some of it you stop every so often and discuss it as you go…that is better than the ones where you have to remember it all at the end…"

Generally there is an overall indication that participants consider the materials to primarily be looking to transmit their content to participants. The video section in the experience of participants has generated a fairly passive environment and the discussion generally revolves around accepting or rejecting the position rather than a deeper exploration. It is clear that the video section does alter what is the 'normal' operating praxis of the group. Many have experienced video content which can be quite long and see advantage in having shorter video sections which allows the video presentation and discussion to occur in a stop start fashion.

3.6.4.3 Empowerment vs Power Maintenance

Have you had any experiences where either you or participants have disagreed with what was presented in a video?

Six have experienced this

Two have not experienced this

If so, how did people respond?

"…someone jumped in straight away…they had no issues about raising it"

"as I said before when I suggested something might be added to the video point some members were almost shocked that I would suggest the video was "lacking"…I think this is because it is interpreted as a mutiny. "Flesh leader" is seen to try to overthrow "pixel leader""

"people are more than happy to raise objections"

"In one group there was a retired pastor who disagreed with a point and raised that disagreement. But I think it was a bit like, well he's a pastor so maybe he knows better. I don't think normal participants would be so inclined to question what is being put forward in the video…people who haven't been theologically trained, or don't practice theological reflection or maybe aren't as engaged in the Scriptures seem more likely to take on what is said"

"Mostly minor things that people have brought up…most of that sort of stuff if I spot something I will say "So what do you think about this?"…"

"The experiences I am thinking of are often when someone is trying to explain how they think the presenter is viewing the material…I think it is a safe way of saying I disagree with the guy by saying "I think he is coming from a different point of view than the one I have"…that is a way of doing it without directly saying "he's wrong""

If not, do you think your group would raise an objection/disagreement if they had one?

"With video, sometimes you might have a question or disagree, but by the time the video ends often you have forgotten what it was. With the video we don't normally stop and start"

"I think people would feel comfortable to do that…I think that it is encouraged in the group and we look at things from different angles"

The participants have either experienced the occurrence of disagreements/objections being raised or do believe participants would raise them if they did occur. At the same time, there is an indication that the materials are given an expert status within the groups and whilst some groups encourage this not to occur others have experienced a sense where the power of the communication situation has been attributed to the expert on the video.

3.6.4.4 Conflicting Medium Potentials vs Unidirectional Medium Potentials

In considering the materials you have used, what advantages do you think the different media components bring to the package?

> *"There are some great advantages in hitting the church in lots of different places. So to have people reading in their private reading what is also being preached on Sundays and then discussed in the Bible study brings a synergy which can be good…"*

> *"It's the modern technology and you won't stop that. We're an older group so it's a bit of an alien technology…but down a decade or two, they know the technology and love that sort of stuff and many would loathe reading"*

> *"The books that come with it like the daily devotionals keep you thinking about it every day…often with a weekly Bible study it is easy to do it then forget about it…"*

> *"The video stuff, especially the campaign stuff is easy to use. It's all prepared…the outline, the course, the framework, you can see clearly where you are going. The advantage of print material is that everyone can have a copy of their own of the book"*

> *"I think it depends…it's all this stuff, it's the way of the world…if you're not in this space and exploring a couple of mediums…"*

"…having a number of mediums helps get the message across in different learning styles and channels…we're less and less of a book reading society so it's one of those get with it or get left behind situations…"

Why do you think more and more producers are adding video to their materials?

"Our culture likes vid a lot. Perhaps vids sell better for producers than printed materials?"

"There's an expectation to have video and it's part of being relevant in the market place"

"I would think that more producers are adding video because it makes money…the Christian market is very consumerist…it can be easy to get Christians to buy stuff…those publishing houses are designed to make money so I would think they are speaking to their people asking what have you got next…It's also one of the primary ways in which the world is engaged now…it's all through a screen…"

"I think there is a perception that our society responds better to multi-media things…there's also a perceived value added…like from a sheer economics point of view…There is also a value for the people making those sort of things because their face gets known and therefore they can get…if people like one thing, then they'll quickly sign up for other things…people will do that based on a person they've seen more than a theologian they may of heard of…but it can also multiply the effectiveness of one good speaker…one good speaker could speak to a church of maybe 200 or 500 or something like that whereas if they make a video they might be able to speak to 10,000 or 50,000 of 100,000 people…but my feeling is people will respond differently to that and that people won't respond as well as being individually engaged"

"I guess adding video is a generational thing…we've all grown up on TV and making a video is pretty easy to do these days…"

"It's probably cheaper to produce over time…apart from the initial cost you know, you can bung out as many CD's or DVD's as you like after that and the cost goes down, down, down.

Generally it would appear that the addition of video is seen to be an inevitable consequence of the society/culture which has developed where audio visual engagement is seen to be the most prominent way of engaging with media. The responses illustrate that there is a perception that reading has become less favoured. The responses indicate that there is a sense that this may not be the best direction to go in – experts delivering content via video – but there seems to be a concession to embracing it.

In terms of why video has been added to these materials it was interesting to see not only the cultural reason again but also alongside this a number suggested that there was a perceived economic advantage. This advantage was attributed to both the publishing houses and the individual authors of the materials who may be able to increase their 'celebrity' status.

3.6.4.5 <u>Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning</u>

How free do you feel when using these materials to encourage the group to arrive at its own understanding of the content?

"Yeah I do feel free to do this…it's easy for me because we have a mature group…"

"Generally I feel free to do this…"

"I'd like to say I feel free, but in actual fact I feel quite constrained by the materials…because you feel bound to what is presented"

"The materials don't determine the position the group will take"

"I don't have a problem to do that…we do that"

"Not free, this is coz there are two leaders, pixel leader and flesh leader"

"we'll try and look at what's being presented and assess it and are there other ways of understanding this or are there other possibilities…what are some alternative views…"

Do you feel the group is invited to arrive at its own position or that the materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a presented position?

"…my perception is that they zero in on what they want to say and then leave you with that…whereas I would say that is a good starting point and then what do you think about that…is there other ways of seeing that, or what they haven't said, etc. etc…That has been quite challenging sometimes for people…for some people to go "there are other ways to see things and to do things" and they've been a bit, not challenged, but surprised by that"

"Vid materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position…they can't afford to do anything other than the hard sell because they are not in a discussion they are in a presentation"

"…when you get a DVD or video and it is on a specific thing and it is just being given info…"

"I think most of the materials have a position that they are trying to get across and I think that should be accepted as valid, even if you don't accept their position as valid"

"I don't think I've done any materials that sort of say, "Here's the big picture and you need to work towards your own conclusions from that"…I think most have an

agenda and want people to see Scripture from a particular way and act in a certain way"

"When they use a 'specialist' or 'expert' then it certainly feels like you should believe them"

Again the responses in this area seem to present that despite the materials operating in a particular way, the group culture has allowed for most participants to operate in an alternate way. Whilst it is clear that the participants felt the materials were not seeking to negotiate meaning but rather transfer it, most felt comfortable to allow the group to arrive at its own understanding of the content. There is the impression across these responses, and including themes of other responses, that this may become an accept/reject process as the materials are seeking to transfer meaning. It is possible that the materials are seen as good or bad; useful or useless and are therefore not engaged with in a meaningful negotiation. Rather they are seen to be something that meets the current meaning or something which opposes it and are thus either accepted or rejected on these terms.

3.6.5 Pedagogical Approaches

3.6.5.1 Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy

There is an overall indication that participants view the materials as predominantly informative pedagogy focussed looking to transfer a set content to the group. It is apparent that participants identified that there was a focus towards the subject/content delivery as the main focus of the materials and that the discussion encouraged was designed to reinforce the content. It was very apparent that participants believe that continuously running such products would have a detrimental impact on the group and its ability to be engaged in a process of discernment. There was some indication that the materials do predominantly operate to reinforce a theory with the perceived outcome that this will then result in a new set of actions for the group.

3.6.5.2 Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed

What would you describe are the main actions that these materials encourage participants to carry out?

> *"A number of the materials do get you to try to go away and do practical things in the week in between…so it's learn, apply, reflect approach…sometimes the questions have been quite pointed in that it is discuss this from this angle…"*

> *"Be attentive listeners to the DVD…Discuss as a group…But the questions can't be related to the local context of the group…so the questions have to be fairly open…but often they are also looking for a specific answer, even though they are discussion questions"*

> *"The video part is often like you're getting preached at"*

> *"They are trying to operate in more sensory modes…so it's trying to expand the means by which you hear the message"*

> *"I think the videos seem to be very limited in terms of…here's this point now go and discuss it…it is more go and discuss, go and discuss or here are the three questions to talk about…Usually the way they go with discussion is "What do you think about this point that has been raised or this question that has been asked?""*

> *"The ones I've done it's mostly just been a person talking on the TV screen…it's a visual aid but it's just someone giving a mini sermon I guess…the discussion questions are almost mostly open questions but the depth can vary a fair bit"*

Predominantly the participants identified that there was a presentation of the content followed by a discussion about it. This reinforces that the focus of the materials is on the subject/content rather than the establishing a learning environment which will encourage the development of ongoing learners. A number of responses suggested that the discussion questions are often seeking an answer and can vary in their depth of

interaction and discussion. It is apparent from these responses coupled with the overall responses, that the video section clearly establishes an expert to learner educational environment in the experience of the participants. Some participants have indicated that this situation has placed their position as a group leader into question against the expert.

3.6.5.3 <u>Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge</u>

If you only ran these materials for twelve months what would you describe is the most obvious thing they would teach your group?

"That normal people can't understand the Bible…that you need the expert"

"I guess it does depend on the topics of the studies, but I don't think you would get much of an insight in how to read and understand the Bible…unless the video topic was on how to be reading the Bible…"

"I think it would teach that their group leader or church leader don't have the capacity or the time or the willingness to engage with the Scriptures themselves and lead it that way and…it may reinforce for people that only certain experts can have insight into the Scriptures and not the group themselves"

"There's a bit of a theory around that the medium is the message but…they would learn dependant on what the content is and they would learn really dependent on us and the interaction of the group…but I think the audio visual stuff makes it a bit lazy…so it's not what the medium is, but how the medium is used…it's about keeping the group focussed on what the group is about and using the materials"

"If all you ran was those packages for a year or two then people might be quite shocked at how difficult some passages of the Bible can be to interpret…and that there might be different ways to interpret it. People would grow to expect an easy palatable…easily broken down and digested study"

"My feeling would be…there would be a lessening of the group experience, because you are going to be looking at a screen for a longer period of time and possibly be less aware of the alternatives surrounding a particular issue…maybe an attitude of acceptance…"

"I'd be concerned about doing six months or a whole year's worth of AV materials alone as it would make people lazy and reduce their interactions…"

The responses clearly indicate a concern of the participants as to the long term benefits of these materials. There is an indication again that the group culture is able to utilise these materials as an alternative to the 'norm' in a beneficial way. However, there is a clear concern that an ongoing exposure to these materials would be likely to develop a group which is no longer meeting the same objectives that participants feel they are achieving currently with their groups. Themes such as generating a laziness or acceptance attitude, a reduced interaction with each other and with the Bible, an expectation that an expert is required to provide the answers and that those answers should be fairly neatly contained were observable.

3.6.5.4 Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory

Can you describe how these materials present the relationship between theory (theology or the Biblical point) and the actions of group members?

"Some are more action orientated, then others are more theory orientated"

"There is a huge variability in what is available"

"I think there is sometimes a tie in of both…others are more about theory…I guess they all sort of vary a bit"

"…my gut response is that most of the material is that if you get the theory right action will follow and I think that's probably been a large part of my experience as a leader"

"I think most of the things would be: this is the theory now go and do the action…I suppose you can get people to do some actions…but generally it is here is the theory…"

"The materials I am thinking of have been more didactic teaching style…so I guess in that sense they are theory…getting the practical has been quite hard…"

"I think the teaching…I mean we've always tried to encourage people to be thinking "what does it mean for us?"…so we take it from the theory and hopefully put it into practice…"

It appears that whilst some participants have experienced variability in the materials they have completed, others predominantly indicate that there is a bias towards a theory to action linear approach to the materials. Previous responses to other questions did also raise the inability of the materials to engage the local setting of participants as well as the local leader.

3.7 SUMMARY OF PRAXIS EVALUATION

This chapter has provided an overall presentation of the process of an action-reflection sojourning through the current media ecology and its establishment within the praxis of the Bible study small group setting. This has been a process of seeking to listen and discern how the Word of God is alive and active within this domain. This sojourning now continues as it seeks to address the community of faith and propose change for the purpose of maintaining and perfecting the Christian community.

4. INTO THE FUTURE

Having completed an extensive critical evaluation of the Bible study materials it is now important to review the outcome of that evaluation, propose an alternate way forward for engaging with the outcomes of that evaluation, and consider the impacts of this study on the researcher – the sojourning practical theologian.

4.1. OUTCOMES OF EVALUATION

Whilst the evaluation was completed under the three identified categories it is evident that there are not clear lines allowing these three categories to remain as distinct categories which bear no influence on each other. In considering the outcomes of the evaluation these are best considered without a clear delineation of these categories.

4.1.1. Tension Lines and the Empirical Data

What is apparent is that whilst it was possible to link the tension lines established in the literature study to the empirical data, the field of media ecology and technological cultural influence is still a field operating primarily from a perspective of observational instinct. It is difficult, if not impossible, to make conclusive statements as there are so many influencing factors in any study. Postman illustrates this by the example of the infamous Stanley Milgram experiments published as *Obedience to Authority* where "Milgrim sought to entice people to give electric shocks to "innocent victims" who were in fact conspirators in the experiment and did not receive the shocks" (Postman 1992:10). The conclusion Milgram made was "In the face of what they construe to be legitimate authority, most people will do what they are told" (Postman 1992:10). But as Postman points out, despite carrying out a controlled empirical investigation Milgram cannot make conclusive statements beyond what the participants did under the specific set of conditions which the experiment established (Postman 1992:10). This doesn't make Milgram's insights inconsequential, but instead it needs to be recognised that what Milgram was doing "is weaving narratives about human behaviour…a form of storytelling" (Postman 1992:12–13). This storytelling

is one in which "an author has given a unique interpretation to a set of human events, that he has supported his interpretation with examples in various forms, and that his interpretation cannot be proved or disproved but draws its appeal from the power of its language, the depth of its explanations, the relevance of its examples, and the credibility of its theme. And that all of this has an identifiable moral purpose" (Postman 1992:13).

This is no different with this area of study. Predominantly the authors writing in this field are tying together a narrative interpretation of the media ecology and are basing this narrative on their investigation and experience across many and varied fields of study. It is notable that a lot of the authors which one must engage with in such a field were making some of their observations from the middle of last century onwards and it is now that some of these observations are becoming more apparent realities that these authors are finding a renewed emphasis.

In terms of this study it is apparent that the observations of those writing in the field of media ecology, whilst possibly overstating their positions, do have validity within the current cultural environment. By utilising the observations of these different authors it has been possible to establish a format for constructing a "narrative about human behaviour" in relation to the use of Bible study materials containing a video element. The observations of these authors have provided a set of categories to investigate, and the investigation of these categories has provided a pathway for an ongoing investigation of this specific area. These areas are explored in more detail below.

4.1.1.1 Cultural Influence and Determinism

One of the key issues facing the media ecology field is circumnavigating the negative or positive determinism which can be perceived. It is likely that most authors in the area are aware of how their observations can be construed to have a deterministic flavour even though this is not their intention. However, it seems that this can accommodate a way to reduce the value of the observations which don't fit the desired outcome of a current piece

of research. It has been observable within the literature study that by placing a particular piece of writing into a deterministic category it is possible to discount the value of that work.

Within this study it may appear that there is a negative determinism. This is not my intention, and what has been clearly observed in the evaluation of the study is that whilst there is merit for the concerns raised within this study of the impact of the current media ecology, there is a symbiotic relationship with the cultural setting into which a particular medium or technology is introduced.

In considering the QDA against the interviews it is apparent that my observations are also being observed by others who have had experience with small group settings both with and without these materials. In the tension lines there is an identifiable tendency for the materials to be technologically, transmission and information focussed. However, at the same time, there was an identifiable attitude amongst the interview participants that the culture of their small groups could not be discounted in how much impact these materials have in establishing this as the norm within the group. It was apparent that from the experience of the leaders they were able to identify areas not only where the materials did have an influence but also areas where the culture of the group could work against these tendencies of the materials.

It is probable that, whilst the materials will seek to influence a particular cultural value system, communication configuration and pedagogical setting, the culture of the group also has the ability to reshape and influence all of these areas. The longer a group has been established and the clarity of what it values as a group would appear to be the key influencing factors. In these cases it becomes less likely for the groups to utilise materials which do not match those value criteria for extended periods. The limited engagement with such materials reduces their ability to impact the group.

4.1.1.2 <u>Production Focus</u>

Whilst common themes were identifiable across the materials it was apparent both in the QDA and then confirmed in the interviews that the materials do have a high level of variability. It would be most likely that were such a study to be extended to include more materials even more variety in the materials would be identifiable.

Despite the variety in the materials, from the empirical data it is possible to suggest that the variables are predominantly influenced by the categories identified in the literature study and the way the producers of the materials are seeking to operate within those areas. The QDA was able to identify exceptions in the majority of the categories where particular materials were operating towards the alternate end of the tension line. The standout packages in this area were *They like Jesus but not the Church* and *Calling Charlie*, with *Six Steps to talking about Jesus*, *Just Faith* and *NOOMA* all also having some key areas of difference.

To deal firstly with the latter, *Six Steps to talking about Jesus* was different in that it was obviously concerned to ensure that participants opened their Bibles and interacted with larger passages of Scripture to support the content of the materials. *Just Faith* was different in having a range of alternative 'experts' present their position on particular topics or biblical passages – even if, despite attempting to keep a distance, it seemed that these positions were the position the materials wanted to put forward. *NOOMA* utilised a completely unique approach to the video medium and the way it was used to communicate the content. All of these differences indicate that the producers of the materials were considering different elements of the identified categories in the production of their materials.

What set *They like Jesus but not the Church* and *Calling Charlie* apart from all the other materials was that the producers of these products appear to have considered further the role that the product should be playing within a group setting. Both of these products

appear to have been designed from a perspective which has considered the theological and theoretical reasoning for the existence of the small group Bible study and sought to incorporate this within their product. One of the key differences looking at these two products as a whole is that they are much more explorative and encourage participants to engage with the Scriptures, the complexities of life, and to consider how it might be that they live as a Christian within their local context, rather than just encourage participants to see the producer's point of view.

Whilst there isn't much to suggest that interview participants identified this with products, at least one comment made by an interview participant after the interview in general conversation does point to the same conclusion. This comment was along the lines of:

> *"It seems most of these materials assume a group exists and knows*
> *why it exists and are therefore made for the group to use rather than*
> *from a position which considers what are the reasons for a group to*
> *exist and how to produce the materials to encourage and strengthen*
> *those reasons".*

None of the interview participants had had exposure to either *They like Jesus but not the Church* or *Calling Charlie* so it is possible that exposure to materials such as these may alter how they would respond to the questions. At present it is clear that there are some materials which are beginning to have a production focus which considers how it may strengthen the theological and theoretical reasons for which small group Bible studies exist.

4.1.1.3 The Video Medium

The addition of video medium to Bible study products has grown immensely over the last decade and from this study it would appear that this is being driven predominantly by either a cultural perception of needing to remain relevant with a 'screen based society' or for the economic benefit of producers or individual authors.

The QDA identified that predominantly the materials incorporated a talking head approach to the video component and only *Calling Charlie* and *NOOMA* have used the video component in a completely unique way, which has sought to incorporate other potentials of the video medium than to transport an 'expert' to an audience.

Within the interviews, the responses were very cynical in terms of why video was being added to the materials. These responses pointed to the two themes above. The economic benefit was provided as the most spontaneous response in a number of the interviews, with other reasons being added after some more consideration.

The rapid change in the availability of the production video content providing a higher economic return coupled with the perception of being a 'screen based society' does appear to have driven the initial addition of video content to these materials. There is some indication that now that a video component has become the norm there has been ongoing development for considering how the video medium is utilised.

Evidence in the changes that were identified via the QDA were that whilst the oldest package had video of around 20 mins in one section the newer packages had either less video content (~10mins) or had the video component divided into two or more sections. There appears to be a move towards a listen and then discuss, with the majority of the materials not expecting participants to be taking notes or 'filling in the blanks' as the video played. The location for the talking head being selected to allow this to reinforce either a memory of the topic/content or to provide visual association was apparent in a number of the materials. Not only are experts transported to the small group setting, participants can also be transported to other parts of the world. The use of narrative/dramatisation is evident in some materials. Including imagery and song to provide a reflective section was also evident. The inclusion of animations/effects has increased, which is not surprising as the accessibility to this has also increased significantly over the last ten years.

