

## APPROVAL CERTIFICATION

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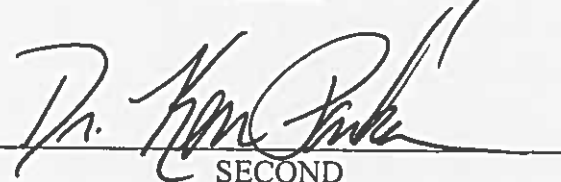
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MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ENHANCING THE SKILL OF SERMON INTRODUCTIONS  
IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

OFFICE OF DOCTORAL STUDIES

BY

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KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

MAY 2019

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To Terrie, best friend, love of my life and precious gift from God

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

–2 Timothy 1:7, Apostle Paul

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my children, Jeremy, Heather, and Jordan, you are my heritage, my reward, and my arrows (Ps 127:3-4). To their spouses, LouAnn, Robbie, and Julia, you are the helper I prayed that God would give my child (1 Sm 1:27-28). To my grandchildren, Jeremiah, McKinnley, SaraBeth, Bailey, EllaGrace, Emmerson, Paisley, Micah, Josiah, Elijah, Deacon, KatieJoy, Piper, and Addy Jo, you are my crown (Prv 17:6).

To my parents, Neal and Ruby Rogers, words cannot express my love, I proudly carry the name ROGERS and bare your graceful wreath and ornaments about my neck (Prv 1:8-9). To my parents by marriage, Jerry and Carol O'Brien, thank you for the greatest earthly gift I have ever received (Prv 18:22).

To my mentor, Dr. Don Stephens, who in Christ Jesus became my spiritual father through the gospel (1 Cor 4:15). To my home church, Kentshire Baptist Church, you are 'church'; I thank my God every time I remember you (Phil 1:3). The churches I have shepherded, Calvary Baptist, Cuero, Texas, Calvary Baptist, Dayton, Texas, and Southside Baptist, Bowie, Texas, it was and is my pleasure to feed you (Jer 3:15).

To my dissertation committee, Dr. Ken Parker, you graciously sacrificed time out of your life for my growth. Dr. Ben Awbrey, your guidance, friendship and mentoring helped me to accomplish this task. More than that, I am a better preacher, pastor, and man for having had your iron sharpen me (Prv 27:17).

Finally, to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who saved me, called me to preach, and continues to use me. I entered this journey with much fear and trepidation, but Your grace allowed me to understand that You did not give me a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline (2 Tm 1:7). I am truly a blessed man.

## GLOSSARY

**clinching elements of persuasion.** Given during the conclusion, where the *pathos* of the preacher delivers the final hammer-blows securing/achieving the purpose of the sermon for believers. This will include illustrative material, which can be biblical but does not necessarily have to be.

**closing appeals.** During the conclusion the preacher will provide ways and means (action steps, i.e., specific application) that will tell listeners what to do and what not to do, now that they understand the purpose of the sermon.

**connection.** During contextualization, the preacher provides a link from this current sermon to the proposition of the previous sermon and its textually-based structure.

**contextualization.** After securing interest, the preacher informs listeners on how the current preaching text links to the overall context, as well as tying it to the previously preached texts.

**crucial assertions.** As the preacher secures interest, he will make decisive declarations concerning the negative and positive results of listener disobedience or obedience to the truth.

**getting attention.** The first introduction component whereby in those first moments the preacher seizes audience distraction, turning their focus to his sermon.

**gospel presentation.** A Christless sermon is not a Christian sermon. Each sermon must have a purpose and a plan for addressing the ungodly. This is an unstated purpose for every sermon.

**keyword.** What makes the plural noun proposition unique. The keyword labels each division and will provide unity and balance to the sermon structure. The keyword reflects a series of parallel ideas from the text.

**orientation.** During contextualization, the preacher provides cultural setting, historical data, and Scripture cross-reference for sermon focus.

**personal questions.** As the preacher secures interest, he will raise vital questions regarding the present obedience or disobedience to the truth by the listener.

**plural noun proposition.** A type of proposition easily identified in the introduction, providing sermon unity and parallel structure through adding a *keyword*. This *keyword* will always be a pluralized noun.



**positive and negative flesh and blood scenarios.** As the preacher secures interest, he will provide concrete illustrations pertinent to the subject matter so listeners can see negative effects of disobedience and positive effects of obedience.

**projection of a determinative difference.** As the preacher secures interest, he conveys clearly that the exposition will reveal how one may, or may not, live productively in this life because of compliance or noncompliance.

**proposition.** A single, strong sermon thesis that appears first in the introduction.

**purpose.** Sermon purpose reveals to listeners exactly what God and His truth require of them and what it should accomplish (there is always a call to personal commitment). While it provides integrity to the entirety of the sermon, the preacher states it intentionally in the introduction and strives to achieve it during the conclusion. The preacher should always direct the purpose to the hearer as to how they live and how they think, and he must accomplish said purpose through the concluding materials (reinvigorated interest in purpose via vital transition to the conclusion by Q&A, closing appeals providing ways and means, and clinching elements of persuasion).

**recapitulation.** During the conclusion, as the preacher reinvigorates the purpose with clarity, he will summarize the biblical truth shared, repeating key words and phrases. Vital Q&A will drive home the purpose to the listener.

**securing interest.** After getting attention, the preacher raises audience needs, which will whet their appetite for the exposition of the Word—the answer to their questions.

**sermon elements (formal).** The introduction, body, and conclusion of the sermon.

**sermon elements (functional).** The working parts of the sermon; explanation, argumentation, illustration, and application.

**summarization.** During contextualization, the preacher provides a brief digest of the book through earlier preached texts.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was enhancing the skill of the Project Director in sermon introductions by evaluating and integrating elements of an effective introduction. The Project Director achieved enhancement through the evaluations of the project committee, as they rendered scores for fifteen submitted sermons following a grading rubric entailing the six elements of effective sermon introductions. The Project Director applied the evaluations from these sermons in his subsequent sermon introductions. By comparing the pre-project and preaching project introductions, the scoring revealed that the Project Director successfully enhanced his skill in sermon introductions, thus accomplishing the purpose of the project.

## CHAPTER 1

### MINISTRY SETTING AND OPPORTUNITY

The goal of this project is to develop and enhance the preaching skill of the Project Director, the major focus being sermon introductions.<sup>1</sup> This project requires several systematic steps to achieve this enhancement. The attention of this chapter is determining the need for more effective preaching through investigation and analysis of the opportunity that exists through the developing ministry setting of Southside Baptist Church. A judicious look at the ever-changing demographics of the ministry situation and the city of Bowie, Texas, will further substantiate the need for the preaching of the PD to be more effective. A survey of certain criteria will determine the precise need of enhancing the sermon introduction; among these are the ministry history of the PD and his educational background. The PD's committee determined that five randomly selected sermons from a wide time range would most accurately depict his preaching.<sup>2</sup> Then, it was further determined that Dr. Ben Awbrey would evaluate and score this sermon sampling and that he would utilize the Sermon Evaluation Form designed and used by him (see appendix A) in the preaching classes the PD has had at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>3</sup> The results of this

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<sup>1</sup>For the sake of brevity, the remainder of the project dissertation body will refer to the Project Director simply as "the PD." This excludes headings and figures.

<sup>2</sup>The committee consists of Dr. Ben Awbrey, professor of preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dr. Ken Parker, Senior Pastor of FBC Kearney, Missouri, and adjunct professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>3</sup>Ben Awbrey, "Sermon Evaluation Form," lecture notes for DR36271 Expository Preaching, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, March 2016).

preaching survey will confirm that the PD does, in fact, need to enhance his preaching, specifically in the area of sermon introductions. Closing out this chapter will be the purpose statement of the dissertation, a chapter summary, and a concise transition to the Biblical Rationale.

### **Ministry Description**

The setting for this project is the Southside Baptist Church of Bowie, Texas. Southside is a church that cooperates with the Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist of Texas Convention, and the Harvest Baptist Association. Southside has ministered in Bowie for the last sixty-eight years. What began as a tent revival at the present location of Southside on July 1, 1948, by the First Baptist Church of Bowie eventually led to the formation of Southside on October 8, 1950, with forty-nine charter members, of which two are still active in the church.<sup>4</sup>

The revival held on the corner of Cowan and Wilbarger was a mission venture of the First Baptist Church of Bowie. Leading the revival was area associational missionary, L. R. Jones. Following the revival, First Baptist Church authorized a committee to secure a building. With the purchase of an old carpenter's shop, the church began meeting and called A. D. Seago as its first pastor. The Southside facilities currently sit on one city block of six acres, consisting of a worship center, educational and fellowship space, and a student center.

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<sup>4</sup>All this historical data found in this section are courtesy of Southside Baptist Church, *2015 Church Constitution: History of Southside Baptist Church* (written 1985) (Bowie, TX: Southside Baptist Church, 2015), 4.

Over the years, Southside has had nineteen men serve as shepherds with the PD serving the longest tenure at ten and one-half years. In the heyday of Southside, they ran approximately two hundred in worship and 170 in Sunday School. In the six decades that Southside has ministered to this community, it has experienced many highs and lows. Currently, Southside averages approximately 110 to 120 in Sunday morning worship, and they have opportunity to experience corporate worship and discipleship groups on Sunday evenings. The most prolific ministries are Wednesday evenings where there will be upwards of one hundred plus students and children. Southside not only feeds these students and children the Word of God, but also a weekly meal. Southside is also a significant supporter of the Bowie Mission, which most evangelical churches in town support. While it is at a different location in Bowie, the mission director and most of the staff are members of Southside.

The congregational demographics of Southside reflect the demographics of the city of Bowie, the one exception being that the children who come on Wednesday evening are primarily from lower income families. A significant obstacle that Southside faces is incorporating the unchurched and unreached students, children, and their families into the body of Christ. Southside is neither ethnically nor racially diverse, which is reflective of Bowie. Southside is, however, diverse in that members come from varying age ranges and occupations—ranchers, farmers, educators, and the oil field industry, just to name a few. Spiritually speaking, the worship of Southside is a blend of hymns and contemporary praise and worship, and the church is unequivocally committed to the authoritative preaching of the Word of God. While

Bowie has faced a decline economically because of the oil industry; nonetheless, great opportunities of ministry exist as people look for answers that only Christ can give.

### **Community Demographics**

The city of Bowie and its surrounding areas offer ample ministry opportunities, not the least of which are preaching and evangelizing. The city intersects at US-287, US-81, and Hwy 59 and was the last stop in Texas for the Chisholm and Goodnight Trails, and most Texans consider it to be the marker for where West Texas begins. As the Fort Worth and Denver Railways converged through Bowie, the settlers soon incorporated a town on August 15, 1882. The citizenry made an application for a post office under the name James Bowie, frontiersman and folk hero who died at the Battle of the Alamo. Bowie eventually became a market and financial center for farmers and ranchers between Fort Worth and Wichita Falls.<sup>5</sup>

Most recent figures show the population of Bowie is 5,085 and has been around that number for the last fifty years. The median age of the average citizen of Bowie is forty-two and the median home income is \$38,003. The city is not racially diverse as the current population composition is 84.5 percent White, 12.0 percent Hispanic, and 3.5 percent other.<sup>6</sup> Bowie Independent School District consists of four schools with an enrollment of 1,530. North Central Community College has a campus in Bowie and the largest employers in the town are Bowie Independent School

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<sup>5</sup>David Minor, "Bowie, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 12, 2010, *Texas State Historical Association*, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hfb03>.

<sup>6</sup>"Bowie, Texas: Demographic Data," *Neighborhood Scout*, <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/tx/bowie/demographics>, 2.

District, Ranger Energy Services (oil and gas), WL Plastics, WalMart, and the American Hat Company. The downturn in the oil and gas industry, as well as the closure of the hospital in Bowie, has impacted Southside in that many of the employees and former employees are church members. Barbara Green stated, “The past year was difficult for Bowie economic development officials, who battled two major obstacles: the loss of hundreds of jobs in the energy field and the closure of Bowie Memorial Hospital after nearly 50 years.”<sup>7</sup> While the economic forecast for Bowie is not as bright as it once was, with all these difficulties comes the opportunity for the church, specifically Southside, to introduce hurting humanity to a holy God.

### **Project Director Information**

The PD began preaching thirty-seven years ago in the Northeast area of Houston, Texas, at the age of twenty-two. He ministered in his home church, Kentshire Baptist Church, for the next five years as both Minister of Music and Minister of Education. During undergraduate studies, ministry included teaching the adult class at Valwood Park Baptist Church in Farmers Branch, Texas, and serving as Minister of Music at Royal Oaks Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. After graduation, over the next twenty-nine years, the PD has pastored three churches: Calvary Baptist Church in Cuero, Texas (four years), Calvary Baptist Church in Dayton, Texas (fourteen years), and Southside Baptist Church in Bowie, Texas (the last eleven years). During the time at Southside, the PD has had the opportunity to preach through

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<sup>7</sup>Barbara Green, “Bowie Forges Ahead with Economic Development, Infrastructure Projects,” *Times Record News*, February 28, 2016, <http://archive.timesrecordnews.com/business/bowie-forges-ahead-with-economic-development-infrastructure-projects-29f09f24-cabb-0d60-e053-0100007-371001891.html/>.

seventeen Old Testament books and thirteen New Testament books. Each ministry station offered several occasions for ministry and the proclamation of the Word of God.

The deep conviction to preach the Word, to see the lost saved, and for believers to mature in their faith led the PD to further his education in biblical studies, especially preaching and pastoral ministry. The PD earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biblical Studies at Criswell College in 1990. During the Calvary Baptist Church (Dayton) pastorate in 1999, the PD earned a Master of Arts degree in Biblical Studies from Luther Rice Baptist Theological Seminary and then added a Master of Arts degree in Theological Studies from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in 2015 while at his current pastorate, Southside in Bowie.

While education pursuits and ministry experience have enhanced the preaching skill of the PD, he feels there is still a constant need for growth in his preaching. On the undergraduate level, there was one preaching class, three graduate classes, and three doctoral seminars. God has noticeably blessed the PD to preach for thirty-seven years, as well as to receive homiletic guidance and mentoring from several godly men and, yet, his desire is to be a perpetual student of preaching.<sup>8</sup>

### **Hypothetical Presupposition**

Despite significant years of experience and theological training, there are still deficiencies in the PD's preaching. The motivation for entering the doctoral program was primarily to become a better expositor of the Word and while much of the PD's

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<sup>8</sup>See the PD's complete vita at the end of this dissertation.



preaching needs enhancement, the component that concerns him most are sermon introductions. Although sermon body and conclusion are certainly important, neither may necessitate a hearing if the introduction is not compelling and purposeful. Indeed, in the initial moments of the sermon introduction, the preacher will either have the listener on board or he will not.<sup>9</sup>

Reflecting on the PD's sermon process, there is the feeling of simply "pushing through" to get to the exposition. He fails to consistently realize the importance, indeed the necessity, of the introduction for the expository sermon. Consequently, there is often the failure to construct a clear roadmap early in the sermon and it is likely that the hearers will have a diminished or nonexistent view of the direction of the sermon. Occasionally, on post-sermon reflection, the PD has failed to answer the questions for the hearer, "How is this going to affect my life?" and "What will happen if the suggested actions are followed or rejected?" Though other elements of the sermon are vital, the PD realizes that the hearer may never experience their vitality if the sermon introduction is insufficient or ineffective.

### **Measurement Tools**

For the realization of this skill enhancement to take place, an objective and professional sermon assessment must take place. The PD provided a web link to his sermon website where Dr. Awbrey, the project chairman and professor of preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, randomly selected five sermons from a wide range of time that would most accurately depict the preaching of the PD.

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<sup>9</sup>Jerry Vines, *A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 138.

Dr. Awbrey evaluated and scored these sermons employing an adapted form of the Sermon Evaluation Form. The PD in immediate consultation with Dr. Awbrey designed this adapted version of the Sermon Evaluation Form (see appendix B).<sup>10</sup> The results of this preaching survey will confirm that the PD does, in fact, need to enhance his preaching, specifically in the sermon introduction component. This survey evaluation will also establish a baseline for proper sermon introductions and put in place a comparative criterion for future sermon project analysis.

Dr. Awbrey evaluated and scored these sermons according to the adapted Sermon Evaluation Form. This adapted version would give new value to different introductory components, as well as establish significant connection of the sermon introduction with the sermon conclusion.<sup>11</sup> This evaluation form consists of six scoring elements: (1) getting attention, five-point value; (2) securing interest, thirty-point value; (3) contextualization, ten-point value; (4) purpose of the sermon established in the introduction and reestablished and achieved in the conclusion, forty-five-point value; (5) plural noun proposition, five-point value; and (6) plural noun proposition stated clearly and the final point of introduction, five-point value. The total of the six elements, scored individually, provide a one hundred percentile score possibility for the skill demonstration. The project chairman evaluated each of the

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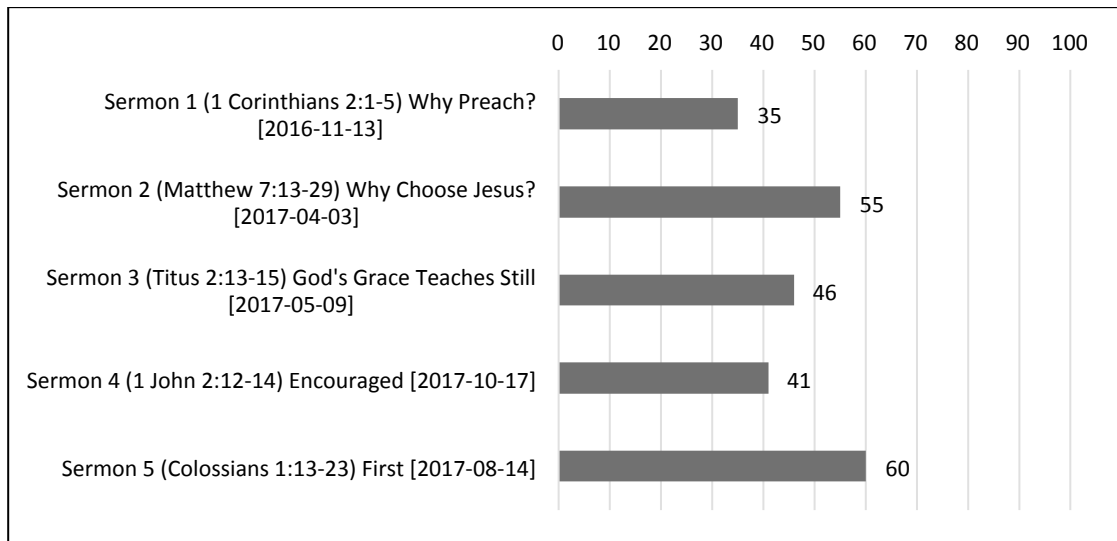
<sup>10</sup>Ben Awbrey, *Sermon Evaluation Form (adapted version): Six Essential Elements of an Effective Introduction* (Kansas City, MO: Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991, 2018).

<sup>11</sup>Of note, slightly less than half of the score derives from the sermon purpose. Forty-five of a possible one hundred point score will come from said purpose: ten points because the preacher states it clearly in the introduction and thirty-five points because he achieves it in the conclusion.

sermons and the ensuing composite scores are shown in figure 1 (see scoring for individual pre-project sermons in appendix C).

FIGURE 1

PRE-PROJECT SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATIONS BASED ON THE SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION



Dr. Awbrey rendered an average of 47.4 percent for the introduction elements. This supplies a baseline for future sermon analysis and measurement in this project in order to ascertain whether, in fact, the skill enhancement of the PD is occurring. The above rendering does display that the PD needs sermon introduction enhancement since his baseline falls short of an acceptable level of expertise in this area.

As apparent as this sermon introduction inadequacy is to the PD, it is likely more apparent to his hearers. The hearers may respond to this inadequacy either directly or indirectly. Those who perceive the introduction inadequacy directly may respond with, “I am listening, but I do not know what he is trying to say, and what I do

understand, he does not say very well.” Those who perceive it indirectly may ask, “Why would I want to listen to him?” or worse, the PD may not even command their attention. To be sure, these responses may be due to the spiritual state of the hearer, but could it be that the PD has failed to contribute due diligence to both the preparation and delivery of the sermon introduction? To be sure, feeding the Word of God to the people of God is the priority at Southside Baptist Church and numerous congregants do exhibit signs of spiritual growth. Yet, should the PD be simply satisfied with the status quo, knowing that there is more in Christ and more in his preaching? Greater sermon introduction enhancement on the part of the PD can only serve to bring greater sermon attentiveness and obedience on the part of the hearers.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project is to develop and enhance the preaching skill of the sermon introductions of the PD by sermonic evaluation and needed adaptation via the six elements of an effective introduction.

### **Conclusion**

Southside Baptist Church is a loving and faithful church in a stable but economically declining community. Bowie teems with ministry opportunities and occasions for the gospel abound. As Southside poises to meet these challenges, it needs sufficient and effective equipping to do the work of the ministry. For optimal equipping of the people of Southside, the PD needs optimal equipping and, therefore, his skill in sermon introductions must necessarily achieve enhancement. Dr. Awbrey confirmed the necessity for this sermon introduction enhancement by reviewing and

evaluating five of the PD's sermons. It was determined that the PD was lacking in the six essential elements of an effective introduction. Therefore, the PD's purpose is to enhance his skill in sermon introduction by evaluation and adaptation of an effective introduction.

The sermon introduction and six essential elements are vitally important to the effectiveness of the sermon. The introduction offers an opportunity for the preacher to get the attention of his audience and secure their interest, to provide context, and to give a clear statement of purpose. This purpose is not only essential to the introduction, but also must have vital linkage to the conclusion.<sup>12</sup> The preacher will afford a plural noun proposition that is clear and unambiguous, which will supply an effective roadmap for the direction of the sermon. Paul asked a series of questions in Romans 10, and verse 14 stands out, "And how will they hear without a preacher?"<sup>13</sup> While the question is pregnant with meaning, in the case of an inadequate or impotent sermon introduction, the answer to the question might be, "They won't." The next chapter will survey specific biblical material for developing a rationale for implementing and delivering effective sermon introductions.

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<sup>12</sup>The PD must articulate the purpose statement in the introduction, but the PD can only achieve the purpose in the conclusion.

<sup>13</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are from the New American Standard Bible (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL RATIONALE

Cotton Mather asserted, “The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher [is] to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men.”<sup>1</sup> The Biblical Rationale speaks to that design and intent, for this project will address two specific areas: first, the mandate for expository preaching, and then the homiletic necessity for sermon introductions in expository preaching. The mandate for expository preaching will include exegesis of 2 Timothy 3:12-17 (establishing the reality of an inspired Word as the basis for expository preaching); 2 Timothy 4:1-5 (proves that expository preaching is not an option but is in fact a necessity); and 2 Timothy 2:1-7 (reveals qualities the expositor must, by necessity, display in his life).

The reasoning for the homiletic necessity for sermon introductions comprises the latter half of this chapter, which will include the exegesis of Isaiah 55:1-13 (affords a paradigm for the need of getting attention and securing interest); Matthew 5:13-20 (exhibits the use of style and application by Jesus and its necessity for expository preaching); and Acts 17:22-31 (provides a pattern for the need of contextualization, as well as achieving the purpose of the sermon in both the introduction and conclusion).

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<sup>1</sup>Cotton Mather, *Student and Preacher: Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry* (1726; repr., Northampton: John Ryland, 1781), iv, <https://books.google.com/books?id=wAk8AQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

## Mandate for Expository Preaching

Mike Abendroth defined expository preaching as “a style or method of preaching God’s Word which seeks to logically ‘expose’ the biblical text to the mind and will of the congregation.”<sup>2</sup> The basis and drive for expository preaching is that God has spoken. The Scriptures attest to their inspired nature, as R. Albert Mohler Jr. stated:

The Bible bears witness to itself as the written Word of God, a claim that springs from the fact that God has spoken. In the Old Testament alone, the phrases “the Lord said,” “the Lord spoke,” and “the word of the Lord came” appear at least 3,808 times. . . . for the authority of Scripture is none other than the authority of God Himself. . . . “Where Scripture speaks, God speaks.”<sup>3</sup>

Preaching is not conjecture about God, but exposition of God from an inspired Word, and any other authority besides Scripture is to preach another gospel.<sup>4</sup> Preaching based on anything other than the reality of an inspired Word is total arrogance. Jesus attested to the reality of an inspired Word, affirming its accuracy and origin. He utilized “it is written” sixty-seven times and the tense emphasized its perpetual nature. He spoke of even the smallest letter (*jot*) or part of a letter (*tittle*) standing forever (cf. Mt 5:17-18).

As his life was concluding, Paul gave a simple mandate to Timothy, “preach the Word” (2 Tm 4:2). Herein lies the action, “preach,” and the content, “the Word.” There exists a strong link between 2 Timothy 3:16; 4:2 regarding the “doing” and the “message”:

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<sup>2</sup>Mike Abendroth, *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers* (Leominster: Day One, 2008), 145.

<sup>3</sup>R. Albert Mohler Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”

2 Timothy 4:2, “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

Preaching the Word is preaching Scripture; it is exposition. It is not about politics or current events. It is not preaching *about* the Word or even *from* the Word, it is in fact preaching *the* Word. While no one should minimize the value of other types of proclamation, “for a regular congregational diet,” expository preaching is most important.<sup>5</sup> Expository preaching is the quintessential mark of a healthy church, and if one is correct in this area, all the other marks of a healthy church should follow.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the Scriptures will afford proof for the necessity of a prepared expositor (2 Tm 2:1-7). As Paul related in his first epistle (cf. 1:12), he was utterly convinced that the Lord Himself had positioned him in the preaching ministry. This sense of calling is foundational for the prepared expositor. The call to preach is the most distinct choosing in life; it is neither a profession or a career, it is the touch of God. “The call is something that is an indescribable joy and an indefinable burden at the same time.”<sup>7</sup> First Timothy 6:11-21 fortifies the idea that the man of God needs preparation to preach the Word the God. Paul honored and assured Timothy by calling him a “man of God” (reminiscent of the Old Testament prophet). This designation

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<sup>5</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 30.

<sup>6</sup>Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, new exp. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 39.

<sup>7</sup>James W. Bryant and Mac Brunson, *The New Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 32.



describes Timothy as standing for God faithfully in the face of opposition and as a model of spiritual leadership for all Christ followers.

Reality of An Inspired Word  
(2 Timothy 3:12-17)

Paul began this chapter informing Timothy that with the onset of these “last days,” difficulty for the Christian would be a part of life. This would be especially true of those who desired to live a godly life. They would most surely suffer persecution and these words were, in fact, an invitation to join him in that suffering.<sup>8</sup> Paul made it clear that the pledge of Timothy to faithfully follow Christ would set the course of his life at odds with the course of the world. Preparation for conflict was both the way of Christ (cf. Mt 5:11-12) and Paul (cf. 2 Cor 12:9-10). Hostility is sure, and conflict is inevitable. For a timid disciple, these words must have shaken the young protégé, yet no matter the nature of the suffering, Timothy would experience “fellowship with Christ” (“in Christ Jesus”) through “the mystical union with him.”<sup>9</sup>

The wickedness of “evil men,” particularly frauds (“imposters”), will only escalate (proceed “from bad to worse”) as time passes.<sup>10</sup> While the primary intent of Paul may have been to portray these evil men as “swindlers,” the term is found outside the Scriptures to describe a “wizard” or “dabbler in the occult”; this would link them

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<sup>8</sup>Thomas D. Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” in *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 232.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

with the opponents of Moses (Jannes and Jambres) in verse 8.<sup>11</sup> They will not only be the catalyst for the deception of others, but will themselves experience deception by others and by their own perverseness (“deceiving and being deceived”). This avowal is not contradictory to verse 9, it only serves to point out that as time progresses evil will intensify, and they will, in fact, grow deeper in their own bondage to evil.

“You, however” marks out a new point of emphasis for Paul. He identified how Timothy should conduct himself in the last days, for a host of people had invested in his life. His own life should not be characterized by chasing the next new teaching, he should ‘continue’ living as he had been (“in the things you have learned”) as opposed to the lifestyle of evil men Paul had spoken of previously.<sup>12</sup> Thomas D. Lea said the term ‘continue’ (*meno*) is not simply continuing in orthodoxy, but “it called for a commitment to live and abide in what Timothy has learned.”<sup>13</sup> The “whom” stated here is plural and Paul has in mind at least himself, as well as Timothy’s mother Eunice and grandmother Lois (1:5). Timothy’s conduct grew out of what he had learned, and Paul urged him to remain on that path. His “things” were the basis of his personal convictions (“things you have learned and become convinced of”). The exemplary life of Paul only served to fortify the convictions of Timothy as he saw truth lived out.

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<sup>11</sup>Lea “1, 2 Timothy,” 232.

<sup>12</sup>Greg Heisler stated, “Yet in order for God to speak *through us*, we must first be convinced that God has already spoken *to us* in his Word (Heb 1:1-4). . . . For the Spirit’s witness to accompany our preaching, the revealed Word of God must be faithfully proclaimed.” Greg Heisler, *Spirit-led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 22.

<sup>13</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 233.

The things he had learned were consistent with the “sacred writings” (i.e., Hebrew Scriptures, cf. 1:5), what he had “known” since he was a child. This kind of training began around the age of five. Paul used *hiera grammata* to refer to these writings and he certainly had the Old Testament in mind. Paul may have intended to contrast the sacred learning of Timothy with the heretical learning of the previously cited evil men.<sup>14</sup> These inspired writings impart ‘wisdom’ and lead to individual ‘salvation’ from sin because Christ is the aim of their content. The ultimate impartation of wisdom is the Son of God. The emphasis here is upon the influence and importance of ‘Scripture’ in Timothy’s past, which had grounded his faith. Scripture has a dual instructive nature concerning salvation; it provides disciplining instruction that leads to obedience and it points to the coming Messiah.<sup>15</sup>

Paul then turned to the import of Scripture in the present and future ministry of Timothy. He reminded Timothy that the profitability of Scripture lies within its inspired nature. No legitimate reason exists to limit the universal scope of “all” when *pas* (“all”) occurs with a technical noun (i.e., “Scripture”). The more accurate translation is ‘every’ instead of ‘all.’ Thus, inspiration of Scripture extends to all the parts, even the words. The context indicates that the entirety of Scripture is under consideration; that is, it is the Old Testament that Paul is speaking about in verse 15 and the subsequent verse.

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<sup>14</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 234.

<sup>15</sup>George M. Wieland expanded this thought by asserting, “The OT directs those taught by it to faith in Christ and a life of righteousness, and hence salvation.” George M. Wieland, “The Function of Salvation in the Letters to Timothy and Titus,” in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul’s Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 147.

Moreover, “All Scripture” is divinely “inspired” (Gr. *theopneustos*, lit. ‘God-breathed,’ cf. 2 Pt 1:21). Extensive discussion occurs as to whether the phrase should be “All Scripture is inspired and is profitable” or “All inspired Scripture is profitable.” Suffice it to say, the former is preferable over the latter.<sup>16</sup> Paul is not describing the process of inspiration (as 2 Pt 1:21 seems to suggest); he simply states it as fact. This should be satisfactory enough for its proclamation. Scripture is not God-breathed because it contains or becomes the Word of God under certain circumstances; “All Scripture” is, in fact, the Word of God, the expression of His heart, mind, and will.<sup>17</sup>

“Scripture” indicates “sacred writing,” and pertains to all divinely inspired writings (Old and New Testaments). The Greeks applied *graphe* (‘Scripture’) to various writings, but New Testament authors only used it to designate holy Scripture. Paul primarily understood this ‘inspiration’ as referring to the Old Testament, although he and other believers recognized that some writings penned in his day were sacred as well (cf. 2 Pt 3:16).<sup>18</sup> Since Scripture is holy, it is “set apart” and useful.

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<sup>16</sup>Lea argued correctly that Paul was not raising questions as to the inspiration of certain passages; he was affirming the usefulness of all Scripture based on inspiration. Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 236.

<sup>17</sup>Quoting J. I. Packer, John R. W. Stott said, “The Bible is God preaching.” Stott added, “The third conviction which preachers need about Scripture is that *God’s Word is powerful*. . . . But when God speaks he acts. His Word does more than explain his action; it is active itself.” John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 103.

<sup>18</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 235.

Consequently, Timothy should utilize Scripture in his ministry.<sup>19</sup> Here, Paul pointed out four uses of Scripture, seen in two pairs: “teaching and rebuking” have to do with doctrine, and “correcting and training in righteousness” deal with conduct.<sup>20</sup> The Scripture is “profitable for teaching” (causing others to comprehend the truth of God). The use by Paul of the term *didaskalia* points to the Scripture as a positive source of Christian doctrine in an age of heresy.<sup>21</sup> ‘Rebuking’ or ‘reproof’ produces conviction of erroneous thought and action that has deviated from the truth of God. “Correction” (restoring the one in error to the truth) is a positive benefit of Scripture. Correction allows the wayward to return to his former state before God. Finally, it is useful for “training in righteousness” (guidance in living what the truth of God reveals). The use of the term *paideia* implies a disciplinary guidance that a parent would provide to a child.

Hence, “the man of God” has all that is essential to achieve his ministry (cf. 2 Pt 1:3).<sup>22</sup> “Man of God” refers primarily to Timothy (cf. 1 Tm 6:11), but also to

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<sup>19</sup>David Allen, “Testimony: The Pastor and His Preaching,” in *The New Guidebook for Pastors*, 30. Allen added, “The theological foundation for preaching is a deep belief that God has spoken. . . . An expository sermon should be derived from a text of Scripture. The text is not *a resource* for the sermon; it is *the source* of the sermon.”

<sup>20</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *1-2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 238-39.

<sup>21</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 236-37. Lea detailed the Old Testament as the source of this doctrine, including such teachings as creation (Gen 1-2), the fall of man (Gen 3), and the doctrine of the atonement (Is 53).

<sup>22</sup>John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 163. He added, “Through the convincing and convicting power of the Holy Spirit, Scripture is God’s own provision for every spiritual truth

anyone committed to God, particularly those in places of spiritual oversight. He is “adequate” (‘equipped’ with all needed ministry tools) “for every good work.” Lea pointed out:

“Thoroughly equipped” . . . described him as furnished completely to do whatever God called him to perform. The use of the Greek perfect tense for “equipped” suggests that this is an abiding condition. If Timothy would nurture his spiritual life in the Scriptures that he would use in his ministry, he would be fully qualified and prepared to undertake whatever tasks God put before him.<sup>23</sup>

Hence, with the adjective and the participle together, one could translate this as “super-equipped.” Mastering and integrating Scripture into the life of the minister is a means to an end, but not the end itself; the goal of Scripture is not only acquiring knowledge, but it is to be transformative and should enable those who employ it to render spiritual aid to others.<sup>24</sup>

The words of Paul have affirmed both the inspiration and usefulness of Scripture, revealing the reality of an inspired Word that serves as the basis for the mandate for expository preaching. Belief in the truth of the inspiration of Scripture and its inerrancy, profitability, and ability to equip the man of God must define how preachers preach.<sup>25</sup> When the Bible speaks, it is the Word of the King of heaven and authority flows from the Word of God because it is, in fact, the Word of God.<sup>26</sup>

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and moral principle that men need to be saved, to be equipped to live righteously in this present life and to hear one day in the life to come.”

<sup>23</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 237-38.

<sup>24</sup>H. B. Charles Jr., *On Pastoring: A Short Guide to Living, Leading, and Ministering as a Pastor* (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 143.

<sup>25</sup>John F. MacArthur Jr., “The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. John F. MacArthur Jr. and

Necessity of Expository Preaching  
(2 Timothy 4:1-5)

There exists no more potent text urging preachers to harness all their skills to faithfully preach the Word; this is a mandate.<sup>27</sup> In light of that mandate, Stephen F.

Olford and David L. Olford defined expository preaching as follows:

What, then, is the awesome task of “expository preaching”? . . . Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered explanation and proclamation of the text of God’s Word with due regard to the historical, contextual, grammatical, and doctrinal significance of the given passage, with the specific object of invoking a Christ-transforming response.<sup>28</sup>

Paul revived his appeal for doctrinal integrity and his desire was for the proclamation of the truth to become a vital part of the public ministry and personal walk of Timothy.<sup>29</sup> He introduced in this verse the basis of the solemn charge he was about to give. “I solemnly charge” (*diamartyromai*) is one word in the Greek text and carries with it the idea that something is legally binding; these last words express his love, as

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The Master’s Seminary Faculty (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 23. Awbrey concurred, “Nonetheless, the expository preacher must be undaunted by the erroneous assumptions some may hold regarding biblical authority and preach it as it is, because of what it is—The Very Word of God!” Ben Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2008), 229.

<sup>26</sup>Adrian Rogers, *The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority: Getting an Upper Hand on the Underworld* (Nashville: B&H, 2002), 134-35.

<sup>27</sup>MacArthur, “Introduction,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, xiv.

<sup>28</sup>Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H, 1998), 68-69.

<sup>29</sup>Ted Traylor, “Jesus Came Preaching,” *Preaching* 20, no. 1 (July-August 2004): 10. Awbrey said about proclamation, “Preaching is not broken, it has never been broken, and it never will be broken. When lost people are convicted by the truth of God’s Word, then preaching works!” Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 175.

well as a mandate to obey.<sup>30</sup> This was not the first charge given to Timothy (cf. 1 Tm 5:21; 6:13) and Paul reminded him by beckoning him into the majestic company of the Father, and Jesus Christ who will “judge” all humanity (“the living and the dead”).<sup>31</sup>

The “living” are those alive in that day and the “dead” are those resurrected into the presence of the Lord, and this statement signified that it is an utter impossibility to escape the judgment of Christ. The judgment of the unbeliever will reveal eternal destiny (cf. Rev 20:11-15), while the judgment of believers will reveal an evaluation of works for recognition or reward (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-15; 2 Cor 5:9-10).<sup>32</sup> He further reminded him of the imminent return of Christ (“His appearing”) and the inauguration of “His” messianic “kingdom.” In a sense, the kingdom of Christ is a present reality, but Paul was linking His judgment with the beginning of His future kingdom. Paul was urging Timothy to make preparation to meet Christ because Timothy would one day stand before Christ at His judgment seat. Timothy would give an accounting for the ministry that God had given him and, most certainly, his faithfulness would come into question.

Timothy needed to herald the Word of God (“preach the Word”) and faithfully realize the ministry that God had afforded him (v. 5).<sup>33</sup> Fittingly, Paul showered

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<sup>30</sup>D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Timothy*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 103.

<sup>31</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 241; see Mark L. Bailey, “A Theology of Paul’s Pastoral Epistles,” in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck and Darrell L. Bock (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 347.

<sup>32</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 242.

<sup>33</sup>MacArthur added, “Any form of preaching that ignores that intended purpose and design of God falls short of the divine plan. . . . The only logical response to



Timothy with five commands to follow: preach, be ready, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. These aorist commands carry the weight of a military command. Dennis Johnson asserts, “In 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2 the apostle likewise defines the task of the preacher as one that combines instruction in the truth with an urgent summons to respond appropriately to the truth through repentance and faith.”<sup>34</sup> “Preach the Word” serves as the foundation to the other four commands and its directive to declare the gospel. The *Timothies* of the world were not receiving revelation, they were expositing the revelation already received.<sup>35</sup> The verb utilized here (*kerysso*, ‘preach’) and in the rest of New Testament means to “proclaim aloud, publicly” and indicates the public preaching or proclamation of the message God had given him. The mandate of Paul was not for Timothy to preach a word about or from the Word of God, but to, in fact, preach the Word itself.<sup>36</sup>

The next four imperatives revealed to Timothy exactly how he was supposed to accomplish this command (“preach the Word”). Paul informed Timothy that the

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inerrant Scripture, then, is to preach it expositionally.” MacArthur, “Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy,” 23. Awbrey added about the faithful expositor and the hearer, “An expositor that people want to hear is one who can make a vital connection between the passage to be expounded and their lives.” Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 123.

<sup>34</sup>Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 83, footnote 13.

<sup>35</sup>James F. Stitzinger, “The History of Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 41-42.

<sup>36</sup>H. B. Charles Jr. went on to emphasize content as opposed to style: “The reason why you should be a student of expository preaching is not about a style of preaching. What you preach is infinitely more important than how you preach. The act of preaching is in vain if the message preached is not true. Paul charged Timothy, ‘Preach the Word’ (2 Tim. 4:2a). He did not charge Timothy to simply preach, as if the function of preaching has any power of its own.” Charles, *On Pastoring*, 141.

exercise of this preaching must be “in season and out of season,” that is, constant, continually, and in times of convenience or inconvenience. The question may arise as to whom this applies. If to Timothy, the charge is to preach the Word whether he felt like it or not. If to his hearers, the command is to preach even if they feel it inconvenient. Considering verses 3-4, the most probable intent for the remark of Paul is the latter, though the former is certainly true. As earlier charged (cf. 2 Tm 3:16-17), heralding had three aspects. Timothy was to employ the Word to reprove, rebuke, and exhort.<sup>37</sup> Preaching the Word ought to compel action on the part of the listener. This volley of potent verbs (convince, rebuke, and exhort) serve to reinforce the resolve of Timothy to preach; in each case, preaching should make a profound difference for the hearer.<sup>38</sup> Reproving would lead to conviction of those in error and was an appeal to the emotions. The aim of the rebuke was to those in sin and was an appeal to the mind. Regarding this, Charles H. Spurgeon said, “Ministers who do not aim to cut deep are not worth their salt. God never sent the man who never troubles men’s consciousness.”<sup>39</sup> Finally, he should use the Word to encourage those walking in the

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<sup>37</sup>Johnson gave several aims of preaching, such as spiritual profitability for the hearer, repentance toward God and faith in Christ, impartation of the gospel of the grace of God, and sharing the whole counsel of God. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 63, footnote 1.

<sup>38</sup>Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 8-9; see Steve J. Lawson, *Famine in the Land: A Passionate Call for Expository Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 33.

<sup>39</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, *Sermons of Rev. C. H. Spurgeon of London*, Tenth Series (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1883), 178.

will of God, an appeal to their will.<sup>40</sup> Timothy was to fulfill these actions with patient, careful instruction.

Paul next explained the reason for this solemn charge and with this explanation came a sense of urgency. “They” are those who would listen or hear the message (“the truth”) of God that Timothy heralded. The audience would not tolerate “the truth.” Three faulty pursuits characterized them. First, Paul described a scene of uninterested listeners, indifferent and aggravated by “sound doctrine.” They would find the substance and requirements of the gospel unacceptable.<sup>41</sup> Second, they would only listen to speakers who told them what they desired to hear (“myth,” heresy; 2 Tm 3:6). Finally, they would seek the constant ‘itching’ of their ears scratched with the newer and more fashionable teaching of the age.<sup>42</sup> Lea stated, “Such speakers toy with the minds of the hearers but leave the intellect uninformed, the conscience unchallenged, and the will set in a direction away from God.”<sup>43</sup>

Paul related two specific results of this spiritual departure. First, they would “turn away . . . from the truth” of the gospel, and, second, they would prefer faith in

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<sup>40</sup>Lea added that the “three imperatives [reprove, rebuke, and exhort] may refer respectively to intellect, conscience, and will.” Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 243.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 244.