Overall it would appear that, as the addition of video is still fairly recent and there is a lot of similarity across the products, there is still room to explore alternative ways to incorporate a video component and the reasons for including such a component.

4.1.1.3 The Message is the Medium?

As referred to in section 3.3.1 above one of the often misunderstood nuances of McLuhan's infamous aphorism "the medium is the message" is that McLuhan considered each new medium to be given another medium as its content (McLuhan & Gordon 2003:31). However, McLuhan's focus continued to remain as to how new medium would influence and shape society regardless of the content which they carried.

In considering the outcomes of this study I would suggest that reversing McLuhan's famous aphorism to "the message is the medium" provides another nuance which has been identified. In both the QDA and interviews it can be seen that whilst different medium are being utilised, the way those medium are being utilised has categorically been shaped by the medium which has been retrieved as their content. As Bible study materials which are seeking teach participants, the media utilised have been shaped by what was seen to be the predominant pedagogical approaches of educational institutions where an expert is present to deliver content to learners. What became evident was that what the majority of these materials deliver to the groups is the setting of such a classroom.

The video medium delivered an otherwise inaccessible expert to give input to the class on their area of expertise. The print materials predominantly provided the end of chapter 'textbook review questions' to ensure the learners had understood the content and its implications. The responses of interview participants to the impacts of a long term exposure to the materials and what they would teach group participants undoubtedly suggests that the power of the video and print medium and what message they convey has been usurped by the message of the question and answer classroom. Therefore,

despite the medium carrying its own messages, it is this retrieved medium which has conveyed the strongest message in this instance.

By reversing McLuhan's aphorism the impact of the "retrieved medium" on the medium used to deliver it becomes more apparent. "The message is the medium" can possibly draw attention away from assuming that only the medium carry their own inherent messages, but that these messages are also shaped by the 'medium' which becomes their content as message. It is the combination of the retrieved medium and the new medium which work together to provide influence into the cultural setting. In reversing this aphorism, it draws attention back to the content, rather than having it ignored which can occur if McLuhan's retrieval nuance is not perceived. At the same time it places the content into a broader framework to consider it from the perspective of a media ecology type analysis.

4.1.2. Re-assessing the Thesis

At the beginning of this study the following thesis was put forward:

> The Church has a responsibility to train and equip believers within the
> context of a relational community interacting with the Word of God so
> that community may grow in discernment and maturity. The Church
> has, and continues, to utilise different media to provide teaching and
> training on a mass scale. The current products being developed as
> Bible study materials (especially those incorporating the video medium)
> are failing to meet this responsibility.

Having now arrived at the conclusion of the study this thesis needs to be reassessed in the light of the outcomes above. Whilst it is not possible to test this thesis in a way to 'prove' or 'disprove' it, there are particular outcomes which provide some indicative results.

4.1.1.1 Cultural Influence of Small Group Leadership

Whilst these materials may be developed in a way which makes the leaders of these groups superfluous, it is apparent that the influence of the leader of a small group is very significant in terms of how the culture of the group develops. Therefore, it may be too strong a conclusion to say that these materials are 'failing to meet this responsibility'. It is questionable as to whether these materials should be expected to meet this responsibility at all and that further emphasis on the responsibility of the local church to encourage and develop leadership in this area would possibly combat some of the cultural tendencies of the materials themselves. This isn't to arrive at the conclusion that these materials could not be improved towards this end, but rather that the expectation for them to take responsibility for this outcome is too presumptuous.

4.1.1.2 Provision of an Alternative Position

Despite the materials themselves carrying a fairly set agenda in terms of the topic they were exploring, this set agenda did not always match the position of the group, or individuals within the group. Having an alternative position provided by an outside source does appear to provide a level of safety for exploring the position as the person presenting it does not have a relational connection to the group. As put forward in the analysis, this may result in the prominence of an accept/reject response to the materials, but it does allow participants to reject a position without the perceived rejection of the person who holds such a position. Providing alternative positions for groups to consider will allow them to consider why they hold the position they do and not the position presented. Such an exercise can contribute to the training and equipping of believers. This does again rely on the culture of the groups, but was evident in the majority of the groups of this study.

4.1.1.3 Variety of Materials

Due to the variety of the materials, even within the small sample size examined, it is evident that such a statement is too broad to include all materials. Whilst I would suggest

that the majority of these materials are not effectively supporting the group leaders in training and equipping believers, there are some which I do believe can contribute positively in this area.

4.1.1.4 Presenting Problems not Solutions

In terms of this study I would suggest the most effective of the materials to be considered in this study was the *They like Jesus but not the Church*. One of the clear differences of this package was that it did not use the media to reinforce the position of the presenter, but instead utilised the media to increase the intensity of the problem which the presenter had identified, leaving it to the group, under the guidance of the local leader to work towards a possible solution. By not providing the solutions, the materials were able to encourage groups to develop their skills and abilities to interact with the Word of God and each other, to work towards a solution.

4.1.1.5 Significance of the Word of God

It was identified by both myself in the QDA and the interview participants that the interaction with the Bible can be significantly downplayed by these materials. This can be from a number of factors including a 'find the answers' approach to the Bible study sections, or the use of small sections (1-2 verses) of Scripture without regard for the context to support a point, etc. The topical nature of all of the materials reviewed in this study and the apparent lack of biblical book based studies in this format does reinforce a compartmentalised approach to Scripture and could undermine a more comprehensive understanding of Scripture over time.

4.1.1.6 Lack of Dialogical Approach

Whilst a dialogical approach is difficult via the use of mass medium, it was not apparent that the packages had considered how to incorporate a dialogical approach to the materials. As mentioned above, the alternative voice provided by the materials does provide an avenue for introducing alternative perspectives, but without a dialogical

interaction, it is likely to result in an accept/reject approach. By incorporating a dialogical approach this allows for interaction beyond just a simple accept/reject. A dialogical approach could further explore the validity of the reasoning for the acceptance or rejection of the position and consider further the presuppositions or cultural influences which may be contributing. An accept/reject approach does not allow participants to be trained and equipped to understand the complexities of different perspectives and viewpoints and could reinforce deciding on an accept/reject position based on stereotypes (e.g. liberal, fundamental, etc).

4.1.3. Summary

What becomes apparent in the review of this study is the complexity of all of the influencing factors which are at play. It has been difficult to isolate one category from the others as each plays a role in how the other is shaped and experienced. However, like McLuhan in *The Mechanical Bride*, this study has attempted "to set the reader at the center [sic] of the revolving picture created by these affairs where he [or she] may observe the action involved in progress in which everybody is involved" (M. McLuhan 2002:v). From this position it is hoped that there is the possibility to identify the benefit of providing a broader framework for considering, and therefore developing, materials such as those reviewed in this study.

Whilst not being able to conclude that the thesis presented at the beginning of this study is verified, I would suggest that this study has provided a number of key themes which need to be addressed in proposing a new way forward.

The importance of a theological position on small groups and its role in informing the production of the materials.

> Without a clear concept of the value of Bible study small groups it appears much
> more likely that materials will be developed in a way which can serve an agenda

that doesn't encourage participants in possible key elements of that theological position.

Empowering the small group leader.

Without a conscientious aspiration to empower the small group leader it appears the resultant outcome is to usurp them in their role, which does not assist them in carrying the responsibility for the training and equipping of the group.

Identifying and considering the medium which has been converted to content.

Without identifying the pedagogy medium, which is being converted into the new medium, it is likely that this, as the resultant dominant 'message' of the materials, may work against the intention of the materials.

Maintaining a Word of God focus.

Without incorporating a diligent trajectory to increase the engagement and interaction with the Word of God including increasing the responsibility of participants to improve in their interpretation skills the reverse will occur.

Encouraging an explorative environment.

Without intentionally seeking to provide inspiration for group participants to discover and discern it is most likely materials will not encourage a situation which enhances the ability for maturity to develop.

4.2 A NEW WAY FORWARD

Having now considered the outcomes of this study it is time to look to propose an alternative way forward. To continue in a rhythm of action-reflection this new way forward will be put forward as a proposal for an alternative product, rather than as a model or theory. There are two key reasons for this.

Firstly, during my undergraduate studies I have had a desire to work towards developing materials of this type, which incorporated my 'gut feeling' that these materials could be significantly improved to provide a better outcome for the small group setting. Secondly, whilst a model or theory does have its advantages in being able to be applied across a wide range of different approaches, considering the complexities of this area and the rapid changes and growth in this area, a specific alternative product provides both the ability to realise it and then test it within the same local church praxis to establish if the interview participants perceived any value in the alternative.

4.2.1   Theological Position on Small Groups

Within this study there is not the space to discuss alternative positions on small groups, but due to the importance of utilising this to influence the production of the materials it is valuable to present three of the key aspects of my theological position.

4.2.1.1 Teachers Developing and Encouraging Maturity

In terms of small group Bible studies, I would suggest there is a clear mandate that there is a responsibility on group leaders to develop an environment which should encourage participants to grow towards maturity. Group leaders should be seeking to develop and encourage each of their group participants to become what they are. Whilst not every participant will be gifted or capable of developing into a leader of such a group, the aim of the leaders should be to develop an ability for group members to be able to engage with Scripture and enable them to move beyond an infant interaction (1 Cor 3; Eph 4; Heb 5).

4.2.1.2 Scriptural Engagement in Community

The small group setting provides for participants to engage with Scripture beyond an individual engagement and to learn and sharpen each other in both how Scripture is to be understood and how specific parts of Scripture are understood. Without calling participants to return to Scripture to hear it again, afresh and anew, the ongoing ability for Scripture to challenge and shape participants can be overcome by their ability to master

Scripture and what it has to say. This is about reinforcing the hermeneutical position as discussed in 1.2.2 above.

4.2.1.3 Group Encouragement and Support

The small group setting, especially in larger church contexts, allows for the encouragement and support elements evident in the New Testament to be fostered. As the concept of 'community' is no longer as restricted by geography, as it was in a first century context, an alternative communal setting is beneficial. The small group setting provides an opportunity for participants to develop deep relationships of trust and support with other participants. Whilst this is an important element of the small group setting, I would consider that this is an element that these materials would be best to encourage by not attempting to be involved in. The importance of allowing the group to develop its cultural value system naturally has been reinforced by this study. It is most likely that if the group is dependent on the materials for establishing the group cultural value systems those value systems will have a higher likelihood of replicating the cultural values systems which were identified in the materials themselves.

4.2.2   The Alternative Product

While it will not be completely possible to describe every aspect of the alternative product, the following provides an indication of the key aspects of this product and what it will incorporate.

4.2.2.1 Presenter

The materials will be presented by someone without a celebrity status or an obvious connection to the materials (such as the material's author). The role of the presenter will be established as someone who will be providing an 'alternative voice(s)' for the group to consider under the guidance of their group leader.

4.2.2.2 <u>No Set Sessions</u>

The materials will be designed to be completed at whatever pace the group works at and won't be broken into a number of set sessions. Instead it will have a continuous flow to allow the group to spend the time as they determine.

4.2.2.3 <u>Biblical Book Study</u>

The product will not be a topical study but rather be a study based on a biblical book and will instead raise different topics to be considered against the book.

4.2.2.4 <u>Providing Dialogical Interaction</u>

The materials will utilise the menu structures ability of DVDs to allow for alternative pathways through the materials to be undertaken. This will be achieved by having a number of short video sections which then provide more than one option for the next video section after that section is completed. This will allow an improved dialogical emphasis as the next video can respond more specifically to the choice of the group.

4.2.2.5 <u>Raising 'Problems'</u>

Each video section will be used to raise 'problems' for the group. This isn't to use problems in a negative sense, but rather than having a set agenda and seeking to ensure participants reach those conclusions, the materials will look to raise problems with alternative outcomes and these alternative outcomes will then provide the group with the pathway forward by selecting that option from the next possible video sections.

4.2.2.6 <u>Interactions with Alternative and Conflicting Perspectives</u>

The materials will provide opportunity for participants to engage and interact with alternative and possibly conflicting perspectives on different issues.

4.2.2.7 <u>Reinforcing of Responsibility of the Group Leader</u>

The materials will place the emphasis on the group leader to direct the group through the materials. This will be achieved by not including an excessive amount of questions and not using closed questions or those having only one possible answer. The materials will

also be designed to only provide the actual 'Bible study' input for the group. There will not be direction for things like 'getting to know people'; session 'ice-breakers'; what to pray for; practical exercises to carry out, instead the group leader will be encouraged to take ownership for these areas.

4.2.2.8 <u>Engaging with the Local Praxis</u>

The materials will encourage participants to consider the role of their local praxis in both their beliefs and actions. This will be achieved by encouraging participants to articulate their positions on different issues, articulate the reasons for holding such positions, consider the factors influencing those positions, provide case studies for participants to consider how they may respond in such situations, and encouraging participants to evaluate their actions in relation to their positions.

4.2.3   Anticipated Benefit of Alternative Focus to Production

Having now considered the above study it is anticipated that by making a proactive shift to consider how these materials are not just designed for a small group setting but are designed cognisant of the benefits of the small group setting it is anticipated that a product can be developed which improves on the currently available products. There is no illusion in my mind that this will be a once and for all solution to this area. Nor that this proposed product will be the definitive response to the situation. However, it is hoped that by taking the time to investigate this area in the way this study has, that both the conscience and also the sub-conscience observations will inform an outcome which can provide an improved alternative.

I would suggest that the most important shift in thinking which is required within the industry producing these materials is a shift to seek to encourage the development of the key elements of the small group setting with a long term focus rather than a short term course outcome focus. This shift will move the production focus from producing materials

for a small group setting to producing materials which encourage a maturing and healthy small group setting.

4.3 A REFLECTIVE SOJOURNING

As was stated in section 1.2.1 above, the importance of conditioning a disposition of the mind and heart of the practical theologian is an essential element of the scholarly task of Practical Theology. It is towards this end that the close of this study is, therefore, not an exposition on the results of the study itself, but rather a recollection of the impact of this study on the researcher.

The extent of this study has had an impact beyond the specific area of the topic itself. Predominantly it has engaged further thinking and practice in the areas of teaching, both within the context of Perth Bible College (PBC) where I am employed and in Cambodia where I had, and continue to have, the opportunity to be involved in the training of Pastors. Engaging the thinking of this study within those environments has encouraged me to explore a more discursive, exploratory and dialogical educational focus, with an emphasis on motivating the learners to establish the benefits of the learning process and from this encourage their own self learning. I have had the opportunity to trial this within the praxis of PBC and Cambodia and this has provided additional avenues for further exploration.

Key areas which may be further explored are:

- The tension between developing ongoing learners and providing a learning environment which isn't purely relative
- How 'online' or 'distance' learning delivered by alternative media can challenge the assumptions of the face-to-face learning environment
- Whether the dominant pedagogical focus of particularly the Higher Education sector has become somewhat divorced from the real life experience of graduates

All of these areas are worth further investigation within the area of theological education, whether it is in the context of a formal setting such as a Bible college or a less formal setting of the training within a local church.

Engaging in this study has provided an extensive engagement with the area of media ecology. This is definitely an area which I am interested in continuing to explore. Currently, in my opinion, the rapid development of technology is producing a media ecology which contains a distinctive range of media participants. The attitudes towards the different media by these different media participants would be worth further investigation. It was interesting to note that the oldest participant in the interviews indicated that the study materials including video was not for their group, and was fairly negative about the difficulties the video technology introduced to their group. But at the same time, they held a position which indicated that this was a generational thing and it was predominantly the unfamiliarity with the technology which was generating this attitude. Such a position suggests that whilst not beneficial for that particular group, the move to embrace these technologies is most likely beneficial for the generations to come.

It is my personal experience that my own attitudes towards technological advancements have already started to feel that the new technologies, whilst second nature to younger generations, take time to learn and master. This area continues to draw me to reflect on the suggestion of Douglas Adam's the author of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* as recounted by Dyer:

> First "everything that's already in the world when you're born is just normal." Then, "anything that gets invented between then and before you turn thirty is incredibly exciting and creative and with any luck you can make a career out of it." Finally, "anything that gets invented after you're thirty is against the natural order of things and the beginning of

the end of civilisation as we know it until it's been around for about ten years when it gradually turns out to be alright really." (Dyer 2011:26).

This perspective also illustrates the rapid changes occurring in the media ecology.

Challies also draws attention to this via the illustration of Laura Ingalls Wilder who wrote the *Little House* series of books describing her life as a girl pioneering in America. He draws attention to how in the lifetime of Wilder (1867-1957) the shape of the world changed so rapidly that while horse and cart were the main form of long distance travel at the beginning of her life, both space travel and the jet travel had begun near the end of it (Challies 2011:47–48). Even considering my experience, in my lifetime I have witnessed the popularisation of the personal computer and can still remember the first PC being introduced into our family home. I remember that in my last year of high school only two members out of 150 in my student year level owned a mobile phone, and they received their fair share of 'ribbing' about why they might need such a device. I now hear parents of children aged as young as ten speak about the pressure they feel to provide a mobile phone for their children to prevent social isolation. I have witnessed the rise of the cassette tape over vinyl records, CDs over cassette tapes and digital downloads over CDs. These are just a few examples, and through this study I have become more aware of how my experience does shape my attitudes towards different technological advances and also how interaction with those technological advances can also reshape those attitudes. This tension between culture's ability to be shaped by the media ecology but to also shape the media ecology has been apparent within this study and is worth further investigation.

In concluding, I would suggest that one of the biggest difficulties in this area of media ecology which has developed during the course of this study is that of escaping the way the media ecology of our personal history plays a large role in shaping our presuppositions. Because of the media ecology I have experienced in my lifetime I can

assume that books are more likely to provide reliable information than TV or the internet. I can assume that quality face-to-face relational interaction with friends is tarnished or negatively impacted by constant interaction via social media. I can assume that having the local pastor preach is more valuable than watching a video of a well-known preacher in a church service. My attitudes towards all these areas can become more defining than the media ecology itself.

It is clear that the media ecology has shaped our world.   But as people, we have also shaped the media ecology and have the ability to redefine the terms of our engagement. As Christians, within a rapidly changing media ecology, we have a responsibility to continue to engage this environment in a theological action-reflection sojourning to challenge both the positive and negative determinism which can result by failing to consider new medium as little more than 'tools'.

5. APPENDIX A: Qualitative Document Analysis Summary

Appendix A provides an overview of Altheide's Qualitative Document Analysis as utilised in this study (Altheide 1996:23–44). This is presented by providing the twelve steps of the process categorised by the five stages.

Stage (a) documents

Step 1. Pursue a specific problem to be investigated

Step 2. Become familiar with the process and context of the information source (e.g. ethnographic studies of newspapers or television stations). Explore possible sources (perhaps documents) of information.

Step 3. Become familiar with several (6-10) examples of relevant documents, noting particularly the format. Select a unit of analysis (e.g., each article), which may change.

Stage (b) protocol development and data collection

Step 4. List several items or categories (variables) to guide data collection and draft a protocol (data collection sheet).

Step 5. Test the protocol by collecting data from several documents.

Step 6. Revise the protocol and select several additional cases to further refine the protocol.

Step 7. Arrive at a sampling rationale and strategy – for example, theoretical, opportunistic, cluster, stratified random. (Note that this will usually be theoretical sampling.)

Stage (c) data coding and organization

Step 8. Collect the data, using preset codes, if appropriate, and many descriptive examples. Keep the data with the original documents, but also enter data in a computer-text-word processing format for easier search-find and text coding. Midpoint analysis: About halfway to two thirds through the sample, examine the data to permit emergence, refinement, or collapsing of additional categories. Make appropriate adjustments to other data. Complete data collection.

Stage (d) data analysis

Step 9. Perform data analysis, including conceptual refinement and data coding. Read notes and data repeatedly and thoroughly.

Step 10. Compare and contrast "extremes" and "key differences" within each category or item. Make textual notes. Write brief summaries or overviews of data for each category (variable).

Step 11. Combine the brief summaries with an example of the typical case as well as the extremes. Illustrate from the protocol(s) for each case. Note surprises and curiosities about these cases and other materials in your data.

Stage (e) report

Step 12. Integrate the findings with your interpretation and key concepts in another draft.

6. APPENDIX B: Qualitative Document Analysis Data

Appendix B contains the data collected using the QDA process. The data tables are presented in the following order with the page the table starts on recorded in brackets:

Study Materials Summary

Overall Details	
Title	Purpose Driven Life
Date of Copyright	2003
Publisher	Purpose Driven Ministries
Publisher affiliations and/or statement of purpose/beliefs	Publisher no longer in business.
Materials provided	DVD Study Guide booklet The Purpose Driven Life book (Warren)
Total sessions for full course	6 (first four reviewed)
Indicated Length of Time for each session	90 minutes
Stated Purpose of Materials (e.g. promotional statements etc)	"*The Purpose-Driven® Life* is a blueprint for Christian living in the 21st century – a lifestyle based on God's eternal purposes, not cultural values" (back cover PDL book). "this study guide will help you strengthen and deepen God's five purposes for your lives" (pg. 4 booklet).

Video Component Details	
Average overall length per session	25mins
Number of segments per session (i.e. is it one presentation or stop/start)	Two
Type of video presentation	Talking head with Rick Warren in an office type studio presenting direct to camera. Key words and verses are shown on screen during presentation. The two session of the video are a five minute introduction for the group leader only to be watched prior to the group meeting and then a 20 min session for the whole group.
Any Relevant Details of presenter(s)	Rick Warren is the author of The Purpose-Driven Life and is the Senior Pastor of Saddleback Church.

Participant Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Study Guide Booklet The Purpose-Driven Life Book.
Print Component #1	Study Guide
Total Pages	62
Average Pages per session	7

Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	Booklet is divided into 5 main sections to reflect the five purposes of life: Connect (Fellowship): A section to help group members connect with each other. Grow (Discipleship): Contains a 'fill in the blank' section to complete as the video plays and then a Discussion section containing 3-4 questions. Serve/Share (Ministry/Evangelism) A section which has questions or suggestions on how to be serving or sharing what has been learnt. Worship: Suggestions for prayer or questions about how what has been learnt might cause a response.
Print Component #2	The Purpose-Driven Life book.
Total Pages	326
Average Pages per session	6-7 (per daily reading)
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	One chapter to be read each day of the forty day campaign.

Leader Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Appendix of Booklet
Print Component #1	Appendix of Booklet
Total Pages	6 pages
Average Pages per session	n/a
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	The leaders guide is very brief containing a page of key points for each session; a page of answers for the 'fill in the blanks' section of each session; and 10 helps for running a group.

Other Resources Component Details	
Other Resources	Video mentions details of campaign materials including sermon outlines and extra resources but these were not available with reviewed resource.

Descriptive Analysis

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Relationship vs Individualism	How integral is a group to completing the materials?
The materials could be completed without a group. The questions don't require more than one participant to be answered. Other participants may generate better discussion, but the materials could be completed without others. They could be used as a reflective set of materials by an individual. Focus on finding your purpose reinforces the importance of the individual.	
Interconnectivity vs Productivity	In what ways are participants encouraged to explore alternative positions related to alternative contexts to the video setting?
Alternative positions are not presented. There are a set of key points which are pre-set for each session. The series wants to convince participants that a key component of Christianity is that it gives life purpose and meaning.	
Complexity vs Efficiency	How do the materials indicate they value time, space and reflection?
The suggested time frame is 90 mins per session. 20 minutes of this is taken up with video leaving 70 minutes for the other areas. The materials also suggest that they should not define the pace of the session; but rather that they should be a tool for the group (p.5). The time provided for the discussion questions is 20 minutes and each section contains ~4 questions providing 5mins per question.

The 'fill in the blanks' sections with the teaching are reinforced by the discussion questions. The questions mostly discuss the implications of the point made.

With the combination of the materials there is a high level of repetition. This would suggest that there is less value on reflection as the point is being made a number of times to reinforce it.

Large numbers of Bible verses but mostly in one or two verse groups and from different books of the Bible. To take the time to look at all the references in their context would be a large task. One example is that Rick Warren uses Jeremiah 29:11 "'For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. "They are plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" as an individual promise for each person without considering how this verse might function in its context as a corporate promise to Israel. This isn't to suggest that Warren's use isn't also valid, but it is presented as the valid interpretation of this verse. This occurs a lot and reinforces that the Bible is a set of short aphorisms to live life by. | |
| Engagement vs Distraction | Is this product best described as a "thing" or "device"? Give indicators. |
| Device.
The materials combined are designed to provide the answers to the question "What am I here for?". All participants are required to do to get the answer is complete a 40 day 'challenge'. Participants are provided with the answers to this question in a fivefold answer. The video | |

sessions with the 'fill in the blank' sections provides an easy and accessible way to get the required responses. The large amount of verses of Scripture quoted without exploring the context of the verses provide a 'get the answers' approach to Scripture.

This product demands very little of the group leader other than an ability to read, play a DVD and facilitate a discussion.

Participation vs Consumption	Are there any indicators of participation which indicates a trajectory towards growing expectation on the participant?

None identifiable. The idea appears to be that if the participant takes on the five fold position of the materials maturity will result. However the way the materials are presented do not encourage a deep searching of the Scriptures.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)	
Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation	What are the actions reinforced by the materials?

Memorisation. The repetitive nature of the materials points to the emphasis on using repetition for memory.

The 'fill in the blanks' sections reinforce the content of the videos. This reinforces a hear and repeat action.

Watching a long video sermonette.

Discussion.

Empowerment vs Power Maintenance	How do the materials indicate their intentions in terms of power in the communication process?

The intention is clearly to maintain power in the communication process. Warren has developed his fivefold purpose for life and it is clear the ambition of the materials is to communicate that and reinforce it with participants.

Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential	What potentialities are utilised by the use of the different media?

The print and video are utilised in a combined way to reinforce each other. The print provides a follow along guide with the 'fill in the blank' sections and then the discussion questions repeat the content covered in the video. This appears to be utilising the potential for different media to hit different target audiences.

The video medium is utilised to build a sense of trust with the presenter. Warren is laid back and friendly in his approach and having him deliver straight to camera enhances that feel that the materials is for you personally.

Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning	Are alternative positions provided for the audience? Are all alternatives equally valid? What gives validity to positions?
No alternative positions are provided. Positions are validated by Scripture, however this is predominantly by one or two verses without any relation to the broader context in which they are situated.	

Pedagogical Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)

Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed	What type of learning environment or learning actions do the materials encourage?
A teacher expert environment is encouraged. Warren, as the author, is the expert of the materials. He provides the teaching content and the 'fill in the blanks' are used to reinforce what it is that he has to say. The directive nature of the materials sets the agenda, even though it does want to be seen as a tool (booklet pg. 3).	

Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge	What indicators are there that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners?
There are no indicators that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners. Alternative viewpoints are not provided. Scripture is not looked at in depth but rather used in a 'proof texting' way to support the points made. The sessions are quite full, which doesn't leave a lot of time for reflection or in-depth discussion about the points being made.	

Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory	How do the materials engage with the interaction of theory and praxis?
The materials are theory to praxis focussed. The aim is to provide the participant with the theoretical framework required to ensure that they live a life of purpose. Once the theory is taken on the actions will then be able to be generated. Participants are encouraged to discuss implications of the theory more than the theory itself.	

Study Materials Summary

Overall Details	
Title	Six Steps to Talking about Jesus
Date of Copyright	2006
Publisher	Matthias Media
Publisher affiliations and/or statement of purpose/beliefs	Mission Statement: We want to persuade all Christians of the truth of God's purposes in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible, and equip them with high-quality resources, so that by the work of the Holy Spirit they will: » abandon their lives to the honour and service of Christ in daily holiness and decision-making » pray constantly in Christ's name for the fruitfulness and growth of his gospel » speak the Bible's life-changing word whenever and however they can—in the home, in the world and in the fellowship of his people. (www.matthiasmedia.com.au)
Materials provided	DVD Guide Booklet (contains Leader's notes)
Total sessions for full course	Six (first four reviewed)
Indicated Length of Time for each session	1 hour
Stated Purpose of Materials (e.g. promotional statements etc)	"The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is good news. And good news is always worth sharing. Our prayer is that through this course you will be motivated, encouraged and equipped to make a start – even a small one – in doing just that" (Booklet p. 5-6)

Video Component Details	
Average overall length per session	3 sessions 15 mins; 3 sessions 10 mins
Number of segments per session (i.e. is it one presentation or stop/start)	2-4
Type of video presentation	Talking head presentation by Simon Manchester. Delivered in what looks like a church/office foyer. Text for key points or key verse references are shown onscreen beside Simon. Very occasional full screen text of verse. Some sections contain talking head comments from people sharing their experience in coming to know Jesus. On session contains two short dramatised role-

	plays.
Any Relevant Details of presenter(s)	Simon Manchester is one of the authors of the materials.

Participant Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Guide Booklet
Print Component #1	Guide
Total Pages	60 (46pgs of studies + 14pgs of appendices)
Average Pages per session	7
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	There are five different headings for sections and each session is made up of a combination of these five sections with sessions containing more than one of each sections (apart from the to conclude section) Discuss: 1-3 questions provided to stimulate discussion. Bible Study: A given passage and then 3-6 questions which include the specific verse(s) which provide the answer. Video: Blank space for taking notes from the video. Exercise: Tasks to complete such as listing people you know who don't know Jesus; thinking of a recent news issue and deciding to contribute as a Christian to a conversation about it. To Conclude: A couple of concluding activities. One being suggested prayer points. Others encouraging the group to share their stories of becoming a Christian with others in the group.

Leader Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Appendix of Guide Booklet
Print Component #1	Guide
Total Pages	9
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	The leaders guide section provides a short "Goal of the Session" overview and then a table for the suggested timing of each section of the session to complete the session within one hour.

	It is suggest that "In preparing for each session, make sure you work through the material beforehand, especially the Bible Study sections" (p.52).

Other Resources Component Details	
Other Resources	N/A

Descriptive Analysis

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Relationship vs Individualism	How integral is a group to completing the materials?
A group is required to complete the materials although it is only fairly minimal. Most of the session can be completed without a group, but the concluding section often requires splitting into pairs to share. This part could be skipped, but the materials suggest that "one small but important aspect of the course as it goes along is the weekly exercise of 'sharing your story' found in the 'To conclude' section of the first five sessions. The main purpose of this is to help people take some first basic steps in having the name of Jesus on their lips" (p. 52). Therefore skipping this section would reduce the aims of the course.	
Interconnectivity vs Productivity	In what ways are participants encouraged to explore alternative positions related to alternative contexts to the video setting?
Alternative positions are not presented. The key points of the 6 session are: 1. God loves people and that is our motivation to share the Gospel 2. We need to understand the Gospel to share it. 3. God saves people not us, so we need to pray. 4. We are free to serve God, so our freedom should be used to connect people to Jesus 5. Christians should invite people to find out more about Jesus 6. Three practical ways to talk about Jesus: a gospel outline; your personal story; putting forward God's view The materials do indicate that "*Six Steps to Talking about Jesus* is not a difficult course to run. The concepts are not complicated, and the format of each session is simple enough" (p. 51). It would seem that the desire of the course is not to provide alternatives but rather a number of clear points.	
Complexity vs Efficiency	How do the materials indicate they value time, space and reflection?
The materials state that "While we have designed the studies so they can be completed in an hour, you will benefit from allocating a little extra time to each session, particularly to prayer and additional discussion" (p.52).	

In the indicative time table the Bible Study sections are allocated 10-15mins and do make up a significant amount of the time in sessions. For the first four sessions this time allocation is at least twice the time of the video input. This does appear to place emphasis on ensuring the Bible Study section is given a high time priority.

Session 1: 2 Bible Study sections (15 + 15mins) Video 15 mins
Session 2: 2 Bible Study sections (15 + 15mins) Video 16 mins
Session 3: 2 Bible Study Sections (15 + 15mins) Video 9 mins
Session 4: 1 Bible Study Section (15 + 15mins) Video 9 mins
Session 5: 1 Bible Study Section (10 mins) Video 10 mins
Session 6: 1 Bible Study Section (10 mins) Video 16 mins

Engagement vs Distraction	Is this product best described as a "thing" or "device"? Give indicators.

Device.

The whole idea of there being six steps to talking about Jesus has a mechanised feeling. Whilst talking about the more organic situations of life the materials are presenting a formula for talking about Jesus. The Gospel is summarised by 4R's (Rebellion, Rescue, Resurrection, Response) which present a very individual salvation focused Gospel. Overall the process of evangelism comes across as a very neat exercise easily accomplished by following the formula. The role-plays lack authenticity but project a sense of how by getting things 'right' success is possible.

Whilst there are significant Bible Study sections these are very 'find the answer' type questions and it would be unlikely that these sections would take the time allocated (15mins) to complete. Most of the Exercise sections are individual exercises and don't need the rest of the group to complete.

Participation vs Consumption	Are there any indicators of participation which indicates a trajectory towards growing expectation on the participant?

There is a sense that within the course participants will grow from being unsure of how to share the Gospel message to being confident of the message, motivated to share it and actively perusing that activity. However, the direction and guidance of the materials are extensive and outline every area with a lot of detail so there is not much expectation on participants other than to take on the expert advice and put it into action.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)	
Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation	What are the actions reinforced by the materials?

Searching the Bible for answers to questions.
Discussion.
Watching a video talk by an expert.
Planning a strategy for evangelising people who participants know.

Empowerment vs Power Maintenance	How do the materials indicate their intentions in terms of power in the communication process?

These materials do seek to share the power relationship to a degree. Whilst Simon as an author is the expert presenter, participants are encouraged to spend a large portion of time studying

Bible passages. This does look to ground the points being made within biblical texts rather than in the presenter. However, the extensive direction in terms of the 'answers' that should be found in the text doesn't encourage participants to test what is being said against the passage in it's context.

Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential	What potentialities are utilised by the use of the different media?

The potential of repetitious reinforcement through mixing mediums is the most apparent potential utilised. The video content adds very little to the content covered in the booklet. It would seem that the video's main role is to repeat the points made in the booklet activities or the booklet activities reinforce the point made in the video. The location of the video and the charisma of the presenter add very little and these sections could have been printed in the booklet as text.

There a two exceptions with the video. One is the few times when there are others sharing briefly of their experiences on the video. These appear to be utilising the potential of reinforcing that what is being said is trustworthy and will work. They are a lot like 'customer' testimonies on infomercials. The second is the short role plays. These utilise the video medium to reduce the need for imagination. Rather than having to describe or write about a situation and the participants needing to imagine it, the situation can be presented and the participants don't have to imagine the situation.

The potential of the print medium to present a logical sequence of discovery is utilised in the Bible Study sections. The questions are used to move participants through the passage to reach the desired conclusions.

Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning	Are alternative positions provided for the audience? Are all alternatives equally valid? What gives validity to positions?

There are no alternative positions provided.

The positions are validated by looking at passages of the Bible.

Pedagogical Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)	
Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed	What type of learning environment or learning actions do the materials encourage?

The materials do seek to encourage an active participation environment. The Video sections are not more than a quarter of a session. The Bible Study and Exercise sections are the longer parts of the sessions.

There is still an 'expert to participant' environment as most of the questions are closed and are looking for the 'right' answer as determined by the authors.

Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge	What indicators are there that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners?

The focus on having extensive time and longer passages to examine in the Bible Study sections do

indicate that there is at the very least a desire to reinforce the Bible's role in increasing discernment. There are references to the background situations from which the passages arise giving participants an indication that this information is important to understanding passages. However, at the same time, the questions for the Bible Study sections are very directive and the answers sought are quite clear.	
Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory	How do the materials engage with the interaction of theory and praxis?
The materials do have a combination of theory and praxis. Whilst a majority is focussed on making sure that the right theory is taken on, there is also encouragement to begin to be active in the praxis and utilise the praxis of the participants to shape how they move forward with sharing about Jesus. That being said, the materials do work in a very theory to praxis way. The first sessions are about getting good theory in place to be able to talk about Jesus .	

Study Materials Summary

Overall Details	
Title	No Plan B
Date of Copyright	2009
Publisher	Bluefish TV
Publisher affiliations and/or statement of purpose/beliefs	Motto: Creating video to help you teach. Mission: The Bluefish TV mission is to help people trade in the pursuit of the American Dream for a world that desperately needs Christ. Values: We love the church – in our neighborhoods, at the office and around the world the mission of the church matters. We love authentic stories – Real-life stories have the power to inspire and validate what God is doing. We love immediate action – Christianity is a verb. To wait is a sin. We love hard work – God is glorified when we use our God-given passion and skills with excellence. We love our families – there will always be more work to do, but not at the expense of family and friends.
Materials provided	Booklet (discussion guide), DVD
Total sessions for full course	Four
Indicated Length of Time for each session	Not indicated. Group leaders are encouraged to set time boundaries (p.5 of booklet)
Stated Purpose of Materials (e.g. promotional statements etc)	"For different reasons, church history has been known for trying to separate evangelism from social action. This kind of thinking is unbiblical, however, as Scripture shows us how we're called to proclaim the good news *and* help the poor and oppressed. These are to be married together as we serve with genuine, heartfelt compassion relying on Jesus as our model." (booklet p. 8)

Video Component Details	
Average overall length per session	8 mins
Number of segments per session (i.e. is it one presentation or stop/start)	One

Type of video presentation	Talking head introduction and wrap-up: Brian Mosley (Bluefish TV President); in lounge chair in a low light setting. Talking head on location including dramatisation and on location shots of other activities: Todd Phillips delivers main content on location in Rwanda, the Congo and Russia. This delivery to camera is interspersed with either dramatisation of events prior to the trip related to his content or footage from the trip itself. Session 2 contains a short segment from a message Todd delivered for a related conference.
Any Relevant Details of presenter(s)	Todd Phillips is the pastor of the 3000-member Frontline Church in Washington D.C. Todd is the author of *Spiritual CPR* and *Get Uncomfortable*. He speaks across the country (North America) at conferences including *LeadNow* and *Fusion*. (back cover of DVD)

Participant Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	N/A: No Participant materials

Leader Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Discussion Guide Booklet
Print Component #1	
Total Pages	31
Average Pages per session	5-6
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	The booklet is provided for the group leader to "combine the video and Bible Study into a dynamic growth experience" (booklet p. 6). Each session is made up of seven elements: Intro: A short paragraph which in the first session summaries the main point of the study. The three remaining sessions provide a summary of the main point of the previous week and one or two questions related to the previous study. Icebreaker: Two related questions which encourage participants to share from their experience and connect the theme of the study to their experiences.

	Intro to video: a short introduction paragraph that is recommended to be read prior to the video.
	Video.
	Discuss: approximately 7-8 questions related to the video presentation. Each session includes 2-3 different biblical references to be considered.
	Challenge: a set task to accomplish prior to the next session related to the session.
	Further Study: a biblical reference and two reflective questions.

Other Resources Component Details	
Other Resources	N/A
Other Resource #1	
Description of other resource	
Description of how it is suggested the resource is used.	
Other Resource #1	
Description of other resource	
Description of how it is suggested the resource is used.	

Descriptive Analysis

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Relationship vs Individualism	How integral is a group to completing the materials?
The biggest impact of not having a group to complete the materials would be the reduction of the personal experience stories which are encouraged by the Icebreakers and by 1-2 questions in the discussion sections. The key content elements could be covered without a group.	
Interconnectivity vs Productivity	In what ways are participants encouraged to explore alternative positions related to alternative contexts to the video setting?
Alternative positions are not presented. The key points for the four sessions are: 1. There are 2000 Scriptures in which God calls us to care for the poor and oppressed 2. There is a false separation of social action and evangelism in the modern church 3. Biblical compassion is acting out of a heart of loving-kindness engaged by those in need 4. We have to undertake specific actions in response (seven are suggested)	

Session two, for example, presents a conference talk by Todd where he suggests that the church has created a false dichotomy between social action and evangelism. Todd suggests this is the result of higher criticism leading to liberalism and concern for the here and now, resulting in a social action focus, being responded to by Bible focussed churches focussing instead on 'saving souls'. This is covered in approximately 3 mins. A sketch of church history places anyone who may be "social action" focussed into the liberal camp and anyone who may have an "evangelistic" fervour into a fundamental camp. The first discussion question reinforces Todd's point then asks: "In what ways do you see churches today following this "artificial divorce"?" (pg. 18). This doesn't appear to encourage exploring an alternative position, but rather rejecting the two positions based on Todd's short summary.

Complexity vs Efficiency	How do the materials indicate they value time, space and reflection?

The booklet does contain guidance in terms of being sensitive to time in the Five Keys to Effectively Lead Your Small Group section (p. 5). In this section it states: "Ending right on the clock may not always be best in the moment" (p.5) which does suggest that time shouldn't pressure the discussion.

The short length of the videos does suggest that the intention of the materials is that the group discussion will make up a majority of the time of the study. The discussion time is about 45mins based on an hour session. With each discussion section having ~9 questions this results in ~5mins per question.

The further study section does suggest that taking time to reflect further during the week may be valuable. However, the biblical references are not very long (3-8 verses except for the last session which is chapter 1 of James) and the questions could mostly be answered without reading the text. E.g. When has your heart been heavily burdened over the spiritual condition of another person? What areas do you struggle in obeying God's word?

A number of the discussion questions aren't really discussion questions. Especially those related to the biblical references. They are often quite easily identifiable answers which would encourage a look and find rather than a Scriptural reflection. This encourages going to the text to find an answer which may reduce the value of seeking to explore the text so it may speak on its terms and challenge those questions.