<sup>42</sup>Ned L. Mathews, “The Disciplines of a Text-driven Preacher,” in *Text-driven Preaching: God’s Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 77. Mathews said, “The age of which Paul wrote has arrived. Many of our contemporaries seem to prefer entertainment, defined by Paul as ‘the tickling of the ears,’ and preachers who teach only what they deem relevant to the interests and ‘felt needs’ of their listeners.” Mathews, “The Disciplines of a Text-driven Preacher,” 77, footnote 3.

<sup>43</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 244.

“myths” rather than the truth of the gospel (cf. 1 Tm 1:4; 4:7; Ti 1:14). “Turn aside” is a strong expression of twisting an extremity out of joint. “Myth” is anything standing in opposition to the truth. It is likely that the expression “sound doctrine” is the key term in the Pastoral Epistles and the main objective of Timothy was to guard and declare it.<sup>44</sup> Indeed “truth” was important, Paul refers to it eleven times in this letter.

For the third time in this epistle (cf. 2 Tm 3:10, 14), Paul elicited the focus of Timothy with the forceful “But you,” and for the second time in this pericope, Paul gave added imperatives directing the response of Timothy. Four appear in this verse: be, endure, do, and fulfill. In view of the increasing opposition, Paul urged Timothy to be “sober” (alert) by avoiding false teachings and their trappings. The present tense reveals the need for continual watchfulness. To achieve this, Timothy must sustain discipline in all settings. He must happily “endure hardship” (cf. 2 Tm 1:8; 2:3; 3:12) and continue declaring the gospel to the lost.<sup>45</sup> Fulfilling the role of the evangelist would include spreading the gospel, not necessarily filling a particularly gifted office.

If one were unencumbered by chapter breaks, a clear train of thought appears in the mind of the apostle: a high view of Scripture (cf. 3:14-17) should manifest itself in a high view of biblical preaching. “Preach the Word” is the ultimate and final charge of solemnity, and the fact that God has given His written Word and sent His

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<sup>44</sup>Ralph Earle, “1, 2 Timothy,” in *Ephesians through Philemon*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 411.

<sup>45</sup>Lea declared, “Christians committed to declaring God’s message to indifferent audiences can expect God’s strength, power, and ultimate blessing.” Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 246.

Living Word serves as a biblical and theological rationale for expository preaching; the very nature of revelation itself demands expository (text-driven) preaching.<sup>46</sup>

Necessity of a Prepared Expositor  
(2 Timothy 2:1-7)

Knowing the rigors of ministry, Paul continued to urge Timothy to stay faithful to the Lord and to his calling. He charged him more than once to persevere in his public ministry and private walk (cf. 1 Tm 4:6-16). In this section, Paul laid out before Timothy what his duty was as a minister of the gospel, expressly as a prepared expositor. The argument of Paul goes from general to specific based on much of what he has already written. He began forcefully (“you therefore”), urging Timothy as his son (*teknon*, ‘child,’ term of affection) to allow the grace of Christ Jesus to empower him. This is a command (*endunamoo*, present passive imperative) in which Paul intended for Timothy to realize his need for constant dependence on God.<sup>47</sup> Empowerment for ministry will occur as Timothy submitted to the Spirit and followed the will of God, as ministry success depends on a constant Christ-connection (cf. Jn 15:5).

Coming to grips with the power of the dynamic grace of God, Timothy would next receive clarity about his stewardship of the gospel. Continuing the idea of

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<sup>46</sup>Tony Merida, “2 Timothy,” in *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Christ-centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 203; see Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1.

<sup>47</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 201. Lea added that to “be strong” was a state of constant empowerment by God. Paul used the same word elsewhere (cf. 4:17; Eph 6:10) and it called for “continuous active cooperation with God.”

guarding the gospel (cf. 1:13-14), Paul then took it a step further. “Entrust,” or *parathou*, is related to *parathēkē*, which translates ‘deposit.’<sup>48</sup> The time had now come for Timothy to do for others what Paul had done for him. He must invest in other faithful men by passing the ministry baton to them, who, in turn, would teach others. Arturo G. Azurdia III spoke not only of the mandate to “preach the Word,” the work of the Spirit in the preaching of Christ, but also this vital link of discipleship:

Finally, in anticipation of his imminent execution, the great Apostle gives the concluding exhortation to young Timothy: ‘preach the word’ (2 Tim 4:2). In summary, preaching was a prominent feature in the ministry methodology of Jesus, the stated reason for which He was anointed of the Spirit of God. It was the specific work to which He called His disciples, the reason for which they, too, would be clothed with the power of the Spirit (cf. Luke 24:49). Furthermore, he continued the pattern of this methodology by exhorting subsequent disciples to this same task.<sup>49</sup>

These disciples would be qualified in the sense that they could accurately handle the Word of God (cf. 2:15) and diligently labor to teach its truth (cf. 5:17).<sup>50</sup> This process of discipleship would involve not only instruction, but also companionship as Paul spoke of “many witnesses” that would allow Timothy to recall the powerful preaching of Paul. This would provide reassurance and an opportunity for commitment to the gospel. Some hold to the view that this is emphasizing some form of apostolic

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<sup>48</sup>*Parathēkē* or ‘deposit’ is exclusive to verses 1-2 and 1 Timothy 6:20 and imply a long journey where one gives his valuables to a friend for safekeeping who, in order, will restore them on return.

<sup>49</sup>Arturo G. Azurdia III, *Spirit Empowered Preaching* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 1998), 84.

<sup>50</sup>“The specific people Paul had in mind probably were the elders of 1 Tim 3:1-7 and 5:17-22.” Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 201.

succession; however, this is highly unlikely. The concern of Paul is more about faithfulness than tradition.

Paul, in his extended ministry with Timothy, had experienced numerous hardships.<sup>51</sup> Paul had made it clear that hardship is the life of those in ministry, so he encouraged Timothy to submit to these hardships as a good soldier. To engrain this exhortation into Timothy, the apostle employed three vivid illustrations: the first is that of a soldier, a military picture of a life of sacrifice (cf. 2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-17; 1 Tm 1:18). Truly, the faithful minister is at war, as well, with the forces of evil. Paul realized this in that at the end of his life he stated, “I have fought the good fight” (cf. 2 Tm 4:7). Paul’s emphasis was on the significance of remaining free from entanglements of less important objectives and activities not pertinent to his duties while serving as a soldier of Christ Jesus. He was to devote himself fully to his commanding officer. Since Paul employed the passive *empletetai*, he may be saying that the minister allows this dereliction of duties through inattention or unawareness.

Paul had earlier warned Timothy about this danger (cf. 1 Tm 6:13-16) and he was not saying that bivocational ministry (in his case, making tents) was one of these entanglements. What he did mean was that nothing should divert the focus of his principle duties as a Christian soldier. His point for Timothy was to keep laser focused on his mind-set and mission. Demas (cf. 4:10) would provide Timothy with an

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<sup>51</sup>Towner elaborated, “The third command resumes the main theme of the letter—the call to Timothy to ‘join in suffering’ (1:8; 2:9; 4:5). It connects with 1:6-8 by repeating the imperative verb that occurs in 1:8, thereby resuming the command to ‘suffer’ for the faith.” Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 491-92.

example of a bad soldier. A good soldier displays singularity of purpose, demanding self-discipline and unwavering obedience to his superior, so likewise must the man of God. He owes total allegiance to “his commanding officer.”

The second illustration Paul provided was that of an athlete. Athletes contend according to the rules of the competition. Likewise, the faithful minister must ‘compete’ in ministry according to the rules God prescribes. The operative word here is *nomimos* (‘lawfully’), which was not only descriptive of the actual race or competition, but also extended to the training regimen, as well as the honesty and integrity of the whole endeavor.<sup>52</sup> Breaking the rules leads to disqualification in a race and in ministry. This metaphor also carries with it the idea of stamina or the ability to persevere. Earlier, Paul had urged Timothy saying, “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (cf. 1 Tm 4:7) and to realize this he must minister with proper motives, purity of life, and obedience to all the will of God. Striving at an elevated level, the athlete must deny self, endure hardship, and persevere, and so also the man of God.

The third illustration Paul utilized, the farmer, stressed the patient labor required if one wants to enjoy a bountiful crop. Lea asserted that this is “not an appeal for a diligent worker to receive an adequate salary. It promises a spiritual reward from God for a job devotedly done.”<sup>53</sup> Preparing the soil, sowing seed, watering, tending plants, and harvesting display a painstaking process (cf. Rom 16:6, 12; 1 Cor 15:10;

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<sup>52</sup>Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 51-52. Lea added, “Performing as an athlete demands a commitment to a regimen of training and to the rules for the game. Paul may have been emphasizing either or both, but the context appears to spotlight the self-discipline and stamina needed for training and preparation.” Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 204.

<sup>53</sup>Lea, “1, 2 Timothy,” 204.



Gal 4:11) with the hopes of ending in fruitfulness. Just as with the soldier and the athlete, the farmer is not privileged to partake of the shortcut; instead, he must completely and faithfully fulfill his ministerial duties. Similarly, the faithful farmer for Christ must sow the gospel seed, water, nurture, and patiently wait for God to bring a bountiful harvest in the lives of people. For the farmer, toil and trust go hand in hand, so it is with the prepared expositor. He toils at his craft, but in the end must trust God to enliven his ministry and bring power to his preaching.<sup>54</sup>

With new understanding in hand, Paul urged Timothy to consider what he had just written.<sup>55</sup> Paul was confident that the Lord (most likely Jesus, vv. 1, 3, 8) would help him perceive this simple, yet profound wisdom. Mark Dever added insight:

If soldiers, athletes, and farmers endure for prizes less glorious and less lasting, can we not endure opposition for the sake of bringing the good news of Christ’s reconciling work to the world? Are you and I committed to being “obedient” only when circumstances are favorable? Since when should circumstances be the lord of our lives, determining what we do and do not do?

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<sup>54</sup>Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 52. Fee stated that “even though the military imagery does not precisely say so, each of the metaphors, besides calling Timothy to ‘take his share in suffering,’ looks forward to the eschatological prize.” Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 243.

<sup>55</sup>“Consider what I say, Paul continues. The verb *noeó* (consider) is used only here in the New Testament. It denotes perceiving clearly with the mind, of understanding fully, of considering carefully, of pondering and mulling over. The form here is an imperative, indicating that Paul was giving a strong admonition, not mere advice.” MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 49. Towner expanded this ‘considering’ stating, “Timothy’s path was leading to Rome and suffering. It was a hard path in every way. . . . Promises of divine enablement, power (v. 1), and insight (v. 7) encircle the instructions, reminding Timothy of the gifts and capabilities he received with the Spirit God had given to him.” Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 497.

Perhaps you need to reconsider the terms you have given God for your willingness to serve him. Do you maintain control of the contract?<sup>56</sup>

The practicality of the wisdom of God speaks to the absolute necessity for a prepared expositor. Finally, the faithful expositor (as good soldier, faithful athlete, and hard-working farmer) must understand that any authority he has, he derives from his accurate handling of the text, for authentic expository preaching conveys authority only in the way the text receives unwavering faithfulness from the preacher. His authority derives from the Scripture because it carries inherent authority.<sup>57</sup>

### **Homiletic Necessity for Introductions in Expository Preaching**

As with any discussion on homiletics (this project included), it is important to recall a foundational truth. Ben Awbrey stated it well in *How Effective Sermons Begin*:

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<sup>56</sup>Mark Dever, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 365.

<sup>57</sup>Jeremy A. Rogers, “An Experimental Design Strategy to Examine Adult Congregational Engagement with the Weekly Sunday Morning Expository Sermon at Arlington Park Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas” (DMin diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 27. MacArthur added a fitting benediction: “Preachers must return to their calling as expositors of Scripture. Like Ezra they must ‘set [their hearts] to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances’ (Ezra 7:10). Like Apollos, they must strive to be ‘mighty in Scriptures’ (Acts 18:24). And like Paul, they must realize that they were made ministers ‘according to the stewardship from God,’ that they ‘might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God’ (Col. 1:25). Only then will they recover the proper foundation of preaching.” John F. MacArthur Jr., “Preaching,” in *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*, ed. John F. MacArthur Jr. and The Master’s Seminary Faculty (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 208-9. Awbrey provided a great picture of the prepared expositor: “Preaching that bears this presence of God is preaching that is according to His Word, and is spoken through His servant who is of His choosing and under his control, therefore, speaks on His authority, by His power, in His conviction, with His passion, from His motives, for His purposes, and to His glory.” Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 151.

Though this book will offer instruction for introducing a sermon, it must be understood that effective introductions, like effective preaching in general, may be aided by homiletical insights but effectiveness in preaching is far more a byproduct of one's personal walk with the living God rather than compliance with a homiletical procedure. . . . Therefore, the insights of this book, or any other book on preaching, will be useful only for those who truly are spiritually fit for the high calling of preaching the Word of God.<sup>58</sup>

With this initial understanding, if one were evaluating sermons or proclamations from the Word of God by utilizing appendix B (Sermon Evaluation Form (*adapted version*): Six Essential Elements of an Effective Introduction), there might be hope for a perfect one-for-one comparison, but such is not the case. Even so, each example (Is 55:1-13; Mt 5:13-20; Acts 17:22-31) does reveal certain components that are characteristic of an effective introduction for an expository sermon.

Therefore, a rationale for introductions in expository preaching will proceed. While one can argue necessity for all parts of the sermon, failure in the introduction may prove fatal to the whole sermon. The defense of the Christian faith by Stephen provides a window into an effective opening. His sermon began with the imperative, 'Listen' to get the attention of the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2). He then secured attention by respectfully referring to them as "brethren and fathers." This brief snippet shows how important getting attention and securing interest is for the sermon. Similarly, this project will use Isaiah 55:1-13 as a biblical rationale for getting attention and securing interest.

The need for style and application in expository preaching uses the teaching ministry of Jesus as an example, with Matthew 5:13-20 providing an excellent template. The approach of Jesus serves as a prime example of featuring both

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<sup>58</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 18.

illustration and application in sermons. He used both salt and light as illustrations of effectiveness and at the same time used them as an applicatory warning (“trampled under foot,” v. 13) and encouragement to obey (“let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven,” v. 16).

Finally, this portion of the project will utilize Acts 17:22-31 (the sermon of Paul at Mar’s Hill) as a basis for the need of contextualization and having a clear purpose statement. He offers God as Creator, as a means of contextualization, and then introduces a clear purpose to preach to them about the “unknown god.” Each of these homiletic necessities will begin with commentary on the passage and conclude with an argument in support of the necessity of the introduction. One cannot overstate the importance of the introduction to expository preaching. As others have similarly stated, Tony Merida sums up the importance of the sermon introduction:

An introduction is like a porch on a house, the prelude to a song, a preface to a book, or the slow rising of the sun in the morning. . . . Obviously, a tiny house with a huge porch is silly, and a fifty-page preface to a five-page book is ridiculous. The goal of the porch is to get you in the house, and the goal of the preface is to escort the readers into the following chapters. So it is with the introduction of the sermon. It should not dominate the sermon; it should simply invite the hearers inside.<sup>59</sup>

#### The Necessity of Getting Attention and Securing Interest (Isaiah 55:1-13)

Here, the work of redemption by the Servant of Yahweh is in focus. Chapter 54 offers insight into what God would do for humanity and chapter 55 urges them to

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<sup>59</sup>Tony Merida, *Faithful Preaching: Declaring Scripture with Responsibility, Passion, and Authenticity* (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 114-15.

accept His salvation. While the people of God in view are primarily Israelites, it would be incorrect to see them as sole benefactors, for the salvation of God and its benefits extend to all peoples. They would need to attend to the unconditional promise of the salvation of God, for it would cost them nothing. Herein lies one of the warmest gospel assertions in Scripture.<sup>60</sup> Viewing the burden of Isaiah as one lengthy proclamation, with chapter 55 as the invitation, is exegetically fitting.<sup>61</sup> Yet, while chapter 55 is not expository preaching in the truest sense, it does exhibit features of an introduction for an expository sermon. Therefore, the approach will be to view chapter 55 as a solitary proclamation, with insight into the elements of getting attention and securing interest.

As the souls of men hang in the balance and their plight is desperate, the only remedy is the blessing the Servant has obtained. With this universal and urgent offer of salvation in hand, the Evangelist introduced His message with the particle (*hoi*), an attention-getting device. After getting their attention, there is an invitation for the thirsty to come and drink freely and the hungry to revel in a free banquet. The thirsty could acquire water (is plural and suggests abundance) because of the work of the

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<sup>60</sup>W. A. Criswell, *Isaiah: An Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 254, 257; see T. V. Farris, *Mighty to Save: A Study in Old Testament Soteriology* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 263.

<sup>61</sup>Smith saw this pattern: 1. Servant poem (49:1-13), 1a. Salvation for Zion (49:14-50:3); 2. Servant poem (50:4-11), 2a. Salvation for Zion (51:1-52:12); 3. Servant poem (52:13-53:12), 3a. Salvation for Zion (54:1-17); Conclusion (55:1-13). Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 337.

Servant.<sup>62</sup> Remarkably, the proposition of the Lord was to purchase what was free by spending the funds of someone else. The Servant would pay for all of those who had a sin debt, if they would accept His offer as good.

To spend the income of oneself for what does not satisfy is absurd. The Evangelist urged His audience to be attentive to His words, choosing the things that satisfy and produce true abundance. Again, the Lord urged His hearers (everyone) to come to Him. While Isaiah is speaking, he is speaking for God, and as God, indicated by the “come to Me.” He pressed the demand on their heart by His twofold insistence on their listening. The banquet is none other than God Himself, rather than the vanity and unfulfilling fare of verse 2. Real living (quenching of thirst and filling of appetite) will occur under an everlasting covenant that God has with His people and even though He mentions David, it is best to view it as referring to the New Covenant since He says, “I will make,” which would hold futuristic implications for all peoples.<sup>63</sup>

“Behold” introduces this verse and verse 5 and suggests a cause and effect scenario. The people are not only to hear the Lord but, to view what He unveils. God is the obvious speaker, but it is unclear as to the identity of ‘him.’ This “witness to the peoples” and “leader and commander for the peoples” may be David (v. 4) or it may suggest the Servant of God. The Servant would be a light (testimony) to the nations and He would lead them as a Davidic–Messianic model. The interpretive difficulty

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<sup>62</sup>Jesus gave an invitation comparable to those of His day, to come and drink of the water of life freely (Jn 4:10-14; 7:37-38).

<sup>63</sup>Still, this could suggest the Davidic Covenant, which is also eternal (cf. 2 Sm 7:16; Ps 89:35-38; Is 9:6; Lk 1:32-33; Acts 13:34) and in full harmony with the promises of God to David. See Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on Isaiah: With Emphasis on the Messianic Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 453.

here is the identification of “you,” which is singular. Is it Israel, or all the redeemed of the Servant of God? The best answer is to focus on the Servant, as the nations of the world will move in His direction. A plurality of nations is in view here as “knows” and “run” are both plural. The Servant as the leader of Israel (cf. 42:4; 61:3) is conceivable.

Isaiah points to the salvation of God in verse 6, repeating and refocusing the earlier invitation (vv. 1-3), yet instead of its satisfying substance, here the emphasis is on resting in the faith of oneself in God and experiencing His transformative power. The Lord has moved near fallen humanity and one can find Him if he only seeks and calls upon Him.<sup>64</sup> An urgency subsists about this as the insinuation is that, one day, the promise of calling and seeking will not be available.<sup>65</sup> For all who have chosen their own way (sin and rebellion), God offers a way of forgiveness for those who will repent of their actions and thoughts. God promises to mercifully receive him, granting abundant pardon for the wanderer. Pardon is available freely because the Servant has purchased it and gives it without cost (v. 1). The rebellious must forsake their attitudes and actions (v. 7) because they are not in line with those of the Lord. A great chasm (as far as the heavens are from the earth) exists separating God and humanity. The ways of God are those of gracious provision and generous invitation (v. 1); faithfulness, mercy, and truth (v. 3); blessing (v. 5); and compassionate welcoming

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<sup>64</sup>Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “A Theology of Isaiah,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, Eugene H. Merrill, and Darrell L. Bock (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 334.

<sup>65</sup>The NET Bible, textual note 16 for Isaiah 55:6 states that the Hebrew renders it “‘while he allows himself to be found.’ The Niphal form has a tolerative force here.” NET Bible, <https://netbible.org/bible/Isaiah+55>.

into His presence (v. 7). All this is made possible by the salvific work of the Servant, if only his ways would conform to His ways.

The rebellious need to forsake their attitudes and actions is that the word of “our God” is trustworthy. The Word of God is akin to the good gifts of rain and snow that water and nourish the earth. What form the blessing may take (rain or snow), it is “our God” that provides.<sup>66</sup> He has promised mercy (v. 7) and abundant pardon (v. 7) for those who will seek and call (v. 6) and forsake their ways (v. 7). The ‘for’ (*ki*) could translate as ‘surely’ and suggests the close of this section on the atoning work of the Servant, even as it affects the creation as lovely flora replace plants bearing marks of the curse. The transformative power of the redemption of the Servant would serve as a monument to the glory of Yahweh, an everlasting sign of the salvation of God.<sup>67</sup>

In what way does Isaiah 55:1-13 furnish biblical rationale for getting attention and securing interest? Isaiah (and God) sought to get the attention of the audience in v. 1 with his opening statement ‘Ho’! The NIV omits the exclamation in favor of the imperative verb ‘Come.’ While the imperative is certainly weighty, to overlook the direct attempt of the prophet to get his audience’s attention is an epic oversight.<sup>68</sup> Gary Smith defended this attention-getting device stating that *hōy* “is most frequently used

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<sup>66</sup>Chisholm, “A Theology of Isaiah,” 325.

<sup>67</sup>Isaiah mentioned three specific things that would be everlasting in chapters 54 and 55: His lovingkindness (Heb. *hesed*, 54:8), His covenant with His people (55:3), and this sign. See Farris, *Mighty to Save*, 271-72.

<sup>68</sup>Concerning getting attention in the introduction, Fabarez stated, “The sermon’s sense of urgency must be evident right out of the gate. . . . Those critical opening moments of the sermon provide us the opportunity to give our listeners a whiff of why this message is so important.” Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, 101.



in contexts where God is bringing judgment and people are lamenting their ‘woe’ (*hōy*), but here it is just an interjection of surprise to gain people’s attention” (“but in 1:24; 17:12; 55:1 *hōy* seems to be more of an exclamation”).<sup>69</sup> The outburst *hōy* reminds the listener of a street merchant peddling his wares, but in this case, the Vendor is none other than Yahweh.<sup>70</sup> God is making an obvious attempt at getting their attention. Isaiah supplies a transitional statement to the subject matter with “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.” Twelve imperative verbs impart a robust sense of encouragement and urgency. Isaiah secures interest by providing an oxymoron.<sup>71</sup> The promise of no money required would gain a hearing from anyone who is normal. Smith said, “This is a complete reversal of their past experience, for previously it was commonly thought that God’s blessings would fall only on a few who were his select chosen people and that every purchase would require a monetary (or moral) prerequisite.”<sup>72</sup>

Now that Isaiah had their attention, his example showed the importance of securing interest. While he did not offer a cluster of five personal questions, he did, however, postulate one poignant interrogative, “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?” T. V. Farris tied the attention of

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<sup>69</sup>Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 495.

<sup>70</sup>Farris, *Mighty to Save*, 262-63.

<sup>71</sup>The NET Bible describes it as follows: “The statement is an oxymoron. Its ironic quality adds to its rhetorical impact. The statement reminds one of the norm (one must normally buy commodities) as it expresses the astounding offer. One might paraphrase the statement: ‘Come and take freely what you normally have to pay for.’” NET Bible, <https://netbible.org/bible/Isaiah+55>.

<sup>72</sup>Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 496.

v. 1 with the interest of v. 2, stating, “The call is first directed (Isa. 55:1a) to all who experience thirst, a recurrent and common need. It is then expanded to include the hungry and the dissatisfied (Isa. 55:2). The astounding feature of the appeal, though, is the fact that the “water,” “wine,” and “bread” are offered without cost.”<sup>73</sup> Isaiah made several crucial assertions, among them: (1) you can delight in abundance (v. 2); (2) listen that you may live (v. 3); (3) YHWH will make a covenant with you (v. 3); (4) God will have compassion (v. 7); and (5) YHWH will abundantly pardon (v. 7). Each ‘for’ (*ki*) or ‘because’ implies a motive to act. Isaiah offered a flesh and blood scenario in verse 3 with, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David.” This would make the promise not just words, but real and vital. Isaiah provided a projection of a determinative difference (vv. 3, 6, and 7): verse 3, “Listen, that you may live”; verse 6, “Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near”; and verse 7, “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” The implications of compliance and noncompliance are clear in verse 3 and verse 7. What about verse 6? The implication of verse 6 is that one must make a choice, and that

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<sup>73</sup>Farris, *Mighty to Save*, 263. Willhite expressed an Isaiah-like burden: “Develop the listener’s need. Introductions must tell listeners what’s at stake for them in the sermon, that is, how this sermon will speak to a particular need in their lives. . . . We must raise the need that the message will address.” Keith Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance: Without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 48.

time is an enemy. This covenant, if accepted, would be on the terms of God and as lavish as His grace may appear, one must accept at the time of His choosing.<sup>74</sup>

#### The Necessity of Style and Application (Matthew 5:13-20)

The setting of *hymeis* ('you') emphasizes the distinctive calling of the disciples.<sup>75</sup> Salt in ancient days served as seasoning for food, fertilizer, and a preservative. The effect of the metaphor is that the disciples could impact the *kosmos* ('world,' humanity) in a positive fashion. Their witness and walk afforded them the opportunity not only to bless, but to enliven those they contacted, as well as hinder the effects of sin on a decaying world. Salt is a stable compound (and cannot lose its 'saltiness'), so the saltiness is less salty via dilution. In other words, it is possible for the disciple to allow something to affect their savor (lessen their witness).<sup>76</sup>

Light is a common symbol employed by biblical authors, including Jesus. Light depicts purity, truth, knowledge, revelation, and the presence of God (likewise there is a contrast of their opposites in the Word of God).<sup>77</sup> Israel saw themselves as lights in a darkened world (cf. Is 42:6), yet the Scriptures portray the Messiah as the

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<sup>74</sup>Farris, *Mighty to Save*, 271.

<sup>75</sup>D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 139. "Are stresses being rather than doing. Jesus is stating a fact, not giving a command or request. Salt and light represent what Christians *are*." John F. MacArthur Jr., *Matthew 1-7*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 240.

<sup>76</sup>Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 102.

<sup>77</sup>Carson, *Matthew*, 139.

true light (cf. Is 42:6; 1 Jn 1:7). As the moon reflects the sun, so disciples have no light of their own, they only reflect the light of the Son. As all see a city on a hill, so must the good works of the disciples be visible for all to see, as they radiate the light of the imputed righteousness of Christ.<sup>78</sup> While shining the light may elicit persecution (vv. 10-12), it is still imperative that it be operative. He drives the metaphors of salt and light home in verse 16—seeing their good works. The disciples understood that as light, they would affect the world positively, lighting the world dimmed by sin. As salt, they would affect the world by delaying its corruption. Indeed, both speak of disciples as not retreating from the world, but in some way affecting it.

Jesus expected His disciples to publicly demonstrate their good deeds, but this would elicit a question in the mind of the hearer/reader, “What is true righteousness?” While Jesus may have been clear, the religious leaders would blur the lines between righteousness and good works. Jesus revealed that righteousness consisted of faithfully living out the commandments, considering Himself. To argue a proper definition of righteousness (conformity to the will of God in both who they were and what they did), Jesus turned to the Scriptures (Old Testament). This would seem novel to some of the religious experts as they felt Jesus had already abandoned the Law in some sense. This set at odds a disparity between the teaching of Jesus and the Old Testament interpretations of the Jewish leaders. “Law and the Prophets” defined the entirety of Scripture for Jesus and served as an *inclusio* within the Sermon on the

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<sup>78</sup>“Often built of white limestone, ancient towns gleamed in the sun and could not be easily hidden. At night the inhabitants’ oil lamps would shed some glow over the surrounding area.” Hiding it would be unthinkable. Carson, *Matthew*, 139.

Mount as it concluded with that phrase in 7:12. There seems to be some debate as to whether Jesus Himself or His teaching were the avenue that the Old Testament was fulfilled.<sup>79</sup> Just as Jesus made no distinction between Himself and His teaching, it appears best for the expositor to make no distinction either. Luke recorded, “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Lk 24:27). The intent of Jesus is that He came to fulfill the Old Testament as the Word of God, not denying, but rather affirming it.

Jesus indicated the importance of the following words with the phrase, “truly I say to you.” This phrase occurs seventy-four times in the Gospels and is a declaration of authority. For as long as the world lasts, neither the smallest letter (‘jot,’ *yod*) or smallest stroke (‘tittle,’ *keriaia*) of a letter would pass away, meaning Jesus upheld the Old Testament down to its most minute parts. This attests to the affirmation of the Lord to the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures (in this case the Old Testament). Verses 17-19 would also verify the affirmation of the Lord of plenary inspiration, extending to all the parts of the Old Testament, even the very words.

Jesus corrected a view held by many, that some commandments were more authoritative than others. He conveyed that all the commandments of God are equally authoritative. Jesus offered a strong corrective that would follow this practice. Here, He likened greatness in the kingdom of heaven to those who hold a high view of

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<sup>79</sup>Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Matthew: 2019 Edition,” <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/matthew.pdf>. For opposing views, see Carson, *Matthew*, 143; and Blomberg, *Matthew*, 103-4.

Scripture, thus the possibility in the kingdom that some will have a higher ranking. But Blomberg ruled this out by stating that “it is not clear whether Jesus intends such ranking to include varying statuses in eternity, an idea that 20:1-16 seems to rule out.”<sup>80</sup> The “For I say to you” of Jesus carries a claim of someone who has inherent authority, not someone who derives it. Selective acceptance of scriptural mandates only produces artificial righteousness, a conformity to the revealed will of God which is only external. This false righteousness would prove inadequate for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. A righteousness that would surpass the Pharisees would link vitally to faith in God and repentance, not empty deeds of an empty heart.

Much preaching relegates style (illustration by way of word pictures, metaphors, and/or other literary devices) and application to the other portions of the sermon (text exposition, conclusion, and transitions).<sup>81</sup> Using the preaching pericope of Matthew 5:13-20 as a model for the inclusion of illustration and application in the introduction, one will see that Jesus used illustrations that are both appropriate and effective, as well as making pointed and forceful applications. The style of Jesus shows the value of incorporating word pictures into the preaching practice. While one may use each of these to get attention, secure interest, or ask personal questions, the vital point is that the preacher can use them in the introduction and do so effectively.

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<sup>80</sup>Blomberg, *Matthew*, 105.

<sup>81</sup>Bryan Chapell stated that one should exert leverage: “Determine when and where to use illustrations by assessing what will make the message’s application most effective. . . . Illustrations work best when the preacher uses them to affect the will of the hearer.” Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 144.

The Lord used imagination effectively, employing many literary devices in His messages. “He turned His listeners’ ears into eyes so they could see the truth and respond to it.”<sup>82</sup>

In verses 13 and 15, Jesus painted a vivid word picture, stating that “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world.” As was often characteristic of the teaching style of Jesus, this potent metaphor seized the attention of the disciples.<sup>83</sup> He then extended the metaphor to parabolic heights, “but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again?” and “A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.” Jesus used “thrown out and trampled under foot by men” and “glorify your Father who is in heaven” as two vivid word pictures that would allow the disciples to see in their minds the results of compliance and noncompliance. Other pictures that would speak to their minds were Jesus obliterating the Law or the Prophets, and the jot and the tittle. Jack Hughes said:

When Jesus used metaphor he made comparisons between familiar things (things previously experienced or sensed by his listeners) and abstract theological truths. Jesus, being the only way to heaven, is the door. He is the person you must ‘go through’ if you are going to get to heaven. . . . Believers are also lights shining in a dark world. When we live in obedience to God, our lives will ‘shine’ in contrast to the deeds of those living in ‘darkness.’ Since metaphor is found all through the Bible, expository preachers should not be afraid to use it.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination* (Wheaton, IL: Baker, 1994), 160.

<sup>83</sup>Jack Hughes, *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2001), 122-23.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 8. Hughes went on to say on page 125, “I smile when I read homiletics books that say, ‘Do not use too much metaphor, simile, or illustration.’ . . . ‘You mean, don’t be like Jesus?’”

Far too many preachers delay application to the end of the message or omit it entirely under the premise that it is the exclusive work of the Spirit. Neither this practice nor this premise is valid. To be sure, the closing appeals of the conclusion are the primary means to which the hearer can make application in their life, yet this fact does not preclude application within the introduction, or even its necessity. An introduction will not seize the hearer if it fails to answer, “So what?” thus establishing relevance for the preached text; thus, application begins in the introduction.<sup>85</sup> Awbrey has analyzed the application approach in the preaching of Jesus and has, in fact, proved from this passage that Jesus did offer a variety of forceful and pointed applications. Awbrey offered some of those various approaches:

**Matthew 5:13-16**

Approach #2. Present God’s intended design for believers along with warning of violating that design (v. 13).

Approach #3. Present God’s intended design for believers along with warning of violating that design (vv. 14-16).

**Matthew 5:17-20**

Approach #4. Provide convincing arguments for the reasons why people fail to keep the Word of God in their lives (vv. 17-19).

Approach #5. Defend the inviolable condition of an unsurpassed righteousness for all who enter the kingdom of heaven (v. 20).<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, 102; see Jay E. Adams, *Truth Applied: Application in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1990), 83, 67.

<sup>86</sup>Ben Awbrey, “Analysis of Application Methodology as Evidenced in the Preaching of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Peter,” lecture notes for DR36272 Style and Application in Expository Preaching, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, May 2017, 3-8.



Then, there is warrant for use of style and application in the introduction. The preacher need not shy away from either simply because it is the introduction.

#### Necessity of Contextualization and Clear Purpose Statement (Acts 17:22-31)

While Paul used language conducive to Greek philosophy, his proclamation was deeply rooted in the Old Testament. His statement of their religiosity was not an effort to compliment, it was, in fact, the thing that had incensed him (v. 16). The use of the term ‘religious’ by Paul is purposely ambiguous with either positive or negative purposes, subject to context; the original text reveals they were staunch in their reverence for a plurality of gods.<sup>87</sup> To be sure, they would eventually know he was not lauding them, but he instead designed his message to meet them where they were (cf. 1 Cor 9:22).<sup>88</sup>

Paul likely meant to inform them about Yahweh by using their altar as a point of commonality (i.e., the altar where they worship in ignorance and his ability to make this unknown god known to them as God and God alone, the only true deity that exists).<sup>89</sup> Notice, it is ‘what’ (a thing), not ‘who’ (a personal God) they worship.<sup>90</sup> Verse 23b sets the tone for the whole discourse—ignorance, and there is an irony at

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<sup>87</sup>Steven Ger, *The Book of Acts: Witnesses to the World*, Twenty-first Century Biblical Commentary Series (Chattanooga: AMG, 2004), 237.

<sup>88</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 9:476.

<sup>89</sup>Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 249.

<sup>90</sup>John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 372.

work in that to worship an unknown (*agnōstō*) god is to admit personal ignorance.<sup>91</sup> Correction of their faulty worship drives this discourse and his focus will consist of the self-revelation of Yahweh, for He has revealed certain knowledge (cf. Rom 2:14-16) to all men about Himself and His will (so they are without excuse).

The theme of God as Creator is prevalent in this discourse. The true God created all things and because He is Lord of heaven and earth, manmade temples cannot house Him. His transcendence is unparalleled. The true God also sustains all things and does not need people to sustain Him. His immanence is unparalleled, as He is providentially involved in the affairs of man. The thoughts of Paul here, would not be uncommon for Greeks to perceive, but as John B. Polhill stated, “There was a world of difference between the philosopher’s pantheism and Paul’s strict monotheism.”<sup>92</sup>

Paul confronted any racial, cultural, or ethnic pride the Athenians may have had, as he revealed that all peoples descend from one progenitor (Adam inferred). His logic rejected superiority of any races, either Jew or Greek. God controls the times and the seasons of the nations, their rise and descent into oblivion. The sovereignty of God (over nations) is unequalled and the purpose of the sovereignty in regulating times and boundaries was so that people would realize it and seek Him (cf. Rom 1). While God is immanent, the world had failed to find Him despite His visible presence in creation

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<sup>91</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 372.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 373.

(cf. Romans). Paul skillfully used the providence of God to inform human responsibility.<sup>93</sup>

Here, Paul cited two pagan Greek writers who articulated philosophies that were consistent with divine revelation. Familiar to the Athenians would be the Cretan poet Epimenides and his words, “For in thee we live and move and have our being,” as well as the poets Aratus and Cleanthes who wrote, “We are also his offspring.”<sup>94</sup> Paul’s purpose here was to have his audience continue in agreement with him about the truth.<sup>95</sup> The deduction of Paul was that idolatry is irrational. If God created people, then one cannot reduce Him to an idol; the divine nature of God is Spirit, not material.

Before Christ came, people were guilty of failing to respond to prior revelation, but now they are more culpable due to the greater revelation of Jesus Christ in His incarnation (cf. Heb 1:1-2). God overlooked the times of ignorance only in the sense that people incur greater guilt this side of the Incarnation. God has always held people liable for their sin, but now that Christ has come, He will hold people more responsible for their sins.<sup>96</sup> Paul centered his gospel appeal to them on the relationship of all people to God as Creator and judge of all; it truly is a gospel fitting the saving purpose of God declared in Luke 2:30-32a, “For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a Light of revelation to the Gentiles.”

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<sup>93</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 374.

<sup>94</sup>Longenecker, *Acts*, 476.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 376.

Accurate knowledge of God emboldens repentance because it informs about imminent judgment. Paul ended his speech by clarifying the accountability of his hearers. His message was simply to look at the past (God is Creator), the present (Jesus redeems and has conquered death), and the future (God will judge). As the agent of the judgment of God, Paul stressed the humanity of Jesus, rather than an idol or a mythical character such as the Greek gods; His resurrection uniquely qualifies Him as judge.

While Paul did not necessarily devote a specific portion of his proclamation to contextualization in the homiletic sense, he did nonetheless contextualize the message.<sup>97</sup> Paul had been laying groundwork to gain an audience for proclamation. He had been speaking of Jesus and the resurrection in the market place (v. 18), which provided necessary context for his sermon (vv. 22-31). He connected his previous discussions in the *agora* to his proclamation and has oriented them to the subject matter, for they readily asked, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are

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<sup>97</sup>To be sure, Paul is preaching no text of Scripture, but instead an entire biblical theology, and while he is not contextualizing as one would do in an expository sermon, he does however provide robust context for his purpose, as well as context for his audience. Concerning contextualization in the sermon, Jared C. Wilson stated, “The word *contextual* is important. It’s more specific than simply asking if the message is *textual*, because a lot of preachers use Bible verses in their sermons, and by this they determine that their sermon is based on a biblical text. But putting some Bible verses in your sermon is not the same thing as preaching the Bible. . . . Make sure the biblical text drives what you want to say, and not the other way around. And even if you aren’t preaching a whole passage of Scripture, make sure whatever portion your [*sic*] preaching is kept in the context of the passage where it’s found. Every biblical text should be interpreted according to its immediate context, and every immediate context should be interpreted according to the greater context of the gospel storyline of Scripture.” Jared C. Wilson, “The 5 C’s of Preaching,” *For the Church: Gospel-centered Resources from Midwestern Seminary* (blog), November 7, 2016, <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/the-5-cs-of-preaching>.

proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean” (vv. 19-20). Surely, the audience would not accept the authority of Scripture, and while Paul may not have contextualized a text, he did offer theological context, thus providing a vital link to Scripture. The preacher needs to assist listeners in seeing how the text fits the flow of thought, utilizing the introduction to establish how the preaching text connects to the overarching theme of related texts.<sup>98</sup>

Unquestionably, Paul provided them with a clear statement of purpose. His goal for them was to inform and enlighten their ignorance concerning the God to which they were oblivious (v. 23).<sup>99</sup> He made the intent of his purpose apparent when he stated, “This I proclaim to you.” In verse 22, Paul said, “I observe that you are very religious in all respects” and reveals that the nature of his discourse is related to the Athenians as a great personal significance.<sup>100</sup> Subsequently, verses 22-23 set the stage for the theme of the whole discourse—their religiosity and their ignorance.

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<sup>98</sup>H. B. Charles Jr., *On Preaching: Personal and Pastoral Insights for the Preparation and Practice of Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 79.

<sup>99</sup>While Paul did not connect the biblical text to the sermon that follows, he did however connect an Old Testament biblical theology to the sermon. Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays believe that one can summarize or allude to the theme of the sermon in the introduction addressing such questions as: “What exactly is the sermon’s purpose and role? What do you expect to accomplish with it? ‘This sermon is about. . . .’” Paul meets the criteria for a clear purpose statement. Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays, *Preaching God’s Word: A Hands-on Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 27.

<sup>100</sup>Purpose and great personal significance are not all that Paul accomplished here. Polhill made a salient point as well: “Paul’s opening remark that he had observed the Athenians in every respect to be ‘very religious’ has often been described as a

Although Paul did provide a clear statement of purpose in his introduction, did he do so in the conclusion? If one were to grant that verses 24-27 were the main body of the sermon, one could perceive verses 28-29 as the transition to the conclusion. Whereas Paul did not appropriate the question and answer method, he did reinvigorate interest in his original purpose of informing and enlightening their ignorance concerning the God to which they were oblivious (v. 23) by informing them that God would no longer overlook their ignorance (v. 30).<sup>101</sup> Paul's purpose in his conclusion is effective, as Charles Swindoll stated, he "ties up any loose ends, unifies the principles and applications under a common theme, and summarizes the message."<sup>102</sup>

As Paul transitioned to his conclusion, he has shown the Athenians their culpability—they can no longer plead ignorant to the truth of God. With this, he offered a singular way and means: "All people everywhere should repent" (v. 30).<sup>103</sup>

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*capitatio benevolentiae*, an effort to win the favor of his hearers and thus secure their attention." Polhill, *Acts*, 370.

<sup>101</sup>Darrell L. Bock revealed the link between introduction and conclusion: "Paul now turns to the key part of the speech and its application. So, what should one do? Formerly 'times of ignorance' (*χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας*) existed, but now God commands all people everywhere to repent. . . . The expression 'times of ignorance' underscores the fact that the Greeks' view of the divine is not according to knowledge. . . . The remark also links the conclusion to the speech's opening, where ignorance is also noted about the unknown god (v. 23)." Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 569.

<sup>102</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Saying It Well: Touching Others with Your Words* (New York: FaithWords, 2012), 228.

<sup>103</sup>Paul called for repentance, and though some put him off for another day, and others mocked him ('sneered'), there were some who, in fact, did believe. The Olfords asserted, "The preacher should exhort the type of response that is appropriate, that which is desired by God. It should be apparent to the audience that the preacher stands under the Word himself and that he has to respond to the message." Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 172.