Engagement vs Distraction	Is this product best described as a "thing" or "device"? Give indicators.

Device

This product demands very little of the group leader other than an ability to read, play a DVD and facilitate a discussion.
The demands of the questions related to biblical references are not particularly demanding and the answer to some could most likely be guessed by a biblically astute Christian or by the focus of the content. E.g. Read Luke 4:14-20, Who was working inside Jesus to accomplish such a mission? (p. 13). Read Luke 9:1-7, What did Jesus send the disciples out to do?

The discussion questions which are more likely to generate discussion are predominantly related to experience. The demand for participants to reconsider their experiences in the light of the

Scriptures is low.	
Participation vs Consumption	Are there any indicators of participation which indicates a trajectory towards growing expectation on the participant?

The Challenge section may provide some indication of participation which has a growing expectation on the participant. This is linked to the content of the session being converted into a practical action.

Predominantly the materials are looking to provide the answers for the participants.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)

Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation	What are the actions reinforced by the materials?

The discussing of experiences.
Watching short messages from an expert.
Viewing third world circumstances.
A 'look and find answers' approach to biblical references.
A conversion of what was learnt into a practical action.
Arriving at answers from experience.

Empowerment vs Power Maintenance	How do the materials indicate their intentions in terms of power in the communication process?

These materials would appear to seek to maintain power in the communication process.
The main point of each session is repeated in the introduction and wrap-up by the head of Bluefish TV reinforcing the importance of taking it on.
Todd (the pastor of a 3000 member church and author of two books) provides all the input from the on location setting, despite other team members being included in the accompanying footage. This reinforces that Todd is the voice which can provide an expert view.
The on location presenting, other footage and the musical score are geared towards creating an emotional connection and desire to respond affirmatively to the content. Todd is not only presented as an expert, but also as someone actively involved, adding value to his voice.

Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential	What potentialities are utilised by the use of the different media?

The potentiality of utilising the video medium to engage emotions through images and music is utilised. This seems especially the case with using the on location approach to the content. The same content is presented by Brian and Todd and both could have presented from the lounge chair. Having Todd on location utilises the potentiality to reduce space and time. Todd does not just talk about his content, but it can be seen in action in another place in another time as he present it.

The potentiality of utilising the print medium to present a rationally sequenced working through the presentation to reinforce the key point is utilised. This is evident in the way the discussion questions aren't predominantly geared towards discussion around the content presented, but discussion to reinforce the position of the content.

Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning	Are alternative positions provided for the audience? Are all alternatives equally valid? What gives validity to positions?

Yes. Session two presents a "Bible-believing" position of divorcing the mandate to care for the poor and the oppressed and a "non-miracle-believing" position of divorcing the mission to preach the Gospel. These views are not presented as equally valid and are presented only to be rejected by the position of the materials.

Scripture is presented as what gives validity to a position. However, it would appear that experience also validates positions. Not only are the materials predominantly focussed on discussing experience, but Todd provides stories from his experience which have led him to hold his position. E.g. Todd recounts that despite having an MDiv it took an experience with a church member for him to realise the importance of his current position.

Pedagogical Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)

Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed	What type of learning environment or learning actions do the materials encourage?

Predominantly one which responds to set questions which are designed to support a 6-9 minute presentation of content. Discussion is encouraged around experience, but there are also many questions which don't provide room for too much discussion and are ultimately seeking an answer which will fit to reinforce the content presented.

Scripture is used to provide answers to set questions rather than also to raise questions.

An expert to student environment is encouraged. For both Todd and Brian to present the same position with a united front doesn't encourage either the group leader or the participants to suggest that perhaps what is presented may be questioned. The Five Keys to Effectively Lead Your Small Group section suggests that "a small group leader is a facilitator" who's job is "to facilitate an environment that's conducive for sharing" (p. 4). Thus the responsibility for the 'teaching' relies then on the experts on the video who have prepared the discussion booklet.

Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge	What indicators are there that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners?

None. The materials appear to be operating to ensure that the learners take on the position of the materials. This is achieved by presenting them in an emotionally engaging way and repeating the key point of each session several times. The look and find approach to the biblical references doesn't encourage thoughtful engagement with the content. For example, there is no engagement with the position held by some that the primary social action responsibility of the church outlined in the Scriptures is for brothers and sisters in Christ.

Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory	How do the materials engage with the interaction of theory and praxis?

There is a linear engagement with the interaction of theory and praxis. Each session presents a practical challenge as a result of the theory presented. Also, the final session of the series is presenting sevenpractical ways to be involved in social action. There is no engagement with how the practice of social action presented may need to be shaped differently than the social action of

the "non-miracle-believing" church to ensure the "marrying of the gospel and social action" (p. 16).

The emphasis appears to be encouraging an increase in social action which appears to have determined that the current praxis lacks social action based on the wealth of the West compared to the poverty of others.

There was no interaction between how a praxis of "social action" may still serve a consumerist Christianity, which is self focussed whereby participating in social action becomes no different to quiet times, attending church, being in a small group and other Christian activities as mentioned in the series.

Study Materials Summary

Overall Details	
Title	No Perfect People Allowed
Date of Copyright	2005
Author (if provided)	John Burke
Publisher	Zondervan
Publisher affiliations and/or statement of purpose/beliefs	Mission: To be the leader in Christian communications meeting the needs of people with resources that glorify Jesus Christ and promote biblical principles. Values: Integrity — We maintain high ethical and moral standards in speech and in personal and professional conduct. Initiative — We are willing and empowered to proactively contribute to the success of the company, its customers, and other employees. Excellence — We give our personal best. Innovation — We seek out new possibilities in every area and embrace ground-breaking change that adds value. Respect — We have as much consideration for the personal and professional worth and dignity of others as we do for ourselves. Accountability — We are responsible for our own actions and answerable to others. (www.zondervan.com)
Materials provided	Book, DVD-ROM
Total sessions for full course	Four
Indicated Length of Time for each session	Not indicated

Stated Purpose of Materials (e.g. promotional statements etc)	"Written for church, ministry, and small group leaders, and for anyone concerned with the church's impact in the world of today and tomorrow, *No Perfect People Allowed* shows how you can create a come-as-you-are culture that bridges the chasm between the church and our postmodern world." (Inside dust cover of book) "The *No Perfect People Allowed DVD* is designed to help you and your church read, listen, discuss, and discover the principles developed by Pastor John Burke at Gateway Community Church in Austin, Texas. We have made this DVD-ROM to enhance the experience of reading the book *No Perfect People Allowed*. Our hope is that everyone in your church or organization will read this book. In fact, we have provided you with the tools to do a four-week *No Perfect People Allowed* campaign in your church." (*Getting Started* info sheet)

Video Component Details	
Average overall length per session	9 mins
Number of segments per session (i.e. is it one presentation or stop/start)	One segment
Type of video presentation	Talking Head presentation by John Burke delivered at a different location each session. The location is related to how the introduction of what the session will cover. The editing uses split screen and at times a scratch effect over the footage. Contents of the split screen parts are a mixture of alternative shots of John (so two different angles are shown at once); other footage or images which relate to the content (e.g. a glass of empty beer as John speaks of alcoholism); key words being put up on screen and; Bible passages which are read by John in the presentation.
Any Relevant Details of presenter(s)	John Burke is the author of the book *No Perfect People Allowed* and at the time of publishing was the pastor of Gateway Community Church in Austen Texas which has applied the principles of the concepts of the materials.

Participant Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Book
Print Component #1	Book
Total Pages	314
Average Pages per session	The book operates in its own right. It doesn't track with the sessions, but appears to stand alone containing its own set of "Small Group Questions" at the conclusion of each chapter. The contents of the DVD and accompanying *Group Video Discussion Questions* are predominantly connected to four chapters of the total of sixteen chapters. Each of these four chapter has an average of 20 pages. Session 1: Chapter 5 Session 2: Chapter 4 Session 3: Chapter 6 Session 4: Chapter 14
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	It would appear that the DVD small group sessions are designed to encourage people to read the book after completing the sessions. This is confirmed by the statement: "This DVD-ROM will provide you with sermon transcripts for a teaching series; video sessions; discussion question sheets to be used in groups of any size; promotional materials; and the motivation to have everyone in your church read this book." (*Getting Started* info sheet p.1)

Leader Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	*Getting Started* info sheet *Group Video Discussion Questions*
Print Component #1	Getting Started
Total Pages	2
Average Pages per session	N/A
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	Sheet provides information on what the DVD-ROM contains. It would appear that the focus of this sheet is to convince the reader to "do a four-week *No Perfect People Allowed* campaign in your church." (*Getting Started* info sheet p. 1)
Print Component #2	Group Discussion Questions
Total Pages	4
Average Pages per session	1

Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	The sheets are provided as questions for discussion after the video has played and it is suggested can be "used in groups of any size" (*Getting Started* info sheet p.1) There is an average of six questions per session. The questions contain a similar pattern: 1-2 questions to initiate discussion around the topic. Examples: What most prevents people from experiencing grace—from feeling perfectly acceptable to God and pulled in close, no matter what? What do you think the goal of Christian spiritual growth is? 2-3 questions related to a biblical reference. Examples: Read Ephesians 3:14–19. God places us into a family of grace to help us discover what our true identity is. How can a new family help us discover the truth about how much God loves us? Read John 15:5–8. According to Jesus, what is the secret to spiritual growth? How do you stay connected in a practical way? Two questions to explore how the session might be practically applied. Examples: When we feel safe and affirmed we seem to be able to lose the need to pretend. What could you do as a group or church to become more authentic with one another? Discuss ways you can better help each other grow in your group or in your church. What do you need relationally? How can you be more intentional?

Other Resources Component Details	
Other Resources	Sermon Transcripts Promotional Materials
Other Resource #1	Sermon Transcripts
Description of other resource	Word for word transcript of sermon.

Description of how it is suggested the resource is used.	In the video message to pastors it is suggested they could be used or used to construct a sermon.
Other Resource #1	Promotional Materials
Description of other resource	Poster, Insert and Postcard size promotion for book *No Perfect People* with ability to enter information of dates, times and location for when the campaign is running.
Description of how it is suggested the resource is used.	As a promotional tool for a campaign run by the church.

Descriptive Analysis

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Relationship vs Individualism	How integral is a group to completing the materials?
Apart from the last type of questions, which are often put within a group context, having a group is not essential to complete the materials. Even with the last questions being worded within a group context (e.g. What would it take for your church or group to follow the dreams and hopes of God and "be the body" in your world?) such a question could be answered by an individual without requiring discussion with a group.	
Interconnectivity vs Productivity	In what ways are participants encouraged to explore alternative positions related to alternative contexts to the video setting?
Alternative positions are not presented.

The key points for the four sessions are to create a church culture which:
1. Accepts people as they are
2. Encourages authenticity
3. Seeks to grow (i.e. come as you are but not stay as you are)
4. Works together as a connected community

The series doesn't encourage participants to explore why churches may, whilst being open and inviting, seek to have a culture of Gospel confrontation and expectant transformation, for example. | |
| Complexity vs Efficiency | How do the materials indicate they value time, space and reflection? |
| The short length of the videos does suggest that the intention of the materials is that the group discussion will make up a majority of the time of the study. With the video taking up only ten minutes, based on a one hour session this would leave 50mins for discussion. If no other actions were undertaken in this time this would result in ~8mins per question for discussion.

Most of the questions are written in an open way which, whilst being answerable by an | |

individual, would most likely provide a range of answers in a group setting.

There is minimal engagement with the biblical references and reflecting on the passages and what they may mean or communicate. Most of the questions related to the biblical references indicate how they have been interpreted for the materials and the related discussion question could be answered without the text. Examples:

Why do you think authenticity is so important to God?
If we begin to see the needs of people with the eyes of Jesus, how might we relate to the people who live around us?
How can a new family help us discover the truth about how much God loves us?

There is not a lot of direction for how a session might be run. The video content of 10mins and then 6-7 questions in this format, where the questions are clearly designed to reinforce the content of the video, would suggest the materials are designed to as succinctly as possible convince participants to take on the content.

Engagement vs Distraction	Is this product best described as a "thing" or "device"? Give indicators.
Device. This product demands very little of the group leader other than an ability to read, play a DVD and facilitate a discussion. As in the previous question, these materials seem to be expressly designed to convince participants to take on the content. Considering the package as a whole, it is possible that this small group series is a marketing device to sell copies of the book. The discussion questions which are more likely to generate discussion are predominantly related to experience. The demand for participants to reconsider their experiences in the light of the Scriptures is low.	

Participation vs Consumption	Are there any indicators of participation which indicates a trajectory towards growing expectation on the participant?
There are discussion questions as to how the suggested culture might be established in the group or church. But generally, there is no indication of growing expectation on the participant.	

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)	
Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation	What are the actions reinforced by the materials?
Watching a short sermon/message. The discussing of experiences and opinions. Reading short passages of Scripture to provide discussion direction. A discussion of how what was learnt might be converted into a practical action.	
Empowerment vs Power Maintenance	How do the materials indicate their intentions in terms of power in the communication process?
These materials would appear to seek to maintain power in the communication process. By having John present reinforces the expert paradigm where this person is the person who has successfully introduced the principles of this series (and the book) at his church.	

There isn't any indication that the participants of this series may arrive at a different set of conclusions. They may decide on different individual, group or church actions to implement the content into their context, but that same context isn't encouraged to engage with the content.

Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential	What potentialities are utilised by the use of the different media?

The potentiality of utilising the video medium to enhance memory by utilising imagery is present. Each of the locations for the presentations is linked to the key illustration of the session:

Session 1
Setting: Church Auditorium
Illustration: People should feel welcome to come to church
Session 2
Setting: Dining Table
Illustration: Each of us has been stamped by our life story: no one is perfect, we need to be authentic
Session 3
Setting: Outside Church in a garden area
Illustration: The church needed to replace the topsoil after building the church buildings otherwise nothing would grow: we need to cultivate the spiritual soil to see growth
Session 4
Setting: Front Porch of a home in a new estate
Illustration: People used to sit on their front porches and be connected to each other: we need to be connected as the body of Christ.
(all of these were able to be recounted from memory from one viewing; they were then double checked).

The potentiality of utilising the video medium to enhance an emotional level of trust is utilised. John presents in very relaxed fashion. His wardrobe is casual. The framing of his presentation is utilised to enhance that he is speaking to the viewer (i.e. not to an interviewer off screen)

The potentiality of utilising the print medium to present a rationally sequenced working through the presentation to reinforce the key point is utilised. This is evident in the way the discussion questions aren't predominantly geared towards discussion around the content presented, but discussion to reinforce the position of the content.

Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning	Are alternative positions provided for the audience? Are all alternatives equally valid? What gives validity to positions?

No alternative positions are provided for the audience.

Taking the materials as a whole it would seem that the success of John to initiate this culture successfully validates the position. Scripture appears to operate as a secondary tool for post validating a successful position.

Pedagogical Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)	
Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed	What type of learning environment or learning actions do the materials encourage?
The learning environment which is encouraged is a memory style environment. The discussion questions are obviously linked to reinforcing the main points of the video teaching. Scripture is used to provide some support for discussion questions. Reflecting on biblical passages is not a key element of the process. In most cases the passage does not need to be read to engage with the discussion question. An expert to student environment is encouraged.	
Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge	What indicators are there that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners?
None. The materials appear to be operating to ensure that the learners take on the position of the materials and to another degree encourage participants to read the available book. With no alternative positions present and the very minimal engagement with the Scriptures, there doesn't appear to be any focus on equipping discerning learners.	
Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory	How do the materials engage with the interaction of theory and praxis?
There is a linear engagement with the interaction of theory and praxis. Each session works towards the final questions which are focussed on how might what has been presented operate in practice in the group or church. The assumed position is that changing the theories of what culture is required will change the culture. This linear engagement appears to be at work behind the production of these materials. The success of the principles of Burke in his context appear to have resulted in the production of these materials so that if others can apply the theoretical principles into their context the same results are expected.	

Study Materials Summary

Overall Details	
Title	Calling Charlie
Date of Copyright	2010
Publisher	Global Interaction (Room 3: Production)
Publisher affiliations and/or statement of purpose/beliefs	Mission: *Global Interaction exists to...* Empower communities to develop their own distinctive ways of following Jesus. Dependence on God: We value discerning God's unique leading and direction, and we commit to a faith-filled response. Contextualised Gospel: We value expressing faith in Jesus in ways that make it understandable and accessible within different cultures. Innovation: We value creative thinking and appropriate risk-taking. Authentic Relationships: We value genuine relationships based on respect, trust, compassion, honesty. Teamwork: We value people working together for a common goal. Sustainability: We value ministry and practice to deliver long-term Kingdom benefits. (www.globalinteraction.org.au)
Materials provided	DVD; Study Guide
Total sessions for full course	Four
Indicated Length of Time for each session	At least one hour (Study Guide p.4)
Stated Purpose of Materials (e.g. promotional statements etc)	We hope Calling Charlie will educate, inspire, provoke and move people one step closer to an authentic expression of faith and mission.

Video Component Details	
Average overall length per session	10 mins
Number of segments per session (i.e. is it one presentation or stop/start)	Session 1 has four segments All other sessions have three segments Segments vary in length with the shortest being 2mins and the longest being 6mins. Most sessions are 3-4 mins in length.

Type of video presentation	The video presentation is designed as a visual experience. There is a presenter who does appear in some sessions as a talking head. He is sitting on a stool in front of a green screen and the background is a graphic designed set which changes at times during the presentation to match the content. Alongside the presenter key words will often be animated on screen. The presenter however is mostly heard as a voice over and is only seen as a talking head some of the time.
	The other parts of the video are a combination of visually stimulating graphic design representations; live footage of dramatised events; dramatised stories (as told by the presenter); paddle pop puppetry for dramatising Scripture or other situations and footage from other locations from around the world.
	The video is well described as "edgy" and contains "top-notch creativity" (Study Guide p.4)
Any Relevant Details of presenter(s)	The identity of the presenter (Scott Hawkins) is only available from the credits of the video. There is no obvious link between the presenter and the resource materials.

Participant Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Study Guide
Print Component #1	Study Guide
Total Pages	35
Average Pages per session	7
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	Each session contains five parts: Watch it: Begin by viewing the DVD. Talk about it: At various times you'll be prompted to discuss the questions in this booklet. Keep Talking: Extra discussion questions for the leader to facilitate during or at the end of the main session. Pray about it: A suggested prayer related to the topic. Explore it further: Some links and resources related to the topic for you to explore in your own time. (Study Guide p.4)

Leader Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	N/A

Other Resources Component Details	
Other Resources	N/A

Descriptive Analysis

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Relationship vs Individualism	How integral is a group to completing the materials?
The materials could be completed without a group. The questions don't require more than one participant to be answered. Other participants may generate better discussion, but the materials could be completed without others. The materials do suggest that those using the materials should get a group together to do so.	
Interconnectivity vs Productivity	In what ways are participants encouraged to explore alternative positions related to alternative contexts to the video setting?
Participants are encouraged to consider the position presented against what the materials present as the 'experienced' positions for those whom the materials would see as the target audience. For example, the materials use story-telling and dramatisation, with a comedic focus, to present an exaggerated stereotype of the target group. Through the discussion questions, participants are encouraged to evaluate the stereotype and even discuss what might be some other stereotypes. It would seem that the materials are utilising a deconstruction of their position in the context of the participant to encourage them to consider an alternative position.	
Complexity vs Efficiency	How do the materials indicate they value time, space and reflection?
The shortness of the video segments and the anticipated time of at least one hour suggests that the discussion time has a high value in terms of time. With 10 mins of video, there is then 50mins allocated for discussion. With each session having ~15 questions this leaves a little over 3mins for each question. The video segments aren't always trying to present a key point – some of the dramatisations work in a confrontation type way which appears to be geared towards instigating a good discussion. These at times do appear to be primarily about generating a space open to discussion. Having a prayer included in each session for people to reflect on encourages a reflective process.	
Engagement vs Distraction	Is this product best described as a "thing" or "device"? Give indicators.
Leaning towards a Thing	

The materials, whilst seeking to convey a central message, do this in a way which requires participants to discuss and consider what is being presented – not just its implications. If placed within its intended setting of a small group, the discussion times do require thoughtful engagement as many questions don't have an easy/simple answer, encourage differing positions to be raised and would require participants to explore their currently held beliefs against those presented.

Group leaders, whilst not being provided with a guide or direction, would be required to provide input across potentially conflicting positions within the group which would require them to be prepared on their position, and the convictions for their position.

Participation vs Consumption	Are there any indicators of participation which indicates a trajectory towards growing expectation on the participant?

Yes. The extensive suggestions in the *Explore it More* section of each session encourage participants to view the materials as an introduction to the content of the materials. Each session includes a suggested further reading list of books to explore the content further. These sections do place before participants an expectation to move beyond the "eye-candy" and "attention grabbing" production of this product into a serious engagement with the content.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)	
Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation	What are the actions reinforced by the materials?