His two clinching elements to persuade them are, first, there is a sure day of judgment coming for all (v. 31) and, second, God has chosen a Man to be that Judge (v. 31). The resurrection, of which the Athenians originally inquired, provided all men proof of His validity as Judge and for Paul a fitting gospel conclusion of the resurrected Christ (v. 31). Indeed, Paul achieved his purpose—the proclamation of the God they were ignorant of—and even though the outcome may have been modest, he was faithful in his proclamation.

### **Conclusion**

The objective of this project chapter was to determine biblical rationale for sermon introductions. Initially, the biblical rationale for the mandate for expository preaching was set forth, as well as the biblical rationale for the homiletic necessity of introductions in expository preaching. The mandate for expository preaching touched on three specific facets relating to exposition. First, the PD put forth an argument employing 2 Timothy 3:12-17 for the reality of an inspired Word, establishing the God-breathed and, therefore, authoritative nature of Scripture. The words of Paul here have affirmed both the inspiration and the usefulness of Scripture. Second, an inspired Word logically necessitates expository preaching. The basis for this was 2 Timothy 4:1-5 where Paul issued the five commands to preach, be ready, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Because God has spoken (in His Word), the preacher speaks from an expository perspective—to do so for any other reason is pure hubris. Third, the fact of an inspired Word, calling for expository preaching, would demand a prepared

expositor. In 2 Timothy 2:1-7, Paul informed Timothy of his exact duties as a faithful man of God, not the least was how he handled the Word of God.

The rationale for the homiletic necessity for introductions in expository preaching touched on three specific areas relating to exposition. First, utilizing Isaiah 55:1-13, the PD pointed to the need in the sermon introduction for getting attention and securing interest. Next, Matthew 5:13-20 served as the basis for the inclusion of style and application within the sermon introduction. Finally, Acts 17:22-31 aimed at the need for contextualization within the introduction and to declare a clear purpose statement, both in the introduction and then again in the conclusion.

The PD deems he has successfully attained a biblical rationale for enhancing the skill of the sermon introduction. The Scriptures reveal that hearers need prompting, clear and vivid context, clear understanding of the purpose of the message, and to hear what God requires and how to meet those requirements. All of this either begins or is part of the sermon introduction. The ensuing chapter will examine the current practice of sermon introductions by others in the field, undertaking an evaluation of what represents an effective introduction through a survey of literature, an analysis of the introductory components of five practitioners, and a survey of numerous pastors and homileticians regarding the sermon introduction.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

The focus of this chapter will be the current practice of the sermon introduction. While most sermon preparation volumes devote a few pages to the introduction, those devoted solely to the introduction are scarce. Yet, artisans of preaching write in accordance for the need of excellence in introducing the sermon and offer ample methodology to accomplish this. For some, an introduction is simply preparatory, but a sermon introduction must, in the end, be more and do more.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will assess the purposes for and methodology of sermon introductions.

First, the PD will make a case for the necessity of introductions. Then he will examine the elements of an effective introduction, followed by an individual treatment of each. These will follow Awbrey's Sermon Evaluation Form (*adapted version*): Six Essential Elements of an Effective Introduction. Finally, there will be a survey of practitioners across the homiletic landscape, with the PD evaluating what the gathered data means. In conjunction, the PD will assess twenty-five sermons from five different practitioners, employing Ben Awbrey's evaluation tool to assess only the six essential introductory elements. The goal of each of these informational, methodological, and practical assessments is to offer significant enhancement to the PD's skill in sermon introductions, which is the thesis of this dissertation. This chapter will conclude with an overall appraisal of the current practice of sermon introductions, leading to the project implementation plan.

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<sup>1</sup>John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, Classic Reprint Series (London: Forgotten Books, 2015), 272.

## Necessity of Sermon Introductions

Some preachers lament the introduction, stressing “Get to the text,” and while one can amplify an introduction to absurdity, this should not undermine the value of the sermon introduction.<sup>2</sup> To infer that sermon content and sound homiletics are at odds is a false dichotomy; they are, in fact, complimentary.<sup>3</sup> The introduction is a vital structural component to the sermon. One does not jettison structure because of a prevalence of poor structure.<sup>4</sup> Tony Merida believes there are times when no introduction is need, such as “the second part of a two-part message” or an emphasis on the main purpose of the text or sermon.<sup>5</sup>

Abandoning the introduction may be more difficult than Merida supposed. Every sermon has a start, either formal or otherwise. Merida offered that you “might just overview the previous week” or simply state the main text or sermon proposition.<sup>6</sup> Since each of these is a constituent introduction element, why not go ahead with a full, efficacious introduction? If introductions have potential to enhance the sermon, the

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<sup>2</sup>Kaiser bemoaned, “More recently, we have tended to specialize in emphasizing the introduction. In fact, we have usually overindulged ourselves in the art of introducing texts and messages. . . . We need to reevaluate our priorities in this matter of introductions.” His arguments should be against *poor* introductions, not introductions. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, 1981, repr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 163.

<sup>3</sup>Jack Hughes, *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2001), 77.

<sup>4</sup>Ben Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2008), 328.

<sup>5</sup>Tony Merida, *Faithful Preaching: Declaring Scripture with Responsibility, Passion, and Authenticity* (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 117.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

benefits outweigh the disadvantages. Surely, while variety in the introduction is a positive, it seems best that the preacher not include “no introduction” in that array, especially pertaining to expository preaching.<sup>7</sup>

The likelihood exists that more sermons fail in the introduction than anywhere else—a sermon that falters first will falter fully, or at the least, be less effective than imagined.<sup>8</sup> To forge a proper biblical sermon from beginning to end requires effort. Since every sermon will offer some sort of introduction, either planned or accidental, it is unfortunate to draft a great sermon only for no one to hear it because of a poor, or unplanned, introduction.

*Must* a sermon have an introduction? Regardless of the lengths one may go to avoid them or the belief of “just jump into the text,” there will be an introduction.<sup>9</sup> So, the answer is an unequivocal, yes, for three reasons: the people need it because they will derive more from the sermon; the preacher needs it for he will receive communicative momentum, as well as audience attention and receptivity; and the

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<sup>7</sup>Awbrey lended preemptive wisdom here: “Effectiveness in preaching is far more a byproduct of one’s personal walk with the living God rather than compliance with a homiletical procedure. . . . Additionally, homiletical instruction cannot take the place of the gift of preaching.” Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 18.

<sup>8</sup>Daniel L. Akin, “The Introduction: How to Begin Well,” in *Engaging Exposition: A 3-D Approach to Preaching*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 187. Haddon W. Robinson added, “There are three types of preachers: those to whom you cannot listen; those to whom you can listen; and those to whom you must listen. During the introduction the congregation usually decides the kind of speaker addressing them that morning.” Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 167.

<sup>9</sup>Curtis Castillow, “A Comparative Analysis between a Preacher’s Practice and Homiletic Theory” (PhD diss., Utah State University, 2010), 35.

passage needs it because its context needs understanding, needs appreciation in relation to its place in the canon, and will aid in the subsequent exposition. If the preacher discounts the principles for introducing a sermon, he does so at the expense of himself and his hearers.<sup>10</sup>

### **Elements of Effective Sermon Introductions**

Having established the necessity of sermon introductions, now quality homiletics come into play; good homiletics is a science, but the application of such is an art.<sup>11</sup> Diligent preparation extends beyond the text to the various essential sermon components, including everything from arrangement to word usage—while the Spirit can give the preacher words in the pulpit, He can also readily provide them in the study.<sup>12</sup> From the opening monologue, movie directors and authors are able to prepare their audience for major coming attractions; the preacher should aim for this as well.<sup>13</sup> A proper introduction is usually brief, is engaging, varies by sermon, raises audience need suggesting God-given remedies, introduces text and sermon purpose, affords transition to the body, and has good opening and concluding sentences.<sup>14</sup> The list of

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<sup>10</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 39-50, 15.

<sup>11</sup>Hughes, *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures*, 20.

<sup>12</sup>John R. W. Stott, “Stewards of God,” in *We Prepare and Preach: The Practice of Sermon Construction and Delivery*, ed. Clarence Stonelynn Roddy (Chicago: Moody, 1959), 183.

<sup>13</sup>Michael J. Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 181.

<sup>14</sup>Akin, “The Introduction: How to Begin Well,” 190-92. Wayne McDill, *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 210-11; see Jim

methods to derive the essential elements and the list of various essential elements themselves are as numerous as the people who offer them. Most elements of an effective introduction are static, but this should not limit variety within the element. Lists range from the succinct<sup>15</sup> to the extensive,<sup>16</sup> while others employ novel mnemonic devices.<sup>17</sup> Awbrey posed an all-inclusive definition of the constituent elements of an effective introduction:

In a sermon introduction the preacher must get attention, secure interest, state the purpose of the sermon, set the biblical context from which the sermon is derived, state the proposition of the sermon, and end the sermon introduction with a repeated statement of the sermon proposition. . . . These six elements are content-based necessities for a truly effective sermon introduction.<sup>18</sup>

These elements provide clarity for the preacher both in his preparation and delivery of the introduction.<sup>19</sup> Also, there is greater enhancement of the ability of the hearer to effectively grasp the Word of God, a most desired outcome in the preaching venture.

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Perdue, “The Necessity and Use of Application” (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 1.

<sup>15</sup>Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays, *Preaching God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 28; see McDill, *12 Essential Skills*, 203-5.

<sup>16</sup>Keith Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance: Without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 45-51.

<sup>17</sup>Ted Traylor, “Crafting the Sermon’s Introduction,” September 27, 2016, *Preaching Source* (blog), <http://preachingsource.com/blog/building-blocks-to-a-sermon-introduction/>; see Dennis J. Brunet, “A Critical Examination of the Homiletical Philosophy and Practice of Adrian P. Rogers” (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994), 166.

<sup>18</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 34-35.

<sup>19</sup>Mayhue tied quality introductions to *ethos*, stating, “The element of *ethos*, i.e., the preacher’s perceived credibility in the mind of the audience, can be markedly

## Getting Attention

Getting attention may be the least among the elements in stature, but that does not lessen its importance, as it is the first domino to fall in the effective introduction. While getting attention requires the briefest of moments, this minimizes neither the difficulty of formulating it or how to deliver it. Nomenclature varies (one will find verbs such as capture, gain, seize, grab, command, or demand to define how one goes about acquiring audience attention), but it is best to reference it as “getting attention,” as this moniker distinguishes it from the element of securing interest (which has numerous labels). Often, there is a blurring of the lines and getting attention morphs or absorbs into securing interest. These two elements, however, are unique and distinct.

Getting attention is the first step on the sermon journey for the preacher and his hearers. One cannot overemphasize this step, as the introduction contends against other voices, so the task is “get their attention.” If the initial phrase fails to get attention, reject it, even though the words of the preacher matter, he will have limited chances.<sup>20</sup> Some insist on a target, saying that attention needs to be gained in the first three minutes, even thirty seconds—the point is, one must achieve it quickly.<sup>21</sup> Are there cases where the preacher can achieve real spiritual success without a perceived

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influenced by the kind and quality of his introduction.” Richard L. Mayhue, “Introductions, Illustrations, and Conclusions,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. John F. MacArthur Jr. and The Master’s Seminary Faculty (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 243-44.

<sup>20</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 239.

<sup>21</sup>Lloyd John Ogilvie, “Introducing the Sermon,” *Preaching.com*, <https://www.preaching.com/articles/introducing-the-sermon/>; see James W. Bryant and Mac Brunson, *The New Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 39.

need to get attention? Sure, in some cases, longevity, even homiletic priority may prevail.<sup>22</sup>

Why is the attention getting so vital? To the degree of negative interest that the preacher has for his sermon, the hearers will perceive and tune him out. To the degree of positive interest that he has for his sermon, they may still tune him out. To assume that the hearers are as interested in the sermon as he is may mean the preacher has misread expectations; warm bodies are not analogous to receptive hearts.<sup>23</sup> While drivel and useless fodder pass for many a preacher's introduction, if he wants to get the listeners' attention, then he needs to say something worth hearing.<sup>24</sup> The approach to getting attention may vary per venue, even preaching to a regular congregation weekly. Indeterminate factors regularly oppose getting attention, including the culture around us (entertainment saturated society), the hearers before us (compelling them is crucial), and the task before us (there is a requirement for hearers to think).<sup>25</sup> While

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<sup>22</sup>Awbrey defined the inimitable style of MacArthur: "Two components thought by some to be crucial for an introduction which secured interest were the opening sentence, and a non-biblical or secular or life-situational opening in the introduction. The opening sentence was not a pertinent factor in the thinking of MacArthur. When asked if he gave any significance to the opening sentence of his sermon introductions he responded, 'No, I don't know the opening sentence until I've heard it.' . . . Because the opening words were not carefully prepared in advance, the spontaneous expression of the opening words consistently revealed what was of primary concern to MacArthur—the word of God." Ben E. Awbrey, "A Critical Examination of the Theory and Practice of John F. MacArthur's Expository Preaching" (ThD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990), 126-127.

<sup>23</sup>Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, 238; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 84; see Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching*, 181.

<sup>24</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 82.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-82.

the skill level varies individually, getting attention is so crucial that the preacher may want to write it out; it is no occasion to chance stumbling out of the starting blocks.<sup>26</sup> Get the attention as quickly as possible, and as the preacher prepares to “shatter the silence,” he needs to recall that it is the text that sometimes offends, not the introduction.<sup>27</sup> Is it possible to be “too good” at getting attention? Indeed, the question is not the level of ‘good,’ but whether the attention getting material is appropriate or inappropriate.<sup>28</sup> In those pivotal first moments, listeners will judge the credibility of the preacher and his suggested information. If he were a salesperson, failure to get attention would be unfortunate, but for the preacher of the gospel, it is tragic—the message, the audience, and the Lord demand and deserve the best of efforts.<sup>29</sup>

What constitutes attention-getting material and how does the preacher go about formulating it?<sup>30</sup> A list of material to draw from and incorporate may include:

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<sup>26</sup>Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 253.

<sup>27</sup>Broadus stated, “Moreover, while earnestly seeking to make the introduction interesting and engaging, we must shun the sensational and the pretentious.” Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 274.

<sup>28</sup>Awbrey added, “The last thing a preacher wants is for his sermon to not be heard because the hearers are still enamored by, and continue to rehearse in their minds, the attention-getting material used by the preacher in his introduction.” Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 90-91. See Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching*, 181.

<sup>29</sup>Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance* (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 174.

<sup>30</sup>Awbrey offered insight for requirements for attention-getting material: “Effective attention getting material must be able to command immediately, must be able to achieve it briefly, must be able to direct it toward a subject-matter, and must be able to be turned into interest.” Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 83-89.



A powerful or insightful quotation.

A story (The preacher could break the story up throughout the sermon.)

A penetrating question

A text (Reading the text still has merit—and God commanded it [cf. 1 Tm 4:13])

A joke (Caution: humor should be organic—preachers are not comedians)

A startling fact/statistic? (Caution: some listeners will verify the stats)

A descriptive lead (“The scene was bleak, there was danger in the air.”)

A powerful statement (Jumpstart the purpose, “At the end of this message, I am going to ask each one to \_\_\_\_.”)

An astonishing lead (unexpected event, word [things we value, things that are unusual, things that threaten us])<sup>31</sup>

This list is not exhaustive, but only illustrative of the attention-getting possibilities. In many ways, the sermon introduction is only as good as the imagination and creativity of the preacher: clearly it should extend to its corresponding elements, even the getting-attention component.<sup>32</sup> Great care should go into the material one will use for getting attention, though it may only take seconds to a few minutes to deliver it. One needs to craft the opening sentence to be memorable (“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”). Other ideas include:

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<sup>31</sup>Roy Naden, “Preparing Your Sermon,” October 1984, *Ministry*, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1984/10/preparing-your-sermon>; Steve Larsen, “7 Ways to Grab a Listener’s Attention: Designing More Effective Sermon Introductions,” *Preaching.com*, <https://www.preaching.com/articles/7-ways-to-grab-a-listeners-attention-designing-more-effective-sermon-introductions/>; see H. B. Charles Jr., *On Preaching: Personal and Pastoral Insights for the Preparation and Practice of Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 82.

<sup>32</sup>Mayhue, “Introductions, Illustrations, and Conclusions,” 244.

Craft the opening sentence to be simple [“Sin spoils everything (Pause) it infects everything around it.”]

Craft the opening sentence to be iconic. . . . [God did] “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Craft the opening sentence to be intriguing. . . . “Has it ever dawned on you that nothing ever dawns on God?”<sup>33</sup>

Craft the opening sentence to be vivid and clear.<sup>34</sup>

Getting attention will not happen accidentally; if it occurs, it will occur intentionally. While the attention-getting element and its subsequent materials are important to the introduction, they are secondary to securing interest (and its materials) and the other elements of the introduction, which are to follow.<sup>35</sup>

### Securing Interest

Now that the preacher has listener attention, he must endeavor to accomplish the major work of the introduction—securing interest. Securing interest is significantly more than making it “of interest.” The preacher should expose the *need* of the audience to listen to the message; securing interest ought to prepare the runway (by raising needs and personal questions) so that the plane (the message/text as the answer) can land.<sup>36</sup> Securing interest not only whets the appetite for the sermon, but

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<sup>33</sup>J. Tyler Scarlett, “Start with a Bang! Crafting a Memorable Sermon Opener,” *Preaching.com*, <https://www.preaching.com/articles/start-with-a-bang-crafting-a-memorable-sermon-opener/>.

<sup>34</sup>Jack Hughes advised that “too much abstract information will sever the artery of attention.” Hughes, *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures*, 67.

<sup>35</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 78, 92.

<sup>36</sup>Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 316.

for the Word, which is the remedy to the problem, the answer to the question, the resolution to the situation, and the explanation to the issue.<sup>37</sup>

Often, there is a confusing of attention and interest. Attention can issue from a sense of duty (voluntary), can issue from distraction (involuntary), or it can issue from an inherent interest in the subject (nonvoluntary)—it is the nonvoluntary attention that the preacher must recognize as secured interest.<sup>38</sup> While listeners are culpable for their disobedience, putting the vibrancy of Scripture on display and showing that it is personal falls on those who preach. In raising need, the hearer can become a doer because the hearer has seen their need.<sup>39</sup>

Audiences come with at least two questions that the introduction must answer: “What are you talking about?” and “Why should I listen?” so it is imperative to have the attention and interest of the audience.<sup>40</sup> The introduction ought to incite interest, as it is a gross assumption to presume interest on the part of the hearer; within the first

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<sup>37</sup>Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance*, 49; see John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 244.

<sup>38</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 103.

<sup>39</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination* (Wheaton, IL: Baker, 1994), 61; see Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, 239.

<sup>40</sup>Keith Willhite, “A Sneak Peek at the Point,” *Preaching*, May–June 1990, 17-18, quoted in Daniel Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 159-60; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 104-5; see Carter, Duvall, and Hays, *Preaching God’s Word*, 27.

few minutes, the preacher must establish relevancy. Merida sadly stated, “While many of the Sunday listeners are ‘ready for the Word,’ some are ready to go to sleep.”<sup>41</sup>

Every week, preachers inadvertently alienate listeners by jumping into the text. They fail to show them that an ancient text is relevant to their present needs and that the message will provide a fresh take on matters with life implications; this is not only sound methodology to introduce the text, it is simply being polite.<sup>42</sup> Any sermon text will have bearing on the understanding of feeling or doing of the hearer, therefore the preacher must give them a foretaste of those implications by pointedly questioning them and challenging them as he secures interest.<sup>43</sup>

The preacher is not simply a “self-help guy” raising needs and answering questions with the wisdom of man. The solutions and answers are redemptive in nature and must result from the sense that Christ is the answer. Merida stated, “Do not have a passionless introduction with no conviction. Come with the *burden*. Strike the match early, and let the heat burn throughout the sermon.”<sup>44</sup> To secure interest (and preserve attention) the preacher must overcome the obstacles of apathy, distraction, and uncertainty (or lack of clarity) in communication.<sup>45</sup> Personally, he must not only

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<sup>41</sup>Merida, *Faithful Preaching*, 115; see Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 102; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 107.

<sup>42</sup>Craig Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit: It’s History, Theology, Psychology, and Practice for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 172.

<sup>43</sup>Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice*, IX Marks (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 104.

<sup>44</sup>Merida, *Faithful Preaching*, 115.

<sup>45</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 127.

be persuaded by what he is saying, he must have grip. Awbrey defined grip as, “*That manner of preaching which impresses a hearer with a strong belief that the preacher feels that he has something to say which is worth saying, and which ought to be said.*”<sup>46</sup> This ‘grip’ must be evident in the introduction, securing interest may fail otherwise.

With the “what it is” and “why it is important” answered, now the preacher must understand “how it is done.” A virtual laundry list exists of “do this—do that” to secure interest (or gain attention—some make no distinction) in print and online. Few offer a sound systematic methodology and philosophy, but the PD feels that Awbrey does offer the soundest method. He gives four *musts* for securing interest:

Substantially improved sermon introduction content is achieved when the following four content means are incorporated: when the subject-matter is seen concretely through *positive and negative flesh and blood scenarios*, so that the truth to be proclaimed in the sermon has been disobeyed with negative implications, and the truth to be proclaimed has been obeyed with positive implications; when *vital questions* have been raised regarding the hearer’s present obedience or disobedience to the truth illustrated by the flesh and blood scenarios; when *crucial assertions* are made regarding the immediate and long-term negative and positive ramifications of disobedience or obedience to the truth; when there is ample assurance that what will be disseminated in this exposition will be a *determinative projection* of how well one may, or may not, live productively in this life.<sup>47</sup>

Providing positive and negative illustrations only serves to enhance the introduction (and sermon). These need to be concrete and vital, providing the hearer with positive and negative examples, with subsequent implications. They ought somehow to connect to the listener. Illustrations that fail to illustrate only confuse; just because

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<sup>46</sup>Ben Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance* (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2011), 204.

<sup>47</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 136-37, 124.

there is a delightful story to tell, does not necessitate its telling.<sup>48</sup> Any real-life experience (personal or scriptural) common to man will build an interest affinity.<sup>49</sup>

Raising vital questions pertaining to the current relation of the hearer to the truth (i.e., the Lord) will further secure interest—the spotlight is on them. For Bryan Chapell, this is the Fallen Condition Focus. He rightly believes that many preachers miss the mark here: “Preachers are almost universally adept at using introductions to indicate *what* sermons will be about, but they are too frequently unskilled at explaining *why* hearers need to listen.”<sup>50</sup> These vital questions can serve as an application thrust, as these questions will “get at” current obedience or disobedience.<sup>51</sup>

Making crucial assertions to continue to secure interest needs balance. While many seem to revel in pumping up their listeners with the immediate and long-term effects of obedience, there are some who wince at the thought of making “crucial assertions” regarding the nature of the immediate and long-term disobedience of the listener. Often, to solve an issue, the preacher needs to create a problem in the mind of the hearer so that the Spirit can begin working.<sup>52</sup>

Preachers augment listener understanding when the things the sermon purports are relevant. The sermon may matter because it reassures them as they understand God

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<sup>48</sup>Charles, *On Preaching*, 87. Hughes said, “Illustrations are verbal flashlights. The better the illustration, the higher the wattage, the more the truth is revealed.” Hughes, *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures*, 45.

<sup>49</sup>Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 172.

<sup>50</sup>Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, 241.

<sup>51</sup>Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, 102.

<sup>52</sup>Merida, *Faithful Preaching*, 116.

and His ways more, or it convicts them of what they are or are not doing. During the introduction, the preacher must lead them to realize the blessing of compliance and the penalty for noncompliance. Chapell said, “No hearer has reason to progress beyond a sermon’s introduction if it does not point to an obvious personal consequence.”<sup>53</sup> For introduction enhancement to take place (as well as securing interest sufficiently), two fallacies need refuting: introductions are irrelevant and preaching does not happen in the introduction—the preaching may not be exposition, but it occurs when the subject matter of the sermon receives personal and relevant usage (through personal questions, crucial assertions, flesh and blood scenarios, and a projection of a determinative difference) that leads the hearer to believe, “I must hear this!”<sup>54</sup> This pre-preaching is absolutely essential to the sermon introduction.

### Contextualization

An essential component of the introduction is the contextualization of the preaching text. Contextualization informs the audience of how a passage ties into the overall context, relating it to the previous passage, thus affording the audience a basis for understanding—expository preaching stresses careful analysis of the sermon text within its immediate context, and other pertinent information to that text.<sup>55</sup> Some hold

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<sup>53</sup>Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, 241.

<sup>54</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 124, 133.

<sup>55</sup>Mike Abendroth, *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers* (Leominster: Day One, 2008), 158-59. Willhite added, “Provide context or enough background so that the passage can be understood in its original context. Structure the sermon, and explain, ‘As we study this passage together, we will discover the answer to our question [the solution to our problem, or so forth].’ . . . Do not assume that your listeners know *why* you turn their attention to the Bible. You must give them

to the notion that contextualization is both unnecessary and a waste of time. Awbrey added:

Most preachers would probably view the idea of establishing the background of the passage and reviewing context of the passage as unnecessary and obtrusive elements that would only serve to make a sermon introduction boring and needlessly lengthy. Undoubtedly, the inclusion of such material will add to the time needed to introduce the sermon.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, some believe that contextualization, although beneficial, is less essential with congregations that are more biblically literate.<sup>57</sup> While it would be absurd to say that length cannot vary, is biblical literacy a legitimate reason to lessen or dismiss contextualization? Sufficient evidence lends credence to contextualization; in fact, some pastors focus on contextualization in the introduction, either primarily or exclusively.<sup>58</sup> To be sure, the amount of background provided will vary, depending on

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*warrant* . . . for looking at the passage. . . . You want your introductory words to whet an appetite for the text of Scripture.” Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance*, 49-50. Chapell said, “After announcing the text, two obligations immediately fall on the preacher. The first of these obligations (although it may not come first in actual sequence) is to *contextualize* the text so that listeners will have some background to understand the reading. This may involve offering brief historical comments (a sentence or two at most), providing definitions for unfamiliar words, or otherwise quickly orienting listeners to the passage.” Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 249.

<sup>56</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 267. Awbrey goes on to say, “For the cause of excellence in expository preaching, the inclusion of such material . . . is not only necessary but will be a much-needed addition to that which is commonly absent from the typical sermon introduction.”

<sup>57</sup>Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 172-73.

<sup>58</sup>For example, Awbrey, “A Critical Examination,” 152. Awbrey said, “The four features found consistently in MacArthur’s introductions in the sermons studied were: a connection between the sermon and preceding sermons, explanation of principles needed to be grasped to facilitate understanding of the sermon, a condensed review of another subject related to the subject of the sermon, and reference to other passages of scripture.” Hochul Song said that “the examination of Criswell’s usage of sermon introductions revealed that the primary roles of the introductions in Criswell’s



genre, sermon, occasion, and audience. The goal in contextualizing is to lead the listener to the source of authority for the specific truth proclaimed. A robust adherence to inerrancy and relevancy does not mitigate contextualization, quite the opposite. The preacher allows listeners to see the inspired nature of Scripture, enabling them to value the enduring and vitally relevant proclamation of a specific truth.<sup>59</sup>

As to specifics of contextualization, there are three elements the preacher needs to grasp and integrate in his expositional introduction. These three assist the listener in understanding text and sermon: orientation, summarization, and connection. Orientation provides cultural setting, historical data, and Scripture cross-references for the sermon focus; summarization provides a brief digest of the book through earlier preached texts; connection links this sermon to the last sermon's proposition, and the textually based structure.<sup>60</sup> The preacher must be diligent in contextualization to guard against advancing material that belongs in the sermon body.<sup>61</sup>

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sermons were to present the dominating subject of the message and to explain the context of the text in order to assist the listener to understand the message.” Hochul Song, “A Critical Examination of W. A. Criswell’s Sermons from Acts in Comparison with His Theory of Preaching” (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 131. Samuel E. Greer said, “Jeremiah used sermon introductions to introduce the body of the sermon in forty-six of the fifty analyzed sermons. . . . In the development of the introductions and conclusions, Jeremiah commanded attention in 50% of the sermons. He uncovered needs in the introduction in 42% of the sermons. Jeremiah introduced the body of the sermon in 92% of the sermons.” Samuel E. Greer, “A Critical Homiletical Analysis of Selected Sermons of David Jeremiah” (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 112, 130.

<sup>59</sup>Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H, 1998), 159-60.

<sup>60</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 268.

<sup>61</sup>Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 268.

In other words, contextualization provides ‘context’ not exposition of the sermon. Dennis Johnson suggests if the hearers feel comfortable in the context behind them and before them that, “Your introduction should push them ‘off balance,’ magnifying ‘cognitive disequilibrium’ and evoking in them a recognition that the text has depths they have not explored and a desire for deeper understanding.”<sup>62</sup> While orienting the listener to the sermon does involve the presentation of settings, data, and references, this does not necessitate boredom. The task of the preacher is not to take the listener to his study, thereby “dumping all the gold he has mined”; instead, the listeners should receive the fruits of his contextual study in such a fashion that is worthy of what he is presenting, “the living and abiding Word of God,” not simply cold, lifeless facts.<sup>63</sup>

Summarization provides a brief digest of the book through previously preached texts. A significant feature of expository preaching is that any given sermon does not stand on its own. While by itself, it makes a vital contribution, it, at the same time, makes a valuable impact to the preached series.<sup>64</sup> Summarization is neither a survey nor seminary lecture; it is the opportunity to show the listener how this sermon text fits into the book’s theme and the whole of Scripture.<sup>65</sup> One cannot overstate the importance of connection, as it links this sermon to the proposition of the last sermon

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<sup>62</sup>Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 406.

<sup>63</sup>Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 161.

<sup>64</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 271.

<sup>65</sup>Charles, *On Preaching*, 79.

and its textually-based structure. This not only enhances listener understanding of the present message, it also brings those listeners who have been absent up-to-speed.

How does the preacher know if he was effective in his contextualization effort?

Several following features inform the preacher and answer specific questions:

*Accuracy* (Can the hearer determine with greater certainty the accuracy of the text considering its previous verses?)

*Thoroughness* (Can the hearer determine with greater certainty the commitment of the preacher to the Word in its complete context?)

*Relatedness* (Can the hearer determine with greater relatedness the sermon text, to the text around it?)

*Completion* (Can the hearer specifically link this sermon text to the sermon text of the preceding week?)

*Perspective* (Can the hearer receive new understanding through new or repackaged information?)

*Retention* (Repeated reviewing weaves the thoughts into the mind of the hearer.)

*Volition* (Swaying volition often comes through repetition and comprehensive knowledge of Scripture.)<sup>66</sup>

### Purpose of the Sermon

Purpose to the sermon is what thread is to a garment—the thing that holds it all together. Purpose reveals to listeners exactly what God and His truth are demanding of them and what it should accomplish.<sup>67</sup> Purpose may be as simple as *to* plus a *verb*,

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<sup>66</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 269-81.

<sup>67</sup>Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 108; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 242; see Jerry Vines and James L. Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons*, revised ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 188.

such as, *to test* or *to reassure*.<sup>68</sup> Terminology may vary when considering the sermon proposition, but regardless, effective preaching will center on one specific idea.<sup>69</sup> That specific idea (purpose) must be tied to and in harmony with the original purpose of the sermon text. Awbrey said, “The sermon’s purpose works to galvanize the sermon’s proposition and its attending structure into a significant assessment of the text.”<sup>70</sup>

For the preacher, sermon purpose coincides with his burden, which adds significantly to his earnestness; this is a result of not only Spirit-filling, but the specific reason for preaching the message that has captivated and compelled him.<sup>71</sup> The man of God is not ready to preach until he can state the purpose in a short and meaningful way. Purpose should be active in each formal element as: introduction (establish purpose), body (flesh out purpose), and conclusion (achieve purpose).

With the burden logically expressed, it will be evident to the listeners that the sermon and its purpose has gripped the preacher and it is a message worth embracing; so, clarity of sermon purpose is of benefit to both preacher and listeners.<sup>72</sup> Clarity of purpose enhances the unity of the sermon and subsequent force/passion of delivery

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<sup>68</sup>Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons: A Seven-step Method for Preaching Salvation*, updated ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 214.

<sup>69</sup>Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 34.

<sup>70</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 185; see Carter, Duvall, and Hays, *Preaching God’s Word*, 114.

<sup>71</sup>Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 161; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 211.

<sup>72</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 184; see Mayhue, “Introductions, Illustrations, and Conclusions,” 245.

because both the preacher and listener see the destination.<sup>73</sup> To be sure, preaching with purpose must include precision and specificity in terminology, intent, and understanding.”<sup>74</sup>

One should never leave the sermon purpose to chance, even if listeners are biblically literate and well-focused.<sup>75</sup> The preacher should err on the side of being more direct than he thinks, more specific than he supposes, and more repetitive than he believes.<sup>76</sup> The preacher fails in preparation and delivery when he is lax about the sermon purpose.<sup>77</sup> Haddon W. Robinson said that a vague sermon purpose will “produce sermons that resemble a dropped lemon meringue pie—they splatter over everything, but hit nothing very hard.”<sup>78</sup>

Establishing sermon purpose must be related to the listener as something of great personal significance. Application is only as good as the authority from which it comes, and transformative change only occurs when listeners respond to biblical truth

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<sup>73</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 186; see Charles, *On Preaching*, 80.

<sup>74</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 234-39.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>76</sup>Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change: Seven Keys to Irresistible Communication* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006), 164; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 244.

<sup>77</sup>Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 257.

<sup>78</sup>Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 107.

resulting in practical application; the Word does more than change listener thinking about subject matter, it also changes feelings and actions about that subject matter.<sup>79</sup>

Any stated purpose should accurately reflect the desired aim of the sermon and will always convey a call to personal commitment.<sup>80</sup> In every introduction, the preacher must clearly and directly (not delaying until the conclusion) convey what the sermon will accomplish regarding the behavior, feelings, or experience of the listener—“My purpose in this message is. . . . Today you must choose to obey. . . .”<sup>81</sup> Some probing personal questions will help expedite achievement of the sermon purpose by the time of the conclusion where, again, the purpose will be reinvigorated through another series of questions.<sup>82</sup> Purposes may vary for the preacher, but the apostles provide a general line of purposes: to inform or enlighten, to inspire or comfort, to motivate or appeal, to edify or develop.<sup>83</sup> Alongside this, it needs remembering that there is always a redemptive nature in the purpose, being ever mindful of lost listeners.

If the preacher has failed to state his purpose for the sermon, it only follows that the listeners will have no clue, as it is insanity to expect real response if they have

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<sup>79</sup>Jim Shaddix, *The Passion Driven Sermon* (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 117; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 192.

<sup>80</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 252.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, 196, 255-57; see Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 162.

<sup>82</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 262-63.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 249-52.

no idea what the message, the preacher, or God requires of them.<sup>84</sup> Purposelessness will not only spoil an introduction, it most certainly will ruin the sermon altogether. So, with the sermon purpose stated in the introduction, does its vitality end there? Absolutely not. Orvin Feliciano concluded, “If from the onset of the sermon there is clarity in the purpose of the sermon it becomes clear what the conclusion should be.”<sup>85</sup> If the purpose statement is vital, reasonable, and desirable, it will live beyond the introduction into the conclusion, stoking the fire of the preacher.<sup>86</sup>

The conclusion is not a “tack on” to the message proper—it clarifies, exhorts, and invites a response to the declared truth. The conclusion will reinvigorate the original aim of, “What exactly does the preacher desire the listener to do in response to this sermon?”<sup>87</sup> Reinvigorating interest for the purpose occurs as the preacher quickly, simply, and with clarity summarizes for the listeners the biblical truth he has shared, repeating keywords and phrases. If the preacher bypasses ending the sermon without review or exhortation, the chances of achieving the purpose will diminish.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 182; see Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 188.

<sup>85</sup>Orvin Feliciano, “Finishing Well: Enhancing the Proclamation of the Word of God through Strength in the Sermon Conclusion” (DMin diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 89.

<sup>86</sup>Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 164; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 200.

<sup>87</sup>Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 171; see Naden, “Preparing Your Sermon.”

<sup>88</sup>Merida, *Faithful Preaching*, 118; see Daniel L. Akin, “The Conclusion: How to Land the Plane Safely,” in *Engaging Exposition: A 3-D Approach to Preaching*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 199, 201; see Mayhue, “Introductions, Illustrations, and Conclusions,” 243. Wiersbe,

As the preacher is reinforcing truth, he needs to bring to bear why the sermon was relevant for them and why it is essential they act. Of all the ways to end a sermon, the preacher must never forget that achieving the purpose in the conclusion is to preach like Jesus did—preach for a verdict.<sup>89</sup>

Craig Skinner reminded the preacher that reinvigorating interest in the sermon purpose is an assault on the human heart: “Thus, the conclusion should gather the strength of all our hammer blows into one last stroke and hit hard. The concreteness with which we complete our exposition will determine much of its reality for those listening.”<sup>90</sup> This can be done by offering Q&A (not new material), possibly rephrasing key ideas, stating preaching points, and giving application questions, thereby placing the spotlight on them.<sup>91</sup> Questions like these will enable the purpose to become a reality for the listener:

What attitude is necessary for this to become reality?

What sacrifices must happen for this to become reality?

What things need to be avoided for this to become reality?<sup>92</sup>

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surprisingly a contrarian, said, “If our preaching has been clear, the people ought to know both the proposition and the main points of the message. Why insult their intelligence and short-term memory by giving a summary?” The answer is clear—to drive the point deep into their hearts. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Dynamics of Preaching*, Ministry Dynamics for a New Century (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 83.

<sup>89</sup>Abendroth, *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers*, 135.

<sup>90</sup>Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 175.

<sup>91</sup>Merida, *Faithful Preaching*, 118.

<sup>92</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 263.



Achieving a sufficiently invigorated sermon purpose, the preacher makes his closing appeals, providing ways and means (action steps) for the listener. In many ways, the conclusion is simply post-introduction. Terminology and focus need constancy through the introduction and conclusion because there is an inextricable link between them. Listeners should know what the preacher expects of them and how they need to respond; he begins driving this call for action early in the sermon introduction, keeping it vital in the exposition—if the preacher waits until the conclusion to establish action, he may have waited too long.<sup>93</sup>

As the preacher begins his closing appeals, it needs remembering that he is not blindly depending on the Spirit, but is in constant dependence on Him, as he provides ways and means for the listener to enact the text-based purpose. Richard L. Mayhue summed it up:

A conclusion should be tied directly to the end result that the biblical text requires of the audience. . . . Review or summarize the message content. . . . Explain the sermon's application. . . . Exhort the audience to obey the sermon's appeal. . . . Call for some sort of decision to mark the beginning of the required obedience. . . . Encourage, comfort, or in some other way build up the flock with the message.<sup>94</sup>

The conclusion ties to the introduction as it assists in answering, "So what?" Surely every listener has a right to ask this question since they have just devoted thirty-five to forty-five minutes of their life to him. The conclusion will aim at second person,

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<sup>93</sup>Merida, *Faithful Preaching*, 115; see Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 221, 238.

<sup>94</sup>Mayhue, "Introductions, Illustrations, and Conclusions," 252.

present tense application, demonstrating the relevance of the Word as it comes to bear on their lives.<sup>95</sup>

In this moment, the man of God must deliver on things promised in the introduction as he preaches for results, applying and affecting the truth he has delivered. This is not mere recapitulation, but revives an application process that began in the introduction.<sup>96</sup> Joey Lang depicted the events at this juncture, “Closing appeals and applications follow in the form of practical action steps that tell the congregation what to do now that they are focused on the sermon’s main points and purpose.”<sup>97</sup>

As the preacher provides ways and means to fulfill the purpose, these action steps must match the text, thereby precluding inappropriate application. The preacher should offer no new exposition here, only resolute effort to activate the wills of the listeners to conform to previous imperatives. Whatever the purpose of the sermon, provide action steps in line with the purpose.<sup>98</sup> The preacher is calling listeners to the

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<sup>95</sup>Akin, “The Conclusion: How to Land the Plane Safely,” 200; see Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 174.

<sup>96</sup>Joey Lang, “More Effective Preaching through Enhancing the Skill of Sermon Conclusion” (DMin diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 91; see Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 246.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 85-86. A good model of this is the preaching of Richard Jackson. James L. Shaddix stated, “Jackson concluded his sermons by exhorting people to respond and delineating specific ways for them to apply the truths. His invitations were characterized by cohesiveness with the other parts of the sermon, simplicity and clarity, decisiveness, and prolonged appeals.” James L. Shaddix, “A Critical Examination of the Decisional Preaching of Richard Allen Jackson” (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996), 127.

<sup>98</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 245.

truth and the God of the truth, not simply new values or behaviors, so all action should push at staying God-aimed and God-focused, truly Christ-aimed and Christ-focused.<sup>99</sup>

Finally, the preacher needs to stay persuasive. If the purpose of the sermon has truly engulfed him, clenching elements will come out of his overflow (not to imply the Spirit will simply “give him something”). Clarity of purpose sets the tone for the exposition and affords the preacher elevated force in his persuasion as he is exhorting for a response, even pleading, as a minister of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor 5:20).<sup>100</sup>

Whatever the specific purpose of the sermon may be, every sermon has a core purpose, as preachers do not preach merely to preach; they preach for a verdict. While much preaching is just a rehearsal of Bible facts with no intent to persuade the listener to action, “the Scriptures make it abundantly clear that truth is unto holiness.”<sup>101</sup> The preacher may employ a timely illustration to persuade, but the preacher would commit high treason if he does not provide an attending gospel presentation. Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert asserted:

We want it to bring the full weight and force of our message down, like a wedge, into the hardened sinner’s heart, the complacent Christian’s will, or the wounded saint’s soul. It needn’t be anything loud or dramatic and shouldn’t be anything that would distract from the points we’ve been making from the Scriptures.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Oxford and Oxford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 173.

<sup>100</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 186; see Akin, “The Conclusion: How to Land the Plane Safely,” 200.

<sup>101</sup>Jerry Vines and David Allen, “Hermeneutics, Exegesis, and Proclamation,” in “Essays in Honor of W. A. Criswell,” special issue, *Criswell Theological Review* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 331.

<sup>102</sup>Dever and Gilbert, *Preach*, 117.

## Plural Noun Proposition

The introduction has a need for a single, strong thesis, often called the proposition, and it is in the introduction where proposition formulation and terminology occur.<sup>103</sup> The proposition is the core truth, the central idea (supported by the points) or demand that the preacher wants the listeners to initiate in their lives; it is a concise and bold, fifteen to eighteen word, present tense application of the CIT (central idea of the text—also known as the main idea of the text [MIT] or the big idea), stated forcefully at the end of the introduction.<sup>104</sup> While the proposition is vital, Awbrey stressed what is most vital:

Ultimately, good sermon structure is a matter of organization. Organization entails much more than mere order. In true organization there must be a controlling principle. The proposition is a controlling principle of organization for a sermon. The sermon proposition dominates all the parts of the sermon.

However, in expository preaching there is *a* controlling principle and *the* controlling principle. *The* controlling principle is not the sermon proposition but the biblical text.<sup>105</sup>

The preacher may advance his proposition as a bull-in-a-china-closet or an absent-minded professor, achieving nothing and destroying much, or he can advance it in the introduction in a clear, orderly way, enhancing both the treatment and delivery of the subject matter.<sup>106</sup> The preacher must know what he will be talking about in the

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<sup>103</sup>Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, 244.

<sup>104</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 184; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 322-23; see Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 162; see York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 182.

<sup>105</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 124.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 327, 317-18.

sermon, as well as what he will be saying about whatever he will be talking about—this is clarity and is truly essential. If what the preacher is talking about is unclear, then he has failed his listeners, robbing them of the tools to understand the sermon.<sup>107</sup>

A clear proposition assists the listener in grasping the subsequent course of action of the preacher. It is simple, the preacher should tell them where he is going, give them a map, and show them how he will satisfy their questions and address their concerns—this takes careful and precise planning and will not occur accidentally.<sup>108</sup> As intentional and lucid as the preacher might be, the truth is, not everyone will grasp the proposition, so he must repeat it several times.<sup>109</sup> Awbrey summed up the proposition:

Repetition is the first crucial factor for a clear propositional statement. Placement of the statement is the second crucial factor for clarity in a sermon proposition statement. . . . [T]he third crucial factor for sermon proposition clarity is a thorough understanding of what the sermon will be about as reflected in a descriptive, definitive, distinguishable statement.<sup>110</sup>

There may be more than one way to present a proposition, such as in a parable or narrative.<sup>111</sup> Preachers will say numerous things (the point of sermon structure)

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<sup>107</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 317-18, 320-21.

<sup>108</sup>Akin, *The Introduction: How to Begin Well*, 188, 190.

<sup>109</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 21; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 318, 338-339.

<sup>110</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 22; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 339. Awbrey stated, “When I preach, I strive to provide in every sermon introduction at least 3 statements of the sermon proposition.” He incorporates it the third time with variety to avoid redundancy. Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 22.

<sup>111</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 197.

about that singular thing his sermon is about (the proposition), and since he is saying numerous things about the one thing he is advancing, it demands another sort of proposition that will lend itself to the corresponding divisions of thought within the sermon structure.<sup>112</sup> One type of proposition can handle this load, as Awbrey asserted:

All propositional statements, even when finely crafted, are not created equal. Not all clear propositions wield the same ability to supply the needed coherence to the outline of the sermon body. The plural noun proposition distinguishes itself in its inherent ability to be easily identified in the introduction as well as relating to the outline in the sermon body in a tight, logical way.<sup>113</sup>

This is known as the *keyword* method and occurs naturally as the outcome of posing a question in light of the thesis.<sup>114</sup> The keyword has several benefits: (1) it categorizes the main points; (2) it provides a roadmap for the intended direction of the message; (3) it gives the sermon a sense of unity; (4) the singular form of the keyword assists in constructing the main points in a parallel fashion; (5) it provides a test for the main points to see if they fit with the other points in the outline; (6) it ties the main points of

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<sup>112</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 326.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 323. Awbrey pointed out that utilizing any homiletic device is subservient to *the* guiding principle—the Word. He gives an example: “However, MacArthur has never acknowledged an attempt to incorporate the usage of key-words in his sermon propositions, or an attempt to use propositions in the introductions of his sermons. The motive of the writer was simply to discover to what degree these homiletical devices were used by MacArthur in his preaching. The writer was not implying that his preaching would be better if he incorporated these devices more consistently. It was the opinion of the writer that the effectiveness of MacArthur’s preaching was not dependent upon conformity to homiletical devices such as propositions containing key-words in the introductions of the sermons.” Awbrey, “A Critical Examination of the Theory and Practice of John F. MacArthur’s Expository Preaching,” 147, note 24.

<sup>114</sup>Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 164-65.

the sermon together; (7) it assists in memorizing the main points of the sermon; and (8) it aids in avoiding meaningless words to describe sermon points (e.g., ‘things’).<sup>115</sup>

How does one formulate a keyword or plural noun proposition? The keyword will label each division and provide unity and balance to the structure.<sup>116</sup> In short, find series of parallels or ideas (such as ‘reasons,’ ‘causes,’ ‘qualities’), identify the keyword that best sums up the list, and build the introduction and initial sentence around the keyword. The list of plausible keywords is endless and, while the process may seem mechanical, mastery of crafting a plural noun proposition is as much skill as it is art.<sup>117</sup> While plural noun propositions tend to be lengthier than non-plural noun propositions, the few additional words can prove advantageous to the sermon.<sup>118</sup> A few examples:

The passage reveals **five** glorious *reasons* why your salvation is great.  
In this text, we see **six** powerful *requests* that will bring you total forgiveness.

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<sup>115</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 201; see Faris D. Whitesell, *Power in Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1963), 61.

<sup>116</sup>Skinner, *Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 165.

<sup>117</sup>Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 200; see Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 169; see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 336-37. The list of available words may be endless, but not all are plausible. Awbrey said, “In the formulation of a plural noun proposition it is never acceptable to use the word ‘things’ as a plural noun. . . . It must be recognized that the word simply is not declarative. It says nothing. . . . The word ‘points’ is just as useless as a plural noun since it is equivalent to ‘things’ and either word can, at best, only relate to the sermon outline and not the sermon proposition. . . . Additionally, two other words, ‘aspects’ and ‘truths,’ must be severely curtailed in usage.” Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 20. For a lengthier discussion on formulation of the plural noun, see Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 14-16.

<sup>118</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 14.

When propositions are predictable, detached from the Word and the listener, they will lose potency, but if proposition and structure are fitting, then Word and listeners meet where they are.<sup>119</sup> Is there any means to test sermon proposition quality? The next three questions will test the mettle of the proposition.

Does the sermon proposition depict the central idea of the text?

Does the sermon proposition reflect the attributes, or the qualities sought for in a plural noun proposition such as accuracy, specificity, conciseness, interest, and relevance?

Does the sermon proposition provide actual insight as to what the sermon will be about?<sup>120</sup>

### **Survey of Homiletic Voices**

The PD determined that it would be beneficial to survey the preaching landscape to ascertain the status of the introduction in theory and practice (see appendix D for a detailed evaluation of each survey question). The PD chose to execute the survey from two vantage points. While doing the same survey, he was able to separate the survey into two groupings—first, responses of full-time senior pastors (fifty-two) and, second, responses of homileticians (professors of preaching), seminary and college presidents, and pastors that have made significant contributions to the field of preaching (fifty-two) and bear the label homileticians.

Surveyors were only individuals from churches and schools who are evangelical and committed to an inerrant Word. The survey ran from February 1, 2018, until March 21, 2018, and consisted of eight questions. Although the groupings

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<sup>119</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Advance*, 340-41.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, 341-42.



are parallel (fifty-two each), it may do well to remember that the homiletician grouping may be ‘weightier’ since it draws from a limited pool. The PD was able to ascertain where certain introductory elements stand on the homiletic landscape, as well as to “get a feel” for current practice. A significant bulk of both groups spend ten to twenty hours in sermon preparation for a Sunday morning sermon. The fact that only five out of 104 spend more than two hours in the introduction was unforeseen; yet more surprising, fewer than one-third of both groups spend less than thirty minutes preparing introductions. This small number begs the question, “Can a practitioner truly prepare an effective sermon introduction in less than thirty minutes?”

Both groups had at least 10 percent as their fixed portion for the sermon introduction, while more homileticians tended to exceed that percentage. The PD was not surprised with the high number (ninety-one of 104) that ranked the text as first in homiletic importance. What was shocking, however, was that it was not unanimous. One can only hope they misunderstood the question. Regarding ranking of elements, the first three places of importance would be identical: text is most important (almost unanimous), application is of second most importance (about 75 percent), and introduction is third most important (slightly above 50 percent). Per the survey, the plural noun proposition has fallen on tough times, with only five surveyors stating its importance. Not that a plural noun proposition or lack of one will make-or-break a sermon, but the surprisingly small number makes one wonder why more pastors and homileticians do not employ it. Some possibilities may be training, habit, preference, perceived time to prepare, forgetfulness, or even ignorance.

The small number for application usage in the introduction raises questions. Does one-third or fewer of either group feel that the introduction is not the place for application? Is it more appropriate in the body or conclusion? Can one effectively give application in the introduction? A sizeable number from both groups write out their introduction for the pulpit. Undeniably, the plus 60 percent for both reflect a feeling that the preacher start well. There was a notable number that saw no connection between sermon purpose in the introduction and conclusion. This small number leaves a chance of losing purpose, or at least having it wane in their sermon conclusions. Any small number that zaps the purpose of the sermon of its vitality is undesirable.

The PD was able to glean insight from the survey. The notion that one can prepare an effective introduction in thirty minutes or less is suspect. Likely, it speaks to a diminished or pedestrian view of the introduction. That the introduction ranked third in order of weight behind application reveals the necessity for vital questions and crucial assertions in the introduction. The fact that few use the plural noun proposition does not diminish its worth; the PD still sees it as a vital element in his preaching.

### **Appraisal of Sermon Introductions**

The resolve of the PD for this project is to enhance his skill in the sermon introduction by appraising and integrating the components of an effective sermon introduction. Factoring into this appraisal and integration, the PD will evaluate select practitioners to determine how they preach their introductions. The PD will utilize the Sermon Evaluation Form (*adapted version*): Six Essential Elements of an Effective Introduction of Dr. Awbrey to assess twenty-five sermons. This assessment can then lend insight into their positive sermon introduction qualities, which the PD will then

be able to employ into his own skillset. The practitioners to evaluate are W. A. Criswell, John MacArthur, Jason Allen, David Allen, and Jim Shaddix. The selection of these five men was intentional, reflecting both pastor and homiletician.

The PD will analyze five sermons from each practitioner, assessing their use (or lack of) of the elements of an effective introduction. This process should broaden the PD's cognition of the sermon introduction. He will only evaluate those aspects of the sermon that pertain to the introduction, not the message itself. Failure on the part of the practitioner to utilize a plural noun proposition to conclude his introduction will call for the PD to determine the ending of the introduction and the start of the sermon body. Failure on the practitioner to clearly transition to the conclusion will allow the PD to make that determination as well, since an aspect of proper sermon introduction elements involves the conclusion. Evaluating the sermons will involve some subjectivity, but it will not lessen the value of the grading process or the worth that the PD will derive from the enhancing process.

The PD will deal with the practitioners in no order of preference and every single analysis will include the text, title, and date of the sermon. Each will include a chart containing the average of the respective practitioners' five sermons, which will accrue according to the six elements of an effective sermon introduction (see appendix E for a detailed evaluation of each practitioner's sermon). The evaluation of the individual practitioner by the PD will reveal the strong points and failings of the collective sermon introduction elements and he will enhance his own sermon introductions through what he gleans.

Dr. Jason Allen

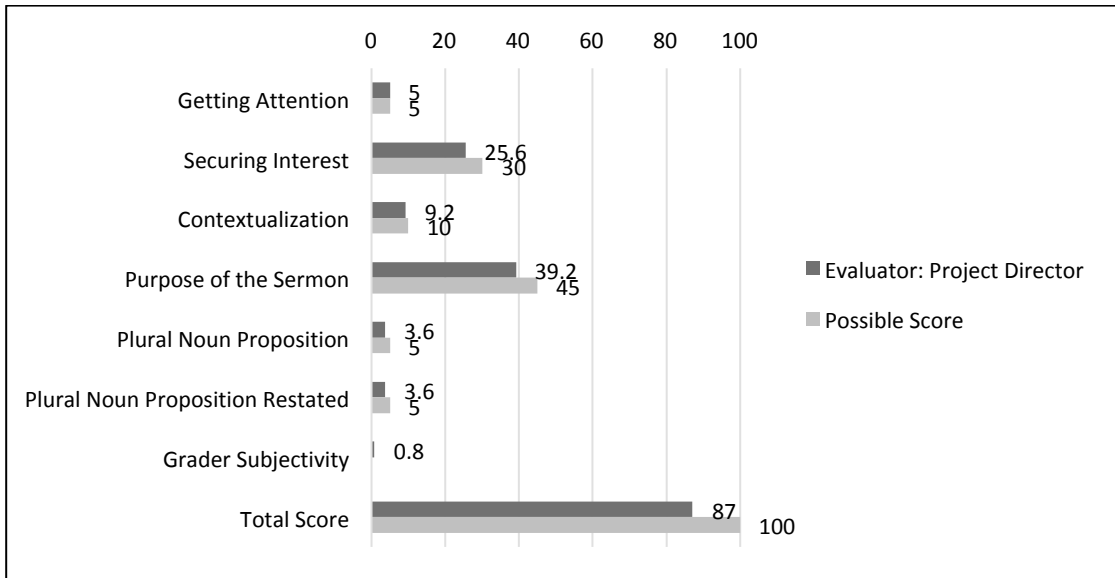
Dr. Jason K. Allen is the president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. He serves as an associate professor for preaching and pastoral ministry. He also serves the church through his preaching and writing ministries. He is the author of four books, *The SBC and the 21st Century*, *Discerning Your Call to Ministry*, *Portraits of a Pastor: The 9 Essential Roles of a Church Leader*, and *Being a Christian: How Jesus Redeems All of Life*. He has a website ([jasonkallen.com](http://jasonkallen.com)) and hosts a weekly podcast, “Preaching & Preachers.”

The sermons evaluated were: “The Power of One” from Philippians 2:1-4 (2017-11-05), “The Coaching Carousel” from Philippians 1:1-7 (2017-11-26), “Not by Might nor by Power” from Zechariah 4:6 (2017-10-08), “Four Marks of a Cheerful Church” from Philippians 4:4-7 (2017-11-12), and “Building a Cross-centered Life and Church in 2018” from 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 (2018-01-07). The median scores for each of the six elements of an effective introduction are shown in figure 2.

Dr. Allen has several strengths and a few weaknesses worth noting. He was successful in getting attention, scoring a 5 in each sermon. He did an admirable job securing interest, consistently offering flesh and blood scenarios, as well as five or more crucial assertions. While many times he did offer personal questions, he failed to meet the required five. He was inconsistent in stating a projection of a determinative difference, scoring three 10s, a 6, and a 4. Interestingly, he was able to accomplish this in one of his ten scores by stating it in his opening prayer. He did an outstanding job of contextualizing the sermon, and the only reason he was not perfect was that two

FIGURE 2

AVERAGE SCORE OF PRACTITIONER SERMON INTRODUCTION  
EVALUATIONS BASED ON THE SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN  
EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION—DR. JASON ALLEN



messages were stand-alone messages (the PD adjusted the N/A on the connection to the previous messages in the grader subjectivity portion).

Dr. Allen does a suitable job with the purpose of the sermon, averaging 39.2 of 45.0. On stating a clear purpose and relating that to great personal significance, he scored 49 of a possible 50 for the sermon pool, executing a stellar effort. On following through with the sermon purpose in the conclusion, he failed to consistently reinvigorate interest through Q&A, averaging 3.2 out of 5.0. He provided appropriate ways and means, as well as adequate clinching elements of persuasion, which he did a couple of times in his closing prayer. He was haphazard with the plural noun proposition, scoring three 5s, one 3, and one 0. Overall, he was successful in accomplishing the purpose of the sermon, averaging 4.6 out of 5.0.

On the average, the sermons of Dr. Allen break down as follows: sermon average (30:16 minutes), introduction (10:54 minutes, 35 percent), body (14:64 minutes, 49 percent), and conclusion (4:81 minutes, 16 percent). The PD notes several things from observing the preaching of Dr. Allen that he can employ, thereby enhancing his sermon introductions. While one may wish for more time devoted to the sermon body, he did show that the preacher can do an introduction well and in a timely way. He directed his thoughts decisively and accomplished this with a modicum of words. Of note was his ability to accomplish elements in his opening and/or closing prayer, whether that be compliance or noncompliance, the purpose related to a great personal significance, or clinching elements of persuasion.

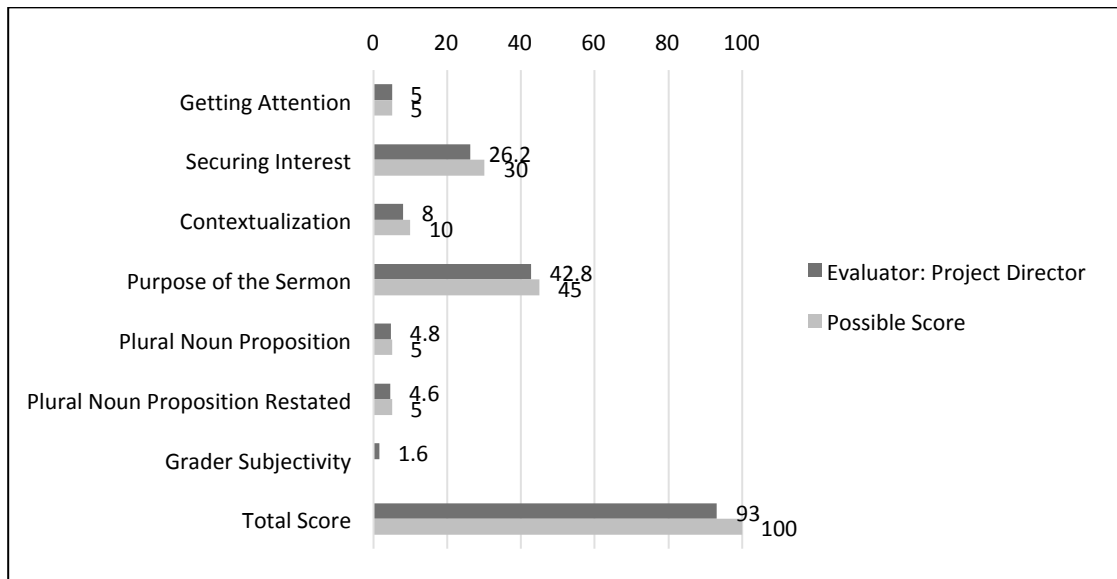
#### Dr. Jim Shaddix

Dr. Jim Shaddix is the Professor of Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He holds the W. A. Criswell Chair of Expository Preaching. He has held pastorates in Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Colorado and served previously as Professor of Preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana. He has authored one book on his own: *The Passion Driven Sermon* and has co-authored two volumes with Dr. Jerry Vines: *Power in the Pulpit* and *Progress in the Pulpit*.

The sermons evaluated were: “Responding to the Otherness of God” from Psalm 99:1-9 (2014-06-15), “Theology for Unexpected Storms” from Mark 4:35-41 (2014-02-02), “The Resurrection and the Life” from John 11:1-53 (2014-03-23), “The Steadfast Love of God’s Adoption” from Psalm 52:1-9 (2014-05-11), and “To Remain

Faithful” from Luke 18:1-8 (2012-11-11). The average scores for each of the six elements of an effective introduction are shown in figure 3.

FIGURE 3  
 AVERAGE SCORE OF PRACTITIONER SERMON INTRODUCTION  
 EVALUATIONS BASED ON THE SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN  
 EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION—DR. JIM SHADDIX



Dr. Shaddix exhibited several strengths and a few weaknesses in his sermon samplings. He was successful in getting attention, scoring a 5.0 in each sermon. He did an excellent job securing interest, consistently offering flesh and blood scenarios, as well as five or more crucial assertions. While many times he did offer personal questions, he failed to meet the required five (averaging 7.4 out of 10.0 for the five sermons). He was consistent in stating a projection of a determinative difference, averaging 9.2 out of 10.0 for the sermon pool. He did well at contextualizing. The only reason he was not perfect was that all his messages were stand-alone messages (the

PD adjusted the N/A on the connection to the previous messages in the grader subjectivity portion).

Dr. Shaddix handled the purpose of the sermon nicely, averaging 42.8 of 45.0. On stating a clear purpose and relating that to great personal significance, he scored 48 of a possible 50 for the sermon pool, accomplishing a first-rate effort. On following through with the sermon purpose in the conclusion, he consistently reinvigorated interest through Q&A, averaging a perfect 5 out of 5. He provided appropriate ways and means (another perfect 20 out of 20), as well as adequate clinching elements of persuasion, which could find improvement (averaging 3.4 out of 5.0). He was consistent in the implementation of the plural noun proposition, averaging 4.8 and a 4.6 on stating the plural noun proposition clearly, and as the last part of the introduction.

Dr. Shaddix scored the highest on the average final grade with 93. On the average, his sermons break down as follows: sermon average (57 minutes), introduction (11:07 minutes, 21 percent), body (27:08 minutes, 49 percent), and conclusion (17:01 minutes, 30 percent). As an aside, it is interesting that Dr. Shaddix's sermon body averaged (27:08) and the total sermon average of Dr. Jason Allen (30:16) are close in actual time, but still both men were able to accomplish the purpose of their sermons. The PD notes several things from observing the preaching of Dr. Shaddix that he can employ, thereby enhancing his sermon introductions. While the average pastor does not devote fifty-seven minutes (average) in delivery, Dr. Shaddix proves that the preacher can preach 'long' and still hold the attention of people and not get sidetracked. One does not have to hurry through an introduction, but can devote



adequate time (average 11:07 minutes) to realize all six essential elements of an effective introduction. He is diligent at asking a lot of questions in securing interest, as well as reinvigorating the purpose by the same method in the conclusion. His closing appeals, providing ways/means, is a major takeaway for the PD in enhancing his introduction skill.

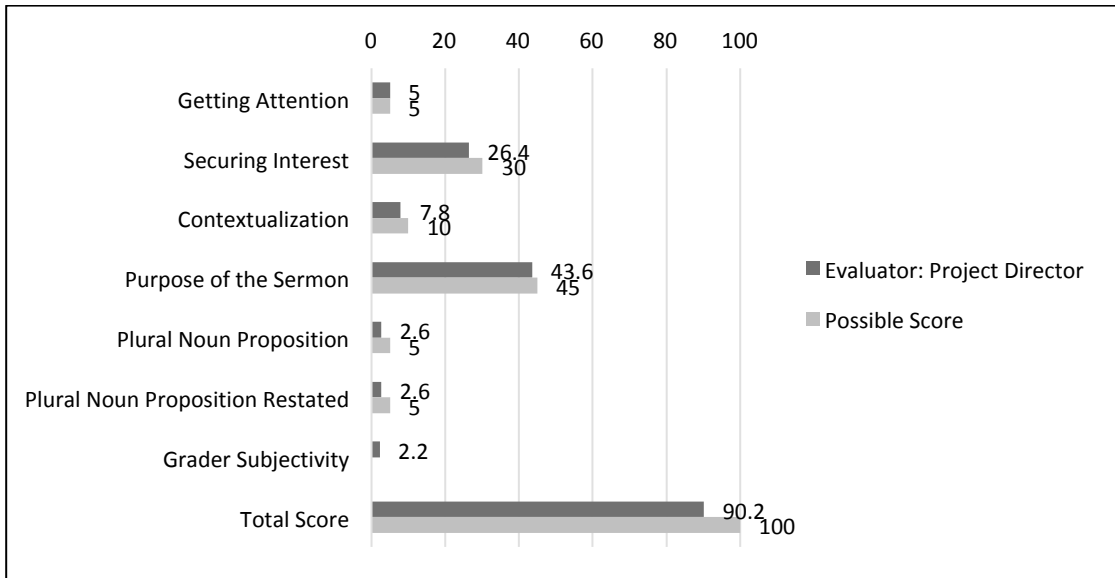
#### Dr. David Allen

Dr. David Allen is the Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He is the Dean of the School of Preaching, Director of the Center for Expository Preaching, and occupies the George W. Truett Chair of Pastoral Ministry. He served as senior pastor of two churches. He is author of *Hebrews* in the NAC Series; *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*; *1-3 John* in the Preaching the Word Series; and *Preaching Tools: An Annotated Survey of Commentaries and Preaching Resources for Every Book of the Bible*. He is co-editor and contributor to numerous other homiletic works such as *Text-driven Preaching* and *Preach the Word*. He is currently writing *Job* in the Christ-centered Exposition Commentary Series. Material is available as well at [www.drdavidallen.com](http://www.drdavidallen.com).

The sermons evaluated were: “A Vision of the Lord” from Isaiah 6:1-13 (2014-02-18), “A Visit to Vanity Fair” from Ecclesiastes 1:1-2; 12:9-14 (2013-10-10), “The Seven Wonders of Jesus” from Hebrews 1:1-4 (2016-02-23), “The Ministry of the Thorn” from 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (2015-10-22), and “Wanna Play Catch?” from 1 John 4:7-11 (2016-10-12). The average scores for each of the six elements of an effective introduction are shown in figure 4.

FIGURE 4

AVERAGE SCORE OF PRACTITIONER SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATIONS BASED ON THE SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION—DR. DAVID ALLEN



Dr. David Allen exhibited several strengths and a few weaknesses worth mentioning. He was successful in getting attention, scoring a 5 in each sermon. He did an admirable job securing interest, consistently offering flesh and blood scenarios, as well as five or more crucial assertions. While many times he did offer personal questions, he failed to meet the required five. He was notably consistent in stating a projection of a determinative difference, scoring two 10s, two 8s, and a 4. He did an exceptional job of contextualizing the sermon, averaging 7.8 out of 10.0, which would have been 9.8 except they were all stand-alone messages (the PD adjusted the N/A on the connection to the previous messages in the grader subjectivity portion).

Dr. Allen did a splendid job with the sermon purpose, averaging 43.6 of 45.0, the highest of all practitioners. On stating a clear purpose and relating that to great

personal significance, he scored a total of 47 of a possible 50 for the sermon pool (averaging 4.8 for clear statement of purpose and 4.6 on relating the purpose as great personal significance), executing significant excellence. On following through with the sermon purpose in the conclusion, he consistently reinvigorated interest through Q&A, averaging 4.6 out of 5.0. He provided adequate and appropriate ways and means, as well as ample clinching elements of persuasion. He scored below average with the plural noun proposition, scoring two 5s, one 3, and two 0s. While this is low, the PD observed that Dr. Allen may feel that the plural noun proposition is not that crucial. He was successful in achieving the sermon purpose, averaging 5 out of 5.

On the average, the sermons of Dr. Allen break down as follows: sermon average (49:13 minutes), introduction (11:46 minutes, 23 percent), body (27:08 minutes, 55 percent), and conclusion (10:36 minutes, 22 percent). The PD notes several things from observing the preaching of Dr. Allen that he can employ, thereby enhancing his sermon introductions. Other than Dr. Criswell, Dr. Allen exhibited an above average *pathos* that is due to his fluency with the text and interaction with the Spirit. This is evident from the beginning of the introduction to conclusion. He typically did not just shatter the silence, he obliterated it, commanding and demanding the hearer's attention and interest (the PD can learn much here). He painted vivid word pictures throughout the introduction and his clinching elements of persuasion in the conclusion provided a significant enhancing feature if the PD can hone these types of abilities.

## Dr. John MacArthur

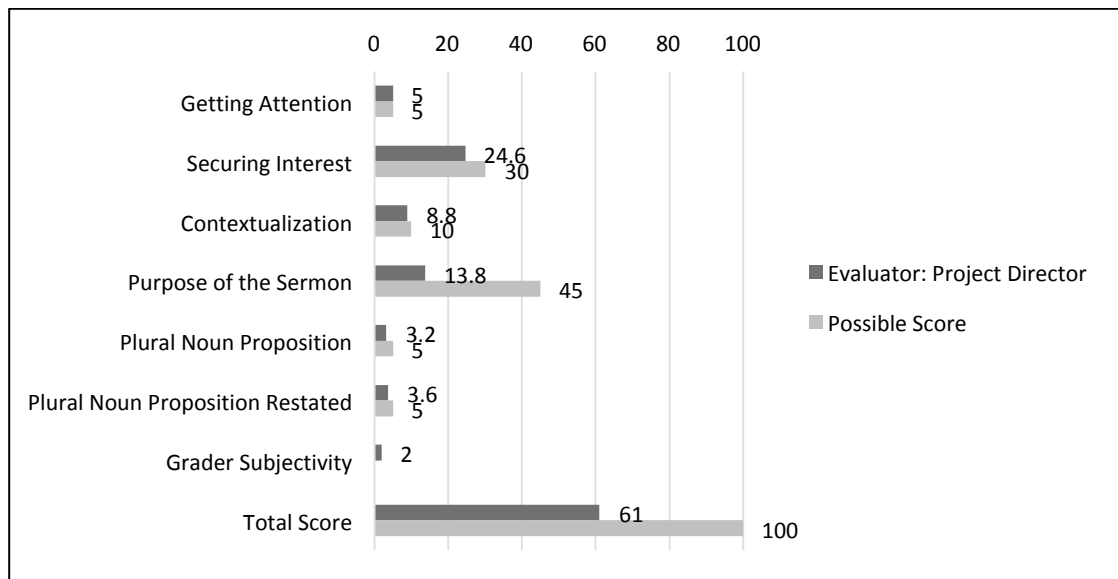
Dr. John MacArthur is the pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, and president and founder of The Master's University and Seminary. *Grace to You* is his teaching and preaching media ministry (*Grace to You* airs over one thousand times daily through the English-speaking world and nine hundred plus times daily in Spanish, reaching twenty-three countries across Europe and Latin America). He has pastored Grace Community Church for forty-nine years. He adheres to verse-by-verse exposition of the Bible, with an undergirding historical and grammatical hermeneutic.

Dr. MacArthur wrote his first bestseller, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, and has penned over four hundred books and study guides, as well as *The MacArthur Study Bible* and the thirty-three volume *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. He contributes to the field of preaching and pastoral ministry, authoring and contributing to *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*; *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*; *The Shepherd as Leader: Guiding Others with Integrity and Conviction*; *The Shepherd as Preacher: Delivering God's Word with Passion and Power*; and *The Shepherd as Theologian: Accurately Interpreting and Applying God's Word*.

The sermons evaluated include: "The Extent of Christian Invincibility" from Romans 8:28 (2002-01-06), "God's Preparation for Christ's Cross" from Luke 21:37-22:2 (2008-01-06), "Hope That Transcends Groaning" from Romans 8:18-25 (2012-01-01), "Strength Perfected in Weakness" from 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (2016-03-06), and "Paul's Plea: Cling to the Gospel!" from Galatians 4:12-18 (2017-11-19). The

median scores for each of the six elements of an effective introduction are shown in figure 5.

**FIGURE 5**  
**AVERAGE SCORE OF PRACTITIONER SERMON INTRODUCTION**  
**EVALUATIONS BASED ON THE SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN**  
**EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION—DR. JOHN MACARTHUR**



There exists a significant discrepancy between the first three practitioners and the last two, scores notwithstanding. The first three practitioners focused on the exposition and application of the text, while Drs. MacArthur and Criswell virtually emphasized exposition with no application (which does affect the introduction and the conclusion)—hence the lower scores. Nevertheless, Dr. MacArthur did exhibit several strengths worth noting. He was successful in getting attention, scoring a 5 in each sermon. He did an adequate job securing interest, consistently offering flesh and blood scenarios (averaging 10 of 10), as well as five or more crucial assertions. While many

times he did offer personal questions, he failed to meet the required five. He was inconsistent in stating a projection of a determinative difference, scoring two 10s, a 7, a 4, and a 0. He did an outstanding job of contextualizing the sermons. He would have scored near perfect, except he had a stand-alone message (the PD adjusted the N/A on the connection to the previous messages in the grader subjectivity portion).

The weakest area of Dr. MacArthur related to the purpose of the sermon (element IV of the essential elements of an effective sermon) where he averaged 13.8 of 45.0. On stating a clear purpose and relating that to great personal significance, he scored a total of 29 of a possible 50 for the sermon pool (averaging 3.2 of 5.0 for clear statement of purpose and 2.6 of 5.0 relating the purpose as great personal significance), which is due to his focus on exposition, no doubt leaving the Spirit to make the text and sermon a great personal significance to the hearer. Following through with the sermon purpose in the conclusion, he did not consistently reinvigorate interest through Q&A, averaging 0.6 out of 5.0. He provided inadequate ways and means (averaging 2.4 of 20.0), as well as slightly below average (2.4 of 5.0) clinching elements of persuasion. He was consistent in the implementation of the plural noun proposition, averaging 3.2, and a 3.6 on stating the plural noun proposition clearly and as the last part of the introduction. This average would have significantly improved if not for the two 0s he scored in this area on the second sermon. For his goal and focus (exposition of text), he was successful in accomplishing his purpose of the sermon; however, for relating the applicable elements of an effective introduction, he was only slightly above average (2.6 of 5.0).

On the average, the sermons of Dr. MacArthur break down as follows: sermon average (54.03 minutes), introduction (27:37 minutes, 50 percent), body (47:32 minutes, 47 percent), and conclusion (2:51 minutes, 3 percent). While one may do a double take on the above figures, they are, in fact, correct and do, in fact, give credence to the style of Dr. MacArthur. Further intensifying the 50 percent on the sermon introduction was the second sermon, which only had an introduction and conclusion. He stated at 53:21 minutes into the sermon, “And that was the introduction to the introduction.”<sup>121</sup> The PD notes several things from observing the preaching of Dr. MacArthur that he can employ, thereby enhancing his sermon introductions. While only Dr. MacArthur could consistently devote that much time to an introduction and live to tell about it, the PD believes he could enhance his sermon introduction skills by following his pattern, especially in contextualizing the sermon. Dr. MacArthur is meticulous in establishing the context of the preaching text and orienting that to listeners. The sheer volume of scriptural support he brings to bear on a text is significant and the pursuit to leave “no stone unturned” in readying people to receive the Word is a path worth following to enhance sermon introduction skill.

#### Dr. W. A. Criswell

Dr. W. A. Criswell (d. 2002) served as pastor for over seventy-five years. Pastorates include FBC Chickasha, OK; FBC Muskogee, OK and FBC Dallas, Texas, in October of 1944. He served for fifty years as senior pastor of FBC preaching over

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<sup>121</sup>John F. MacArthur Jr., “God’s Preparation for Christ’s Cross (Luke 21:37–22:2)” (Video) Sermon: Grace to You, Panorama City, CA, January 6, 2008), <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/42-266/gods-preparation-for-christs-cross>.

five thousand sermons from its pulpit. Dr. Criswell wrote fifty-four books and founded Criswell College. As founder, he gave his later years to preparing young preachers to preach the Word of God. He is known as the father of the “conservative resurgence,” returning the SBC to its Bible-believing roots. Twice elected president of the SBC and his homiletic commentaries (*Acts, Isaiah, Daniel, and Revelation*) were standard fare for many preachers, as well as *Criswell’s Guidebook for Pastors*. The *Criswell Study Bible*; and *Why I Preach That the Bible is Literally True* are his *magnum opus*. One can find over four thousand of his expository sermons at [www.wacriswell.com](http://www.wacriswell.com).

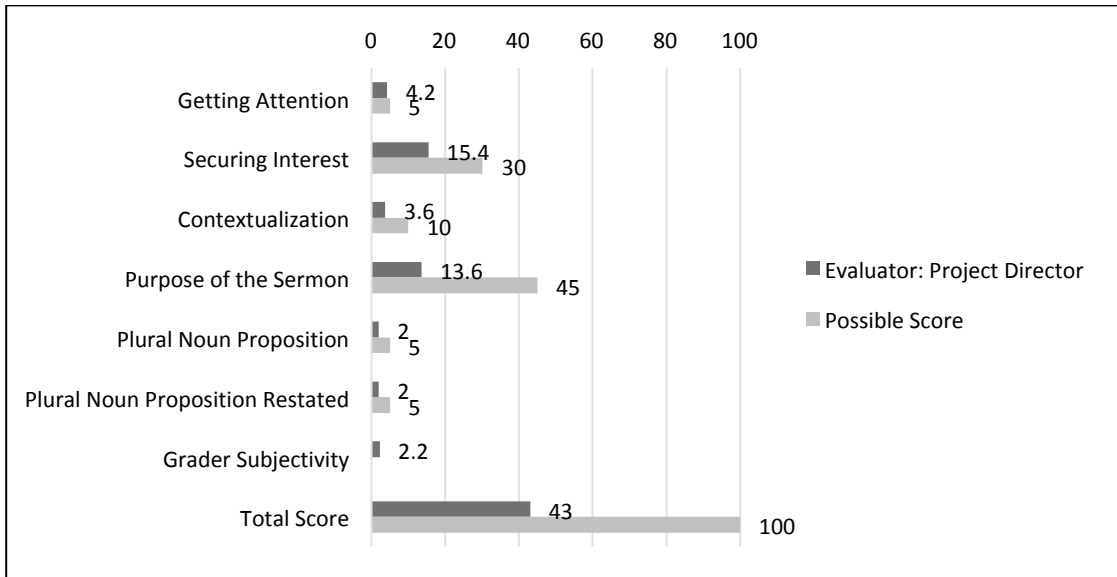
The sermons evaluated were: “This Is Your Bible” from Genesis 1:1; John 21:25 (1956-09-09), “The Power of the Resurrection” from Philippians 3:10 (1990-02-04), “God’s Amazing Propitiation” from Romans 3:25 (1992-09-13), “The Imperishable Word of God” from Isaiah 40:8 (1974-07-15), and “The Vision of the Apocalypse” from Revelation 1:1-3 (1961-01-08). The average scores for each of the six elements of an effective introduction are shown in figure 6.

Dr. Criswell was successful in getting attention, averaging 4.2 of 5 in each sermon. He is slightly above the midpoint (15.4 of 30.0) for securing interest. He accomplished the bulk of that score through flesh and blood scenarios (averaging 8 of 10). He consistently enlisted five or more crucial assertions, yet he was inconsistent in stating a projection of a determinative difference, scoring one 6, a 5, a 2, and two 0s. He fell below the median in contextualizing the sermon (averaging 3.6 of 10.0). These messages were stand-alone messages (the PD adjusted the N/A on the connection to the previous messages in the grader subjectivity portion), so there was no connection to a previous message. While his approach may have been expository, his delivery (at



FIGURE 6

AVERAGE SCORE OF PRACTITIONER SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATIONS BASED ON THE SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION—DR. W. A. CRISWELL



least for these five messages) was topical/textual. He was more apt in these instances to preach ‘from’ or ‘about’ the text, instead of preaching the text.

Dr. Criswell fell significantly below the average with the purpose of the sermon, averaging 13.6 of 45.0. On stating a clear purpose and relating that to great personal significance, he scored a total of 36 of a possible 50 for the sermon pool (averaging 4.4 of 5.0 for clear statement of purpose and 2.8 of 5.0 relating the purpose as great personal significance). On following through with the sermon purpose in the conclusion, he did not consistently reinvigorate interest through Q&A, averaging 1.2 out of 5.0. He provided insufficient ways and means (averaging 1.2 of 20.0), as well as inadequate clinching elements of persuasion. He was feast or famine with the plural

noun proposition, scoring two 5s and three 0s. Overall, he was above average in accomplishing the purpose of the sermon, averaging 2.8 out of 5.0.

On the average, the sermons of Dr. Criswell break down as follows: sermon average (33.23 minutes), introduction (7:25 minutes, 21 percent), body (22:22 minutes, 69 percent), and conclusion (4:36 minutes, 10 percent). The PD notes a few things from the preaching of Dr. Criswell that he can employ, thereby enhancing his sermon introductions. Dr. Criswell is rare, these five sermons prove that; it would be difficult to duplicate what he does and the way that he does it. The sermon delivery buries any foreseeable sermon methodology/structure, and this certainly does not indict his preaching; it is simply what makes him unique.<sup>122</sup> The PD would do well to take note of his *ethos* and *pathos*, even in the introduction. Dr. Criswell consistently stated and kept the purpose of the sermon before the hearers, which the PD would be wise to follow to enhance his introduction skills.

### **Contextual Application**

Having assessed current and accepted sermon introduction practice and the approach in which pastors and homileticians employ them, the PD has gained significant insight into how he can enhance his own sermon introductions. To be sure,

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<sup>122</sup>Criswell is akin to Spurgeon, Thomas said, “I have used them [his sermons] over and over ever since, sometimes with great delight and admiration, and sometimes (it has to be said) with dismay at his handling of the text. Spurgeon’s invariable style was textual, often focusing on one or two verses. His *intent* was always to be expository; in *practice*, he could sometimes introduce matters into the sermon that did not properly emerge from the text. . . . Nevertheless, the salutary influence of the greatest Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century has been incalculable.” Derek W. H. Thomas, “Expository Preaching,” in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, 2nd ed., ed. Don Kistler (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2008), 42.

every introduction should employ each element. An effective introduction will be able to quickly get listener attention, thereby affording the preacher the opportunity to secure interest through the means of personal questions and crucial assertions (these will raise need), offering flesh and blood scenarios (these will offer both negative and positive illustrations), and showing listeners the results of compliance or noncompliance. The effective introduction will summarize and connect previous preaching texts, as well as orient listeners to the current preaching text. This furthers effectiveness by offering and maintaining a clear, text-driven purpose that the listener will perceive as personally significant, which will serve in making the listener ready for the Word. The preacher will forge a plural noun proposition that he will repeat and use as the last sentence of the introduction. This will function as the sermon roadmap for the listener.

The PD garnered substantial insight recognizing the vital link between introduction and conclusion. Having already established the purpose in the introduction, the preacher cannot allow the purpose to wane, so he will then reinvigorate that purpose in the conclusion through vital Q&A. His closing appeals afford the listener (through both personal and practical) ways and means appropriate to the purpose. The clinching elements of persuasion will allow listeners to see with their ears as the preacher provides pertinent and powerful word pictures/illustrations. A persuasive gospel-driven ending is not optional; it is essential. A message minus Jesus is not a Christian message. Whatever the message, the preacher must allow the listeners (lost and saved) to deal “with Him with whom we have to do” according to the stated purpose. Each of these elements is crucial to an effective introduction.

Over two decades ago, Robinson coined the phrase “the heresy of application,” speaking of erroneous application that preachers offer in their sermons.<sup>123</sup> The application was not ‘heresy’ because it was bad, immoral, or erroneous; it was ‘heresy’ because the application had nothing to do with the text. Concerning the essential elements of the introduction, if the attention gained, the interest secured, the context derived, the purpose proposed, and the proposition stated do not originate from, point to, or go along with the biblical text, then the preacher has committed the heresy of introductory material. It is not as if the preacher is a late-night talk show host performing an opening monolog that has nothing to do with the rest of the show. The sermon introduction is an opportunity for the preacher to initiate the process whereby he and the listener will experience a rendezvous with the living God.

“Must hear” preaching starts with “must hear” introductions, revealing several beliefs: (1) the finished introduction has a cumulative effect on the whole sermon, (2) the preached message is valuable, (3) the introduction exceeds a sermon’s token obligation, (4) the introduction is more than a brief patchwork of preliminaries, (5) the introduction requires and merits as diligent an effort as all other sermon components, and (6) an effective introduction is not produced without significant effort.<sup>124</sup> Daniel L. Akin provides a typical forty-minute sermon breakdown in a table format.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>Ed Rowell, “The Heresy of Application: An Interview with Haddon Robinson,” *Leadership Journal*, Fall 1997, 22.

<sup>124</sup>Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 22, 24, 27, 30, 31, 33.