Discussion times which are able to thoughtfully consider a presented concept or idea.
Entertaining viewing.
Being prayerfully reflective. The contained prayers are all constructed as poems. The literature of poetry can operate to encourage reflective engagement.
Seeing the small group times as a small part of a larger ongoing engagement.

Empowerment vs Power Maintenance	How do the materials indicate their intentions in terms of power in the communication process?

The materials tend towards an empowerment focus. The presenter is not identified and therefore the authority of the message isn't attached to the person; but to the message. The discussion questions whilst reinforcing the message do encourage participants to thoughtfully process what has been presented.

The segmented delivery of the video materials encourages a 'dialogical' communication. Participants are provided with some content and then after considering that, they are presented with a related set of content.

Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential	What potentialities are utilised by the use of the different media?

The video medium is utilising the entertainment and visual engagement of potentialities of the medium to encourage engaging the content.   Well constructed imagery and the dramatisation of examples and different stories are attention grabbing. The medium is utilised to draw people to consider the content.

The potentiality of the video medium to present stereotypes is utilised to present the exaggerated stereotypes.

The emotional potentialities of the video medium in using images are utilised to both work between the fun approach (providing a emotional safety) and the serious nature of the content at times.

The print media is presented such that the potentiality of seeing the content as valuable and serious in contrast to the video which is fun and entertaining. The print materials are very plain and do not have the same lightness and entertainment design.   In this way the two media work in opposite ways – the video to bring a fun, entertaining and exciting presentation; the print to contrast this with a serious discussion working through the ideas of the video.

Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning	Are alternative positions provided for the audience? Are all alternatives equally valid? What gives validity to positions?

There are alternative positions presented. In terms of the video, these positions are often used as an exaggerated stereotype of what the materials seem to present as what would be the context of the intended audience.

All positions are not presented as equally valid. It would be possible that there could be participants who have felt belittled by the comedic exaggeration of a stereotype.   It becomes clear that some positions, whilst presented, are not considered as valid positions by the creators of the product.

Scripture is identifiable as giving validity to the positions presented. However, the stereotyped positions do not have an equal representation in terms of their possible validation by Scripture. It is presented very early that one passage is often used out of context to support a position (Jeremiah 29:11 used to support a "God has *a single* plan for my life"). This could then be transferred by assumption to why the stereotyped positions are invalid. For example, one session stereotypes a Christian position of setting up a "Christian bubble" which makes someone possibly culturally irrelevant to their context. This doesn't engage with the many passages which appear, in context, to call the church to not live like the 'pagans'. To be holy and set apart.

Pedagogical Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)	
Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed	What type of learning environment or learning actions do the materials encourage?

The learning environment encouraged is a dialogical one where the group and its leader hold an important place in how the content is understood and engaged with.

The materials encourage participants to share not only their experiences, but also the different ways they have thought about the content of the materials. For example:

What stories or passages in the Bible have shaped your view of call?
What does it mean that you are primarily called to Someone (Jesus) rather than something?
Survey results show that the vast majority of young adults believe the most common way people know God's call is "conviction by the Holy Spirit". What does this mean? What might it look like? What has been your experience of this?

The poetic prayers could encourage a time of reflection in the group.

The fullness of the *Explore it More* sections could encourage participants to see the session as only a small part of the learning process as there is a lot more to be explored. Everything is not solved after the session.

Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge	What indicators are there that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners?

The exaggerated stereotypes presented, which seem to represent what the producers would consider to be a stereotype that the participants could relate to, would be confronting for someone who held some of those positions. Whilst they may cause offense to some, and could also encourage self-righteousness for those not confronted by them, they do appear to be presented to help participants consider their pre-suppositions and why they might believe what they do. For example, after one of these stereotypes there are questions such as:
What's your reaction to Charlie's [the stereotyped character] story? How do you feel towards him? Are there aspects of Charlie's story that you identify with in your own life, or those around you? What are some other Christian stereotypes? Are they valid?

There are also discussion questions which encourage participants to see the complexities of the world (such that discernment is required). For Example:

"For millions of people in desperately unjust situations, the gospel is good news. How is the gospel good news to a sweatshop worker in Cambodia, to a refugee fleeing political conflict, to a wealthy businessman in Sydney and to you?"

"Compare the commission passages in the gospels: Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:19-23. What other passages motive you for mission?"

"What are the risks involved in adapting communication of the gospel to be relevant to different contexts? When have people 'crossed the line' or not gone far enough?"

Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory	How do the materials engage with the interaction of theory and praxis?

The materials do seek to illustrate the tension between theory and praxis as they draw out how our actions will speak of what is believed and how what is believed will shape our actions. The stereotypes are used to exaggerate the actions which operate out of a set of beliefs. This method may encourage participants to consider how their actions demonstrate their beliefs (theories) and thus how both their actions and beliefs may need to play a more informing role for the other.

The *Explore it More* sections contain suggestions for both actions in a praxis and further exploration of theories.

Study Materials Summary

Overall Details	
Title	NOOMA (Collection 1)
Date of Copyright	2002-2003 (video) 2010 print
Publisher	Flannel and Zondervan
Publisher affiliations and/or statement of purpose/beliefs	Flannel: Flannel is a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to tell the way of Jesus in new and creative ways. Flannel is an independent organization not affiliated with any specific church or denomination. Vision: Flannel's vision is to be a catalyst for highly creative people who share our desire to communicate the way of Jesus to the world. Zondervan Mission: To be the leader in Christian communications meeting the needs of people with resources that glorify Jesus Christ and promote biblical principles. Values: Integrity — We maintain high ethical and moral standards in speech and in personal and professional conduct. Initiative — We are willing and empowered to proactively contribute to the success of the company, its customers, and other employees. Excellence — We give our personal best. Innovation — We seek out new possibilities in every area and embrace ground-breaking change that adds value. Respect — We have as much consideration for the personal and professional worth and dignity of others as we do for ourselves. Accountability — We are responsible for our own actions and answerable to others. (www.zondervan.com)
Materials provided	DVD Guide Booklet
Total sessions for full course	Stand alone sessions (grouped as a package of four)
Indicated Length of Time for each session	Non prescribed. "Go whatever pace everyone is comfortable…We don't recommend a 24-hour marathon, but we also don't recommend you try to cram all four films in a two hour session" (Guide p.12).

Stated Purpose of Materials (e.g. promotional statements etc)	"NOOMA Group films are designed to engage viewers with those issues that are most important to all of us. NOOMA films look at life from a perspective of Jesus and encourage you to explore the questions raised in those films through conversation and mutual study" (case back cover). "Ultimately it isn't about a film, or a deep discussion…or any of that, really. Ultimately it's about you and what you do with this Jesus. Is he who he says he is, or is he not?…Always keep in mind, NOOMA films don't claim to have all the answers…but they do claim to start the conversation" (Guide p. 12).

Video Component Details	
Average overall length per session	12 mins
Number of segments per session (i.e. is it one presentation or stop/start)	One
Type of video presentation	Straight to camera style of delivery by Rob Bell. Each film combines this delivery with actions which intertwine the delivery with the dramatisation of a story or the actions of the presenter contributing to the illustration of the content.
Any Relevant Details of presenter(s)	The product doesn't have blurb or information about Rob Bell. His name is does appear beside the title of each film in the opening sequence. Rob Bell was the founding pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Michigan and is the author of a number of books including *The Velvet Elvis* and *Love Wins.*

Participant Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Guide
Print Component #1	Guide
Total Pages	95
Average Pages per session	20
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	Each session contains four parts: Talk about *film title* Quotes and questions which follow along with the film to provoke thought and introspection (Guide p.11) Go a Little Deeper Discussion questions to "help participants delve more deeply and meaningfully into the issues

	raised" (Guide p.9) Before Moving On An application for either the group or the individual to complete in the coming days. (Guide p.12) Further Personal Reflection Individual questions for participants to wrestle with. (Guide p. 12). The guide is presented as a guideline for discussion but suggest the group should ultimately decide both the direction and the terms of the discussion (Guide p.11-12).

Leader Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	N/A

Other Resources Component Details	
Other Resources	N/A

Descriptive Analysis

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Relationship vs Individualism	How integral is a group to completing the materials?
The materials could be completed without a group. The questions don't require more than one participant to be answered. Other participants may generate better discussion, but the materials could be completed without others. They could be used as a reflective set of materials by an individual. The questions from the "Talk about" sections are mostly "you" questions. There are lots of "do you"; "have you"; "are you" questions. Rain 15/10; Flame 10/13; Trees 12/16; Sunday 9/16. The other questions are often related to personal experience or opinion. Such as: Rain: What beautiful moment in your life would you like to freeze? (p.17) How did that beautiful moment end? (p.17) Flame: Does it surprise you to hear the words "Bible" and "erotic" in the same breath? (p.39) Does our culture understand sex? (p.42) Trees: Does the world feel out of whack to you? (p.59) Is this world ours or Gods? (p.62) Sunday: Does God care if you go to church? (p.79)	

Do Jesus' words ever insult you? (p.80)
Is your heart ever far from God? (p.82)

Such questions raise the individual's opinion to a higher level. The guide also states "don't be afraid to disagree with what the speaker says, or what others say…Ultimately it's about you and what you do with Jesus." (p.12).

Interconnectivity vs Productivity	In what ways are participants encouraged to explore alternative positions related to alternative contexts to the video setting?

The materials seek to present a deconstruction of what appear to be the assumed dominant positions on each of the topics. Rain deconstructs that God abandons us in our suffering. Flame deconstructs that a Christian view of sex is boring/prudish. Trees deconstructs that Christianity is only about the 'afterlife'. Sunday deconstructs that Christianity is all about religious rituals. In this process these alternative views are interacted with, but as the materials are deconstructing these views, it becomes clear they shouldn't be held.

There is also a fairly clear reconstruction of what view should be held. Rain: God is with us in our suffering and God gets to show his love to us in these times. Flame: Christian sexuality is a combination of friendship, deep affection and a physical sexual element making sex a spiritual act. Trees: Christians should participate in actions towards redeeming and restoring the broken world. Sunday: God is interested in our hearts beating like his, not our actions trying to please him. There does not seem to be encouragement to explore any alternatives to these positions.

Complexity vs Efficiency	How do the materials indicate they value time, space and reflection?

Whilst the materials suggest to "Go at whatever pace is comfortable" (p.12) there are a lot of questions for each session. Each "Talk about…" section has ~15 questions which are suggested to be answered during the videos (~12mins). Each "Go a Little Deeper" section has ~16 questions and each "Before moving on" section suggests sharing further in a number of different ways for each session. With each video running ~12 mins and then having ~30 questions with a number of suggestions for sharing further in the *before moving on* section this would leave the following timeframe for each discussion question.

If completing in 1hr: ~1.5 mins per question.
If completing in 2hrs: ~3.5 mins per question.

The materials place the emphasis on completing the "talk about" sections (i.e. they suggest discussing those first before going to the "Go a Little Deeper" sections if there is time). If this were all that was completed then if the session went for an hour there would be ~3 mins per question.

Trying to put something down for each question as the video plays would mean the participant is writing a response at ~48 second intervals.

All of these pressures don't support a high value of time and space to encourage a reflective process.

Engagement vs Distraction	Is this product best described as a "thing" or "device"? Give indicators.

Device.

The main focus of the materials is the video presentation and the "Talk about…" sections. The "Go a Little Deeper" sections are suggested to be completed "if there's time". With most of the questions from the "Talk about…" sections being directed towards the opinions of the participants the demands of completing a session are low for participants. There is little encouragement to engage with looking at the texts used as examples in the teaching.

In terms of a specific session such as Flame, its main presentation is related to the three Hebrew words which are translated by the one word 'love' in English: '*raya*' '*ahava*' '*dod*'. For anyone who has studied language, or an original biblical language, the complexities of translation usually become apparent. This isn't to say that Bell's use of the terms is incorrect or that using the original texts doesn't provide an avenue for expanding understanding. But using the terms to formulate the core element of the teaching (Christian sexuality is a combination of the three terms) allows Bell to present a position which anyone without knowledge of Hebrew may find difficult to engage with. It is presented in a way which makes it easy to take on what is being said because there is unlikely to be opposition to the position as it would require a certain Hebrew expertise.

Participation vs Consumption	Are there any indicators of participation which indicates a trajectory towards growing expectation on the participant?

The biggest indication of this is the statement: "Always keep in mind, NOOMA films don't claim to have all the answers…but they do claim to start the conversation" (p.12). Taking this on its face value would suggest that NOOMA seeks to encourage people to participate in a conversation which will require them to move towards a maturity that can engage on the same level that NOOMA films are at.

However, there is a lot in terms in even these four films from the NOOMA catalogue which could be identified to discourage conversation as the 'level of conversation' is beyond the participant. One example of this is, as mentioned above, the use of Hebrew terms as the core support for a position. Another is the rhetorical expertise used in the construction of the video scripts. These are very well written monologues, which are delivered in a very convincing way, with a high level of professionalism. It would not be difficult to get the impression that you wouldn't want to start in conversation with Bell as you would most likely not come out favourably.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)	
Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation	What are the actions reinforced by the materials?

Watching an entertaining short film that teaches.
Discussing your experiences.

Empowerment vs Power Maintenance	How do the materials indicate their intentions in terms of power in the communication process?

The materials do indicate that "NOOMA is an invitation to search, question and join the

discussion. NOOMA films don't claim to hold all the answers, but they do claim to start the conversation." (p. 7). They also state: "Make sure that everyone has a Bible. And make sure you open it, and read it, and don't be afraid to disagree with what the speaker says, or what others say. Look for yourself at what the Bible says" (p.12). These statements would indicate that the intention is to place power into the hands of each individual.

However as already stated above, the professionalism of the short films and the well constructed rhetoric is less than inviting for conversation. The points conveyed are not just open questions. There is a definite bias that questions the tradition of the church or Christians.

It is possible that the materials are seeking to shift the power from what they perceive as the 'institutional church' to the participants, but the materials shift it mostly from 'the church' to Rob Bell. It is not very hard to see him as a 'guru' type figure bold enough to question the 'authorities'.

Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential	What potentialities are utilised by the use of the different media?

The emotional and visual potentials of video are utilised to reinforce the content. The action of the short film is often a slight mystery – what is Bell doing? – which then links to the point and reinforces the memory of the point. The straight to camera delivery whilst carrying out the activities is utilised to give a "Bell is talking to me" rather than a group feel to the presentation. The video medium is utilised to captivate the viewer and draw them into the point of the film very effectively.

Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning	Are alternative positions provided for the audience? Are all alternatives equally valid? What gives validity to positions?

Different positions are presented. Not all positions are equally valid. Other positions are mostly presented to be deconstructed. Bell often uses the phrase "in the Bible it says" to validate the positions presented. This is utilised effectively to validate the positions presented without engaging the areas of the Bible which have lead to the ideas which Bell has deconstructed via rhetorical devices.

Pedagogical Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)	
Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed	What type of learning environment or learning actions do the materials encourage?

The short time of the videos does mean that the discussion time makes up a majority of the session. There is a big focus on the experiences of the participants in the discussions. It seems that the key question is "what do you think?" which is a good question to ask, but should also be coupled with other questions to inspire more than just relying on participant opinions.

Again the rhetorical expertise of the videos doesn't open the conversation. There isn't an encouragement to investigate the deconstructed positions and the reconstruction of the alternative position is designed to be very convincing. The rise in the popularity of Rob Bell in relation to the NOOMA series does illustrate the possibility that the series enhanced his 'guru' status. This makes it much more likely for an expert – student situation to exist.

Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge	What indicators are there that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners?
There are limited indicators in this regard. There is limited engagement with an in depth look at Scripture. "The Bible says" is used often to reinforce points without also engaging with a process of considering what is said in context. Often, where the Bible says it, and for what purpose isn't considered. This could move the Bible into a position of being a book of neat aphorisms which can be learned to direct life. Again the use of rhetorical devices are used to convince participants. The clear purpose is to have participants both agree with the deconstruction and the reconstruction around the point being made.	
Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory	How do the materials engage with the interaction of theory and praxis?
Using the experiences of participants to undergird the discussions does place the theory and praxis into something of an ongoing reflection. The deconstruction process does seek to challenge the participant to consider why they hold the theory that they do, or carry out the action which relates to a particular theory (even if they are not aware of the theory).	

Study Materials Summary

Overall Details	
Title	They like Jesus but not the Church
Date of Copyright	2008
Publisher	Zondervan
Publisher affiliations and/or statement of purpose/beliefs	Mission: To be the leader in Christian communications meeting the needs of people with resources that glorify Jesus Christ and promote biblical principles. Values: Integrity — We maintain high ethical and moral standards in speech and in personal and professional conduct. Initiative — We are willing and empowered to proactively contribute to the success of the company, its customers, and other employees. Excellence — We give our personal best. Innovation — We seek out new possibilities in every area and embrace ground-breaking change that adds value. Respect — We have as much consideration for the personal and professional worth and dignity of others as we do for ourselves. Accountability — We are responsible for our own actions and answerable to others. (www.zondervan.com)
Materials provided	Book, DVD-ROM, Participants Guide, Leaders Guide
Total sessions for full course	Six (first four reviewed)
Indicated Length of Time for each session	Approximately 1 hr (Leaders Guide p.8)
Stated Purpose of Materials (e.g. promotional statements etc)	Led by author Dan Kimball, this six-session participant's guide will help you explore and respond truthfully, caringly, and engagingly to the most common objections and mis-understandings culture has about the church and Christianity.

Video Component Details	
Average overall length per session	20 mins
Number of segments per session (i.e. is it one presentation or stop/start)	2 segments

Type of video presentation	Talking Head presentation by Dan Kimball delivered at a different location for each first segment and then all last segments are delivered at the same location.
	The location of segment 1 of each session is related to an introduction of what the session will cover. Locations included office (set to be Kimball's office) for Christian Bubble; tattoo parlour for Christians are negative and judgemental; 50's diner for attitudes that oppress women; and hairdresser for homophobia. Sessions are introduced using anecdotal stories to introduce the perception of the church the session will cover, and why it might be important to consider.
	The first segments also contain an interview with one of Kimball's 'friends' who represents the key attitude being discussed in the session. Kimball conducts the interview. The interviews are mostly the responses of the interviewee with an occasional specific question asked by Kimball included.
	The final segment is of Kimball at a table in a café and he wraps up the session by teaching on the perception raised. Kimball doesn't expressly impose his position in these sessions, but does seek to present the importance of being able to engage with these perceptions.
Any Relevant Details of presenter(s)	Dan Kimball is the author of several books, including *The Emerging Church* and *Emerging Worship* and is a pastor at Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California.

Participant Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Participant's Guide
Print Component #1	Participant's Guide
Total Pages	139
Average Pages per session	15

| Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used | Each session has the following sections:
DVD Segment #1 notes section with key points from video provided as a guide for note taking.
Group Study and Discussion #1. 5-6 discussion questions, including at times biblical references to inform discussion.
DVD Segment #2 notes section with key points from video provided as guide for note taking.
Group Study and Discussion #2. ~7 further questions for discussion. These sections have an emphasis on grounding the positions held on the perspectives presented within the Scriptures.
Wrap-up. A short paragraph suggesting how one might respond prayerfully to the session.
How You Can Respond. A number of practical activities or reflections to complete before the next session.

There is also an extensive appendix (32 pages) which provides some guidance for how Kimball would respond to some of the "more theological questions" (Participant's Guide p. 11). |

Leader Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Leaders Guide Book
Print Component #1	Leaders Guide
Total Pages	30
Average Pages per session	3
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	Each session has very similar content. It suggests the leader should preview the DVD sessions, read over the discussion questions, read the related appendix answers and indicates which chapters of the book would be helpful. There are a few specific tips for each session, but mostly the same advice is given for each session. The guide also provides indicative timeframes for each part of the session.
Print Component #2	Book
Total Pages	271

Average Pages per session	As recommended in the Leaders Guide Session 1: Chps 1-4 (35 pages) Session 2: Chps 5-6 (40 pages) Session 3: Chp 7 (20 pages) Session 4: Chp 8 (27 pages) Session 5: Chp 9 (24 pages) Session 6: Chp 10 (26 pages)
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	Book provides a more comprehensive treatment of the material of the DVD and participant sessions. It would appear that it is suggested that the book be read to prepare a group leader to facilitate the group sessions. Alternatively, the *Getting Started Guide* also suggests that "our hope is that all of your key leadership will experience the video curriculum and read the book". This might indicate that the book might be the next step for participants of the video curriculum as well.