<sup>125</sup>Daniel L. Akin, “The Word of Exposition: Developing the Message,” in *Engaging Exposition: A 3-D Approach to Preaching*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 155.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>% of Message</b>	<b>Time Allotment</b>
Introduction	10%	4 minutes
Body	75%	30 minutes
(1) Exposition	(50%)	(20 minutes)
(2) Illustration	(12.5%)	(5 minutes)
(3) Application	(12.5%)	(5 minutes)
Conclusion (Invitation)	15%	6 minutes
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>40 minutes</b>

While the table does not account for the cumulative effect of the introduction on the entire sermon, it does however put things in perspective timewise to the exposition. This should give pause—the preacher is on a sacred mission, and to be effective in the introduction, there is no time for idle chatter or buffoonery. Every second is a precious gift from God—the preacher need not be derelict and waste them.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter maintained that the sermon introduction must be more and do more than the typical sermon introduction. To say “simply preparatory” would be an understatement. The PD assessed the purposes for and methodology of sermon introductions and, thereby, made a case for the necessity of introductions. An examination ensued of each of the elements of an effective introduction, with a subsequent treatment of each respectively. Each element followed Awbrey’s Sermon Evaluation Form (*adapted version*): Six Essential Elements of an Effective Introduction. The PD conducted a survey of practitioners (fifty-two senior pastors and fifty-two homileticians) across the homiletic landscape, which he ascertained what the gathered data meant and what it meant for him. In conjunction, the PD assessed twenty-five sermons from five different practitioners, employing Awbrey’s the

evaluation tool to assess only the six essential introductory elements. Each of these informational, methodological, and practical assessments provided significant enhancement to the skill of the sermon introductions of the PD, which is the thesis of this dissertation. This chapter concluded with an appraisal of the current practice of sermon introductions and will now lead to the project implementation plan.

## CHAPTER 4

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The initial step was to describe the ministry setting and determine the PD's need for sermon introduction enhancement. He determined that his sermon introductions were, in fact, insufficient and needed further development. The PD established a biblical rationale for both the mandate for expository preaching and a homiletic necessity for introductions in expository preaching. Finally, the PD was able to contextualize both the history of practice and the review of the literature into what constitutes an effective sermon introduction.

This chapter will outline the strategy by which the PD proposes to accomplish the purpose of the project. This strategy will entail the following: (1) the PD will list his objectives and goals; (2) the PD will present a plan providing detailed steps whereby he will enhance his skill in sermon introductions; and (3) the PD will provide a list of project measurement tools, assumptions, and limiting causes that will either guide or effect the plan to enhance sermon introduction skills of the PD.

#### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project is to develop and enhance the PD's preaching skill of his sermon introductions by sermonic evaluation and needed adaptation via the elements of an effective introduction.

## **Project Objectives and Goals**

The following signifies the PD's objectives to meet the goal of sermon introduction enhancement. These objectives comprise the content of the dissertation project.

1. The PD will (a) determine and establish the biblical rationale for sermon introductions as well as (b) assess the current practice and methods of sermon introductions as advised by practitioners and authors in the field.
2. The PD will evaluate sermons of significant practitioners in contemporary preaching.
  - a. The PD will evaluate five sermon introductions and related concluding matter from Drs. Jason Allen, Jim Shaddix, David Allen, John MacArthur, and W. A. Criswell.
  - b. The aim of the PD is to evaluate the method by which the preacher introduces and concludes his message and not an appraisal of the message itself.
  - c. The PD will use Dr. Awbrey's sermon introduction rubric as the standard of measurement for evaluation (appendix B).
3. The PD will submit eighteen sermons to the doctoral project committee for evaluation using Dr. Awbrey's sermon introduction rubric as the standard of measurement for evaluation.
  - a. The PD will adapt his introductions based upon feedback from the evaluation process provided by the project committee.
  - b. The PD will implement the feedback through the duration of the project, with the aim of enhancing his skill of sermon introductions.
  - c. The enhancement of the PD through the eighteen sermons will sufficiently demonstrate an overall enhancement by increased scoring according to the sermon introduction rubric as compared with pre-project introduction evaluations.
4. Upon completion of the project, the PD will assess project outcomes to determine (a) the overall effects of the project, (b) the effectiveness of the execution of the project, (c) the degree of enhancement of the sermon



introductions, and (d) a plan for future application to ensure the continued incidence of effective sermon introductions in the preaching of the PD.

### **Project Plans**

Earlier, the PD submitted sermons and the project dissertation committee chairman randomly selected five for evaluation. The scoring basis of the sermons was Dr. Awbrey's grading rubric, which provided a baseline of the sermon introduction skill of the PD. The PD and project dissertation committee will use this baseline to evaluate and determine improvement of the skill of the PD.

The project will consist of eighteen sermons from the Book of Philippians. Each week, a sermon video and transcript of the sermon introduction and conclusion will be available to the project dissertation committee for review. The dissertation committee consisted of Dr. Ben Awbrey, Professor of Preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dr. Ken Parker, Senior Pastor of FBC Kearney, Missouri, and Adjunct Professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Upon analysis, the dissertation committee will score the introduction and related concluding material according to the introduction rubric and instruct the PD with corrective measures and recommendations for introduction enhancement. The PD will integrate those recommendations in the following sermon. Thus, each sermon introduction during the project should show improvement over the last, thereby having a cumulative effect.

### **Measurement Tools**

The measurement tool for this project is an adapted version (appendix B) of the standard grading tool of Dr. Awbrey (appendix A) for preaching classes at Midwestern

Baptist Theological Seminary. This adapted version would give new value to different introductory components, as well as establish significant connection of the sermon introduction with the sermon conclusion. This Sermon Evaluation Form consists of six scoring elements: (1) getting attention, five-point value; (2) securing interest, thirty-point value; (3) contextualization, ten-point value; (4) purpose of the sermon established and achieved in both the introduction and the conclusion, forty-five-point value; (5) plural noun proposition, five point value; and (6) plural noun proposition stated clearly and final point of introduction, five-point value. Each of the elements, scored individually, provide a 100-percentile score possibility for the skill demonstration. The project dissertation committee will evaluate and score each of the project sermons according to these six elements that make up an effective sermon introduction. A determination based on these scores will allow the PD to tangibly see if, in fact, his sermon introductions skill was enhanced.

### **Assumptions**

The project is based upon certain assumptions. There is an expectation that the project committee will practice objectivity with regard to the introduction rubric. The adapted sermon introduction rubric does have the potential for subjectivity as the evaluator awards points based on how he feels the PD executed the elements of the effective introduction. While one cannot discount the human element and the given variance in scoring, the fact that the project committee brings seasoned homiletic and pastoral skill can only serve to increase objectivity. Concurrently, such grading will provide sufficient assessment of the introduction skills of the PD.

Moreover, there is an assumption that the PD can enhance his skill in sermon introductions. The promise of weekly evaluation, advice, and suggested improvements portend the fact that the PD is capable and able to integrate all committee feedback about the elements and, thus, demonstrate that his skills are improving. There is an assumption that the PD will produce and present each of the eighteen sermons to the project committee in a sensible and timely fashion. There is an assumption that the committee will score, make recommendations, and return the results to the PD so that he will have enough time to integrate suggested improvements in the ensuing sermon.

Finally, there is an assumption that the PD will preach the pool of eighteen sermons on consecutive Sunday mornings via *lectio continua* from the Southside Baptist Church in Bowie, Texas. The one exception will be a week of vacation during the summer. The PD assumes that there will not be obstacles preventing sermon delivery that are unbeknownst to the PD at the time of this writing.

### **Limitations**

1. The limitations of this project are to the preaching ministry of the PD.
2. The limitations of this project are to the introductory and pertinent concluding material of sermons preached on Sunday mornings at Southside Baptist Church of Bowie, Texas.
3. The limitations of this project are to the eighteen sermons preached by the PD.
4. The limitations of this project are to the evaluation of the eighteen sermons by the introduction grading rubric as designed by Dr. Awbrey.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this project is to develop and enhance the preaching skill of the sermon introductions of the PD by sermonic evaluation and needed adaptation via the elements of an effective introduction. This chapter presented and detailed the implementation strategy for the dissertation project. The PD restated his purpose statement and provided clear objectives and goals, leading to well-defined steps of implementation. Dr. Awbrey's introduction grading rubric would serve as the measurement tool for evaluating the sermons because of its conciseness and precision regarding the six elements of effective introductions. Assumptions and limitations were also set forth, as well as exceptions to the implementation strategy. The subsequent chapter will review the implementation of the plan.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

The purpose of this project is to enhance the skill of the PD in the sermon introduction by examining and integrating the elements of an effective introduction. An overriding assumption from the inception of this project was that the PD could enhance his skill by comprehending and adhering to the rubric designed by Dr. Ben Awbrey. This evaluation tool focused on the six elements of an effective introduction. The preceding chapter outlined the plan of the PD to enhance his introducing skill, comprising a calculated means of receiving evaluation from his committee based upon the rubric. This chapter will detail precisely the implementation of that plan.

Initially, this chapter will serve as a detailed digest of how the implementation of the project progressed. Next, the PD will provide results from measurement tools, with comparative analysis against the scoring results of the five pre-project sermon introduction evaluations. Then, the chapter will describe any unforeseen causes and effects the PD met or realized during the progress of the implementation phase. This chapter concludes with a comprehensive digest of the results of the implementation of the project and then shifts to the project analysis.

#### **Implementation Summary**

The preaching phase of the project began on Sunday, July 22, 2018, at Southside Baptist Church in Bowie, Texas, and ended on Sunday, October 28, 2018. The PD serves as the senior pastor of Southside Baptist Church; thus, the preaching series transpired each Sunday morning without interruption or hindrance (see

appendix F for the preaching phase schedule). The PD submitted each sermon introduction and conclusion the next Monday for evaluation to the project dissertation committee comprised of Drs. Ben Awbrey and Ken Parker. The PD furnished sermon videos and audios by email link to the YouTube page of the PD and written transcripts of each sermon introduction and conclusion (see appendices G-U). The committee returned the evaluations through email so the PD could integrate any enhancement recommendations into the sermon of the subsequent week.

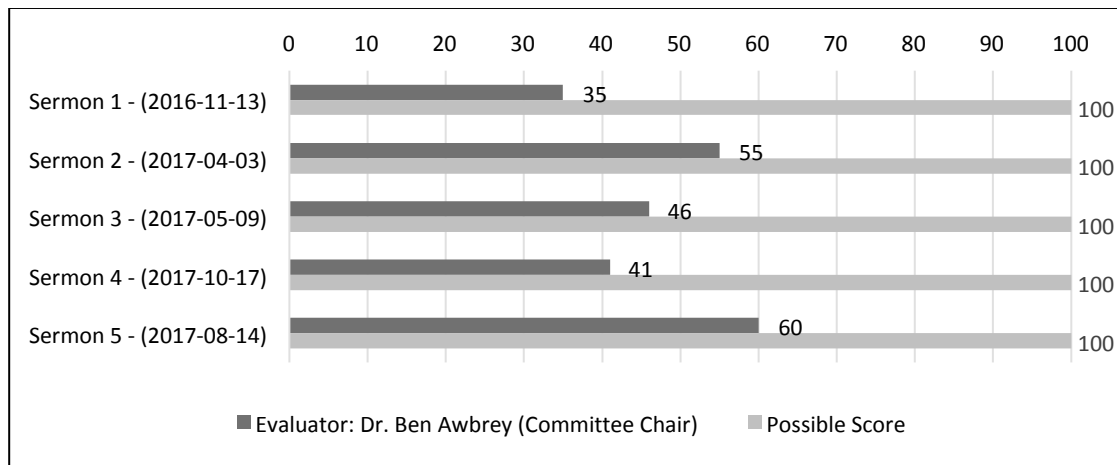
The dissertation committee specified from the onset that the preaching phase would consist of eighteen expositional sermons through Philippians, but the committee approved exemption from preaching the final three sermons, resulting in a preaching phase of fifteen rather than eighteen. Dr. Awbrey awarded the exemption due to the clear and measurable enhancement of the PD in both the skill of sermon introduction and understanding the introduction rubric. The following section focuses on the scoring results of each sermon unit established by the introduction rubric.

### **Results of Direct Measurements**

The PD submitted each of the fifteen sermons weekly, then later divided those sermons into three units to measure total progress in introduction enhancement. This would include inconsistencies and error, as well as advances and effectiveness in the integration of the six elements. Sermon unit divisions are: Sermons 1-5 (Unit 1), Sermons 6-10 (Unit 2), and Sermons 11-15 (Unit 3). The PD compared the evaluation of the unit scores with the pre-project scores. The pre-project introduction scores consisted of five sermons the committee chairman evaluated and graded as per the

introduction rubric. This process preceded project launch, helping establish a baseline to evaluate progress. Scores for each pre-project introduction are shown in figure 7.

FIGURE 7  
PRE-PROJECT SERMON SCORES BASED ON THE SIX ESSENTIAL  
ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION



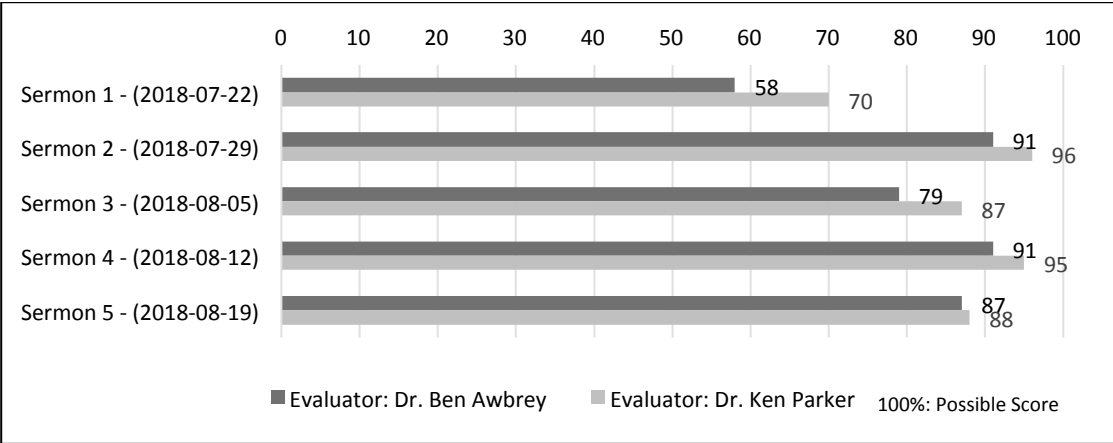
Dr. Awbrey issued an average score of 47.4 percent for the five sermons. This confirmed the suspicions of the PD that his introductions were deficient and in need of substantial enhancement. The pre-project evaluation average served as the baseline from which to evaluate and measure enhancement and verified that there was significant work to do in the introduction, as well as pertinent concluding elements (see appendix C for an appraisal of each sermon from the pre-project scoring). The objective for the project sermon introductions (and pertinent concluding sermon elements) was to reveal significant and progressive improvement in the proficiency and knowledge of the PD in the six elements of an effective introduction.

So, scoring for each unit of five project sermons (Unit 1-3) should convey such improvement. The sermons of Unit 1 averaged a score of 81.2 percent by Dr. Awbrey

and 87.2 percent by Dr. Parker. The PD displayed sizable improvement over the pre-project evaluation scores. The list of scores for each individual sermon introduction is shown in figure 8.

FIGURE 8

PROJECT SERMON UNIT 1 (SERMONS 1-5) COMPOSITE SCORES



Unit 2 sermons showed continued enhancement in applying the introduction rubric. Unit 2 averaged 93 percent from Dr. Awbrey and 95.2 percent from Dr. Parker. The list of scores for each individual sermon introduction is shown in figure 9.

Unit 3 sermons showed continued improvement. Unit 3 introductions averaged 98 percent (97 percent from Dr. Awbrey and 99 percent from Dr. Parker, respectively). The list of scores for each individual sermon introduction is shown in figure 10.

The PD showed significant improvement regarding the measurement tool with visible increase in the measured average scores: the pre-project score was 47.4 percent, Unit 1 was 84.2 percent, in Unit 2 it was 94.1 percent, and in Unit 3 it was 98



FIGURE 9

PROJECT SERMON UNIT 2 (SERMONS 6-10) COMPOSITE SCORES

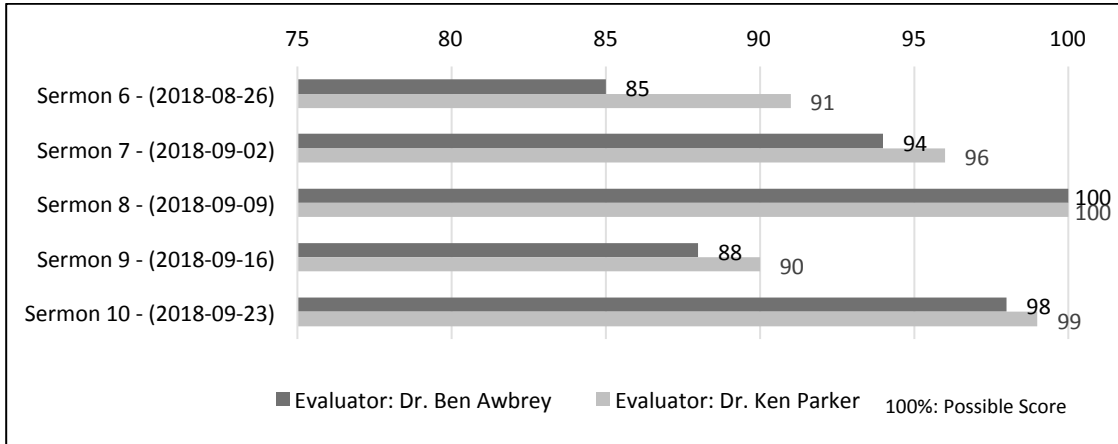
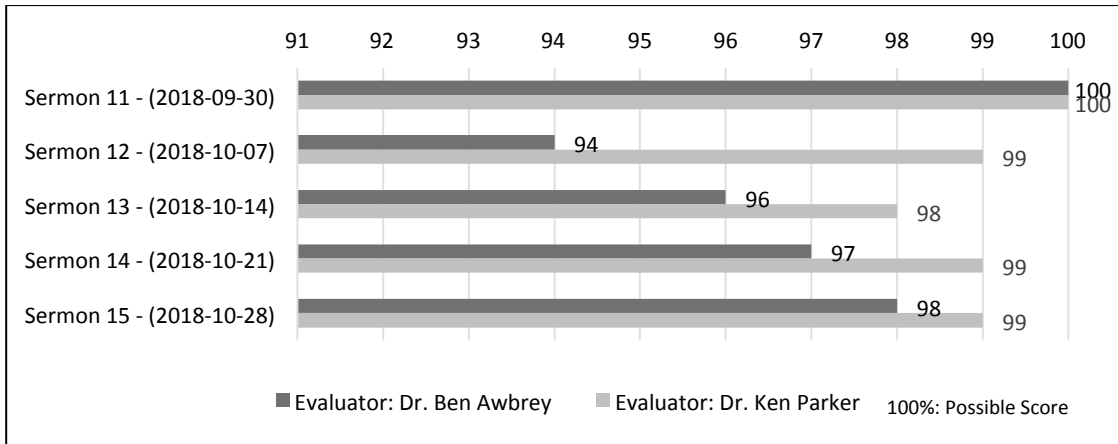


FIGURE 10

PROJECT SERMON UNIT 3 (SERMONS 11-15) COMPOSITE SCORES



percent. The PD revealed a consistent grasp and application of the six elements of introduction compared to the pre-project sermons (see appendix W for an appraisal of the scoring for each of the six elements of the introduction for each project sermon).

## **Unforeseen Causes**

During the preaching phase of the project, the PD received a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes on the fifth week of implementation. This explained much of what the PD experienced for the past several months (lightheadedness, diminished vision, reduced focus, and lethargy). With medication and diet, the health of the PD has returned. The Lord was gracious, seeing him through a rough few weeks until his blood sugar leveled off. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak, but God managed to empower His servant to study, prepare, and preach. The PD believes the project was not hindered.

## **Unforeseen Effects**

### **Sermon Preparation**

To effectively integrate the six essential elements of the sermon introduction, sermon preparation time increased significantly, or at the least was allotted differently. While previously, the PD may have spent thirty minutes to an hour preparing for what he believed to be an effective introduction, the project forced the PD to devote more time to preparation of that sermon element. The PD required a good eight-hour day at the onset of the project, which gradually decreased to where he devoted four to six hours on average, particularly as familiarity and sermon ‘muscle memory’ began to take over. This pattern of sermon preparation will continue, as better and more refined introductions have made for better and more refined sermons and preaching in general.

## Sermon Length

Implementation of the six essential elements of the sermon introduction did increase overall sermon time. Average sermon length for the five pre-project sermons was 45:57. The fifteen project sermons averaged 53:38. The difference of 7:41 may seem minor, but substantial change occurred through the sermon. While with 7:41 more substance occurred on the average, the PD feels that the original 45:57 has become more substantive across this project. Not only has there been an effect on the introduction, but subsequently the body and conclusion have become cleaner, tighter, and clearer. One can note from appendix V that the introduction average went from 9:32 (figure 56) for the pre-project sermons to 17:29 (figure 58) for the project sermon average. Also note that the conclusion average length went from 5:29 for the pre-project sermons to 14:40 for the project sermon average. Increased sermon length was unavoidable, but not injurious (see appendix V for a comparative analysis of time spent on introduction, body, conclusion, and overall length of the sermons).<sup>1</sup>

## Unnecessary Fillers and Repetition

In transcribing each introduction and conclusion, the PD became aware of the overuse of words like ‘so’ and ‘uh’ and phrases such as ‘in regards to,’ and ‘by the

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<sup>1</sup>By including comments on the length of sermons and their elements, the PD is not wishing to leave the impression that a certain length of any of those features necessarily means ‘better.’ The PD is also not calling for a particular length hoping to answer the question, “How long should an introduction or any other sermon element be?” In terms of what this paper addresses, the introduction should be as long as it takes to ‘get the job done,’ not one second more, not one second less. In regard to the introduction, this will call for clear focus on what needs to be accomplished, ruthless editing in preparation, and a sense of mission in delivery.

way.’ These miscues were sporadic, but any are too many. With this awareness, there is now a diligence for the PD to eradicate these filler words and worthless phrases. Also, alarmingly, are the repetition of phrases and sentences. While the PD did utilize repetition for leverage, occasional overuse, habitual or intended, could become a distraction and may reveal the hard truth that the PD had not internalized the material as well as he had thought. The PD sought to remedy this as the preaching phase continued.

#### Sermon Unit 4 Exemption

Unforeseen was exemption from the final three sermons of the project (16-18). Dr. Awbrey explained that these sermons are used only if sufficient enhancement has failed to occur. Measurement revealed that the PD could enhance his scoring no further (or only negligibly). Measurable enhancement between the pre-project sermon average and Unit 1 sermons revealed a 77.6 percent increase, pre-project sermon average to Unit 2 sermons revealed a 98.5 percent increase, pre-project sermon average to Unit 3 sermons revealed a 106.8 percent increase, and pre-project sermon average to total project sermons average revealed a 94.3 percent increase.

#### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented a digest of the implementation of the project. The chapter presented an analysis of the enhancement of the skill in sermon introductions of the PD, based upon evaluation of the six essential elements of an effective introduction. The evaluation scores of the PD reveal significant improvement compared to the established baseline provided by Dr. Awbrey’s evaluation of the five

pre-project sermons and their average. The PD identified any unforeseen causes and effects considering how they did or did not define, alter, or inhibit the project.

Consequently, project implementation went as planned. The ensuing chapter provides an analysis of the project and will contend for the success of the project. The chapter also answers the question, “Has the purpose of this project been accomplished?”

## CHAPTER 6

### PROJECT ANALYSIS

The preceding chapter gave a report of the dissertation project implementation. This chapter will offer analysis of project implementation with the goal of determining the success or failure of the project purpose. The stated purpose of the project is to enhance the PD's skill in sermon introductions by evaluating and integrating the elements of an effective introduction. Elements are: (1) getting attention, (2) securing interest, (3) contextualization, (4) purpose of the sermon (clearly stated in introduction and fully achieved in conclusion), (5) plural noun proposition, and (6) plural noun proposition restated clearly and exactly as last sentence of the introduction.

This chapter will argue that the project has achieved its projected purpose of enhancing the PD's skill in sermon introductions per the six essential elements. Detailed analysis of project implementation will demonstrate this enhancement. First, the PD will provide a general evaluation of the findings of the project with thought of the stated proposal of the project. This will offer analysis as to how the ministry setting, biblical rationale, review of current practices, and the preaching phase of the project have affected the attempted improvement of the PD's sermon introductions.

Thus, a summary analysis will reveal how the PD enhanced or did not enhance his skill in each of the respective six essential elements. As well as the summary analysis, the PD will present evaluations and justifications as to how he implemented the instructions and input of the dissertation committee consistent with their introduction evaluations. The chapter culminates with recommended revisions,

prospects for future study, and a conclusion that recaps the content and provides a segue to the dissertation appendices.

### **General Evaluation**

The preaching phase of the project began on Sunday, July 22, 2018, and continued through Sunday, October 28, 2018. The project proceeded sequentially each Sunday morning service with no interruptions throughout its implementation. By the culmination of the project, the PD had significantly and meaningfully enhanced both his comprehension of the six essential elements of an effective introduction and the delivery of those components in the sermon. This measurable enhancement is based on a comparison between the project sermons and five pre-project sermon introductions evaluated by the dissertation committee chairman. The average of these pre-project scores constituted the baseline from which to measure the effectiveness of the project in enhancing the PD's introductions. The pre-project scores determined an overall average of 47.4 percent out of a 100 percent potential. This unequivocally confirmed that the PD had substantial room for enhancement, hence compelling this project. With this newfound revelation, the PD set himself to study and enhance the sermon introduction with the intention of enriching his preaching ministry.

### **Evaluation of the Ministry Setting**

Chapter 1 outlined the ministry setting and opportunity for this project as Southside Baptist Church of Bowie, Texas, where the PD currently serves as senior pastor. While the PD believed Southside had experienced spiritual growth, he felt his preaching ministry and skills needed to improve. The sermon component concerning

him most was the introduction. While sermon body and conclusion are surely vital, neither may demand a hearing if the introduction is not compelling and purposeful. Indeed, in the initial moments of the introduction, the preacher will engage the hearer, or he will not. Often, on post-sermon reflection, the PD failed to answer the questions for the hearer, “How is this going to affect my life?” and “What will happen if the suggested actions are followed or rejected?” The PD realized that hearers may never experience their vitality if the introduction is insufficient or ineffective.

The pre-project introduction scores proved the misgivings of the PD; that his introductions were neither captivating, compelling, purposeful, nor practical, hence reducing the prospect for the flock of God to feed. The hard truth is that the PD lacked sufficient preparation for his introductions. Most introductory material was careless and primarily served as an ‘ice breaker’ or an easy means to jump into the exposition. Thus, the PD initiated thorough research and evaluation of a biblical rationale as the initial and foundational measure for creating an approach for effective introductions.

#### Evaluation of the Biblical Rationale

In chapter 2, the aim of the PD was to fix a biblical rationale for introducing sermons effectively. While the Bible is not a manual in the sense of ‘how to’ preach a sermon or introduce one, it surely offers rationale for what the sermon should achieve through the opening and ending of a discourse. The sermon outcome must be a cogent, conscious, and continued model of hearer obedience to the Word. The PD assessed six texts relevant to the preacher, preaching, preparation, and desired response to the Word in order to find the mandate for more effective preaching of sermon introductions.



The study of these six passages revealed two streams of thought concerning the biblical rationale: the mandate for expository preaching and the reasoning for the homiletic necessity for sermon introductions. The mandate for expository preaching provided three crucial principles for the effective delivery of the Word of God, thereby producing the continued pattern of hearer obedience, which achieves God's purpose in preaching. First, the reality of an inspired Word established the basis for expository preaching (2 Tm 3:12-17); second, expository preaching is a necessity, not an option (2 Tm 4:1-5); and, third, there are essential qualities the expositor must display in his life (2 Tm 2:1-7). The reasoning for the homiletic necessity for sermon introductions offered three crucial principles as to the nature, structure, and aim of discourse material and how it relates to the sermon introduction. First, the Word of God does provide a paradigm for getting attention and securing interest (Is 55:1-13); the preaching of Jesus provides an example of the use of style and application that is pertinent to expository preaching, chiefly sermon introduction content; and, third, the Word of God provides a pattern for the need of contextualization, as well as stating the purpose of the sermon in the introduction and achieving that same purpose in the conclusion (Acts 17:22-31).

The PD applied these principles in his preaching to demonstrate that faithful exposition of the Word of God will lead to growth in the life of the Christian hearer. For growth to occur, the preacher must lead the hearer to react with absolute obedience to the text. A clear, purposeful, efficacious introduction will only facilitate and serve as the genesis of that process. The introduction by necessity calls for meticulous crafting so the hearers can follow it as they would a roadmap. Along with

faithful exposition, at the conclusion of the sermon, if the implementation of the introduction was appropriate, then the hearers should know exactly what God expects them to do.

The PD argued that the introduction is crucial. If the exposition and conclusion are compelling and purposeful and the introduction is not, then all material post-introduction may not warrant a hearing. The PD believes that the introduction serves as a most sensible place to begin teaching as he secures interest and states his purpose, establishing it as of great personal significance to the hearers. The conclusion fulfills the introduction as vital Q&A reinvigorate the purpose and the preacher affords the hearers with ways and means to achieve the purpose, persuasively providing elements that allow them to follow that purpose, thus obeying Scripture. If the introduction is not captivating, meaningful, and memorable, then it may, in fact, 'be the conclusion' as far as hearers are concerned. Only with a biblical view of preaching and sermon introduction such as this can the preacher fully equip the people of God. So, the PD believes that he did, in fact, establish a biblical rationale for enhancing the sermon introduction.

### Evaluation of the Current Practice

In chapter 3, the PD pursued greater depth of knowledge for the justification of sermon introductions by research and discovery pertaining to the current homiletic practice. Three significant questions surfaced: what do the experts say, what do the experts do, and what did the experts say when given specific questions about sermon introductions by the PD? To answer the first question, from a review of the literature for preaching, several 'methods' or 'essential elements' comprising a sermon

introduction became known. ‘Methods’ range from extensive (John MacArthur) to nonexistent (Walter Kaiser). The introduction should not rule the sermon; it should invite the hearers inside. Although every sermon has a start, either formal or otherwise, an introduction is more than a ‘jumping off point.’ An insufficient ‘method’ or absence of an ‘element’ leave an introduction deficient. For instance, if the preacher employs only ‘getting attention,’ he may have stimulated congregational interest, but they may not know anything about the text they are ‘jumping into.’

Likewise, if the ‘method’ of contextualization comprises the entirety of the introduction, the hearer may better comprehend background and text terrain, but the reason for going to said text may remain a mystery. Moreover, it is insufficient for the preacher to only state the ‘method’ of the purpose in the introduction; the preacher must achieve the purpose stated in the introduction in the conclusion. The PD deems that these ‘methods’ of introduction are more rightly identified as ‘elements’ of the introduction, individually providing a vital task in crafting a robust introduction. An introduction that accurately applies each element serves to enhance hearer obedience.

The PD determined that the six essential elements of an effective introduction of Dr. Awbrey best exemplify what constitutes an introduction.<sup>1</sup> This integrates the current practice (and for that matter, the best of the past) of homiletic methods into one unified sermon introduction guide. Consequently, Dr. Awbrey’s rubric was the standard for scoring and evaluating the enhancement of the PD. The rubric served as

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<sup>1</sup>For a further and more expansive discussion of these elements, one needs to see Ben Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2008). This is one of only a handful of books that devotes itself solely to the sermon introduction. Most homiletic works contain a paragraph or two, a brief chapter at the most. His book is by far the most comprehensive and complete work on the subject.

the benchmark by which the PD prepared and delivered his sermon introductions (and pertinent concluding elements) during the preaching phase of the project.

The PD offered a second question concerning current practice. What do the experts do? The PD used the six essential elements of an effective introduction rubric to evaluate the sermon introductions of five practitioners. These include the living and the dead, pastors and homileticians, each an able expositor in his own right. The five practitioners were: Dr. Jason Allen, Dr. Jim Shaddix, Dr. David Allen, Dr. John MacArthur, and Dr. W. A. Criswell. The PD evaluated five introductions per practitioner, totaling twenty-five sermon introductions. The evaluation intent was not to assess each message, but to assess their sermon introduction methods, bearing in mind the grading rubric. The aim of the PD was to glean from their practice what to use, avoid, or dismiss. This proved beneficial for the PD, as each practitioner revealed varying assets and liabilities in their introductions (see appendix E for a complete appraisal of each sermon score of each practitioner consistent with the rubric).

The PD found that the average scores of three homileticians (87, 90.2, and 93) were on the high end of the spectrum, while the two pastors (43 and 61) were on the lower end. This divergence from the evaluated introductions of each practitioner caused the PD to realize that the essential elements of sermon introductions do not simply ‘happen,’ even for the best of expositors. If one is to introduce well, it will require diligence and purposefulness. From the onset of the preaching phase of the project, introduction preparation increased, and the PD used the grading rubric as the outline for his preparation. During this process, the comprehension of what constitutes an introduction began to congeal in the PD’s sermon preparation and delivery.

Finally, there was a third question to address regarding current practice: What did the experts say when given specific questions about sermon introductions by the PD? These responses came from full-time senior pastors (fifty-two) and professors of preaching (fifty-two). The PD gleaned insight from the survey, noting in the end a diminished or pedestrian view of the introduction, especially considering the six essential elements (see appendix E for results of the sermon introduction survey).

### Evaluation of the Project Implementation

Chapter 4 provided the implementation strategy of the preaching phase of the project. The PD presented the objectives needed to achieve the project goal of sermon introduction enhancement. He sequentially completed each objective and goal. The PD determined and established the biblical rationale for sermon introductions. Also, he effectively achieved an analysis of current practice and methods, which led to a more significant comprehension of what constitutes an effective introduction. This enhanced, and even new, comprehension gained from these objectives received verification via weekly submission of the planned eighteen sermons. The dissertation committee then evaluated each of these per the sermon introduction rubric.

As the project advanced, the PD showed such clear improvement in his grasp and delivery of the introduction rubric, the chairman granted exemption from the final three sermons, resulting in a preaching phase of fifteen sermons instead of eighteen. Thus, the overall effect of the project, which was to enhance the PD's skill in sermon introduction, was demonstrably successful. All assumptions and limitations proved valid. While the PD and committee may have had to wrestle with some issues of life, each accomplished their respective duties 'as unto the Lord' and in enough time to

integrate vital insight. The PD believes that the project was not hindered or negatively affected in any way. The ensuing section offers a detailed digest of the movements of the project and the calculable skill enhancement of the PD.

### **Summary Analysis of the Project Sermon Scores**

The purpose of this project is to develop and enhance the PD's preaching skill of his sermon introductions by sermonic evaluation and needed adaptation via the elements of an effective introduction. To determine the success of such enhancement, the dissertation committee received and evaluated fifteen sermons. The committee consisted of Dr. Ben Awbrey, chair and first reader, and Dr. Ken Parker, second reader. The PD submitted sermon videos and audios by email link to the YouTube page of the PD, as well as written transcripts of each sermon introduction and conclusion.

The committee scored the introductions (and concluding materials relating to sermon purpose) with respect to the established grading rubric. The committee offered guidance, insights, corrections, and encouragement so as to assist the PD in refining his sermon introductions. The PD arranged the fifteen sermons into three sections: Unit 1 (Sermons 1-5), Unit 2 (Sermons 6-10), and Unit 3 (Sermons 11-15). Through the progression of each unit, enhancement should be both measurable and demonstrable. Furthermore, Units 1-3 should reveal noteworthy enhancement over the five pre-project introduction scores, which the PD will reveal to be the actual case in point.

The scoring of each sermon was in accord to the numeric value given to each of the six essential elements of an effective introduction as defined by the grading

rubric of Dr. Awbrey. The worth is as follows: Getting attention (five points), securing interest (thirty points), contextualization (ten points), purpose of the sermon holds a point value of forty-five and is the weightiest of the elements (while ten points make up the purpose in the introduction, the purpose is not 'purposeful' if it is unachieved in the conclusion, hence a thirty-five-point allotment for the purpose being achieved through the closing appeals of the sermon conclusion), the plural noun proposition (five points), and, finally, the plural noun proposition restated clearly and exactly as in previous references and used as the last sentence of the introduction (five points). Each sermon is potentially worth one hundred points and the resultant point value of each element is a proportion of the whole.

To measure the sermon introduction enhancement of the PD, he will offer select figures revealing an average score per sermon unit of each of the six essential elements. This will render a comparison between the pre-project average score and each score of Units 1-3. While the pre-project average is the evaluation of the committee chair, Units 1-3 are the average score of the dissertation committee. The PD will provide a digest of how he employed the insights from the committee per the evaluation process. This will reveal that the project gave occasion for the PD to implement the needed modifications that would enhance his ability to accomplish sermon introductions effectively. The PD inserted 'homiletic checks' to ensure proper achievement of each element objective. Failure to soundly answer the homiletic check in the affirmative meant the PD had more work to accomplish in that element or further refining (see appendix W for a complete appraisal of each of the six elements of the introduction scoring for the project sermon units).

## Getting Attention

Getting attention is the first introduction element where in those first moments the preacher seizes audience distraction, turning their focus to his sermon. The pre-project average revealed the carelessness of the PD to this feature, as indicated in the evaluation of the committee chairman. Adding weight to this oversight is the fact that getting attention should be one the easier elements to achieve. Often, instead of the PD immediately opening in the most significant way possible, his introduction yielded to preliminary remarks about what he was going to do or say. Instead of ‘shattering the silence,’ he sometimes simply ‘cracked it,’ failing to maximize the opening statement. To alter this, the PD began to identify the most crucial statement he might make in the introduction and present that as his opening salvo, thereby making the first words from his mouth decisive and engaging. Getting attention allowed for later success in transitioning to the text subject matter. Homiletic check: Did the opening words provide the means for arresting listener attention; would they grip even the dullest of listeners? The PD improved his skill for this element as figure 11 shows.

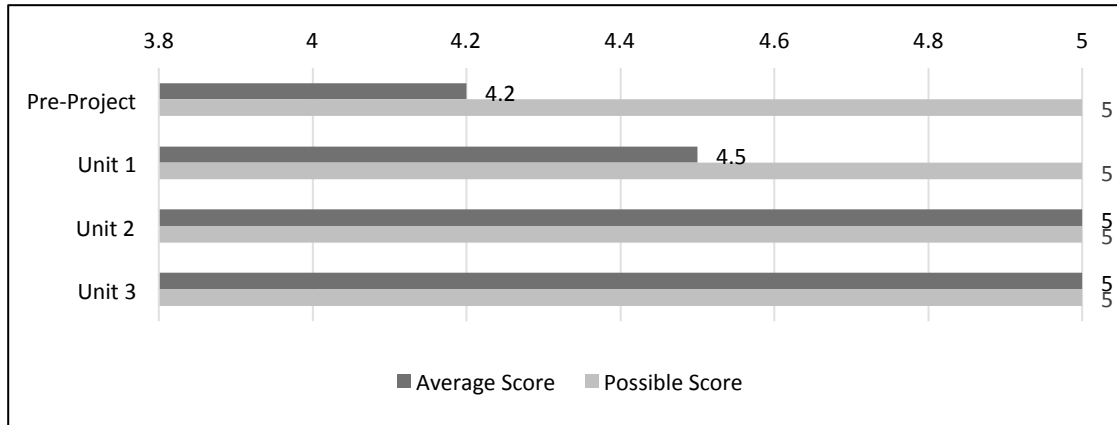
## Securing Interest

Securing interest occurs after getting attention. The preacher raises audience needs, whetting their appetite for the supplying of their need—the exposition of the Word. Pre-project scoring reflected the misunderstanding of the PD, failing to average even 50 percent of the allotted point value. While ‘securing interest’ is worth thirty points, it has three components worth ten points each. The PD must offer: a cluster of five personal questions and crucial assertions, positive and negative flesh and blood scenarios, and pose a projection of a determinative difference (re: compliance/



FIGURE 11

GETTING ATTENTION AVERAGE SCORE COMPARISON:  
PRE-PROJECT/UNITS 1-3



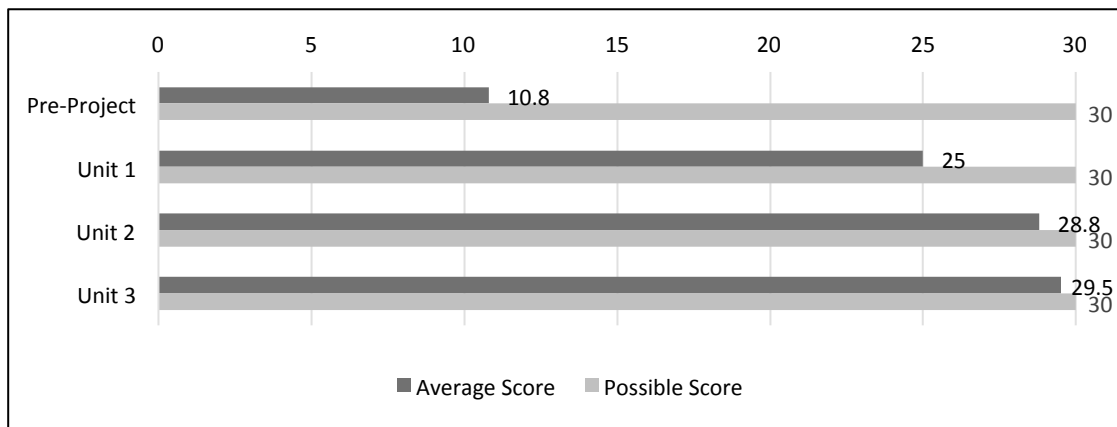
noncompliance). The PD came to understand that the questions and assertions do more than raise listener need, they directly relate to the purpose of the sermon. Hence, the questions cannot simply be rhetorical, they must be crucial. The PD began to look at the assertions as answers to the five questions he raised. The PD deemed this as sort of ‘pre-preaching,’ using Scripture to answer the questions that he clearly knew the primary answers would come from the preached text. Homiletic check: Has listener need been sufficiently raised and initially answered with biblical insight per the anticipated purpose?

The PD increased his awareness that positive and negative flesh and blood scenarios are more than illustrations. They depict the facts of a positive (obedience) or negative (disobedience) response. If the flesh and blood scenarios were not accompanied by positive and negative implications, thereby maximizing the effect of the scenario, then one has simply told a story. Homiletic check: Have both positive and negative illustrations with ensuing consequences been offered in expectation of

stated purpose? The PD began to realize that the projection of a determinative difference must be related to compliance or noncompliance to the purpose, not to the message in general. The PD found that to state or simply suggest this is ineffective, it requires elaboration and insight. The response must be directly related to the chosen disobedience or obedience that some would have to the message and is the basis of securing interest. One must ‘get to’ the implications of obeying or not obeying the purpose. Homiletic check: Has the listener been given a clear forecast of what obedience and disobedience to the sermon purpose will mean? Figure 12 shows that the PD’s skill improved for this element.

FIGURE 12

SECURING INTEREST AVERAGE SCORE COMPARISON:  
PRE-PROJECT/UNITS 1-3



### Contextualization

Contextualization occurs after securing interest. The preacher informs listeners on how the current preaching text links to the overall context, tying it to previously

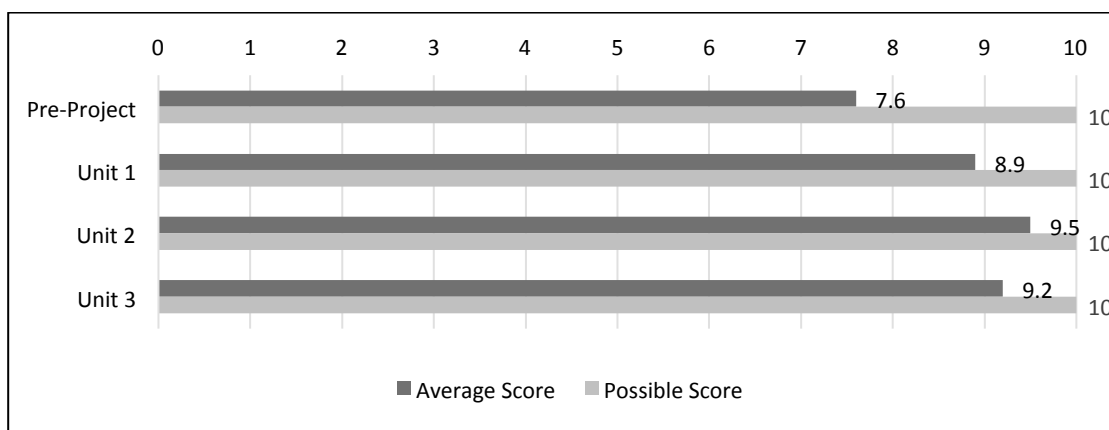
preached texts. The inadequacy of the pre-project score revealed the PD needed work in this area. Occasionally the PD failed to achieve the previous element (securing interest), which made contextualization seem unnecessary and intrusive to the hearer. This caused the PD to grasp the gravity of securing interest, as contextualization became otherwise meaningless. While contextualization is worth ten points, it consists of three components. The PD must establish the unit and section of the preaching text (five points); orient the hearer to the subject matter of the preaching text providing cultural setting, historical data, and Scripture cross-reference for sermon focus (three points); and connect the hearer to previous messages providing them with the plural noun proposition, message, and text territory of message (two points).

The PD provided orientation to the hearer, averaging 3.0 points from a possible 3.0 on the pre-project sermons and 2.9 for the project sermons. Homiletic check: Has the listener been steered into the direction of the nature of this text? A weak area was summarization, as the PD averaged 3.2 out of a possible 5.0 for the pre-project sermons and 4.3 for the project sermons. The PD failed to provide his hearers insight of how the text he was preaching related to the unit and section it was a part of, succumbing to lack of clarity. What the PD did was try to gain a better grasp on the book division (such as units and sections) and how it flowed. To accomplish this, the PD sought a better grasp on the terminology (units and sections) and strove to understand and clearly explain the unit and its text terrain. Homiletic check: Has the listener received clarity on the arrangement of the text?

The PD needed improvement connecting previous messages, reminding the hearer of the preceding text/sermon, restating the plural noun proposition from the

previous week, and giving the main structure and the text portion for each main point. From a possible 2.0 points, the PD averaged 1.0 point for the pre-project sermons and 2.0 points for the project sermons. The PD began to see occasion to include a quick snapshot of the structure of the message, giving the hearers the structure of the sermon while still in the introduction. Homiletic check: Has the listener been provided with vital information about previous sermons/texts? Figure 13 reveals that while the skill of the PD improved for this element, it was the only one that did not receive increased gradual enhancement—Unit 2 received 9.5, but Unit 3 dipped to 9.2.

FIGURE 13  
 CONTEXTUALIZATION AVERAGE SCORE COMPARISON:  
 PRE-PROJECT/UNITS 1-3



### Sermon Purpose in Introduction

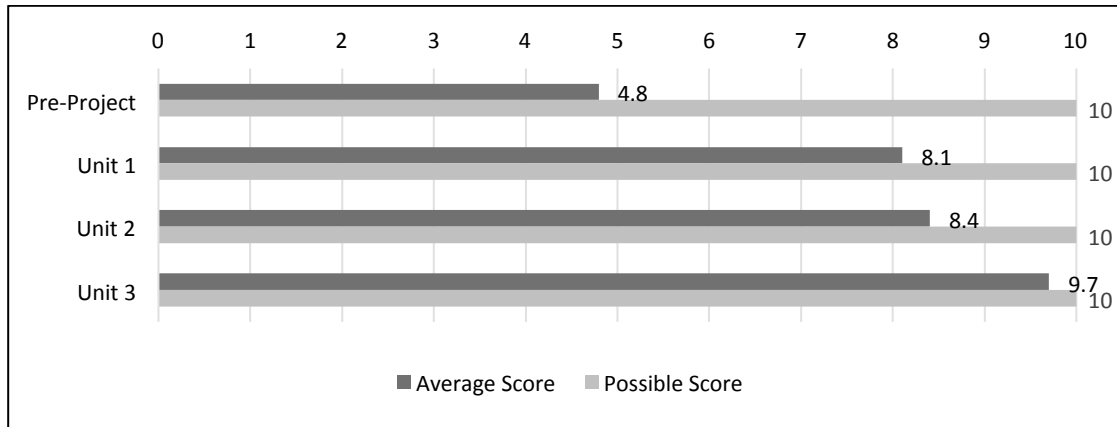
Sermon purpose reveals to listeners exactly what God and His truth require of them and what it should accomplish (there is always a call to personal commitment). While it provides integrity to the entirety of the sermon, the preacher states it intentionally in the introduction and strives to achieve it during the conclusion. The

preacher should always direct the purpose to the hearer as to how they should live and how they should think. The pre-project sermons indicated a woeful attempt to establish the purpose in the introduction, scoring 4.8 of a possible 10.0. Establishing the purpose in the introduction consists of two factors: clear statement of purpose (the PD averaged 3.6 out of 5.0) and the purpose related as a great personal significance (the PD averaged a meager 1.2 out of 5.0).

The PD adjusted his preparation and focus significantly as he realized that the purpose for preaching the sermon must be obvious and emphatic. He began to grasp that volition predominates sermon purpose rather than cognition (the biblical text takes care of the cognition). The purpose stated in the introduction provides a commercial message for a great product in the conclusion. The PD saw that the purpose cannot simply state potential—“We can have”—but must convey possession—“We will have.” The purpose must go beyond simply making assertions about a need, but rather declaring what the hearer needs to do for it to become a reality. With a pointed and imperatival purpose, the PD can now guide the hearers clearly so they will see how the purpose is of great personal significance to them. The PD became intentional in thought and attentiveness to the purpose. This intentionality led to increased scores from the pre-project sermon average (4.8), to Unit 1 (8.1), Unit 2 (8.4), and Unit 3 (9.7). The success of the purpose in the introduction allowed the PD a greater possibility for achieving the purpose in the conclusion. Homiletic check: Has the listener received clarity about the intent of this sermon and the personal commitment to which they are being called? As figure 14 demonstrates, the PD consistently improved in this area.

FIGURE 14

SERMON PURPOSE STATED IN THE INTRODUCTION  
 AVERAGE SCORE COMPARISON: PRE-PROJECT/UNITS 1-3



Sermon Purpose in Conclusion

As was the case with stating the purpose in the introduction, achieving the purpose of the sermon in the conclusion is difficult when the purpose lacks clarity and pointedness. The pre-project evaluations revealed this element to be the weakest portion of the sermon. The reason for the variation is that the PD rarely stated a clear purpose. The PD came to realize that every word of the conclusion must be about achieving the stated purpose of the introduction. Achieving the purpose in the conclusion consists of four facets: reinvigorating the purpose through vital Q&A, closing appeals providing ways and means, clinching elements of persuasion, and the purpose accomplished through all the criteria.

The pre-project Q&A (1.6 out of 5.0) revealed the PD knew little about this element. The PD came to recognize the transition to the conclusion as mirroring what securing interest was for the introduction. The PD saw that vital Q&A was purpose-

specific and related to listener obedience, moving them to whatever state they are in to a greater state of said purpose. Not only is listener attention reacquired, the vital Q&A provides a clear path for the preacher to inform them on ‘how’ to obey the text. The questions are meant to provoke thought, disable objections and doubts, and elicit continued attention. The PD began to think about questions such as: “What are the factors holding you back from . . . ? Or “What will it take to get you from ‘A’ to ‘B’?”

Homiletic check: Has listener understanding of the purpose been reinforced by vital questions pertaining to the purpose? The PD showed enhanced skill in each of the subsequent units: Unit 1 (4.7), Unit 2 (4.5), and Unit 3 (5).

Closing appeals allow the preacher to provide practical instruction through various ways and means with obedience encouraged and disobedience discouraged. The pre-project average score (4.0 out of 20.0) revealed the inadequacy of the PD to provide specific instruction. The appeals should answer those issues raised in the vital Q&A and hence cannot be merely suggestive. The PD offered no biblical basis to add support, either via reference or illustration, thus the appeals given lacked the scriptural basis necessary to make an impact and an enduring impression. The PD began to see the importance of scriptural support for ways and means or else they lack authority and are simply good ideas or opinions. Closing appeals must tie in to the stated purpose of the introduction, and closing appeals must answer the question, “How do I do that (purpose)?” They cannot be merely assertions (potential); the preacher must show the hearers how they can be a reality (a possession). Eventually, the PD began to incorporate the essence of the purpose statement in the statement of each of the ways and means. Homiletic check: Have listeners been provided clear and concrete means

to achieve the sermon purpose? The PD showed enhanced skill for the following units: Unit 1 (15.3), Unit 2 (18.7), and Unit 3 (20.0).

A clinching element of persuasion was lacking in the pre-project conclusions of the PD (2.8 out of 5.0). The aim of the element is to illustrate and inspire obedience to the text. The PD began to look at this persuasive element as a last attempt to answer the question “Do I really need to do this?” He provided elements from Scripture and life, answering, “Yes, you really do need to do this!” Homiletic check: Have hearers been provided enough urging to put them in the realm of compliance to the purpose and the biblical text? The PD showed enhanced skill in each of the subsequent units: Unit 1 (4.0), Unit 2 (5.0), and Unit 3 (4.6). The purpose accomplished in all criteria (1.2 out of 5.0) was poor as well. The PD sought less ambiguity and more clarity, realizing that of all the elements, purpose is ‘king.’ In reiterating the purpose of the sermon, the purpose became focused through to the conclusion of the sermon. The PD showed enhanced skill in each subsequent unit: Unit 1 (3.9), Unit 2 (4.2), and Unit 3 (5.0) as revealed in figure 15 (see appendices G-U for examples of the purpose in the introduction and conclusion transcripts).

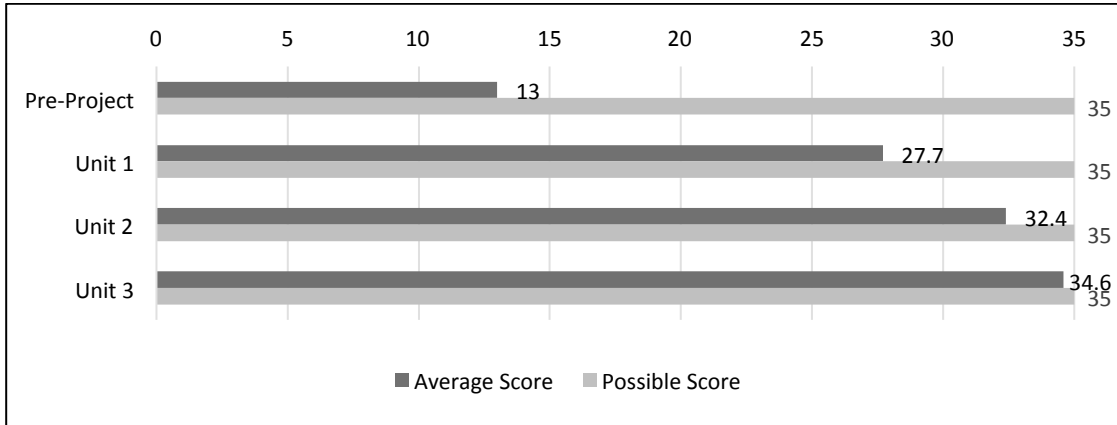
### Plural Noun Proposition

The proposition is a single, strong, sermon thesis that appears first in the introduction. The type of proposition the PD used here is the plural noun proposition; it provides sermon unity and parallel structure through adding a *keyword*, which will always be a pluralized noun. Homiletic check: Has the listener been provided a clear succinct roadmap for the sermon purpose? The pre-project score of the PD was 5 out



FIGURE 15

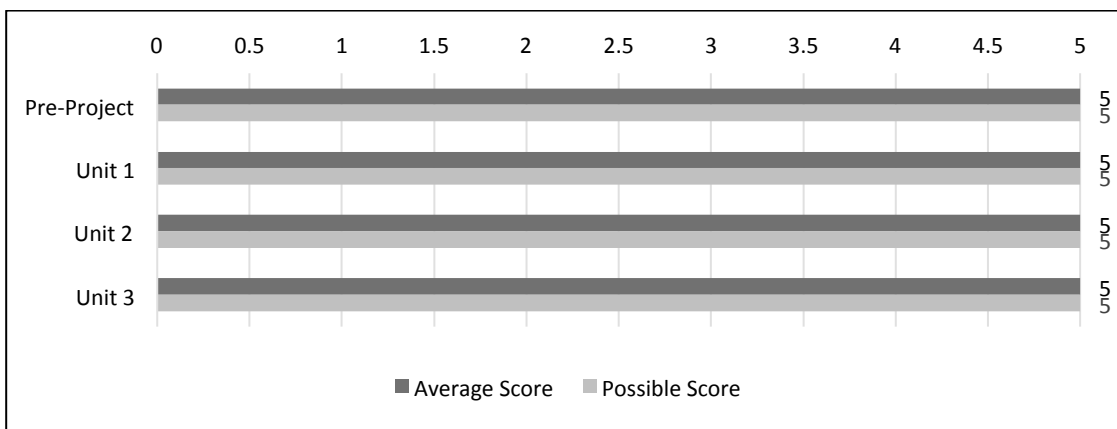
SERMON PURPOSE ACHIEVED IN THE CONCLUSION  
AVERAGE SCORE COMPARISON: PRE-PROJECT/UNITS 1-3



of 5. Units 1, 2, and 3 represented one of the easier elements to score; each scored 5. Any failure here was simply due to inattention. As viewed in figure 16, the skill of the PD for the plural noun proposition was perfect across the board.

FIGURE 16

PLURAL NOUN PROPOSITION  
AVERAGE SCORE COMPARISON: PRE-PROJECT/UNITS 1-3

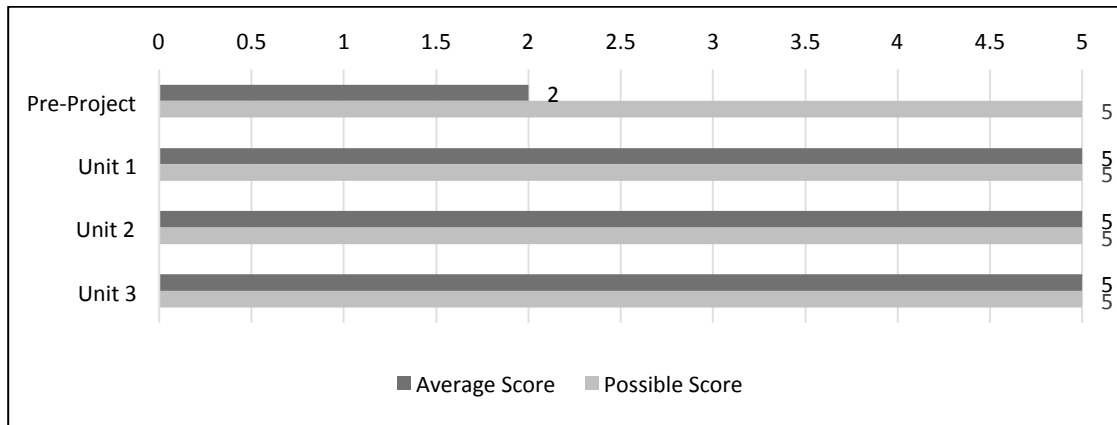


## Plural Noun Proposition Restated

The plural noun proposition needs to be restated clearly and as the final sentence of the introduction. Homiletic check: Has the roadmap of the listener been reinforced as the final words of the introduction and a preview to the Word of God? The pre-project score of the PD was an abysmal 2 out of 5. Units 1, 2, and 3 were a perfect 5. Any failure here was simply due to inattention. As viewed in figure 17, the skill of the PD for restating the plural noun proposition improved for this element.

FIGURE 17

### PLURAL NOUN PROPOSITION (RESTATED AS FINAL SENTENCE) AVERAGE SCORE COMPARISON: PRE-PROJECT/UNITS 1-3



### Recommended Revisions

The project endured steady progress and negligible difficulty. The dissertation committee was encouraging, challenging, and insightful in the mutual task of enhancing the introduction skill of the PD. In truth, if the PD were to reinitiate the project, he would do nothing differently, as he found it gratifying and worthwhile. The PD feels that he has not only proven the enhancement of the sermon introduction

measurably on paper, but he also senses it measurably in the pulpit.<sup>2</sup> Considering that, the PD has no recommended revisions of or for this project.

### **Prospects for Future Study**

Study of the introduction and how it relates to specific genres found within Scripture may prove helpful. Does genre have anything to do with how a preacher frames his introduction or how he presents it? If so, what does that look like with aspects such as narratives, epistles, and parables? Often, preachers speak of text-driven and traditional expository preaching synonymously. While both stress text faithfulness, it seems the structure at times would look differently for the text-driven model, especially the introduction. Steven W. Smith stated, “We have argued that the shape of the text determines the shape of the sermon and, further, that the genre determines the shape of the text.”<sup>3</sup> While there are many implications, the one question pertinent to future study might be, “If the shape of the text determines the shape of the sermon—what of the introduction per each specific genre?”

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<sup>2</sup>Awbrey poses six convictions that characterize ‘must hear’ preaching and the sermon introduction. Conviction five states, “*The preacher must believe that the sermon introduction, like every other part of the sermon, deserves and requires his most diligent effort.* Enhancement in the preaching of one’s sermon introduction certainly is attainable. However, enhancement may not be attained without considerable additional effort.” Awbrey, *How Effective Sermons Begin*, 31. The PD believes that in some way he has realized this ‘sermon introduction enhancement’ through the considerable efforts of this project. He has certainly not arrived, but, prayerfully, is a little nearer the goal of being a consistent ‘must hear’ preacher.

<sup>3</sup>Steven W. Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture* (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 27.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an analysis of the final outcomes of the implementation of the project. The purpose of the project was to enhance the skill of the PD in sermon introduction by evaluating and integrating the essential elements of an effective introduction. The PD established that the project achieved this stated purpose. The analysis of the ministry opportunity, biblical rationale, and evaluation of current ministry practice of the PD established a clear and robust foundation for effective project implementation. An evaluation of pre-project introduction scores compared to the project introduction scores per the measurement tool of the grading rubric of Dr. Awbrey revealed that enhancement in the skill of sermon introduction was successful. Thus, the PD has achieved the plans, goals, objectives, and purpose of this project.

Finally, the project analysis revealed the PD made considerable and continued enhancement in each of the six essential elements, therefore fulfilling the thesis of the project. The PD is a more effective preacher for he now realizes that no matter how clever or engaging his 'sermon' may be, the introduction, when rightly valued, is an introduction to the Word of God, not the feeble ramblings of a man. The introduction is a 'commercial' for the glorious coming attraction of the Word and is, thus, intensely purposeful. If the introduction fails, the sermon fails; the people of God are ill-equipped, and instead of the preacher being a herald, he may be a hindrance. The grading rubric of Dr. Awbrey afforded guidance for the faithful execution of the sermon introduction for expository preaching.

The ensuing appendices supply comprehensive data concerning the movement, advance, and implementation of the project. The desire and the prayer of the PD is that

this project may be as much a benefit and blessing to those who follow as it was to him. May this help those who are hopeful to enhance their proclamation of the Word. May the man of God faithfully illumine the Word of God as he skillfully introduces the Word of God, for the glory of God.

APPENDIX A

SERMON EVALUATION FORM

<b>I. INVENTION, ARRANGEMENT</b>		
<b>A. Introduction</b>	<b>Grade:</b>	<u>      </u> /15
Gets attention.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Secures interest.....	<u>      </u>	/4
Indicates Purpose of the Sermon.....	<u>      </u>	/2
Orientation to subject.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Summation of Biblical context.....	<u>      </u>	/2
Connection to previous messages.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Proposition stated clearly.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Proposition synthesized fully.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Proposition repeated.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Transition from proposition to first point.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Length appropriate, necessary.....	<u>      </u>	/0
<b>B. Body</b>	<b>Grade:</b>	<u>      </u> /15
<b>Skeleton</b> .....	<u>      </u>	/2
Main points principlized fully, clearly.....	<u>      </u>	/2
Main points stated clearly.....	<u>      </u>	/2
Main points incorporating the proposition.....	<u>      </u>	/2
Main points expressed in complete sentences.....	<u>      </u>	/2
Subordinate structure related to the preaching text.....	<u>      </u>	/2
Supporting material related to main/subpoint.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Transitions between points clear.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Structure repeated effectively.....	<u>      </u>	/3
<b>Flesh and Muscles</b> .....	<u>      </u>	/18
Lexical description effective.....	<u>      </u>	/3
Grammatical description effective.....	<u>      </u>	/3
Syntactical description supportive.....	<u>      </u>	/3
Theological description effective.....	<u>      </u>	/3
Theological corroboration persuasive.....	<u>      </u>	/3
Attention directed to words of passage/cr. refs. ....	<u>      </u>	/3
<b>Vital Organs</b> .....	<u>      </u>	/20
Illustrations, appropriate, effective.....	<u>      </u>	/8
Applications pointed, forceful.....	<u>      </u>	/8
Dialogue/Argumentation clear, cogent.....	<u>      </u>	/4
<b>C. Conclusion</b> .....	<u>      </u>	/15
Synopsis of PNP/main structure repeated.....	<u>      </u>	/1
Transition to conclusion clear, vital.....	<u>      </u>	/2
Closing appeals clear, forceful.....	<u>      </u>	/5
(obedience encouraged, disobedience rebuked)		
Clinching element of persuasion.....	<u>      </u>	/2

Purpose of the sermon fulfilled.....	_____	/2
Gospel proclaimed to unbelievers.....	_____	/3
Length appropriate, necessary.....	_____	/0
D. Sermon Emphasis (Intro, Illust, Appl, Concl).....	Grade: _____	
<b>II. DELIVERY, STYLE, MEMORY</b>		
A. Oral Presentation.....	Grade: _____	/2
Varied intensity.....	_____	/1
Varied projection.....	_____	/1
Natural, conversational voice quality.....	_____	/0
Varied pitch.....	_____	/0
Varied rate.....	_____	/0
Appropriate, meaningful pauses.....	_____	/0
B. Physical Presentation.....	Grade: _____	/2
Gestures appropriate, natural.....	_____	/0
Eye contact varied, purposeful.....	_____	/2
Mannerisms nondistracting.....	_____	/0
Bodily animation natural, energetic.....	_____	/0
Facial expressions engaging.....	_____	/0
C. Rational Presentation.....	Grade: _____	/3
Progression of message adequate.....	_____	/3
Advancement of message adequate.....	_____	/0
Familiarity with content of message obvious.....	_____	/0
Notes referred to briefly.....	_____	/0
Notes handled inconspicuously.....	_____	/0
D. Pathos.....	Grade: _____	/3
Passion (message processed through heart).....	_____	/3
Enthusiasm concerning the message.....	_____	/0
Tone of the message corresponding to content.....	_____	/0
Life, vitality.....	_____	/0
E. Language.....	Grade: _____	/3
Concrete, specific language.....	_____	/0
Interesting expression, sense appeal.....	_____	/2
Direct address.....	_____	/1
Correct vocabulary.....	_____	/0
Correct grammar.....	_____	/0
Correct pronunciation.....	_____	/0
	Grade Total: _____	
Estimated Error Due to Grader Subjectivity (-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3)		
	Final Grade: _____	
Sermon Evaluation Sheet. Copyright 1991 by Dr. Ben E. Awbrey. All rights reserved.		

APPENDIX B

SERMON EVALUATION FORM (*ADAPTED VERSION*):  
SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION

I. Getting Attention.....	Grade: _____	/5
Opening statement.....	_____	/2
Established transitional relationship of opening concept(s) to the subject matter of the text.....	_____	/3
II. Securing Interest.....	Grade: _____	/30
Cluster of 5 personal questions and 5 crucial assertions.....	_____	/10
Flesh and blood scenario(s) .....	_____	/10
Projection of determinative difference (re: compliance/noncompliance).....	_____	/10
III. Contextualization.....	Grade: _____	/10
Establishment of unit/section the preaching text is in.....	_____	/5
Orientation to subject matter of the preaching text.....	_____	/3
Connection to previous messages (plural noun proposition, message, text territory of message).....	_____	/2
IV. Purpose of the sermon.....	Grade: _____	/45
A. Introduction:		
Clear statement of purpose for the sermon.....	_____	/5
Purpose statement related as great personal significance...	_____	/5
B. Conclusion:		
Reinvigorated interest for purpose through vital transition to conclusion by Q&A.....	_____	/5
Closing appeals providing ways/means.....	_____	/20
Clinching elements of persuasion.....	_____	/5
Purpose accomplished resulting from all criteria.....	_____	/5
V. Plural noun proposition.....	Grade: _____	/5
VI. Plural noun proposition (Stated clearly/exactly as in previous references, used as last sentence of the Introduction)...	Grade: _____	/5
	Grade Total: _____	
Estimated Error Due to Grader Subjectivity (-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3)		
	Final Grade: _____	
Sermon Evaluation Sheet. Copyright 1991 by Dr. Ben E. Awbrey. All rights reserved.		



APPENDIX C

PROJECT DIRECTOR PRE-PROJECT  
SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATIONS

FIGURE 18

PRE-PROJECT SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF SERMON 1

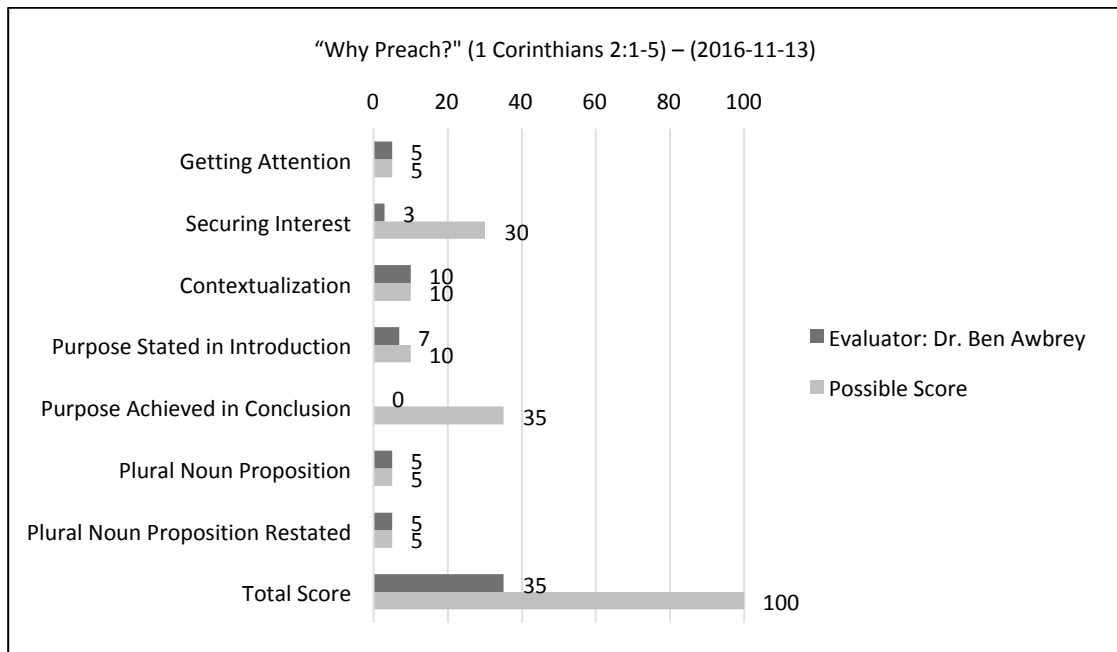


FIGURE 19

PRE-PROJECT SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF SERMON 2

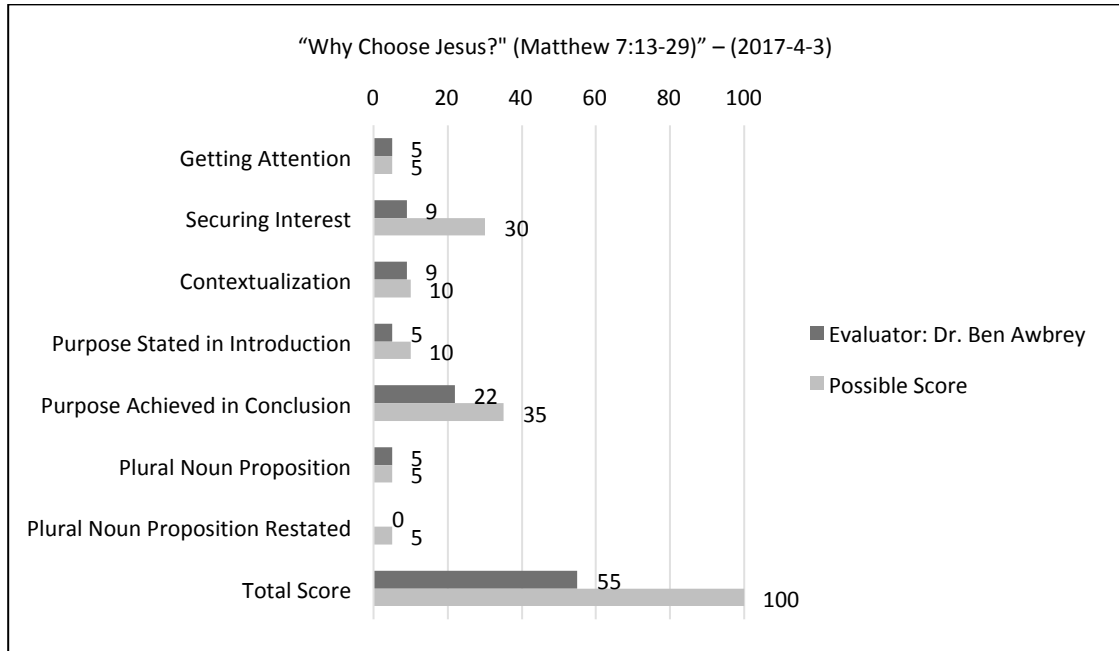


FIGURE 20

PRE-PROJECT SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF SERMON 3

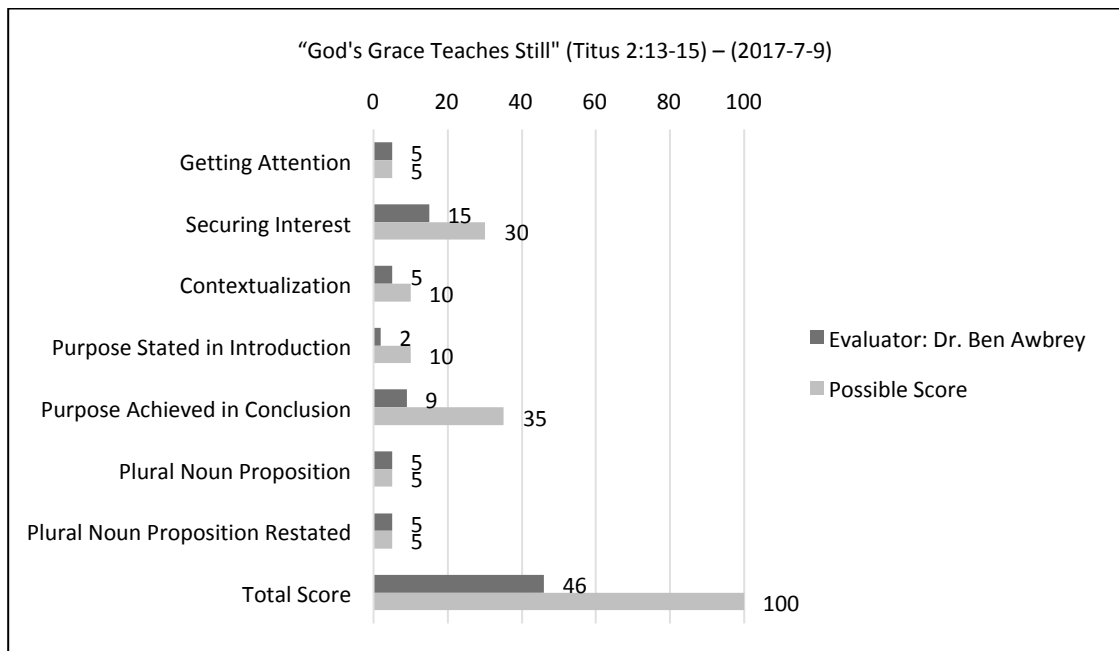


FIGURE 21

PRE-PROJECT SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF SERMON 4

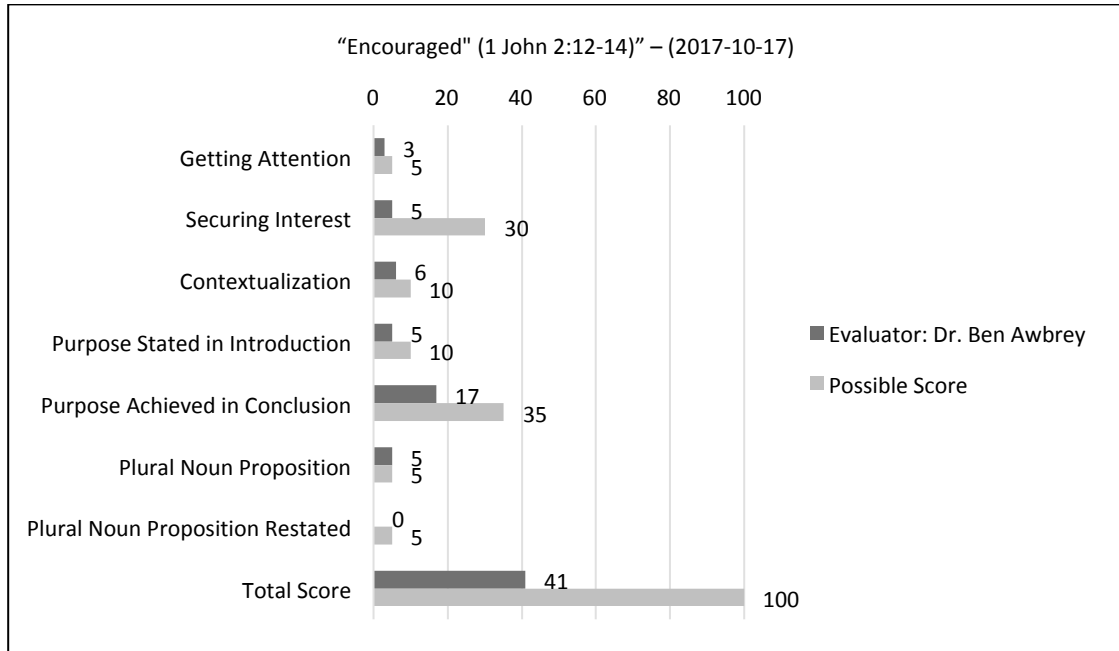
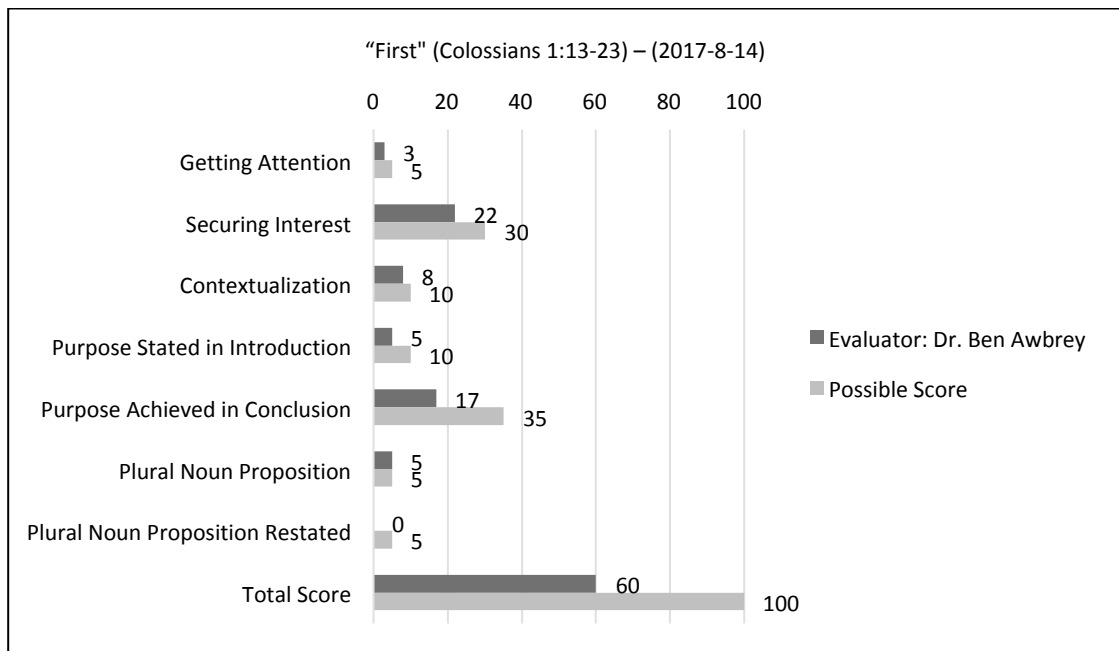


FIGURE 22

PRE-PROJECT SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF SERMON 5



## APPENDIX D

### SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES

This survey has two aspects—first, responses of full-time senior pastors (fifty-two)<sup>1</sup> and, second, responses of homileticians (professors of preaching), seminary and college presidents, and pastors who have written or made significant contributions to the field of preaching (fifty-two). This second group will go by the label homileticians.<sup>2</sup> The results of this sermon introduction survey are shown in figures 23-30.

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<sup>1</sup>Participants include fifty-two full-time senior pastors from the states of Alabama (1), Arkansas (4), Colorado (1), Florida (3), Georgia (3), Illinois (1), Kansas (1), Louisiana (1), Mississippi (1), Missouri (2), Nevada (1), North Carolina (3), Tennessee (1), Texas (28), Vermont (1).

<sup>2</sup>While the survey was anonymous, the schools represented in the process were Anderson University, Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary, Beeson Divinity School, Bethel Seminary, Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary, Carson-Newman University, Cedarville University, Criswell College, Dallas Theological Seminary, Denver Seminary, Gateway Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Houston Baptist University, Johnson University, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Luther Rice College and Seminary, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Ouachita Baptist University, Piedmont International University (Graduate School and Temple Baptist University), Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Talbot School of Theology (Biola University), The Master's Seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Wheaton College. Participants include four seminary presidents, five college presidents, thirty-eight professors of preaching, and five pastors who have made significant written contributions to the field of preaching. States represented are Alabama (1), Arkansas (3), California (3), Arkansas (1), Florida (1), Georgia (1), Illinois (2), Kentucky (3), Louisiana (4), Maryland (1), Massachusetts (2), Minnesota (1), North Carolina (6), Ohio (1), Pennsylvania (1), South Carolina (2), Tennessee (4), Texas (13), Virginia (1), and the country of Canada (1).