Other Resources Component Details	
Other Resources	Sermon Outlines Sermon Introduction Video clips Promotional Materials
Other Resource #1	Sermon Outlines and Video introductions.
Description of other resource	An outline of sermons by Dan Kimball to allow pastors to construct a six week sermon series to supplement the small group materials. The video introductions contain a short excerpt from the interview held for each session. They do not contain Kimball.
Description of how it is suggested the resource is used.	These materials are provided to allow for a church or organisation to do a six-week series on the materials, even if not everyone attends a small group setting.
Other Resource #1	Promotional Materials
Description of other resource	Poster, Insert and Postcard size promotion for the book *No Perfect People* with ability to enter information of dates, times and location for when the campaign is running.
Description of how it is suggested the resource is used.	As a promotional tool for a campaign run by the church.

Descriptive Analysis

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Relationship vs Individualism	How integral is a group to completing the materials?
The materials could be completed without a group. The questions don't require more than one participant to be answered. Other participants may generate better discussion, but the materials could be completed without others. They could be used as a reflective set of materials by an individual.	
Interconnectivity vs Productivity	In what ways are participants encouraged to explore alternative positions related to alternative contexts to the video setting?
Participants are primarily encouraged to explore the alternative positions of those who are outside of the church. These positions are not reinforced by the content; but rather the ability to engage with them is encouraged. As there are some issues which are not all seen in the same way across the church, Kimball does often present his position, but not as the only position. What is presented as more important than Kimball's position is understanding how to deal with, especially the complexities of Scripture, which have led to different positions *within* the church. The sessions seek to present the positions which have caused the resultant perspectives of the church by those outside. These positions aren't presented in a way to belittle them, but to question if the original motives have been lost by subtle shifts. Kimball self identifies that he may have at one time been a contributor to the perceptions people outside the church hold. This invites people to consider their position by not taking a judgemental position, but one which has also been 'caught out' by subtle changes that results in major distortions.	
Complexity vs Efficiency	How do the materials indicate they value time, space and reflection?
It would seem that these materials look to value time, space and reflection. There are a lot of questions which do not have simple answers and do require reflection and space. Kimball's second segment presentations pose questions rather than give answers. However, the time frame of one hour would put a lot of pressure on the value of time. For example, the *Leaders Guide* suggests that leaders should welcome people, pray and have people share some comments or insights from the previous *How to Respond* activities/reflections and indicates this should take 3mins. The *Wrap-up* section also is given 3 minutes. Overall with 20-25 minutes of each session being video presentation and then the 6 mins to begin and close a session, this would leave 30-35 minutes for discussion. With an average of 12 questions per session this equates to 3 mins per question. This would place a large amount of time pressure on completing the materials within the hour timeframe as 3 mins would allow maybe 2-3 different responses to a question and very little time to discuss them.	

Engagement vs Distraction	Is this product best described as a "thing" or "device"? Give indicators.

Thing

The materials, if completed without a set timeframe, do require a significant amount from participants and leaders.

Suggesting the leaders watch all the videos and read the relevant chapters of the book, the participant guide and the appendix answers, places a level of demand on the leader which does reinforce the importance of preparing well to lead people through the materials. Whilst this advice might be ignored by leaders, the course is designed with a level of demand as evidenced by Kimball including the appendix to assist leaders with how he might respond to some of the more difficult theological questions. This may have people skipping to the answers to take on Kimball's position. In Kimball's answers, however, it is clear that the answers have been informed by Scripture and have taken thoughtful engagement to formulate, i.e. they are not quick simple answers.

Participation vs Consumption	Are there any indicators of participation which indicates a trajectory towards growing expectation on the participant?

Yes. The materials constantly suggest that it is not enough to have taken on positions of others and that the positions that are held need to be constantly measured against Scripture and that they will need to constantly be taken back to Scripture as the culture continues to alter and change. It is clear that the materials present current challenges which face the church in a Western setting, but at the same time that these will not always be the same cultural issues. Participants are also discouraged from taking on Kimball's position as a first option. He has provided some direction for areas which he has felt require it, but participants are encouraged to discuss and think this through before considering their response against Kimball's.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)	
Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation	What are the actions reinforced by the materials?

Watching short messages from an expert.
Watching interviews with people outside the church environment.
Note Taking.
Utilising the Bible to inform responses.
Consideration of biblical references for informing positions.
A conversion of what was learnt into a practical action.
Arriving at answers from experience.

Empowerment vs Power Maintenance	How do the materials indicate their intentions in terms of power in the communication process?

There appears to be a focus on empowerment. Kimball doesn't seek to present his position but rather seeks to draw participants to see the positions those outside the church may hold. There may be questions over the legitimacy of the claims that people like Jesus and not the Church as those presented are only a very small sample group. The materials don't look to impose their

position on the topic, but at the same time it is shared with conviction that it needs to be considered.

Kimball presents a lot of his content in the form of questions for participants to engage with. The focus of the materials isn't to give answer questions, but to pose problems.

Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential	What potentialities are utilised by the use of the different media?

The potentiality of utilising the video medium to enhance memory by utilising imagery is used. Each of the locations for the presentations is linked to the key illustration of the session:

Session 1
Setting: Church Office (snow globe and Christian trinkets)
Illustration: People can become isolated in a Christian Bubble and isolate themselves from the outside culture by becoming enmeshed in Christian culture.
Session 2
Setting: Tattoo Parlour
Illustration: The church is often judgemental and negative. Kimball illustrates with a story of a new convert who was offended by negative remarks about those who have tattoos and piercings (which he did) and a story of getting a "new believer's Bible" to give to an interested person but the Bible contained extra sections which highlighted a lot of the don't do's.
Session 3
Setting: 1950's diner.
Illustration: The church can often be seen to be living in the past as it can appear to hold outdated views on women and their abilities – such as in the 1950's with the caricatures of the good housewife.
Session 4
Setting: Hairdressers
Illustration: Kimball uses the hairdresser to introduce how he uses his hairdresser and other such services to try to remain in touch with how others see the world. He recounts his experience of thinking that being homosexual or bisexual was just how some people are before he was introduced to an alternative view within the church.
(All of these were able to be recounted from memory from one viewing; they were then double checked).

The potentiality to allow the viewer to become an observer is utilised with the video medium. The interview sections of the sessions allow the viewer to observe those who are willing to share with Kimball their viewpoints on the topics. The viewer is permitted access to people who Kimball has referred to in the book. This also may allow an emotional connection to those people. They are not just quotes on a page, but are real people with real emotions.

The potentiality of utilising the video medium to enhance an emotional level of trust is utilised. Kimball presents in a very relaxed fashion. His wardrobe is casual. The framing of his presentation is utilised to enhance that he is speaking to the viewer (i.e. not to an interviewer off screen). The final sessions are all shot in a café and it is framed so that the viewer is placed in the position of being at the other side of the table.

The potentiality of utilising the print medium to encourage participants to fill the participant's guide with a lot of their own notes. There is a lot of space provided for answers to be written.

There aren't predetermined spaces to fill in predetermined words.

The potentiality of utilising images and diagrams is utilised by the print materials. These serve as visual aids to the content.

The potential of print to hold a 'neutral' position is utilised. The participant's guide speaks of Kimball in the third person (Dan Kimball says) and thus implies that he is not the author, but that the guide is offering a neutral voice to consider what Kimball has presented.

Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning	Are alternative positions provided for the audience? Are all alternatives equally valid? What gives validity to positions?

Yes. As the different topics are considered different alternative positions are offered. This is especially the case with topics like the oppression of women and homosexuality. For the homosexuality topic, the main content of the discussion #2 is the presentation of alternative views on the normal passages used to support seeing homosexuality as sinful. No, all positions are not seen as equally valid. The positions, which those outside the church present, are not all considered equally valid, especially in terms of how they understand Jesus (such that they like him and not the church). But Kimball does seek to allow alternative positions to have equal validity around some topics (such as women in ministry). As much as possible, Scripture is seen to give validity to the different positions. Kimball's repeated challenge is to not hold positions which are built on proof texts but top hold to positions built on discernment of the Scriptures.

Pedagogical Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)	
Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed	What type of learning environment or learning actions do the materials encourage?

The materials do work to produce a problem solving environment. Kimball is trying to present a number of current problems that he believes the church is facing. At the same time he doesn't look to provide a clear solution to each of these problems, but rather encourages participants to explore how they might respond.

The amount of content within each session would put considerable pressure on getting through the materials if the 1 hour time frame is to be met. This would work against encouraging an environment that can see the need to be reflective in seeking different responses to the raised problems.

Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge	What indicators are there that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners?

Whilst Kimball does provide an extensive appendix which outlines his response to a number of the more difficult theological questions, these questions are being asked. That is, Kimball is not just giving his response, but participants are encouraged to consider how they might answer such a question.

The sessions on homosexuality and oppression of women especially focus on encouraging participants to not only know a position, but also to be able to discern how to respond to those who have legitimate questions based on how that position might have been formulated.

The extensive amount of discussion and reflection questions which are 'open' and don't have a pre-set answer or actually ask questions of what Kimball has presented supports the equipping of discerning learners.

Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory	How do the materials engage with the interaction of theory and praxis?

There are practical responses at the end of each of the sessions. Some of these aren't token 'put this into practice' activities but require further reflection of the content against the praxis of the participant.

The utilisation of those outside the church to raise the topics and problems of this series does reinforce a theory praxis tension where the praxis suggests there may need to be more thought in the theories (and practices) of the church to generate an alternative outcome.

Study Materials Summary

Overall Details	
Title	Just Faith
Date of Copyright	2009
Publisher	TEAR Australia
Publisher affiliations and/or statement of purpose/beliefs	TEAR Australia is a Christian development, relief and advocacy organisation responding to global poverty and injustice. Our vision is for a just and compassionate world in which all people have the opportunity to achieve their God-given potential. We will: • inform, challenge and empower Australian Christians to make biblically-shaped responses to poverty and injustice. • support community-based Christian groups, churches and mission organisations around the world as they work holistically with poor communities in development, relief and advocacy. • adhere to biblical teaching, and evaluate our work and attitudes in its light. • maintain a low-cost administration regime in order to maximize the funds allocated to project partners.
Materials provided	DVD Guide Booklet (Daily reading booklet with campaign package)
Total sessions for full course	8 (First four reviewed)
Indicated Length of Time for each session	1 and a half hours
Stated Purpose of Materials (e.g. promotional statements etc)	"This course has been designed for Christians who are interested in exploring the connections between their faith and the big issues of our world today. Participants are invited to open their Bibles, open their eyes, and open their hearts. Together we will investigate the state of the world and what the Bible says about how we can look at, understand and live in this world" (p. 5 Booklet)

Video Component Details	
Average overall length per session	~15min
Number of segments per session (i.e. is it one presentation or stop/start)	3-4
Type of video presentation	Talking head as group facilitator (Amanda Jackson) who introduces each video section. Video sections are made up of affiliates of TEAR sharing their experiences and how these may relate to the Scriptures; songs with pictures; on location videos of third world countries. Video also uses basic animation to put images, main key words and verses on the screen.
Any Relevant Details of presenter(s)	Amanda Jackson introduces her credentials in the area of poverty advocacy. All speakers are introduced by Amanda to qualify their ability to and reason for speaking in the section.

Participant Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	Guide Booklet Daily reading booklet (with campaign pack)
Print Component #1	Guide Booklet
Total Pages	64
Average Pages per session	8
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	The guidebook works to direct the session. IT provides a step by step guide to work through each session. The key sections are: To begin: Sharing on how what was learnt last week was followed up on during the week. Introduction: Either a video segment or a set of discussion questions to introduce the topic. Topic expansion: This section is divided into a number of heading questions related to the topic. Under each of these questions will be a combination of: statistics/information; a video section to watch; biblical passages to read; discussion questions. End of session reflection: These three questions: What was new to you during this session? What, if any, unresolved issues or questions remain for you?

	What will you do this week in response to the issues that have been raised? To close: A reading to share together to end the session. What next? A number of suggestions of what further action or research could be carried out by the participant. Something to think about: A short quote or Bible verse related to the topic.
Print Component #2	
Total Pages	
Average Pages per session	
Description of Print Type and how it is suggested it is used	

Leader Print Component Details	
Print Materials provided (e.g. book, study book, daily readings, etc.)	N/A

Other Resources Component Details	
Other Resources	Promo disk says campaign kit contains sermon outlines and extra resources but these were not available with the reviewed resource.

Descriptive Analysis

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Relationship vs Individualism	How integral is a group to completing the materials?
The materials could be completed without a group. The questions don't require more than one participant to be answered. Other participants may generate better discussion, but the materials could be completed without others. They could be used as a reflective set of materials by an individual.	
Interconnectivity vs Productivity	In what ways are participants encouraged to explore alternative positions related to alternative contexts to the video setting?
The materials do present a number of alternative positions which have been influenced mostly by people who have experienced a third world context. The booklet states "You may at times feel like this course opens up more questions than answers – this is to be expected. The course is not	

designed to give you all the answers or to tell you what to think. You will be introduced to a number of different people from various faith backgrounds who will present their own personal perspectives on a range of issues. You are invited to listen to them, reflect, and talk with others about what you heard." (pp.6-7).

However, the positions presented by the video speakers are then mostly reinforced by the discussion questions which follow. There isn't an invitation to question the positions so much as to consider how the alternative position may raise challenges.

Complexity vs Efficiency	How do the materials indicate they value time, space and reflection?

The course time is suggested at one and a half hours. Discussion sections are given a 10-20 min suggested timeframe which would provide ~ 4-5mins per question. The End of Session Reflection questions are given a 15min timeframe. This does indicate that both discussion and reflection are given value based on their designated time. The End of session reflection suggesting 15mins gives people 5 mins per question which is quite significant in comparison to other materials.

Engagement vs Distraction	Is this product best described as a "thing" or "device"? Give indicators.

Device.

The materials are designed to run themselves. There is no real need for a group leader as the presenter guides the group. The discussion questions can be easily engaged with from experience. The Bible passages are presented and interpreted in a way that places that interpretation as the legitimate way to interpret the passage, providing the participant with what they need to know why and how they may get involved in poverty advocacy.

Participation vs Consumption	Are there any indicators of participation which indicates a trajectory towards growing expectation on the participant?

Yes. The End of Session reflection and the What's next sections do give an indication that the study is just the beginning of the process of investigating the topics. There is a sense that just doing the study isn't enough and that more will be required.

At the same time, the presentation, although perhaps confronting for some, does provide participants with easily accessible information in relation to the issue of poverty and justice. There is still a persuasive sense of this is how you as the participant should see things also, despite the claims to be opening up questions.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)	
Cultural Formation vs Information Transportation	What are the actions reinforced by the materials?

Watching short video presentations.
Discussion.
Reading Bible passages and discussion.

Reflection.	

Empowerment vs Power Maintenance	How do the materials indicate their intentions in terms of power in the communication process?

The materials would seem to be predominantly about maintaining power. The way the materials are presented, especially with the use of contrasting images of poverty against images of wealth, do seek to be persuasive that the position of the materials needs to be taken on.

There are elements of encouraging reflection and self-learning, but these occur after the main communication point has been reinforced.

Conflicting Medium Potential vs Unidirectional Medium Potential	What potentialities are utilised by the use of the different media?

The most obvious is the potential for an emotive connection with the video medium. The images used in the videos are being utilised to reinforce the message of inequality.

The potentiality for different speakers from different locations to contribute is utilised. Each of these different speakers having experience in the area or topic on which they are speaking.

The print materials are used to direct a logical working through the materials. They are set out to indicate where different areas are for discussion (no space for written answers) and where it may be good to write some answers.   They provide an extensive notes section at the end of each session for participants to make their own notes. The print materials are also used to convey statistics and other similar data.

Negotiated Meaning vs Transferred Meaning	Are alternative positions provided for the audience? Are all alternatives equally valid? What gives validity to positions?

Alternative positions aren't provided within the materials but the materials state that "you will be introduced to a number of different people from various faith backgrounds who will present their own personal perspectives on a range of issues" (p.7). And during the video presentations Amanda at times introduces sections in a way that suggests they may be presenting an alternative position to that held by the viewer; but there is no presentation of two differing positions.

It is difficult to establish what validates positions. There is a definite linking to the Bible, and the intro line is "open your eyes, open your Bible, open your heart". However, there is also a strong emphasis on the individual, what their interpretation of passages might be, particularly based on their experiences. This coupled with the emphasis of the materials to "make up your own mind" seem to suggest the individual is the key validator.

Pedagogical Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)	
Educational Environment Focussed vs Subject/Content Focussed	What type of learning environment or learning actions do the materials encourage?

The materials do encourage a very discussion focussed environment; however the questions are very directive of the discussion. At the same time there are a number of fairly open questions allowing participants to discuss an alternative to what was presented. The video sections are

fairly short and only take up a small amount of the suggested 1 and a half hours.

There is a continued emphasis to respond to the presented content whether that be someone sharing how they understand some scripture or imagery and song.

Discernment vs Accessible Knowledge	What indicators are there that the materials are operating to equip discerning learners?

The End of Session Reflection is the biggest indicator of seeking to equip discerning learners. The three questions are provided to assist the participant in identifying what may have been new information or ideas; what issues or questions they may still have; and how they might respond to the session. Without this section it is difficult to identify other indicators which are encouraging participants to be discerning, but rather to be taking on what is being presented.

Praxis Theory Dynamic vs Operational Theory	How do the materials engage with the interaction of theory and praxis?

The materials utilise the experiences of those who have been involved with poverty advocacy to share how they understand the Bible from these experiences. This illustrates for participants how experiences can play a role in shaping theory. However, the materials themselves are predominantly theory focussed, which would suggest a linear theory to praxis interaction.

7. APPENDIX C: Qualitative Interview Data

Appendix C contains the data collected during the qualitative interviews.

Interviewee Identifier	MH
Age	33
Sex	M
Length of experience as small group participant	12yrs
Length of experience as a small group leader	7 yrs
Description of usual small group format and content	6-10 people studying a passage lead by a leader who had prepared for the study
List of any Bible Study Materials containing video component used previously	Just Faith, The Bait of Satan, 40 Days
As a small group leader how would you describe your attitude towards Bible Study Materials containing a video component?	*Sceptical.*
What do you think has informed the attitude that you currently have?	*I have seen poor theology coated in a slick video that attracts people.*
Cultural Value Systems (Community vs. Technology)	
Can you describe how the group relates to each other when you use materials with a video component? Particularly consider how it might be different from times when they aren't used.	
Less interaction. What the man in the video says is "gospel". I remember in 40 Days of Purpose I suggested there was an additional point to be made that wasn't made in the video and some members were almost shocked that I would suggest the video was "lacking". Yet if we had had that very discussion in the group between us… with no video… and I said the same thing no one would have blinked an eye.	
In what ways do think these materials encourage your group to explore the different positions on a passage or topic and the contexts which may have had a role in how those different positions arose?	
Prolly depends a bit on the video and how it is made. But vid doesn't allow people to ask questions of the one putting the point of view forward which is very different to a bible study discussion with people sitting together… you know, Q and A format of real living people facilitates exploring other views in a way that vid doesn't coz some one can say "what do you mean?"	
What level of expectation do you think there is when using these materials to complete them in the timeframe suggested by the materials? How comfortable would you be to encourage a longer discussion if you knew it would mean not completing the set session that week?	
High expectation and uncomfortable. I think I feel that because one they've broken it up into the session…they've put thought into it and broken it up into so many steps…I've done that with like preaching and so I presume they have a reason for putting a session together as they have, and so I think they have planned it and thought it through and I assume they have good reasons for what they have done. It's also because I feel like there's a sense that you aren't the leader of the group…there is a 'pixel leader' and they are one who is really the leader of DVD sessions as they have done all the work.	

Can you describe the demands or expectations you find placed on you to prepare to run a study with these materials? Particularly from other ways you may prepare if not using these materials.

Usually no demand inherent to the actual program. But there is an external demand being the leader of the group to try go through the material before the study.
If not running a vid I will go through the study guide…if using one…. and go over the passages and run through the study first myself. I will add/subtract or modify questions. I do not do this with DVDs…..Not sure why. Maybe coz with a DVD I don't feel like I am the actual study leader i.e. the dude on the TV is in a sense the study leader….the pixel leader…. He directs questions and leads. There is a sense with the DVD that the flesh and blood study leader is relegated to an obedient side kick who get to field question time after the study is complete, but he does' get to lead, set direction etc... SO there are 2 leaders "pixel leader" and "flesh leader" Pixel leader is sets the agenda and direction, gives his opinion but is never there for discussion, Flesh leader knows his group better than pixel leader but is somewhat disempowered to lead.

What contribution do you think materials such as this make towards enabling participants to mature in their faith?

Most are not great coz it relegates the actual study leader to a side kick. Most DVDs make it hard for the actual leader to modify content for the group…unlike say a study guide which is easily tailored. Hence DVD studies are more "play it as it is"… your average leader cannot alter the digital content on the DVD like he can in a study guide…DVDs with higher ability for the actual leader to mould the study would be better.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs. Transmission Theories)

How would you describe the encouraged actions of participation for group members when using these materials?

During the "play time" very little
After "play time" high. But when interaction is high the "pixel leader" is not there to interact

Have you had any experiences where either you or participants have disagreed with what was presented in a video? If so, how did people respond? If not, do you think your group would raise an objection/disagreement if they had one?

As I said before when I suggested something might be added to the video point some members were almost shocked that I would suggest the video was "lacking"…. I think this is because it is interpreted as a mutiny. "flesh leader" is seen to try to overthrow "pixel leader"

In considering the materials you have used, what advantages do you think the different media components bring to the package (e.g. a printed booklet; the video presentation; the leaders guide; a book to read daily)? Why do you think more and more producers are adding video to their materials?

Printed stuff is good coz people write things in and engage. It also allows the leader to easily modify content for his group.
Video is attractive. Apple is one of the best marketing companies on the planet. Go to their web site and you get heaps of slick vids of products, not a screen of printed material. Our culture likes vid a lot. Perhaps vids sell better for producers than printed material?

How free do you feel when using these materials to encourage the group to arrive at its own

understanding of the content? Do you feel the group is invited to arrive at its own position or that the materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position? Give reasons for your response.

Not free, this is coz there are 2 leaders, pixel leader and flesh leader.

Vid materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position. I think this is coz it's hard for a vid to encourage people to arrive at their own conclusion, because the vid presenter is not there in person i.e. they can't afford to do anything other than the hard sell because they are not in a discussion they are in a presentation.

Pedagogy Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs. Informative Pedagogy)

What would you describe are the main actions that these materials encourage participants to carry out? Can you describe how these actions may differ from when these materials are not used?

Be attentive listeners to the DVD. This is where much of the time is spent. This is very different to a normal bible study lead by the flesh leader using a study guide. This is because it is naturally more interactive, the flesh leader is more easily challenged…the group know him and are more happy to push back on ideas etc...
Discuss as a group. Most DVDs encourage discussion after the presentation of a key idea. But the questions can't be related to the local context of the group….so the questions have to be fairly open…but often they are also looking for a specific answer, even though they are discussion questions

If you only ran these materials for 12 months what would you describe is the most obvious thing they would teach your group?

I wonder if it would… incorrectly teach people or get people to assume that everything in terms of the bible is really quite neat. Because it seems that those packages can deal with a really realy complex issue and sort of strip it down to something that is really quite simple. Coz prolly most of those packages have an outcome that they want your group to get to so they try to move your group to that outcome as simply and efficiently…..and persuasively as they can. If all you ran was those packages for a year or two then people might be quite shocked at how difficult some passages of the bible can be to interpret….and that there might be different ways to interpret it. People would grow to expect an easy palatable…easily broken down and digested study.

Can you describe how these materials present the relationship between theory (theology or the biblical point) and the actions of group members?

Some are way more action orientated, then others are more theory orientated….I'm not sure that I could say there is a consistent methodology with this with the materials I've experienced.

Interviewee Identifier	MS and WS
Age	60
Sex	M and F
Length of experience as small group participant	30 yrs
Length of experience as a small group leader	12 years
Description of usual small group format and content	A range of different options: Study books Sermon reviews on what was preached Self-prepared on Bible books DVD series
List of any Bible Study Materials containing video component used previously	One on Prayer (unsure of title) Just Faith 40 Days of Purpose
As a small group leader how would you describe your attitude towards Bible Study Materials containing a video component?	*We find the DVD materials quite good. It helps with what has to be prepared. We have got over the study books…we find the questions a bit repetitious (WS)*
What do you think has informed the attitude that you currently have?	*There is less preparation in terms of leading and there is some good stuff around. (MS)*

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)

Can you describe how the group relates to each other when you use materials with a video component? Particularly consider how it might be different from times when they aren't used.

It's not really dramatically different…. I think we like the change…like we have just completed going through first and second Peter but next year if there was something good we would like to start with that. I think you get a bit sick of the same style. (WS)

I don't think it reduces discussion. It has been our experience that people will pick up points (take notes (WS)) it's not as though people watch it then it is gone. Whether they do it better with a DVD or with a personal presenter I don't think there is a lot of difference…not with our group anyway because people are prepared to interject if there is something they don't understand (MS).

In what ways do think these materials encourage your group to explore the different positions on a passage or topic and the contexts which may have had a role in how those different positions arose?

Well definitely if there was a DVD and someone was speaking on something that was quite controversial or became controversial they would definitely want to research and come back…as long as the teaching time….we usually leave an hour for the bible study…so you don't want the DVD to be more than 20mins or you're cut right back….and people get restless…I mean I get restless (WS).

I think the people themselves are prepared to raise points and not let things go that they don't agree with (MS).

What level of expectation do you think there is when using these materials to complete them in

the timeframe suggested by the materials? How comfortable would you be to encourage a longer discussion if you knew it would mean not completing the set session that week?

We have taken more time….we have said we'll take an extra week to look more into the Scriptures or whatever (WS).

We'd rather do that than run substantially over time…I mean we can stop at any point and pick it up next week (MS).

Can you describe the demands or expectations you find placed on you to prepare to run a study with these materials? Particularly from other ways you may prepare if not using these materials.

Well I think there is more preparation involved in what you do yourself than with the DVD. I mean the DVD normally covers the ground. The Scriptures are there, the whole lot. You just need to familiarise yourself with it. (MS)

Normally we'd watch beforehand….maybe decide which questions to leave out…or if it needs to be split over two weeks….I think there is much less preparation when getting ready for a DVD session (WS).

What contribution do you think materials such as this make towards enabling participants to mature in their faith?

I think some of the study booklets we've used can get a bit repetitive and not really encourage that…we're quite a mature group now and we want a bit more depth. (WS)

There's good and there's bad like everything else…some of the DVD materials are quite challenging others not so much. I think our group has been quite encouraged over the years and some have grown quite substantially (MS).

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)

How would you describe the encouraged actions of participation for group members when using these materials?

I think it is good when the presenter would encourage you to follow Scripture in your own bible…I haven't experienced this as a common trend…(MS)

I think also some of them leave you something to do before the next session…you know like a challenge…(WS)

I spose they don't always encourage you to take notes….but there is a booklet with it most often so I guess they do…we've found that with some of the speakers people would get quite focussed on the person…like he's got that shirt on again…I think that they could use the video's a bit more effectively sometimes….rather than just focussing on one person…(WS).

Have you had any experiences where either you or participants have disagreed with what was

presented in a video? If so, how did people respond? If not, do you think your group would raise an objection/disagreement if they had one?

We've only had one real occurrence like that and they didn't bring it up at the time…they had nothing against the content, they didn't like the person. And that was strictly a personal thing…they felt a negative emotion….some in the group said they didn't like Rick Warren…they don't like his style and we try and say well let's see if we can get past that and see what he has to say….but some people don't want to get past that (WS).

We've had one occasion where something was said and someone jumped in straight away. It was a bit of misunderstanding, but they had no issues about raising it.

In considering the materials you have used, what advantages do you think the different media components bring to the package (e.g. a printed booklet; the video presentation; the leaders guide; a book to read daily)? Why do you think more and more producers are adding video to their materials?

I think the potentials of video aren't always used so effectively…I think having someone with a new perspective coming in and sharing from a different angle is helpful. (WS).

Maybe there is an ease of presentation (MS)….not every life group has mature people in it…so you can get hold of something that has good content for the group which is quite good….having the audio and visual helps the content be presented by a person (WS).

How free do you feel when using these materials to encourage the group to arrive at its own understanding of the content? Do you feel the group is invited to arrive at its own position or that the materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position? Give reasons for your response.

I don't have a problem to do that…we do that (MS).

The ones that are meant for a bible study to be fairly open…but when you get a DVD or video and it is on a specific thing and it is just being given info…most of the ones we've done have questions after and they encourage you to delve…we all have study bibles and we always bring them so people will often be referring to those as well (WS).

Pedagogy Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)

What would you describe are the main actions that these materials encourage participants to carry out? Can you describe how these actions may differ from when these materials are not used?

Well to search out the word (MS)…and to apply it to your life we would hope (WS). Rick Warren often gets you to do some homework or something to keep you focussed on it (WS).

When we were using the books we are writing down answers (MS). There are all different types of questions…but we got sick of the book series we were using as the questions were often fairly closed and simple…so it might have been something that you just read in the passage…(WS).

The questions need to encourage discussion (MS)…they need to have thought provoking

questions…not always with easy answers (WS).
If you only ran these materials for 12 months what would you describe is the most obvious thing they would teach your group?
I think most of the materials are fairly focussed on the topic (WS)…I would hope that it would teach us to read the word more, to discover and understand what's there for us…I'm sure they would encourage…whether there would be any follow up on the encouragement of this though…(MS)
Can you describe how these materials present the relationship between theory (theology or the biblical point) and the actions of group members?
I think the teaching…I mean we've always tried to encourage people to be thinking "what does it mean for us?" …so we take it from the theory and hopefully put it into practice….by having good theory…theory is the foundation….but you do need some back and forward (MS).

Interviewee Identifier	CR
Age	35
Sex	M
Length of experience as small group participant	21 years
Length of experience as a small group leader	21 years
Description of usual small group format and content	Self-written materials.
List of any Bible Study Materials containing video component used previously	Just Faith The Christ Files 40 Days of Purpose The Prodigal God
As a small group leader how would you describe your attitude towards Bible Study Materials containing a video component?	*Generally I prefer not to use them, but I have used them and will use them again, but generally for short periods of time.*
What do you think has informed the attitude that you currently have?	*My experience has been mixed, there are some good ones, but it is harder to tailor to the specific group. There is a variation in the quality. Because of the way I run bible studies I like writing them and tailoring to the group…you can't do that anywhere near as much with a video…they are less flexible….the content is very fixed and you are very dependent on the theological position of the people who make the video.*
Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Can you describe how the group relates to each other when you use materials with a video	

component? Particularly consider how it might be different from times when they aren't used.

I think one of the differences I find in the groups is that there's more…running a bible study generally is about understanding what the bible says, so more like explaining work…whereas doing it with a video it's more people assessing whether they agree or disagree with the video…so it's more of explaining vs assessing…I find the bible challenges people's ideas whereas people's ideas challenge the videos.

I think sometimes the relationship is: "what do you think about what he says?", like if someone doesn't necessarily agree with what is being said on the video they are almost trying to test what the group thinks before they are willing to speak…as if the group loved it you then might not want to disagree which is different to a regular bible study where people I think are more free to say what they think than to be seen to disagree with the expert.

In what ways do think these materials encourage your group to explore the different positions on a passage or topic and the contexts which may have had a role in how those different positions arose?

It depends a lot on the materials…there are some that are better at getting people to express what they think…one I am using with the youth group shows a lot of people expressing what they might think on an issue and then gets you to stop the video to hear what the people in the group think….it sometimes works it sometimes doesn't…and then the presenter comes on to say what they think.

What level of expectation do you think there is when using these materials to complete them in the timeframe suggested by the materials? How comfortable would you be to encourage a longer discussion if you knew it would mean not completing the set session that week?

I find that a lot more than with a book. A DVD expects you to do one session in one session, whereas with a book people are a lot more like "we can finish this off next week". I would be more comfortable pushing over to next week with a book than with a video.

Can you describe the demands or expectations you find placed on you to prepare to run a study with these materials? Particularly from other ways you may prepare if not using these materials.

It certainly seems a lot less preparation with a video….they've done the work…you haven't had to write the studies yourself that obviously takes less time….the issue is, depending on the video, sometimes I'll want to watch it first…so I've got an idea of what's coming and where they are going with the ideas and stuff like that…sometimes, if I'm doing that it can take more time to sit down and view them.

What contribution do you think materials such as this make towards enabling participants to mature in their faith?

It depends a bit on the materials…it can make a good contribution and raise things…it depends on the focus of the materials…some material isn't focussed on that…I think stuff that, um….the ones that are most likely to do that are ones that push people back to reading their bible rather than replace reading the bible….some of them say this is the way theology is or this is the way this topic is or something like that….others say why don't you go back and look at this in more detail with 'these things' in mind….so the ones that send you back to look at the bible in more details would

be the ones most likely to have a bigger impact on people's maturing in faith.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)

How would you describe the encouraged actions of participation for group members when using these materials?

Some people will take notes…but not many in my experience…so for many people it is fairly passive…they will sit and almost absorb…but some people will take notes. Sometimes it breaks for discussion, or there will be discussion that follows the material, based on the material.

Have you had any experiences where either you or participants have disagreed with what was presented in a video? If so, how did people respond? If not, do you think your group would raise an objection/disagreement if they had one?

The experiences I am thinking of are often when someone is trying to explain how they think the presenter is viewing the material…so. "I don't think it's right, I think he is seeing it from this way which is why he is phrasing that way, but that way doesn't sound right, but it's because he's seeing it from this point of view"….I think this is a safe way of saying I disagree with the guy by saying "I think he is coming from a different point of view than the one I have"…..so I think that is a way of doing it without directly saying "he's wrong".

In considering the materials you have used, what advantages do you think the different media components bring to the package (e.g. a printed booklet; the video presentation; the leaders guide; a book to read daily)? Why do you think more and more producers are adding video to their materials?

There are some great advantages in hitting the church in lots of different places. So to have people reading in their private reading what is also being preached on Sundays and then discussed in the bible study brings a synergy which can be good…I think running one of those packages like that takes a lot of work, so things like sermon outlines can be helpful because you are putting work into here that takes away from the work you can put in there…but that can depend on the quality of the sermon outline and how it matches your personality and how you preach…which might be quite different.

I think there is a perception that our society responds better to multi-media things…we're used to getting things off the TV and therefore we respond to getting things off the TV…there's also a perceived value added…like from a sheer economics point of view. If you can sell your materials and they pay an extra couple of bucks for a DVD your making more money cause the DVD once you've made it cost virtually nothing to produce more….so I think there is some cost benefit to that. There is also a value for the people making those sort of things because their face gets known and therefore they can get…if people like one thing, then they'll quickly sign up for other things….people will do that based on a person they've seen more than a theologian they may of heard of, but may or may not remember…so I got this bible study book that is written by Stott, 90% of Christians wouldn't recognise who wrote it, they'll just think it's a book on Revelation or whatever. Whereas with the video they'll say "I liked that guy" and they will be more likely to get something else by that guy.

There's a big thing within our society…certainly within Christian culture at the moment that um, sermons are boring, people don't interact well, we need to make it more exciting or more

interactive or things like that and in some ways multi-media is an easy way to do that…It's a way you can plug people in and break things up and that is seen as helpful in our culture…I don't know if I would necessarily agree with that…I think at times it's helpful and at times it's distracting…I think there is certainly a perception within Christianity that people are going to engage more with a multi-media thing than with one person talking…but it also can multiply the effectiveness of one good speaker…one good speaker could speak to a church of maybe 200 or 500 or something like that whereas if they make a video they might be able to speak to 10000 or 50000 or 100000 people…there can be then a perception that this person then is famous because he is on TV and then we should obviously listen to him because he's on TV.…but my feeling is that people will respond differently to that and that people won't respond as well as being individually engaged.

How free do you feel when using these materials to encourage the group to arrive at its own understanding of the content? Do you feel the group is invited to arrive at its own position or that the materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position? Give reasons for your response.

Generally I feel free to do this…I have been in experiences where this is material I have been asked to run and I like I have felt less free to do that then….like if it is a whole church program…but that is more to do with external things than materials themselves.

Often I think the materials are more about accepting the presented position…but there are materials around which try to get you to discuss and disagree…but usually those ones are still trying to get you to a point I think. When they use a 'specialist' or 'expert' then it certainly feels like you should believe them.

Pedagogy Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)

What would you describe are the main actions that these materials encourage participants to carry out? Can you describe how these actions may differ from when these materials are not used?

It encourages people to discuss…it encourages people to watch and observe what is going on in the material…sometimes they will encourage people to engage with what the bible says…so it might say turn to this passage and see what you think.

I think the videos seem to be very limited in terms of…here's this point now go and discuss it…ah, they don't tend to be able to be as creative in how they get people to think about things…it is more go and discuss, go and discuss or here are three questions to talk about…you don't often get them to like act out a scene from the bible, or build this from Lego, or other creative things I have done in a bible study to get people to interact with a text…the video itself is the creative thing and so there is not so much variety…sometimes participants are therefore more passive…a recent example was that we were looking at cultural blind spots in our study so we did actual blind spot tests to find out where people's blind's spots in their eyes were…

Usually the way they go with discussion is…"what do you think about this point that has been raised or this questions that has been asked". I think the disadvantages with that is the video can't run with people's suggestions or see how people are going with it…you need a group leader to be able to do that…I mean you have a group leader but the video feels like you don't need the experience or training to run it…but that sort of thing does need experience to run.

If you only ran these materials for 12 months what would you describe is the most obvious thing they would teach your group?

That normal people can't understand the bible…that you need the expert. One of the advantages of doing just bible study is that it teaches people that hey, we can work together and understand this.

Can you describe how these materials present the relationship between theory (theology or the biblical point) and the actions of group members?

I think most of the things would be: this is the theory now go and do the action…I suppose you can get people to do some actions….but generally it is here is the theory….although I think it is harder to make an application with a video….application is largely dependent on the audience and with video you can't know the audience as much, so you can't make the application as specific…so from that point of view there is a lot….there is not as much specific application….some have had so much application that there has been almost too much application….but most of it I would think is understand the point then go away and do the action.

Interviewee Identifier	PS
Age	48
Sex	M
Length of experience as small group participant	30 years
Length of experience as a small group leader	26 years
Description of usual small group format and content	Varied. Self prepare if possible. Using study booklets. Using video packages
List of any Bible Study Materials containing video component used previously	40 days of Purpose 40 days of Community Just Faith Network A Discipleship one (unsure of title) What's so Amazing about Grace Alpha
As a small group leader how would you describe your attitude towards Bible Study Materials containing a video component?	*Ambivalence is not quite the right word…there are some really good things about them… but there is an unknown quantity about them. I'm not opposed to using them and think they can be really helpful. I'm not sure about how effective the more campaign type ones are…like 40 days or even Just Faith.*
What do you think has informed the attitude that you currently have?	*They have been helpful at times, but I don't always see them have the impact they suggest they will have.*
Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Can you describe how the group relates to each other when you use materials with a video component? Particularly consider how it might be different from times when they aren't used.	
	I think that maybe the difference is more between when an authority figure is presenting than

someone from within the group is presenting…there is a sense where people look to the guru who is presenting on the video in a different way than they look to someone in the group. I think probably the things I appreciate more is when people are involved in teaching within the group because it often causes self-growth within them…rather than someone else preparing and doing all the teaching…I think it is easier to lull people into a sense of…unless you have really good questions or there is set homework which people need to do in preparation for the next week and people commit to doing it, it can be much more that people are looking forward to hearing the expert speaker or are attracted to the personality of the speaker.

In what ways do think these materials encourage your group to explore the different positions on a passage or topic and the contexts which may have had a role in how those different positions arose?

Whenever you choose something which comes out of a different tradition than your own then you're always going to have ideas which are going to challenge people….Just Faith for example, it wasn't so much a different position but an approach to faith and Scriptures which saw justice as a very importance lens… whereas probably in our tradition historically there hasn't been a real focus on that…it's ok for others to be into that….so Just Faith was challenging for some people….they were taken out of their comfort zone and had an approach to Scripture which was different to what they had been brought up on and that was challenging…

What level of expectation do you think there is when using these materials to complete them in the timeframe suggested by the materials? How comfortable would you be to encourage a longer discussion if you knew it would mean not completing the set session that week?

I think it is a high expectation…I think most of the groups I have been in have been fairly defined by time…but I would be very comfortable to let discussion go as much as possible, but when you have a course that has a number of weeks I have a tendency to be thinking we've gotta get through this and that may or may not be a good thing….I guess I am conscious of those longer courses being dragged out too long….I think the courses designed to be run as a whole church campaign increase this expectation so that you keep up with the rest of the church.

Can you describe the demands or expectations you find placed on you to prepare to run a study with these materials? Particularly from other ways you may prepare if not using these materials.

Fairly minimal expectations…most of the stuff I have done in the last 5-10 years, particularly with the American based campaigns, they almost want to teach you how to I don't know…it's like um, step one: open the book; step two: read the first paragraph; step three; ask God to…they don't leave anything to the imagination. The way these courses are written, certainly from the point of view of those American ones they are just very clear on here's the outline, this is what you do, this is what happens if someone says this.…there's virtually no….or very minimal expectations of what I've got to do as I can just go "there's the questions"…but I tend to look at them and go, I'll ask a different question or revise it or refine it.

There would be a lot more work in preparing a study when I'm not using these materials. I would prepare by reading the passage, engage with it myself, I would seek to hear God speaking to me, I would do background reading and reading commentaries and then look to make an application.