FIGURE 23

SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES—QUESTION 1

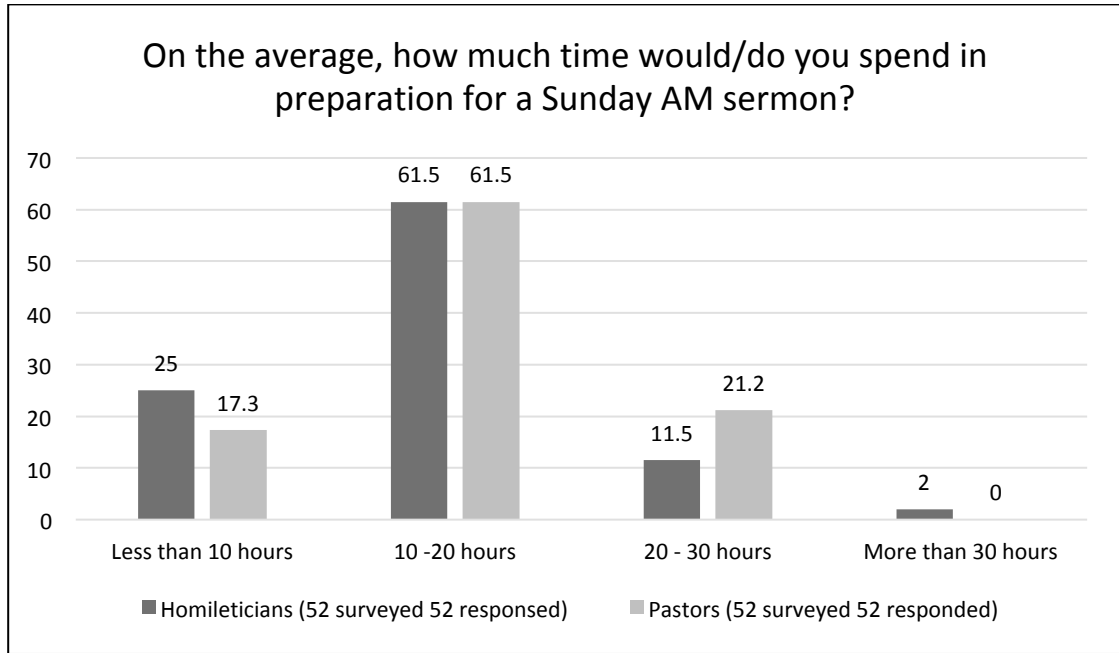


FIGURE 24

SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES—QUESTION 2

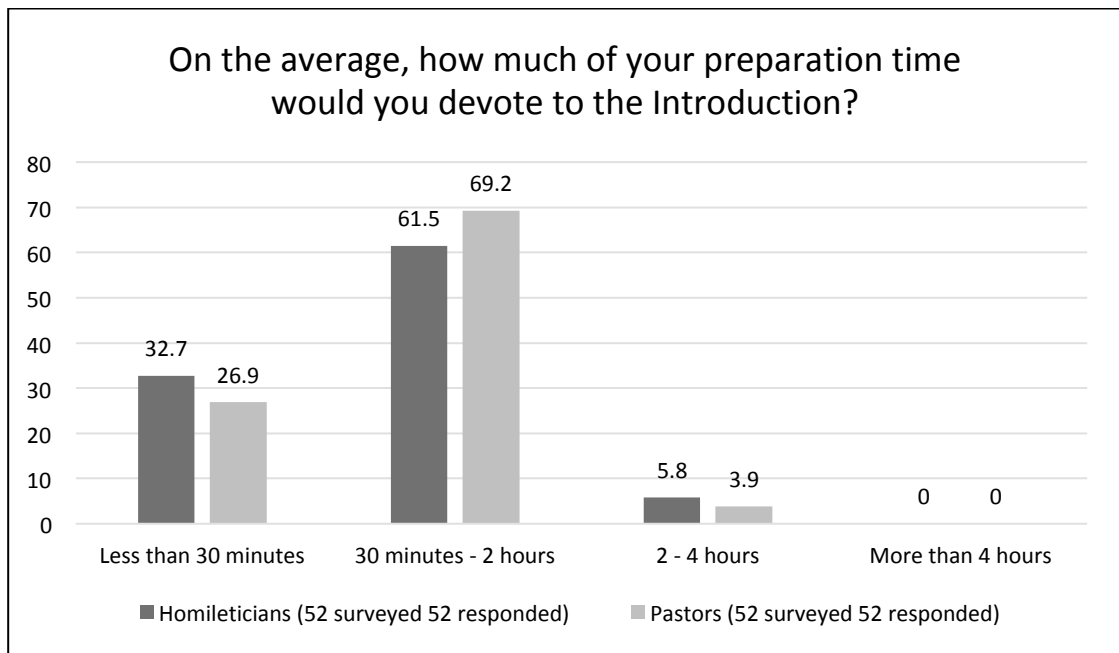


FIGURE 25

SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES—QUESTION 3

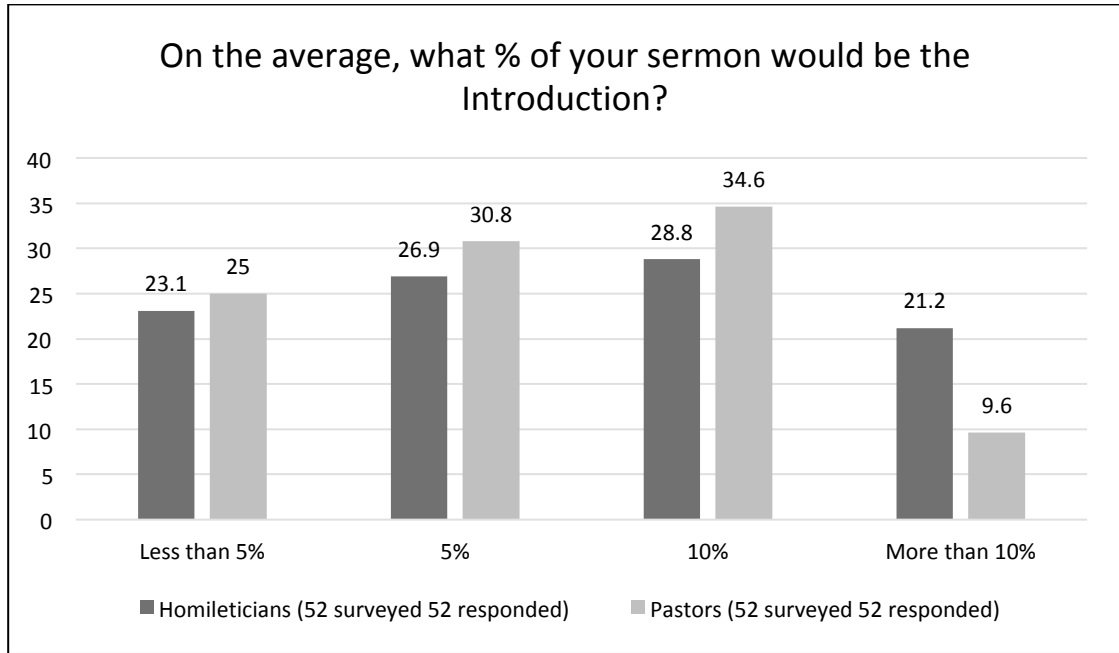


FIGURE 26

SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES—QUESTION 4

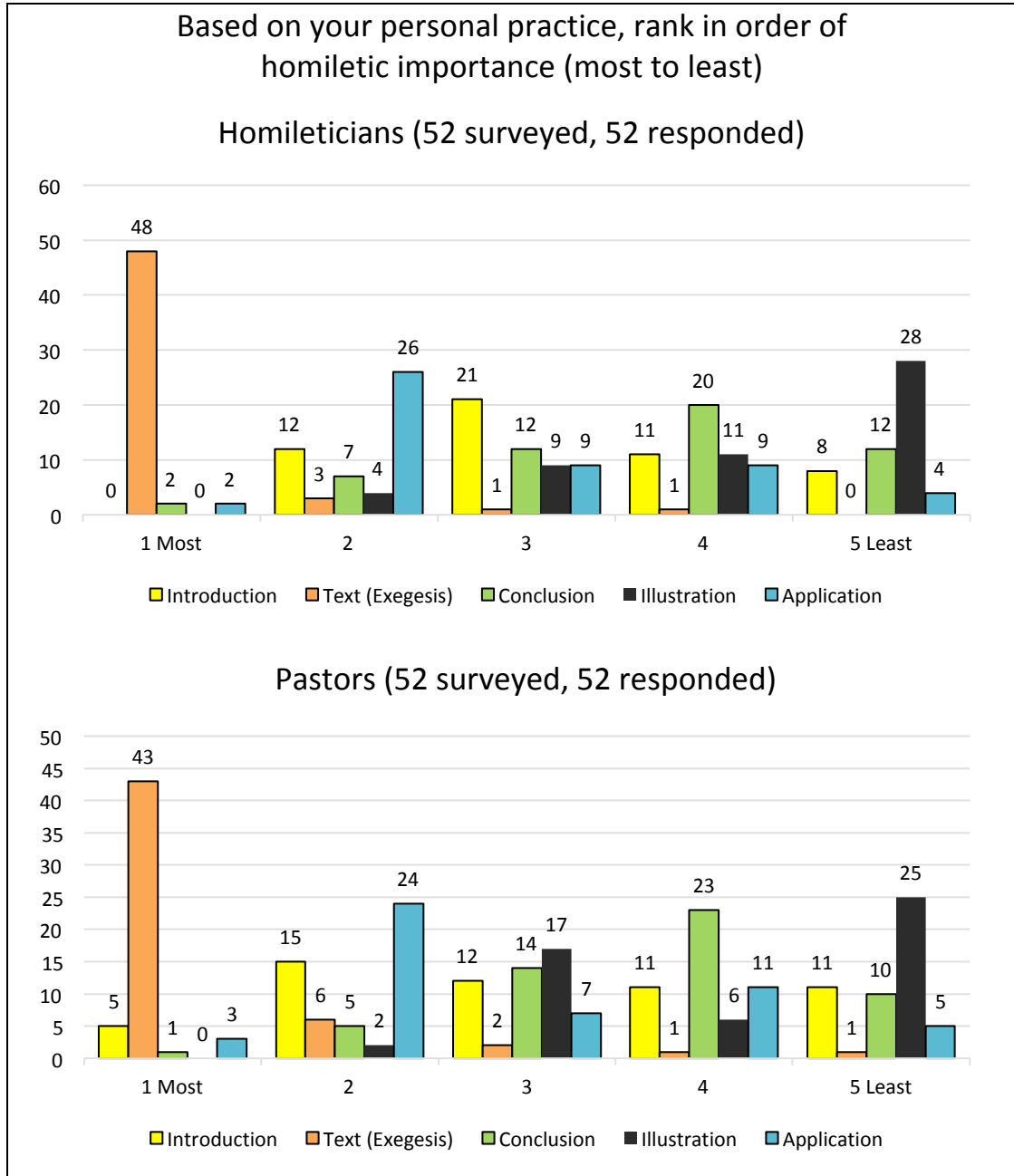


FIGURE 27

SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES—QUESTION 5

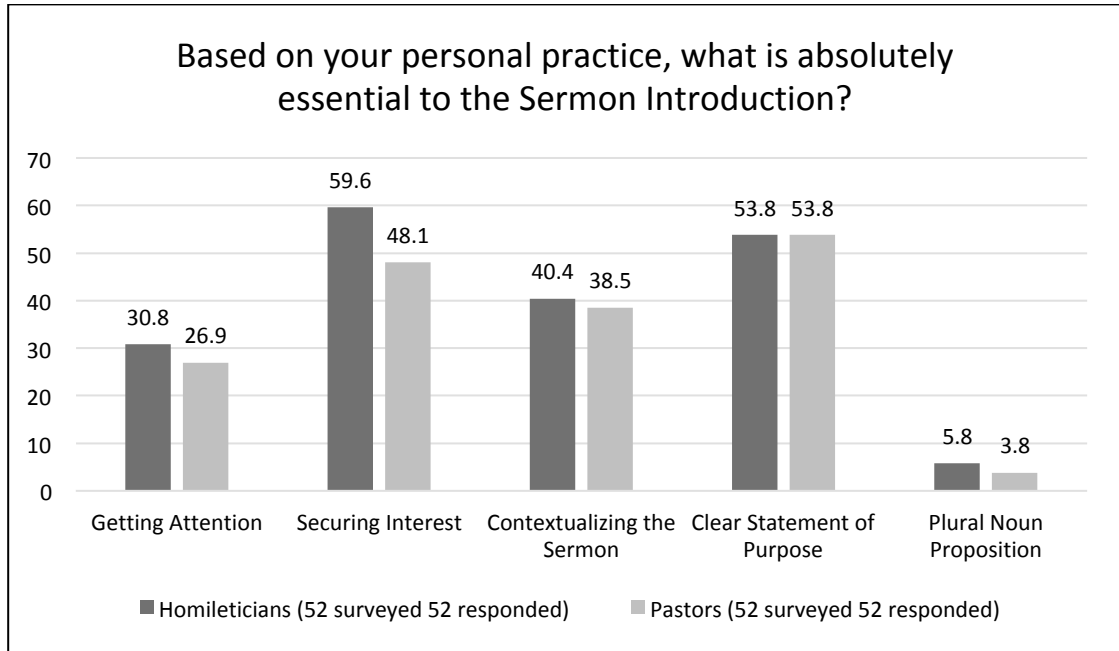


FIGURE 28

SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES—QUESTION 6

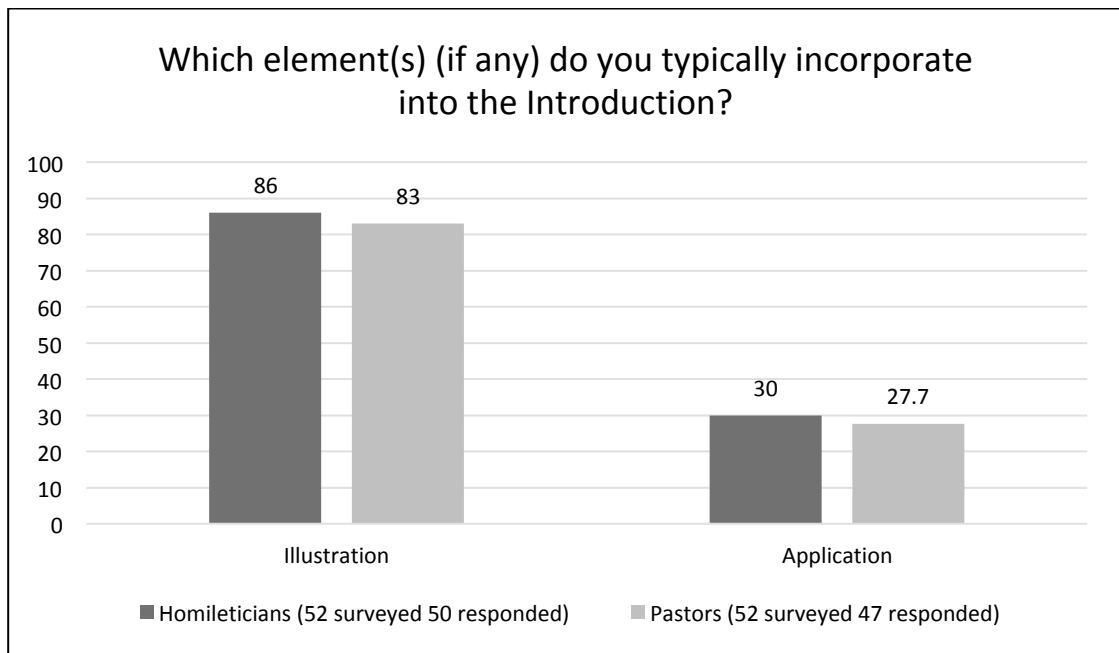




FIGURE 29

SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES—QUESTION 7

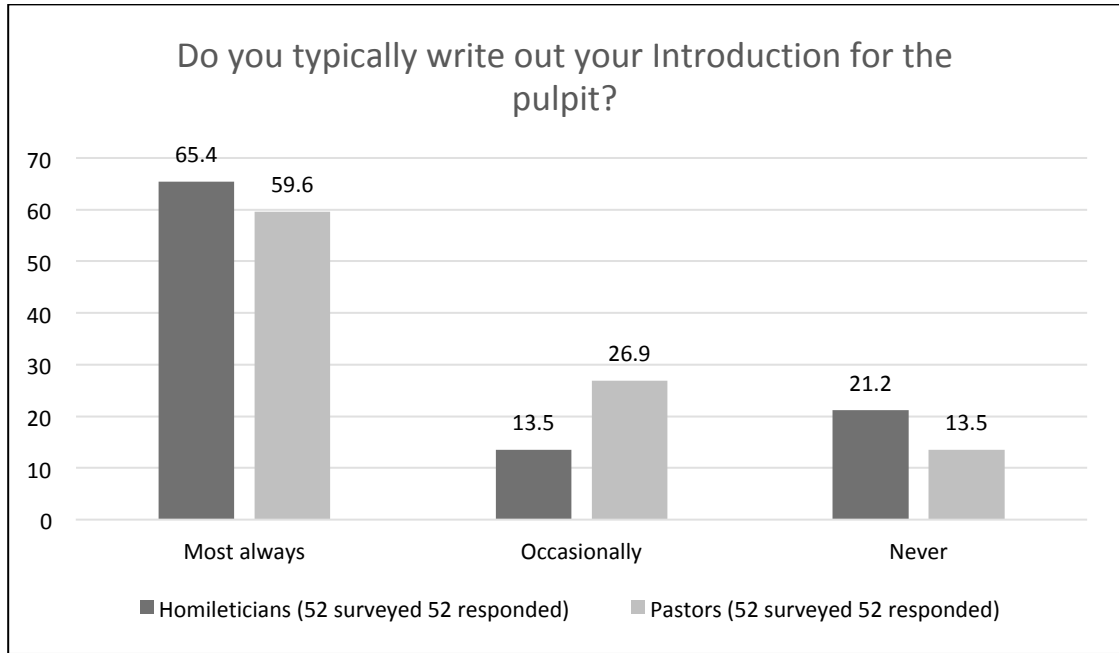
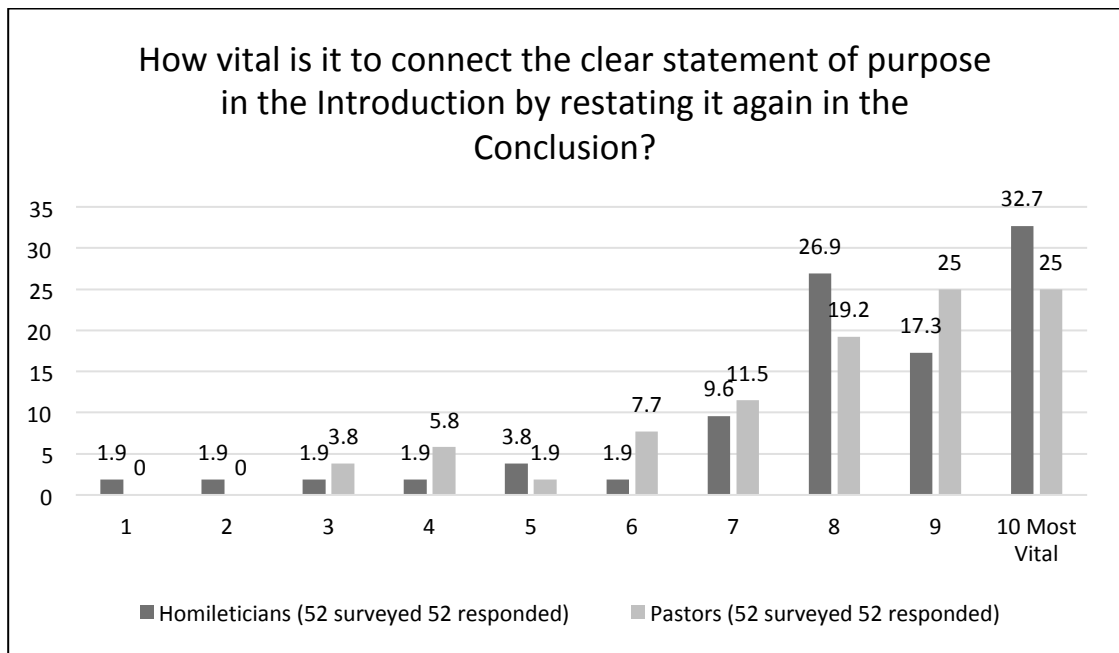


FIGURE 30

SURVEY OF HOMILETIC VOICES—QUESTION 8



APPENDIX E

PRACTITIONER SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATIONS

FIGURE 31

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JASON ALLEN:  
“THE COACHING CAROUSEL”

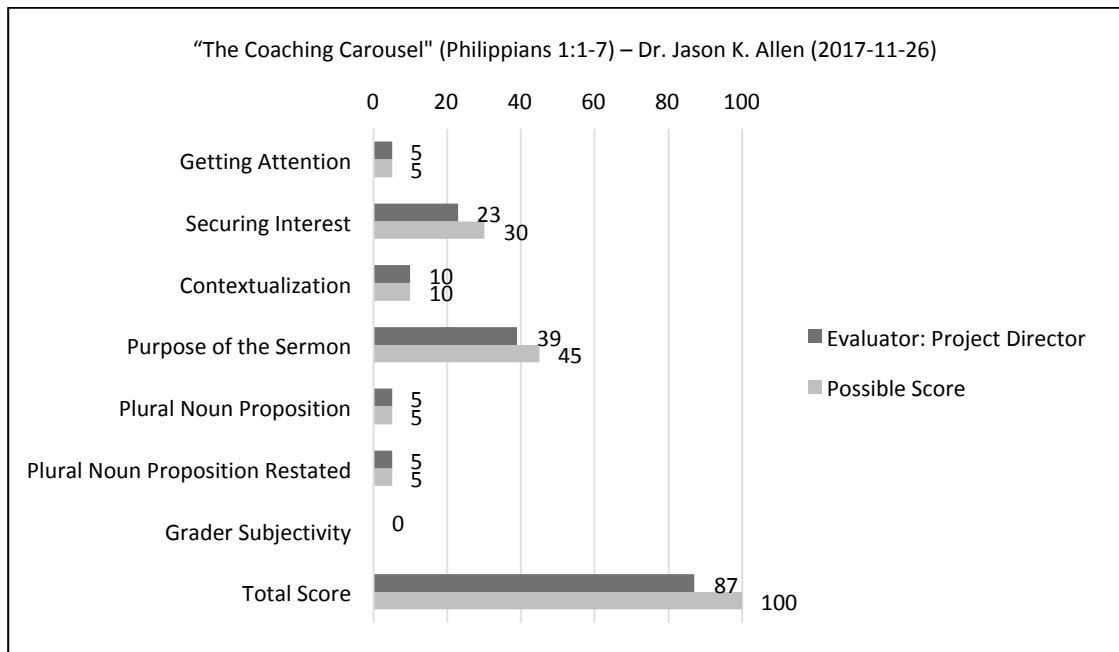


FIGURE 32

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JASON ALLEN:  
 “FOUR MARKS OF A CHEERFUL CHURCH”

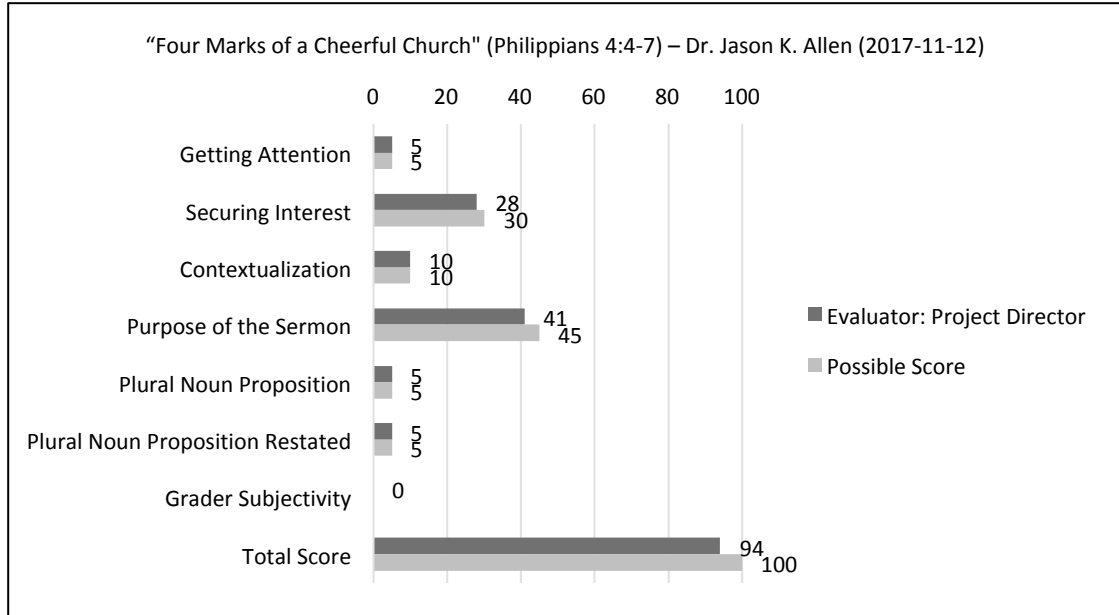


FIGURE 33

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JASON ALLEN:  
 “THE POWER OF ONE”

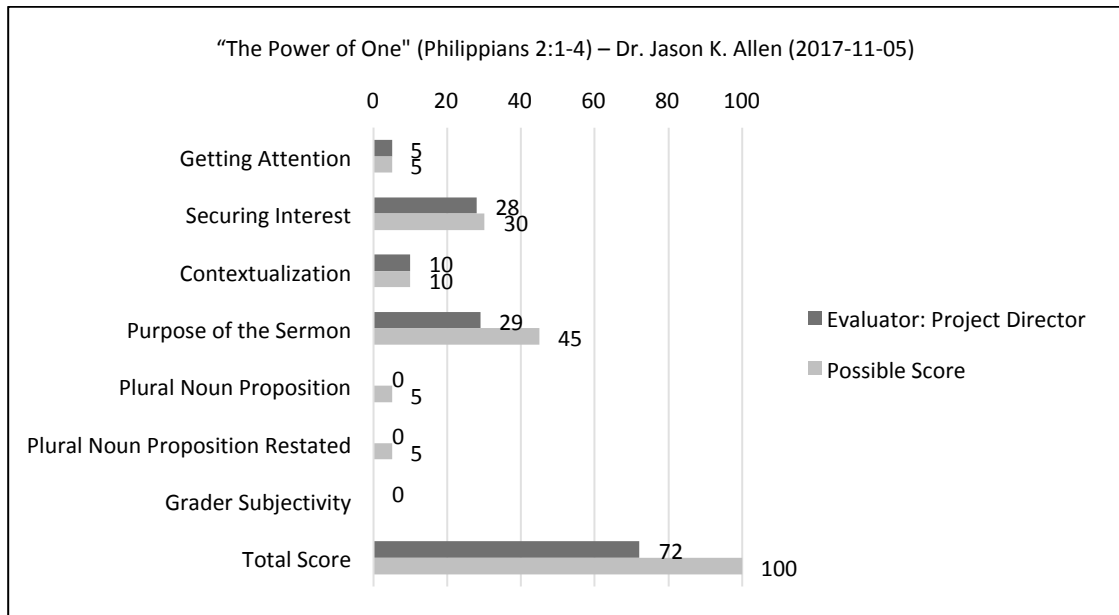


FIGURE 34

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JASON ALLEN:  
 “NOT BY MIGHT NOR BY POWER”

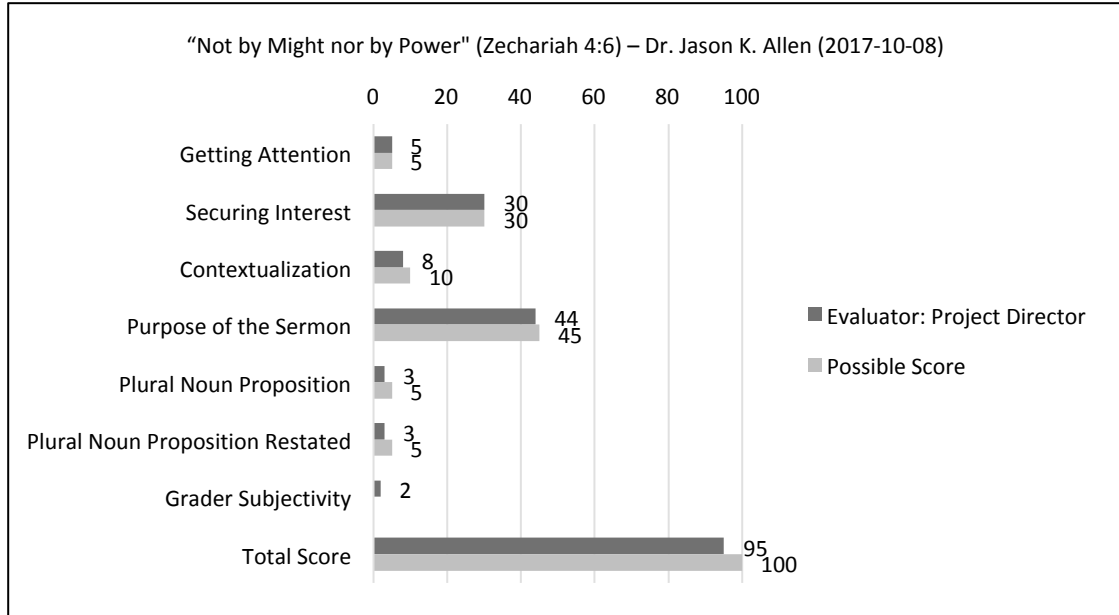


FIGURE 35

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JASON ALLEN:  
 “BUILDING A CROSS-CENTERED LIFE AND CHURCH IN 2018”

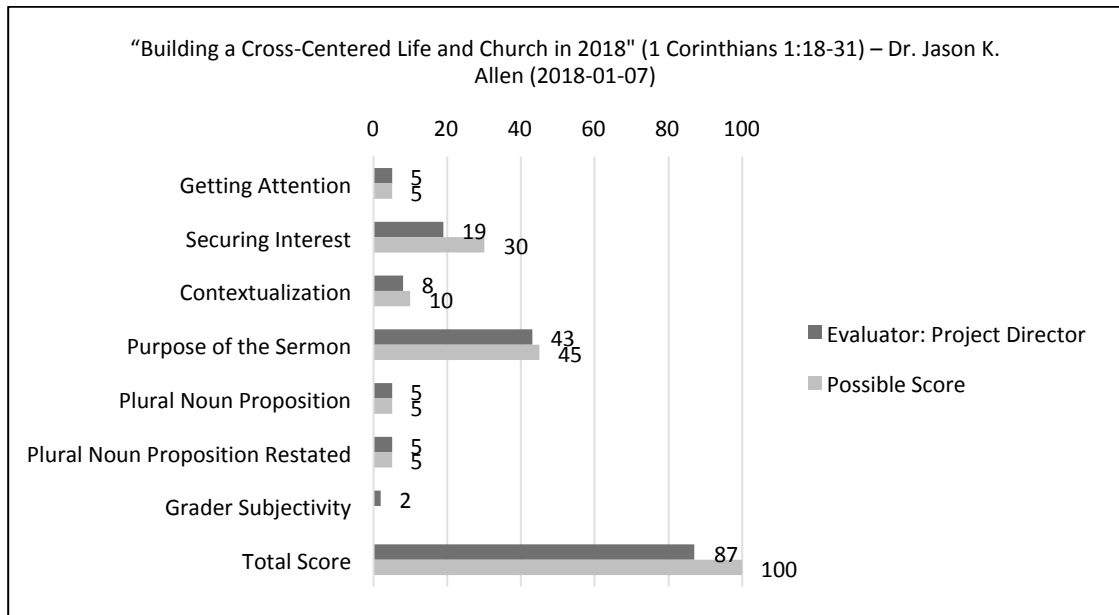


FIGURE 36

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JIM SHADDIX:  
 “THE STEADFAST LOVE OF GOD’S ADOPTION”

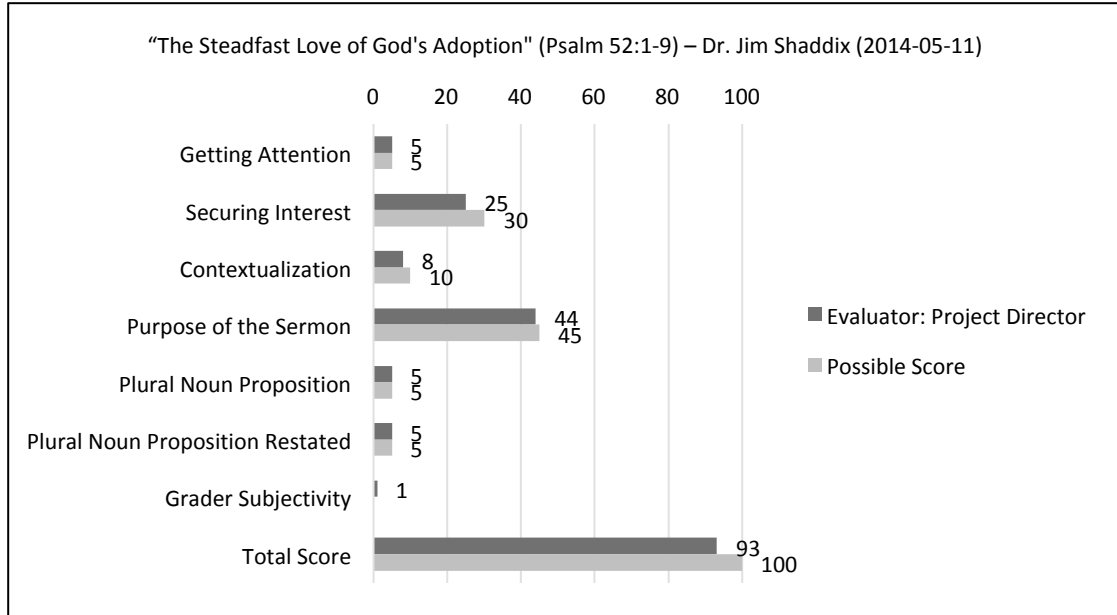


FIGURE 37

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JIM SHADDIX:  
 “RESPONDING TO THE OTHERNESS OF GOD”

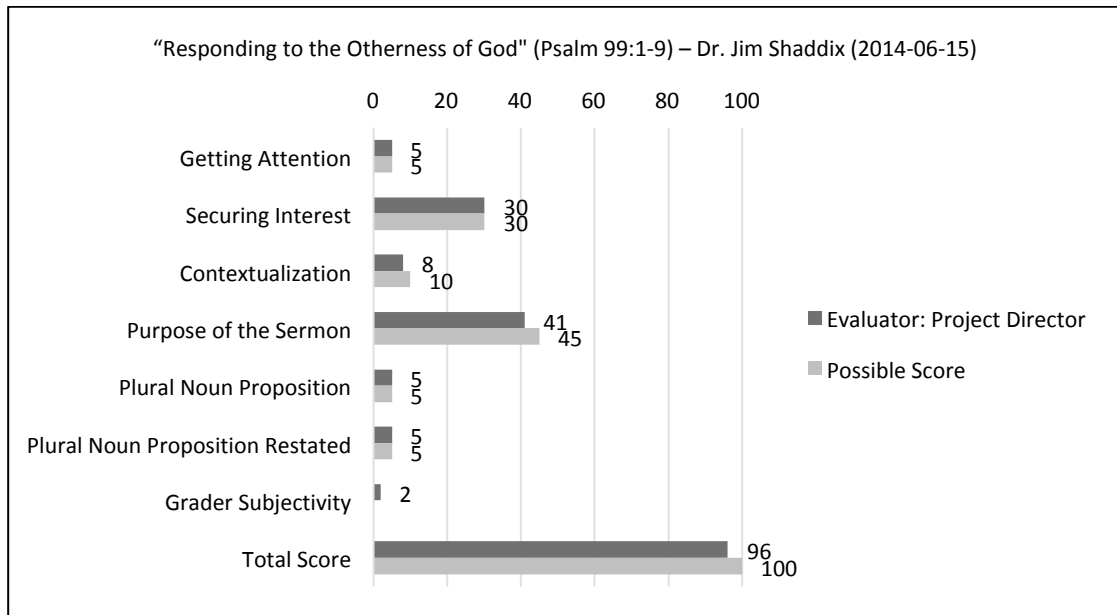


FIGURE 38

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JIM SHADDIX:  
 “THEOLOGY FOR UNEXPECTED STORMS”

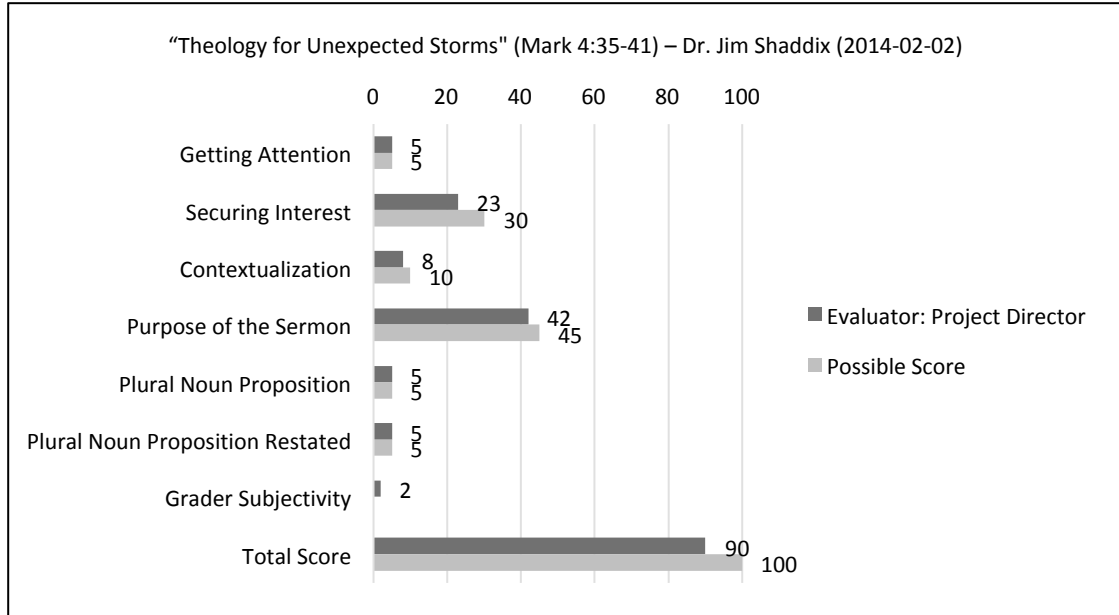


FIGURE 39

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JIM SHADDIX:  
 “TO REMAIN FAITHFUL”

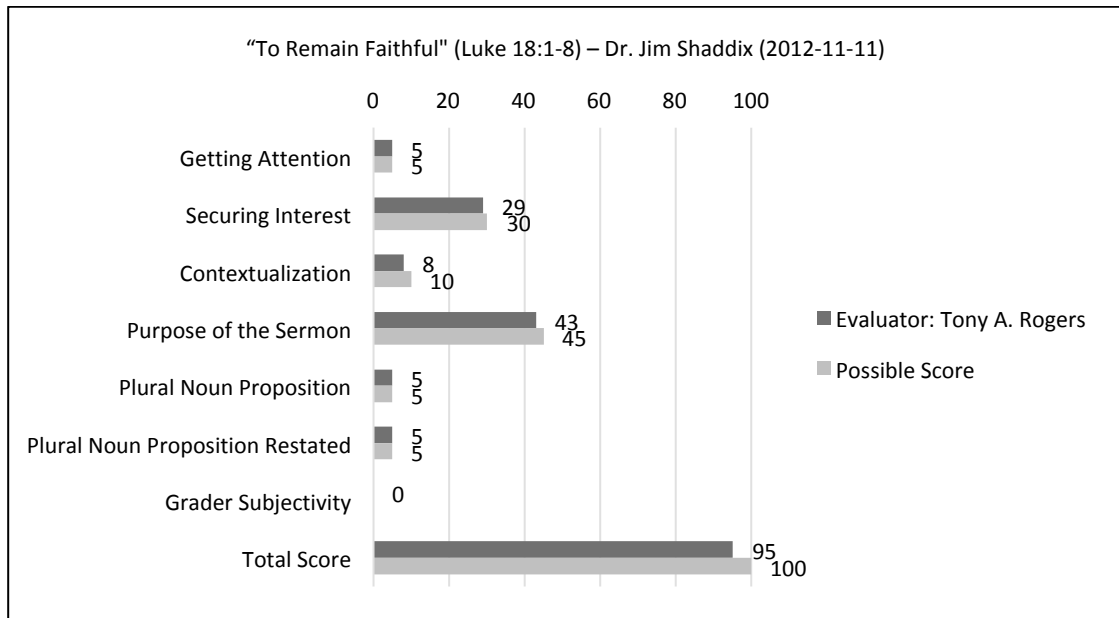


FIGURE 40

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JIM SHADDIX:  
 “THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE”

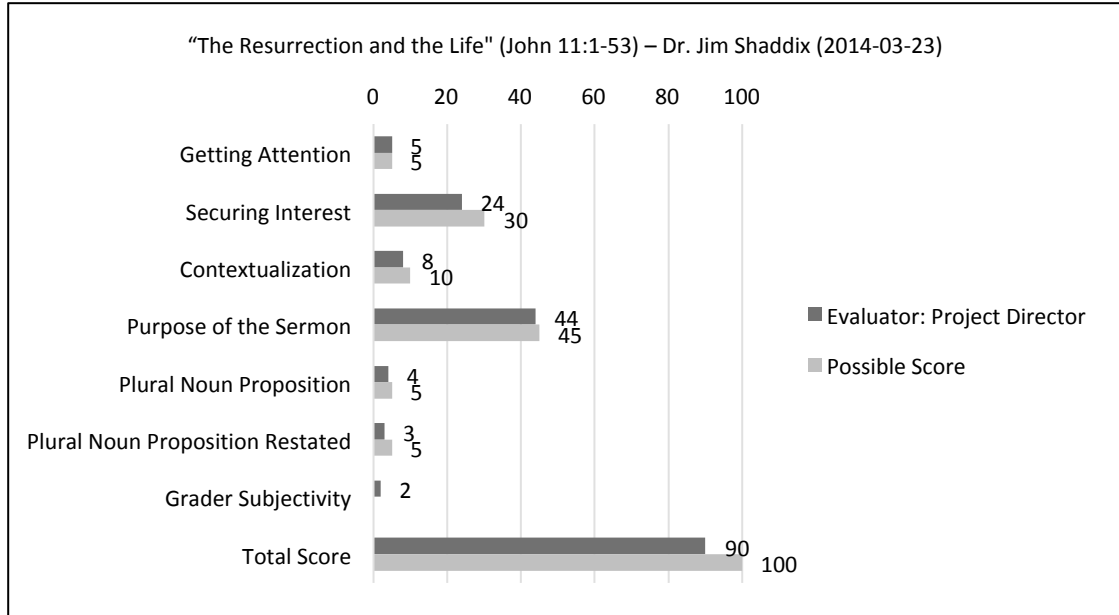


FIGURE 41

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. DAVID ALLEN:  
 “WANNA PLAY CATCH?”