Normally with a video one I'll try to flick it on to have a look at it before the night, but I may doing something else as I listen…it's a much more convenient mentality.

What contribution do you think materials such as this make towards enabling participants to mature in their faith?
I don't think it is ideal to just run these materials…I'm not against using the materials, but I think we need to continue to train leaders of groups so that we say, this is how you engage materials, whether it is materials you prepared or someone else prepared…this is how you encourage people to ask the right questions that lead towards maturity…this is how you have differences of opinion on minor matters…this is how you deal with differences of opinion on major theological issues…so really it is about training leaders in the art of theological reflection and small group leadership to see maturity encouraged
Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)
How would you describe the encouraged actions of participation for group members when using these materials?
It varies…with some of the campaigns participants can be encouraged to do a lot of things like journaling, and memory verses, and key chains, etc, etc….but there can seem like there is just too much information…it's too much for people… *In the small group setting the actions encouraged are to answer questions…and sometimes it seems the key is to get the right answer so that you can move onto the next question…so, again it comes back to training….I'm not sure we actually sure we teach people how to have an outcome or an action that says "we hold things in tension"…we don't have to get everything solved or resolved to move forward…I think that within a group there will also be an action that calls the group to prayer and sometimes an action to be accountable to each other…* *The watching video part I think is a very relaxing action….it's very easy for most people to watch TV, it's what we do…maybe that puts people at ease…but maybe it also lulls people into a different place…people become focussed on the screen rather than each other.*
Have you had any experiences where either you or participants have disagreed with what was presented in a video? If so, how did people respond? If not, do you think your group would raise an objection/disagreement if they had one?
I have had experience of this. In one group there was a retired pastor who disagreed with a point and raised that disagreement. But I think it was a bit like, well he's a pastor so maybe he knows better. I don't think normal participants would be so inclined to question what is being put forward in the video… people who haven't been trained theologically, or don't practice theological reflection or maybe aren't as engaged in the Scriptures seem more likely to take on what is said.
In considering the materials you have used, what advantages do you think the different media components bring to the package (e.g. a printed booklet; the video presentation; the leaders guide; a book to read daily)? Why do you think more and more producers are adding video to their materials?
The video stuff, especially the campaign stuff is very easy to use. It's all prepared… the outline, the course, the framework, you can see clearly where you are going. The advantage of print material is that everyone can have a copy of their own book. One package that I did use had a transcript of the video in the print materials so people were able to read through what was

presented in a video again…

I would think that more producers are adding video because it makes money…the Christian market is very consumerist…and whilst there are many people who are genuine in wanting to get good material out to people…it can be easy to get Christians to buy stuff….those publishing houses are designed to make money so I would think they are speaking to their people asking what have you got next…I reckon it would be great if materials could be made which people were happy to create for free or for donations….which would take the sales pitch element out of it…

It's also one of the primary ways in which the world is engaged now….it's all through a screen now…I know there are Christians who say we need to keep up with that and you get virtual church and bible on your phone…I think this is why it is more popular, everyone is used to getting stuff on a screen….I think the huge disadvantage and the danger is that we miss real community

How free do you feel when using these materials to encourage the group to arrive at its own understanding of the content? Do you feel the group is invited to arrive at its own position or that the materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position? Give reasons for your response.

I'd like to say I feel very free, but in actual fact I feel quite constrained by the materials…because you feel bound to what is presented.

I don't think I've done any materials that sort of say, "Here's the big picture and you need to work towards your own conclusions from that"….I think most have an agenda and want people to see Scripture from a particular way and act a certain way….also I don't think I have done too many, if any, that are exegetical teaching, if I can put it like that, they're usually topically based…so it often isn't looking at a Bible book and we're going to have some teaching on that and discussion to draw out our conclusions…but rather we're going to do a study on the purpose of the church or justice and the end results is that you'll know the five purposes of the church and you'll have five memory verses from that and you'll know that the purpose the church is, or purpose of your life….it's quite a different approach

Pedagogy Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)

What would you describe are the main actions that these materials encourage participants to carry out? Can you describe how these actions may differ from when these materials are not used?

It varies depending on the materials….I think some material is more about getting knowledge of the bible into your head…more so than an outcome like Just Faith saying this should change how you engage with the world…physically, spiritually and emotionally…you'll be different….so I think there are different outcomes that are aimed for.
Overall I think it varies widely and some materials are better than others….I do think though, that the danger of this, because of the commercial packaging is that if you study this you'll find the key to the successful Christian life…it sort of promises something….and maybe it could potentially deliver if people did everything that was suggested….but it is can be a plug and play thing.

If you only ran these materials for 12 months what would you describe is the most obvious thing they would teach your group?

I think it would teach people that their group leader or church leader don't have the capacity or

the time or the willingness to engage with the Scriptures themselves and lead in that way and…ah…it may reinforce for people that only certain experts can have insight into the Scriptures and not the group themselves.	

Can you describe how these materials present the relationship between theory (theology or the biblical point) and the actions of group members?
I probably…my gut response is that most of the material is that if you get the theory right action will follow and I think that's probably been a large part of my experience as a leader…something that I had learnt in my experience as well…that as long as you get the theology right something will happen…but I don't think it is that simple now…but that is the gut feel I have of the materials focus…you have to get the theory right first.

Interviewee Identifier	RN
Age	38
Sex	M
Length of experience as small group participant	15 years
Length of experience as a small group leader	10 years
Description of usual small group format and content	Discussion by working through a Bible book. Self prepared study.
List of any Bible Study Materials containing video component used previously	Just Faith Introducing Faith
As a small group leader how would you describe your attitude towards Bible Study Materials containing a video component?	*I haven't had issues with them and am happy to use them.*
What do you think has informed the attitude that you currently have?	*Having had the positive experience.*

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)
Can you describe how the group relates to each other when you use materials with a video component? Particularly consider how it might be different from times when they aren't used.
There's not too much difference with the group and how it runs. I find it does work well for certain purposes.
In what ways do think these materials encourage your group to explore the different positions on a passage or topic and the contexts which may have had a role in how those different positions arose?
I guess in our group we've grown up together so it's more that when we get a video it comes from a different position at times and that can help us see things from a different angle. But the ones we've done did come from a fairly similar position. *The materials do to some degree try to put forward a different position.*

What level of expectation do you think there is when using these materials to complete them in the timeframe suggested by the materials? How comfortable would you be to encourage a longer discussion if you knew it would mean not completing the set session that week?

No, not at all. With some of the stuff we do sometimes it's 20 mins and sometimes it's an hour and a half. I'd definitely be happy to let a study go over to the next week if discussion was going well.

Can you describe the demands or expectations you find placed on you to prepare to run a study with these materials? Particularly from other ways you may prepare if not using these materials.

They are easier….when I prepare normally I am looking at the bible and a concordance and working through the passage…with the video ones, I will maybe watch the video or read the book that comes with it but in general it is a bit easier and there is less preparation time….maybe a tenth of the time I would normally take.

What contribution do you think materials such as this make towards enabling participants to mature in their faith?

I guess they are…when we did Introducing God we had some non-Christians and new-Christians and it definitely helped them…I'm not sure that if they just did these materials it would continue so much…my personal feeling is that the Bible is the main source for this and it depends on the course…if they are doing books of the Bible….I am more keen on doing books of the bible than on doing topical type studies….so I guess in that respect, all the ones I've sort of seen have been more topical rather than going through a book of the bible so I guess that is where that sort of differs….I think working with the bible helps people mature in their faith, and not just doing topical studies.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)

How would you describe the encouraged actions of participation for group members when using these materials?

Most of them looked at a passage in the bible…they do stop and discuss…I haven't seen any that have been in one huge discourse….normally they are broken down a bit. Some have a daily devotion or reading they get people to do as well.

Have you had any experiences where either you or participants have disagreed with what was presented in a video? If so, how did people respond? If not, do you think your group would raise an objection/disagreement if they had one?

Yeah I have had experience of this. Mostly minor things that people have brought up….most of that sort of stuff if I spot something I will say "so what do you think about this"….the whole idea is that it is a discussion, not a sermon….other group members would definitely do the same.

In considering the materials you have used, what advantages do you think the different media components bring to the package (e.g. a printed booklet; the video presentation; the leaders guide; a book to read daily)? Why do you think more and more producers are adding video to their materials?

The books that come with it like the daily devotionals keep you thinking about it every day…often with a weekly bible study it is easy to do it then forget about it…so it keeps the mind ticking over

the ideas and things…the video themselves will often go down a line you wouldn't have thought of yourself…it's a different person thinking.

I guess adding video is a generational thing…we've all grown up on TV and making a video is pretty easy to do these days….what is it, writing, reading and visual…everyone comes from a different mindset….personally I get more out of reading, but everyone is sort of different….if you're looking at it, discussing it and bringing the Bible in to it you are covering all the bases.

How free do you feel when using these materials to encourage the group to arrive at its own understanding of the content? Do you feel the group is invited to arrive at its own position or that the materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position? Give reasons for your response.

Yeah I do feel free to do this…it's easy for me because we have a mature group…we have had people who are newer-Christians and we try to accommodate when that occurs….I will sometimes look at less of a passage or maybe jump a bit if I think it might be a bit much….but with the video stuff it is pre-set…but for the main group it's not an issue.

Well only having a limited experience I think it is more about getting the presented position accepted…not having done many it is hard to say.

Pedagogy Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)

What would you describe are the main actions that these materials encourage participants to carry out? Can you describe how these actions may differ from when these materials are not used?

The one's I've done it's mostly just been a person talking on the TV screen…it's a visual aid but it's just someone giving a mini sermon I guess. Some of the people need to be able to carry the materials….have a good charisma.

The discussion questions are almost mostly open questions but the depth can vary a fair bit.

If you only ran these materials for 12 months what would you describe is the most obvious thing they would teach your group?

My personal view is that the video stuff is, for want of a better word, not as deep as going through a book of the bible…not really shallow…but I don't get as much out of it as studying book of the bible…I guess it does depend on the topics of the studies, but I don't think you would get much of an insight in how to read and understand the bible…unless the video topic was on how to be reading the bible….I tend to feel that with the ones I have run you sort of put the bible down…it's a minimal use of the bible…but then again, I assume they are out there, but I've never seen one that is focussed on a book of the bible.

Can you describe how these materials present the relationship between theory (theology or the biblical point) and the actions of group members?

I think there is sometimes a tie in of both….others are more about the theory….I guess they all sort

of vary a bit.	

Interviewee Identifier	JS
Age	61
Sex	M
Length of experience as small group participant	40yrs
Length of experience as a small group leader	20yrs
Description of usual small group format and content	There is a focus on sharing and openness. Normally we would read through a book together and discuss, or look at a book of the Bible, use a study book on its own or do a themed study…like the video ones.
List of any Bible Study Materials containing video component used previously	Wild at Heart 40 days of Purpose Just Faith 6 Steps to Talking about Jesus Some stuff from Matthias Media, one that was more on apologetics.
As a small group leader how would you describe your attitude towards Bible Study Materials containing a video component?	*Happy to use them as a tool. The way we function, we're happy to abandon using a series if we're not getting much out of it as a group.*
What do you think has informed the attitude that you currently have?	*We have had some good positive experiences. They are good to stimulate further discussions.*
Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)	
Can you describe how the group relates to each other when you use materials with a video component? Particularly consider how it might be different from times when they aren't used.	
I think the group operates much the same. There are some guys who relate to an electronic thing better…some guys admit they are not good readers and prefer the electronic format….it's variable amongst the guys.	
In what ways do think these materials encourage your group to explore the different positions on a passage or topic and the contexts which may have had a role in how those different positions arose?	
I find it hard to make that sort of judgement…I don't think they are open to discussion in the materials…and in our group it introduces another voice…I think the group has been together for a while and so they think things through…sometimes they might feel something is poorly presented but if it has some content that touches them…then it doesn't matter…so some stuff is stimulating, other stuff isn't. I find it variable.	

What level of expectation do you think there is when using these materials to complete them in the timeframe suggested by the materials? How comfortable would you be to encourage a longer discussion if you knew it would mean not completing the set session that week?

We've always thought that what is going on with the members of the group is more important than the materials so we are more than happy to carry discussion over. Some materials we have condensed as well….we did a couple of weeks in one night…if something stimulates us or hits one of the group we are happy to go in that direction even if the study doesn't.

Can you describe the demands or expectations you find placed on you to prepare to run a study with these materials? Particularly from other ways you may prepare if not using these materials.

I think there isn't a lot of difference. We work as a group to prepare. Everyone in the group needs to prepare for what we are covering. Sometimes we try to get a couple of copies of the video so we can pass them around so that people can come prepared.

What contribution do you think materials such as this make towards enabling participants to mature in their faith?

The whole process is about that…I wouldn't say they would do that on their own….it's good to have a mix of different media….sometimes we really feel that we need to get back and just study a book of the bible…or get a book to read at home…it's not been a basis for the group…there is stuff that comes through that is a good add on and you know sometimes they meet a need and sometimes they are disappointing. If they're disappointing then you just have to let them go.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)

How would you describe the encouraged actions of participation for group members when using these materials?

They have to watch the video part. Usually there is discussion and evaluation of what has been said.

Have you had any experiences where either you or participants have disagreed with what was presented in a video? If so, how did people respond? If not, do you think your group would raise an objection/disagreement if they had one?

Yeah, quite often. Sometimes people think that something isn't that relevant or they are evaluating where someone is coming from…so people are more than happy to raise objections…with the Just Faith one it was a bit of a challenge as there was a bit of liberal theology sprinkled amongst that…so I could do some dissociation and see that is where they are coming from but there is still some valid messages there. Others came from a much stronger position that this is garbage….that meant there was a range of different views and that didn't mean there wasn't a healthy discussion about what was in there….so the video wasn't that valid but it was a really good stimulus for real good exploration and it was really helpful but not maybe as it had intended, if you know what I mean.

In considering the materials you have used, what advantages do you think the different media components bring to the package (e.g. a printed booklet; the video presentation; the leaders guide; a book to read daily)? Why do you think more and more producers are adding video to their materials?

I think it depends….it's all this stuff, it's the way of the world….if you're not in this space and exploring a couple of mediums…it's about marketing and marketing a product. There's an expectation to have video and it's part of being relevant in the market place.

How free do you feel when using these materials to encourage the group to arrive at its own understanding of the content? Do you feel the group is invited to arrive at its own position or that the materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position? Give reasons for your response.

The materials don't determine the position that group will take. I think most of the materials have a position that they are trying to get across and I think that should be accepted as valid, even if you don't accept their position as valid. Even in our last study, which was on Revelation you get an idea on if someone is pre-millennial or post-millennial or whatever and that is fine....I think they should have a position on things

Pedagogy Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)

What would you describe are the main actions that these materials encourage participants to carry out? Can you describe how these actions may differ from when these materials are not used?

They are trying to use and operate in different sensory modes…more than just the read and talk…they are trying to use visual and auditory modes….so it's trying to expand the means by which you hear the message.

The questions vary and the materials vary. We haven't done a lot of these materials…I go back to using the old video tapes and some of those were much more didactic…but obviously they have evolved now and expanded their learning theory. The presenters come from a position of authority…but we'd look at where they come from and what they are about to try and get a better idea of who it is presenting….I wouldn't pick up just any material unless I'd looked into the person and got some idea of credibility….or at least a bit about them or the angle they would be coming from…

If you only ran these materials for 12 months what would you describe is the most obvious thing they would teach your group?

The medium I don't think… is as important… as the content. There's a bit of theory around that medium is the message but….they would learn dependant on what the content is and they would learn really dependant on us and the interaction of the group…to the materials of what is there rather than how it is presented…

But I think the audio visual stuff makes it a bit lazy….it consumes too much of the time. That's only one way….if a groups about a group you've got to make sure you balance the time and interaction…you know what I mean…so it's not what the medium is, but how the medium is used…it's about keeping the group focussed on what the group is about and using the materials

Can you describe how these materials present the relationship between theory (theology or the biblical point) and the actions of group members?

There is a huge variability in what is available. Some is more theory focussed. The Matthias Media we did was more apologetics so it was probably more theory focussed. Wild at Heart encouraged different actions…so we went away as a group based on being encouraged to do this

by the materials.	

Interviewee Identifier	JW
Age	70-80
Sex	M
Length of experience as small group participant	30 yrs
Length of experience as a small group leader	20 yrs
Description of usual small group format and content	Mostly using study books.
List of any Bible Study Materials containing video component used previously	40 Days of Purpose Just Faith A few others
As a small group leader how would you describe your attitude towards Bible Study Materials containing a video component?	*They are ok for other groups, but they aren't the best for the group I run.*
What do you think has informed the attitude that you currently have?	*They are more suited to another generation. Even the difficulties with getting the video up and running can be a bother.*

Cultural Value Systems (Community vs Technology)

Can you describe how the group relates to each other when you use materials with a video component? Particularly consider how it might be different from times when they aren't used.

The group finds the video to impact on the ability of the group to enter into discussion. The group would be sitting thinking when is this video going to be finished so we can get on with our study.

In what ways do think these materials encourage your group to explore the different positions on a passage or topic and the contexts which may have had a role in how those different positions arose?

You are sort of confined to what the disk is all about and it is narrow…or it can be narrow. People might come with different questions but by the time the disk is finished the time is eroded.

What level of expectation do you think there is when using these materials to complete them in the timeframe suggested by the materials? How comfortable would you be to encourage a longer discussion if you knew it would mean not completing the set session that week?

The group has an ongoing discussion and the video materials are not something which we normally use so the group often just wants to get through it so it can get back to the normal way things are.

The video materials are time consuming, the materials we've done run for half an hour to forty minutes which is our normal study time, and then there is discussion after it. This normally means that things go longer. Generally by the time the video is finished we've had enough as a group and aren't interested in the discussion.

Can you describe the demands or expectations you find placed on you to prepare to run a study with these materials? Can you describe any differences than other ways you may prepare if not using these materials?

Normally I would look up different books and different commentaries as I prepare for a session I would run.   If it's a video I try and watch it before to know what is going to be said, and then I would normally go along with what is being said. When you look at the video you get the information you're being given from the video. Normally with the study books we use, will work through the passage and look at some commentaries to expand on what the book provides. The more I delve into the books the more information I can bring out and help make the Scriptures more relevant…some of the books are repetitive. With the videos you don't get much time to write much down, and this doesn't help discussion.

By the time you watch and get your head around what is being presented taking more time to prepare on it is a bit much.

What contribution do you think materials such as this make towards enabling participants to mature in their faith?

As the leader of the group I do the extra work to try and help people not just be naïve and to encourage them to think deeper. This doesn't happen with the video materials in our group.

Communication Theories (Ritual/Cultural Theories vs Transmission Theories)

How would you describe the encouraged actions of participation for participants when using these materials?

It's mostly watching TV. You just watch it then it's finished. You might say "that's nice what was said", but there isn't normally a lot of discussion.

Have you had any experiences where either you or participants have disagreed with what was presented in a video? If so, how did people respond? If not, do you think your group would raise an objection/disagreement if they had one?

I encourage participants to disagree and hold different positions. We have a devout catholic as part of our group which means that we need to be sensitive to different positions people may hold. If I say something and we don't agree we will often have a discussion about it. I will encourage that we look at the Scriptures to help understand better. I don't say that people are wrong, but if I think they need to think further I will encourage them to engage with Scriptures.

With video, sometimes you might have a question or disagree, but by the time the video ends often you have forgotten what it was. With the video we don't normally stop and start.

In considering the materials you have used, what advantages do you think the different media components bring to the package (e.g. a printed booklet; the video presentation; the leaders guide; a book to read daily)? Why do you think more and more producers are adding video to their materials?

It's the modern technology and you won't stop that. We're an older group so it's a bit of an alien technology. Most of us don't have DVDs. We've got the book studies and that is what we know. But down a decade or two, they know the technology and love that sort of stuff and many would

loathe reading books.
How free do you feel when using these materials to encourage the group to arrive at its own understanding of the content? Do you feel the group is invited to arrive at its own position or that the materials are more focussed on encouraging acceptance of a present position? Give reasons for your response?
That's a hard question… our group doesn't really like the video package materials. So we just want to get them out the way.
Pedagogy Approaches (Formative Pedagogy vs Informative Pedagogy)
What would you describe are the main actions that these materials encourage participants to carry out? Can you describe how these actions may differ from when these materials are not used?
The video part is often like you're getting preached at, where normally we would take more time. Often, even though people might be asked to open their Bibles they wouldn't do it because the video often moves on too fast. Normally, we would just watch and then try to remember what was said. Often we don't really have much to discuss at the end of the video.
What would you describe is the most obvious thing that these materials teach your group?
We don't use them because they don't work within our group. The group finds that there isn't the same discussion and group learning when these materials are used.
Can you describe how these materials present the relationship between theory (theology or the biblical point) and the actions of group members?
Not really sure for that one…yeah, I don't know.

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