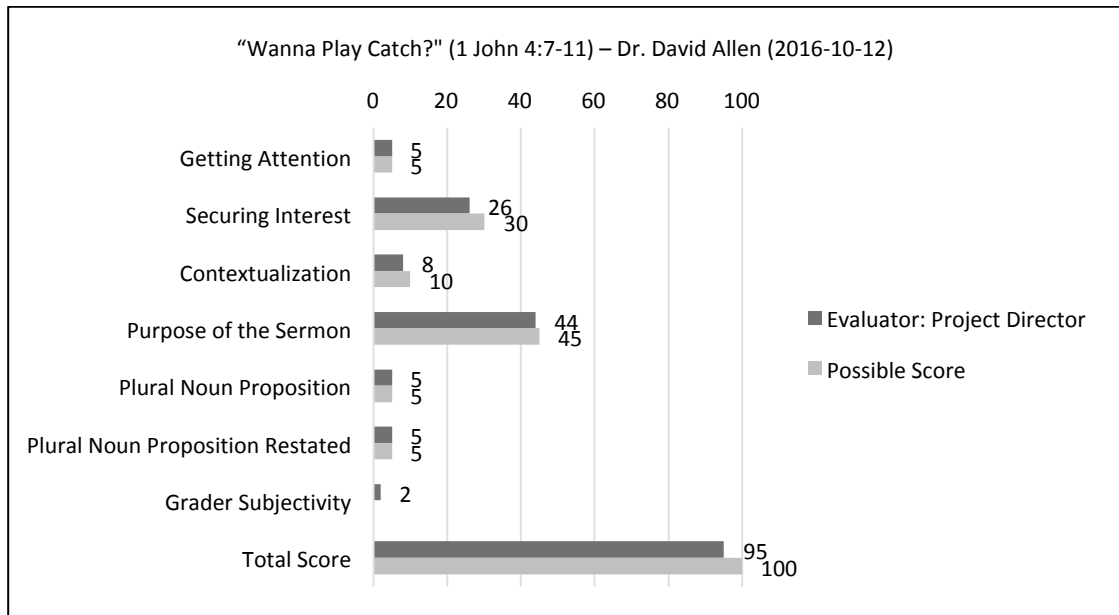


FIGURE 42

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. DAVID ALLEN:  
 “THE SEVEN WONDERS OF JESUS”

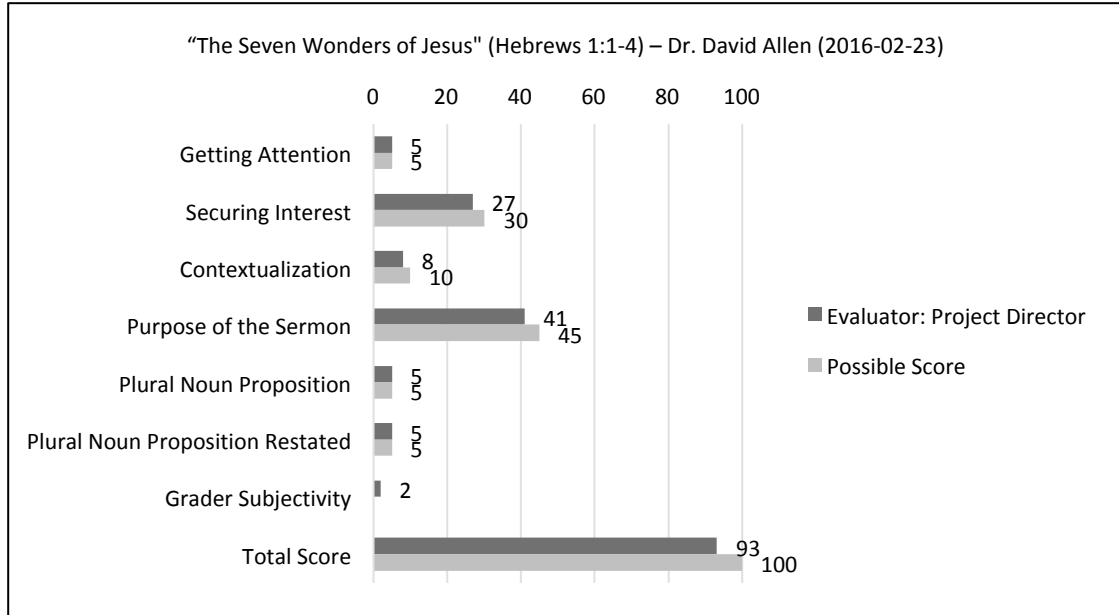


FIGURE 43

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. DAVID ALLEN:  
 “THE MINISTRY OF THE THORN”

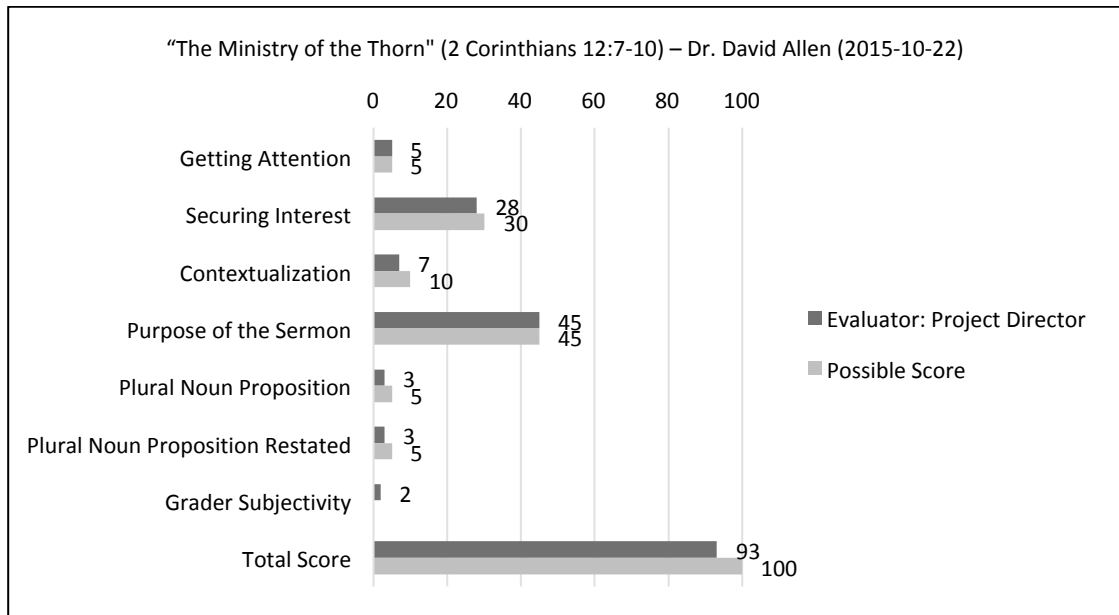




FIGURE 44

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. DAVID ALLEN:  
 “A VISION OF THE LORD”

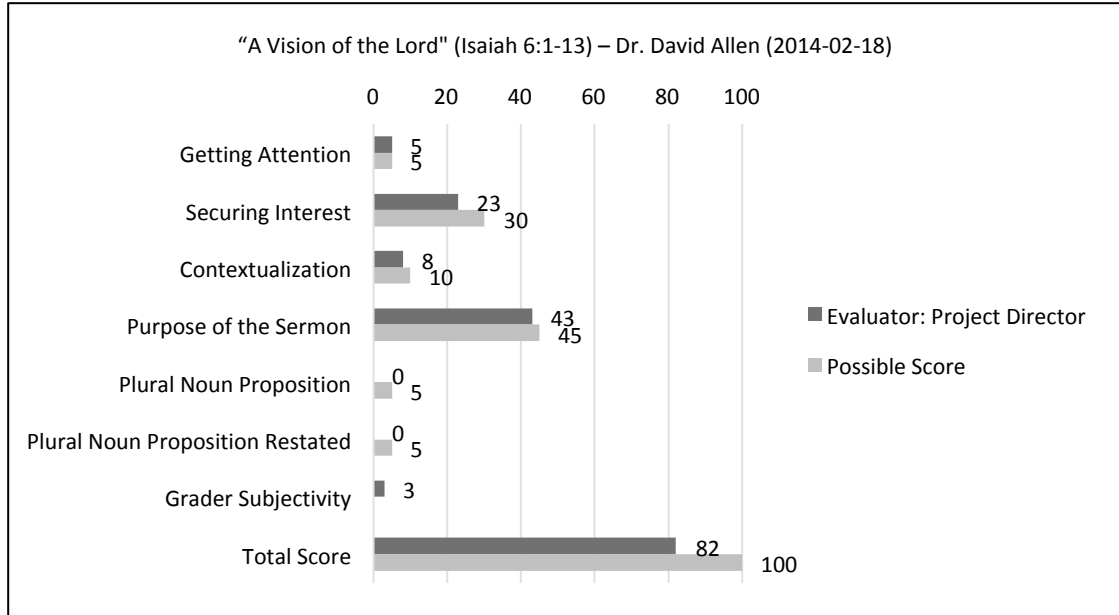


FIGURE 45

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. DAVID ALLEN:  
 “A VISIT TO VANITY FAIR”

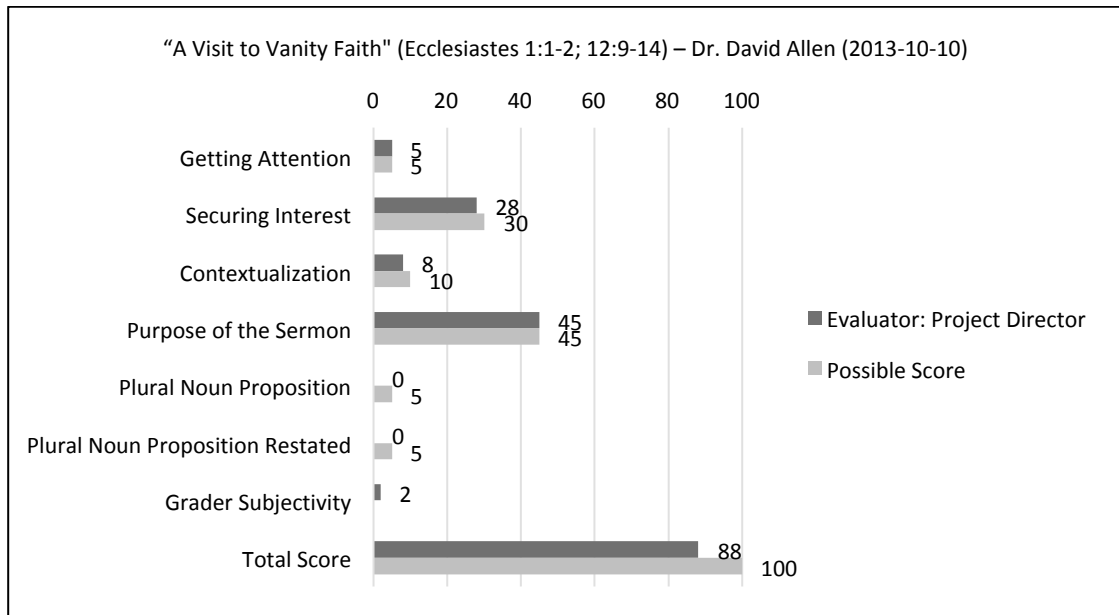


FIGURE 46

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JOHN MACARTHUR:  
 “PAUL’S PLEA: CLING TO THE GOSPEL!”

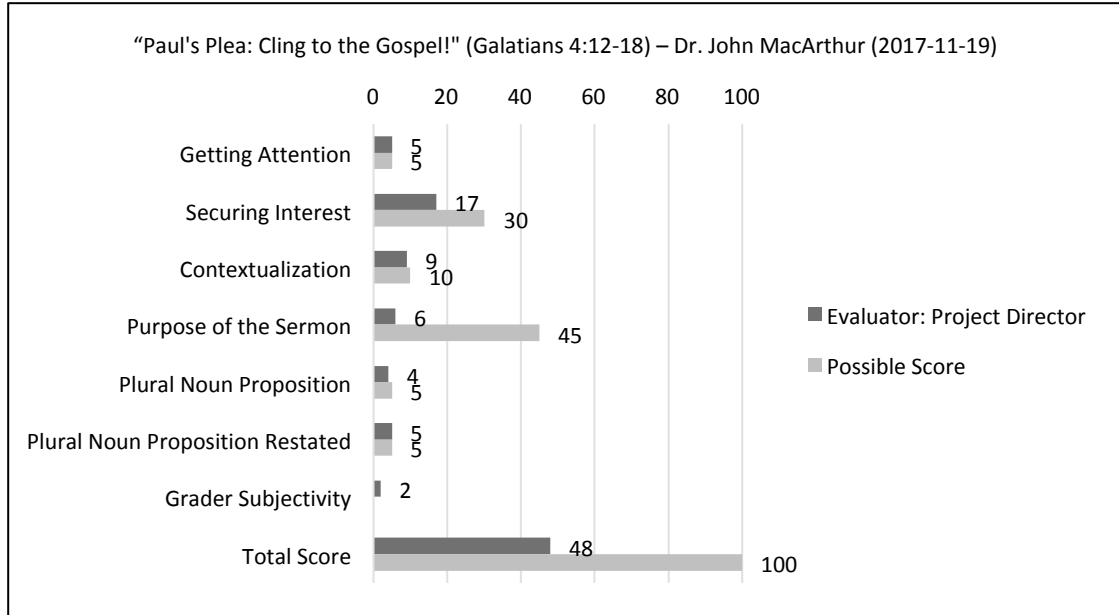


FIGURE 47

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JOHN MACARTHUR:  
 “STRENGTH PERFECTED IN WEAKNESS”

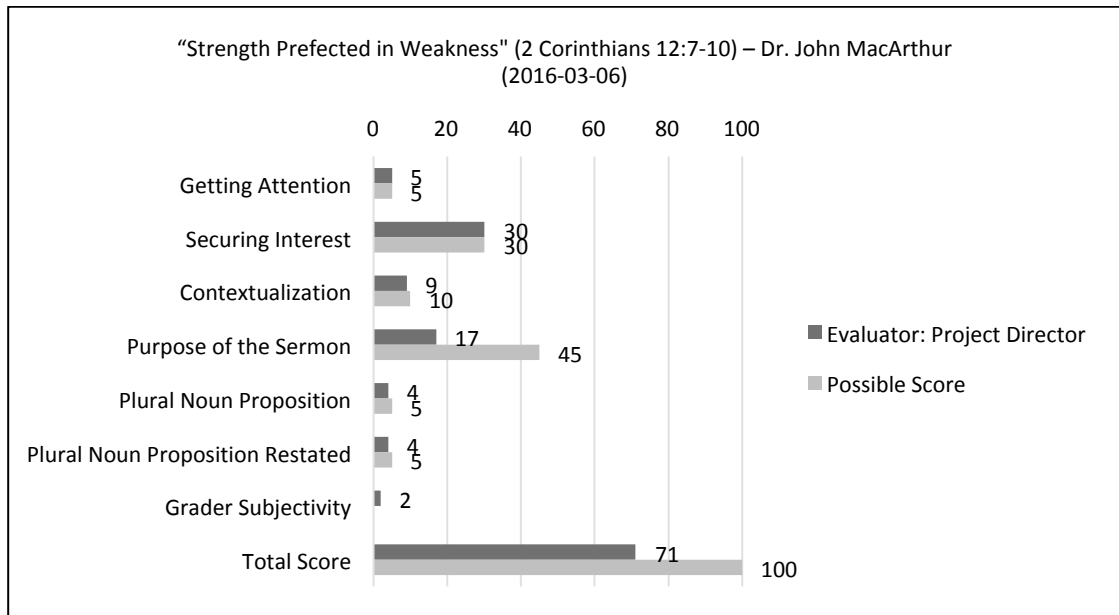


FIGURE 48

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JOHN MACARTHUR:  
 “HOPE THAT TRANSCENDS THE GROANING”

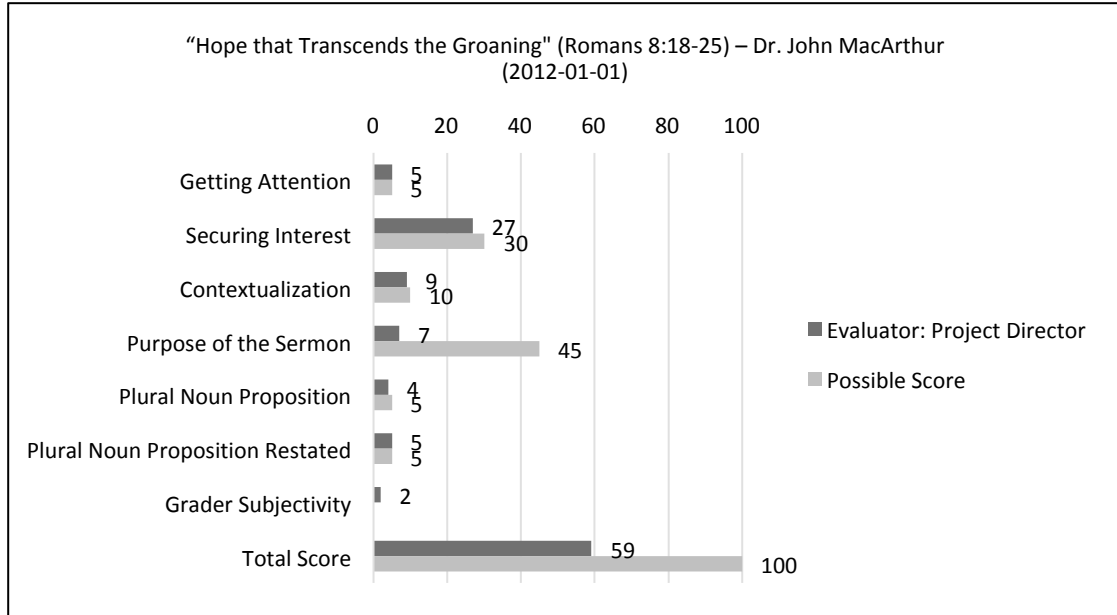


FIGURE 49

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JOHN MACARTHUR:  
 “GOD’S PREPARATION OF CHRIST’S CROSS”

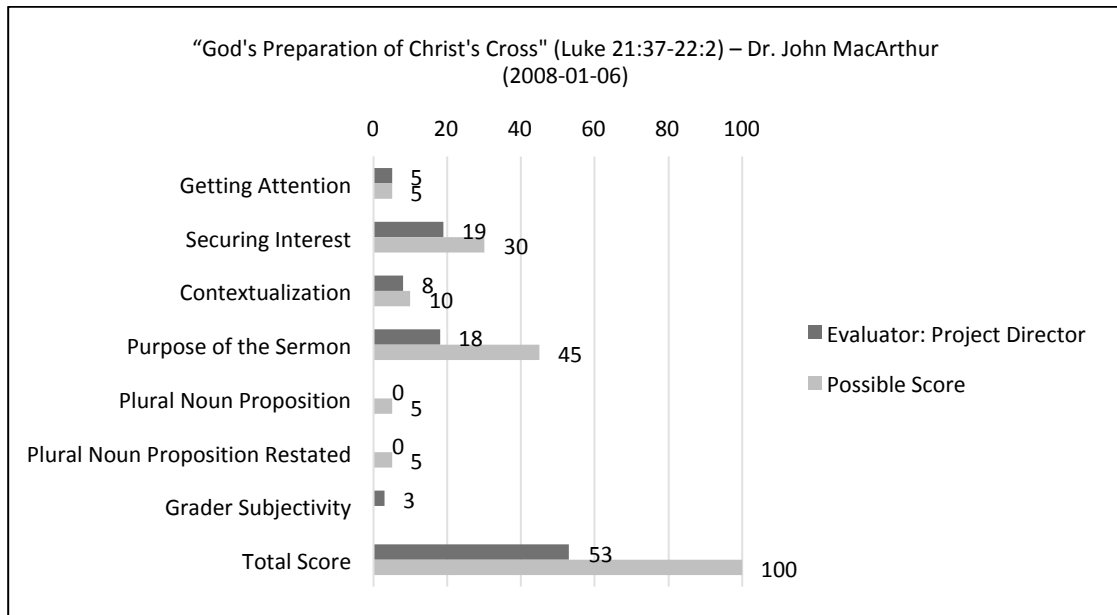


FIGURE 50

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. JOHN MACARTHUR:  
 “THE EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN INVINCIBILITY”

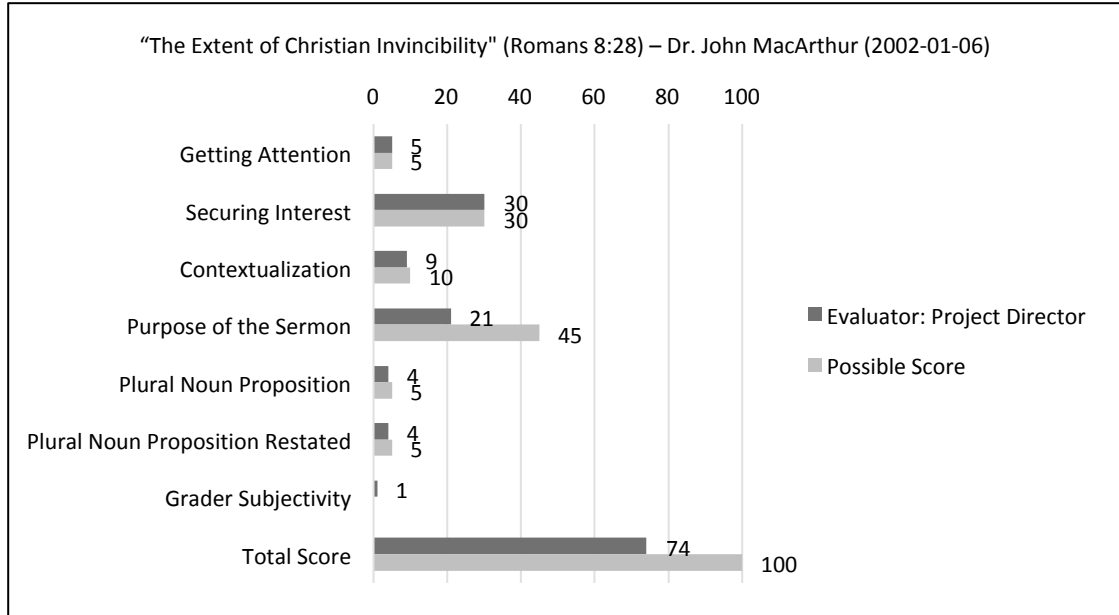


FIGURE 51

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. W. A. CRISWELL:  
 “THE VISION OF THE APOCALYPSE”

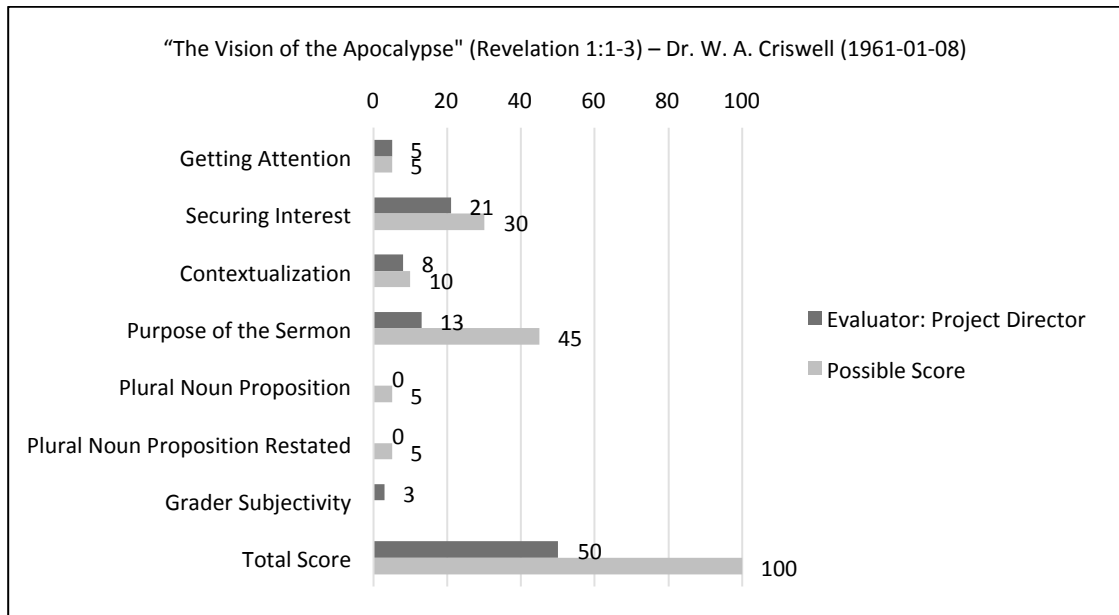


FIGURE 52

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. W. A. CRISWELL:  
 “THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION”

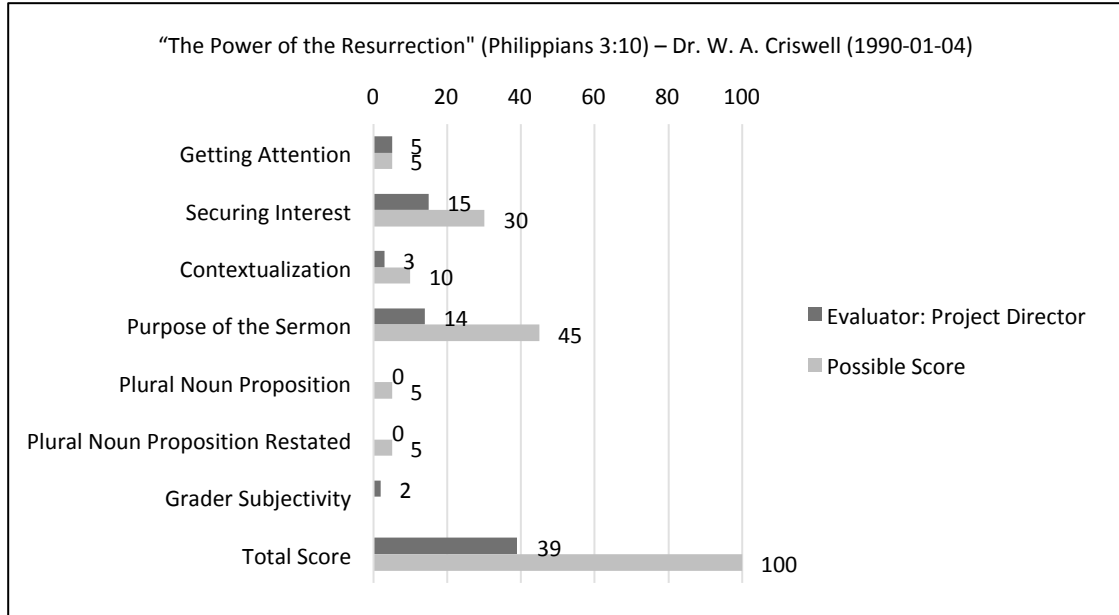


FIGURE 53

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. W. A. CRISWELL:  
 “GOD’S AMAZING PROPITIATION”

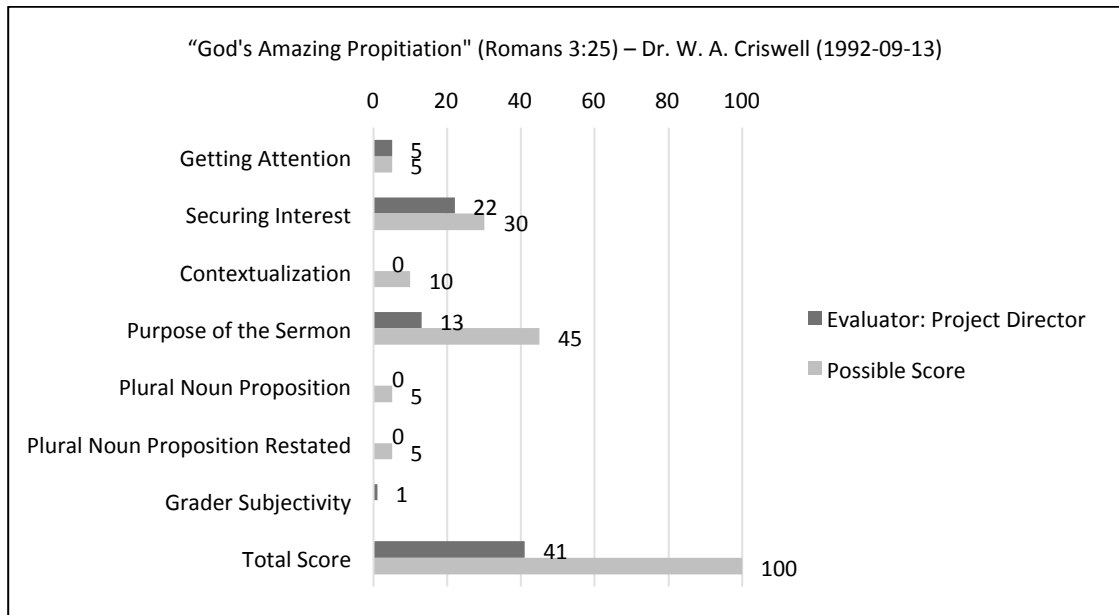


FIGURE 54

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. W. A. CRISWELL:  
 “THE IMPERISHABLE WORD OF GOD”

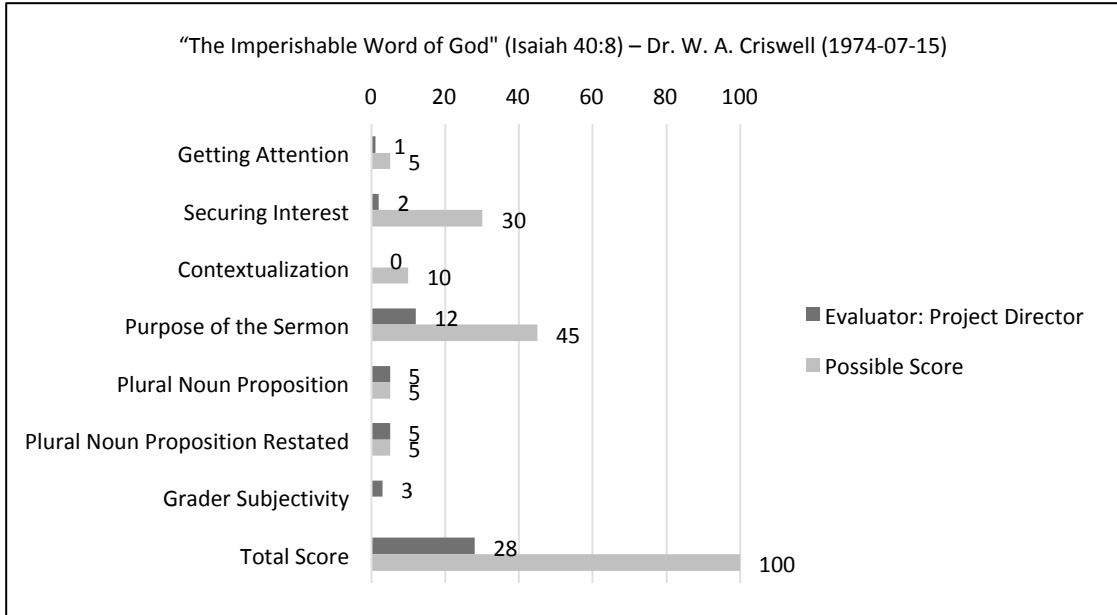
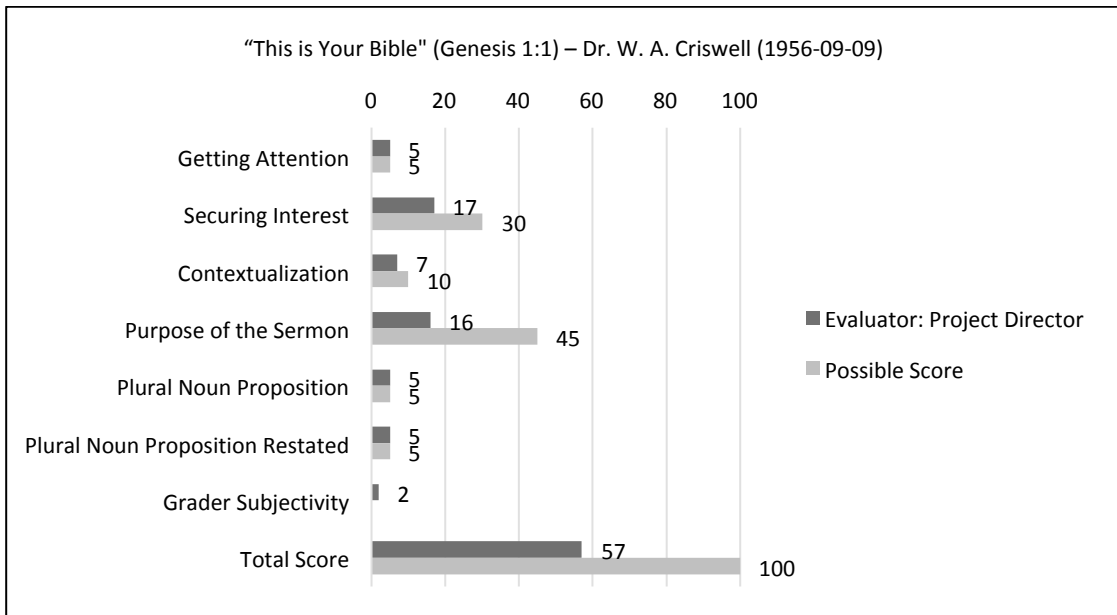


FIGURE 55

SERMON INTRODUCTION EVALUATION OF DR. W. A. CRISWELL:  
 “THIS IS YOUR BIBLE”



## APPENDIX F

### SERMON PROJECT PREACHING SCHEDULE AND SUBMITTAL DATES

	<u>PREACHED</u>	<u>SUBMITTED</u>
<b>SERMON 1</b> (Philippians 1:1-5)	July 22, 2018	July 23, 2018
<b>SERMON 2</b> (Philippians 1:6-11)	July 29, 2018	July 30, 2018
<b>SERMON 3</b> (Philippians 1:12-18)	August 5, 2018	August 6, 2018
<b>SERMON 4</b> (Philippians 1:19-26)	August 12, 2018	August 13, 2018
<b>SERMON 5</b> (Philippians 1:27-30)	August 19, 2018	August 20, 2018
<b>SERMON 6</b> (Philippians 2:1-4)	August 26, 2018	August 27, 2018
<b>SERMON 7</b> (Philippians 2:5-11)	September 2, 2018	September 3, 2018
<b>SERMON 8</b> (Philippians 2:12-13)	September 9, 2018	September 10, 2018
<b>SERMON 9</b> (Philippians 2:14-18)	September 16, 2018	September 17, 2018
<b>SERMON 10</b> (Philippians 2:19-30)	September 23, 2018	September 24, 2018
<b>SERMON 11</b> (Philippians 3:1-11)	September 30, 2018	October 1, 2018
<b>SERMON 12</b> (Philippians 3:12-16)	October 7, 2018	October 8, 2018
<b>SERMON 13</b> (Philippians 3:17-21)	October 14, 2018	October 15, 2018
<b>SERMON 14</b> (Philippians 4:1-7)	October 21, 2018	October 22, 2018
<b>SERMON 15</b> (Philippians 4:8-9)	October 28, 2018	October 29, 2018

## APPENDIX G

### SERMON 1: KEEPING IT REAL (PHILIPPIANS 1:1-5)

#### Introduction Transcript

Philippians 1:1-5.<sup>1</sup> On my iPhone I have an app, on that phone it's called Bible VR. Bible virtual reality, it is an artificial environment that is produced where you can experience the sights and the sounds of biblical experience that is provided by a computer. You can do that as much as you want or as little as you want—you can go and buy the virtual reality glasses, all of that. Now, spiritually speaking, virtual reality by the way is only—virtual, it's not real. Virtual actually means 'near,' so we're not talking about 'real' reality, we're talking about 'near' reality. Spiritually speaking, in the lives of people, people need to experience 'actual' realities, things that are real and substantive, such as participating in the gospel and all of the things that are a part of that. We sang this morning about 'joy,' that is one of the things that we're going to look at this morning. The Book of Philippians is not just about joy, it is about the gospel of Jesus Christ and all of the things that come from experiencing the gospel. If participation in the gospel brings forth all sorts of genuine, substantive realities for a believer, why in the world would you not want God to bring those about? Why in the world? That begs the question, what is the gospel? Is it just for a select few to minister the gospel? In a moment, we're going to talk about a couple of other realities, which are grace and peace. What do the realities of grace and peace, what do those mean to you? What do they mean in your life? Do our lives reflect the reality of thanksgiving to God, not only for Him, but also for others? As we're going to see expressed in these first five verses: are these prayers of thanksgiving that we offer to God; are those out of duty or do those flow from a joyous heart that is reflective of the fact that the gospel is an integral part of your life?

The gospel is not just a ticket to be punched. The gospel is good news. It is the good news. The gospel has and is the power to save. The gospel has the power to

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<sup>1</sup>All biblical passages referenced in appendices G through U are in the Christian Standard Bible (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017). This is the version the PD used in the preaching phase of this project. The PD is presenting these transcripts verbatim, as preached, so he understands that the writing here is not within the parameters of Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* or *The Midwestern Style Manual* (grammar, syntax, references, abbreviations, passive voice, clichés, slang, contractions, and exclamations).



sustain. And the gospel will bear fruit. Can I say that again? The gospel will bear fruit in our life. There are two traveling companions (there are many traveling companions) of Paul as we see his writings in the New Testament. Two of those traveling companions I want to speak about this morning because as Paul came to the end of his life there in 2 Timothy 4, he began to rehearse many of the individuals that had invested in not only him, but the gospel. And he made mention of two of those, one in a negative aspect and one in a positive aspect, because one of them had forsaken him, or actually both of them had forsaken, but one of them had come back. As Paul is coming to the end of his life, this is what he says about the individual Demas. He says he forsook him, which meant not only that he forsook Paul, but he also forsook the gospel mission and he did that because “He loved the present world” (2 Tm 4:10). The very next verse he speaks of an individual by the name of Mark and this is what he says (you know Mark at one time, he just couldn’t cut the mustard and Paul said you can just go your way, but later in his life, Paul saw that he was beneficial) and here is what he said, “He is useful to me in ministry” (2 Tm 4:11).

Now, as we look at this, this morning, there’ll be two types of people that walk out of here, there’ll be the type of people that comply to this message and there will be the type of people that do not comply to this message. And I found that in one verse, 1 Corinthians 1:18, for those that do not comply to the gospel and that could be lost people, obviously, but that could also be saved people as well. “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.” Those that walk out and do not comply to this, that’s their take. The cross, the message of the cross, the message of the gospel is just foolishness, it’s just a waste of time. But for those of us who will comply, Paul goes on and he says this, “But it is the power of God to those of us who are being saved.” It is the power of God! Now, you are there in the Book of Philippians, I hope. Let me just set the context for you. This is one of Paul’s prison Epistles. There are four prison Epistles, that is, he wrote these letters from a jail cell. The Book of Colossians, the Book of Ephesians, the Book of Philemon, and the Book of Philippians, he all wrote from that setting. It is highly personal in nature. The Book of Philippians, the personal pronouns ‘I’ and ‘my’ occur 51 times in this book. There’s only four chapters, but those occur 51 times. It is an extremely personal letter. It is written to a church that is part of the Roman colony in the province of Macedonia. He expressed prayerful thanksgiving to God, experiencing joy in and for the fact that they were participating in the gospel with him. So, he’s going to express thanksgiving for the fact that they are participating in the gospel with him.

Follow along with me, by the way, I am reading from a new translation this morning—the Christian Standard Bible. So, we’re going to try it and see how we end up. If you do not have a Bible, there is a pew Bible there in the rack and that is page 569 if you would follow along with me. Philippians 1:1-5:

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus: To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”

So, participating in the gospel is the basis for all sorts of spiritual realities. So, I'm going to give you three glorious spiritual realities that God allows us to experience when we participate in the gospel. Now, the reason this is important, the reason this is significant for you is this: I found a quote from John Wesley, here's the reason why it's important to participate in the gospel. Here's what John Wesley said, “Untold millions are still untold.” “Untold millions are still untold.” So, let me give you these three glorious spiritual realities that God allows us to experience when we participate in the gospel together.

#### Conclusion Transcript

So, this passage has given us three glorious truths when we participate in the gospel. He brings us fellowship—oh, that's a very real possibility, if we don't want to be a limited partner. When we participate in the gospel, God brings us thanksgiving. When we participate in the gospel, God brings us joy: real, substantive realities, not virtual realities (near realities), but real. Is your life only an illusion of those spiritual realities or are these things a vibrant certainty? What people need in their lives are actual, spiritual realities, such as fellowship, such as thanksgiving, such as joy. So, exactly where are you with those three things? Where are you? Let me simplify. As far as the gospel is concerned, are you a general partner or are you a limited partner?

Let me encourage you this morning. I think God would encourage us that we need to partner together in the gospel to experience fellowship, to experience thanksgiving, to experience joy. I encourage you to do that this morning. As a member of Southside Baptist Church, become a full partner. If you do not have a church home, I challenge you this morning—I can't think of a better place to serve and to partner for the gospel than right here. Virtual reality, virtual Christianity, is undesired and is totally unacceptable to God, totally! So, what should I do, Brother Tony? Let me give you a few things. Number one, and you can do these right now or you can write them as a list to do sometime this week. Pray that God will make you more aware of your slave status. Just as Paul expressed there—I am a servant of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That makes it less about our agenda, makes it more about His agenda. As a matter of fact, if I recognize that I'm a slave, you know what? I don't even have an agenda! Secondly, realize as a believer that you are a partner, some way, shape, or form. Limited? Full? You are in fellowship with other believers based on grace and peace—the gospel. Third, ask God to overwhelm you with a spirit of

thanksgiving, not only to God, but to God on behalf of others, that is expressed ultimately in prayer. Fourth, ask God to let joy reign over you as you pray on behalf of others, and not duty. Let joy reign over you. And then, fifth, what are you doing concretely to participate in the advance of the gospel? Man, I could just list a thousand things that could be done to participate in the gospel—VBS, Sunday School, church, intercession, worship, Samaritan's Purse. The list is endless, and you can find your niche anywhere. And you can find your niche anywhere, in any church partnering with other believers because that's what brought joy. It brought joy to Paul's heart. I assure you, it brought joy to God's heart first and foremost. Be open to tangible ways to participate in the gospel.

It's interesting in the Bible, there are only a few references (there are many references to the gospel), but there're only a few references to obeying it, and all of those references are negative. I'm going to share one of them with you this morning just to show you what God really thinks of His Good News. 2 Thessalonians 1:8, "When he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who do not know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." He takes His Good News very seriously, doesn't He?

Good news—its only good if it gets there, right? Limited or full? Now, there may be some here that you're no partner at all because you've never expressed faith in Christ. You know I said earlier the gospel is about a person, the gospel is the truth about that person, and the gospel is a life lived like that person. Let me just speak to you for a moment. The gospel is about a Person, His name is Jesus. Let me tell you some of the truth about that Person: He is God, He left heaven, He became a man, He was born of a virgin, He lived a sinless life, He rightly became the sacrifice, He went to the cross, He suffered the full wrath of the Father, He shed His blood, He made perfect atonement for sin, He died and He raised the third day. That is the truth about Him. Now what about the life lived like that Person? The only way you can live that life is to accept that truth and then to do something—to turn from your sins, repent, and ask that Individual to come into your life and to save you. On the authority of God's Word, let me assure you, if you do that, He will save you! Even right now, even in this moment. There's no number of churches that you can join to be saved, there's no certain amount of times I can dip you in that tank back there to be saved. The only thing that will save you is a relationship with the living Lord of the universe, Jesus Christ. So, I invite you to do that today as we have an invitation. Believer, decide—am I going to be a full partner or a limited partner? Lost person, decide—am I going to follow Him and comply or am I not going to follow Him and not comply? "When he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

## APPENDIX H

### SERMON 2: ENERGIZED BY GOD’S SALVATION (PHILIPPIANS 1:6-11)

#### Introduction Transcript

“You contribute nothing to your salvation except your sin that made it necessary.” Those are the words of the greatest theologian America has ever produced, Jonathan Edwards. You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary. As we sang all of those songs, I was reminded of three verses of Scripture that I want to just bring to your recollection this morning. As Absalom was chasing David, David cries out in the third Psalm, he says, “Salvation is of the LORD!” That is what we are talking about this morning, “Salvation is of the LORD.” As Jonah was plummeting the depths of the sea and the great fish and he was recounting that, he was repenting there in the belly of that animal—the very next statement that he makes is this, “Salvation belongs to the LORD!” David, again, in the Book of Psalms (Psalm 62:1), he says, “From Him is my salvation.” So, we’re going to talk about salvation this morning.

Does the possibility of losing your salvation trouble you? There may be some here today, that for you, that is a very real possibility (at least you think so). Does that trouble you that you might lose your salvation? Would it excite you to know that God has never left any plan or purpose (including salvation) undone or unfinished? That should excite you. If God’s salvation is ‘so great’ according to the Book of Hebrews 2:3, why are we so unmotivated, unmoved, unfaithful, and unenergized about our salvation, if it is, ‘so great’ a salvation? In terms of salvation, is there any evidence whatsoever that God is working in you, even right now in this moment? Is there any evidence whatsoever? Is the ultimate goal of God, in salvation, just to get us to heaven? Is that His ultimate goal, just to get us to heaven?

Let’s expand our understanding about God’s wondrous, energizing salvation. Okay? Jesus loses none that He saves. Are you with me today? How many of you are here? Alright, Jesus loses none that He saves. John 6:39, “This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day.” Along those lines, God has perfect follow through. God has perfect follow through. Psalm 138:8, “The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me.” In terms of salvation, that’s a wondrous thought to have—that He is going to fulfill that purpose within me. Being saved should not only bring us joy, but it should motivate us, it should move us, it should energize us. The great reformer Martin Luther says, “Is it not wonderful news to believe that salvation lies outside of ourselves?” Isn’t that a

wondrous thought to think, that God did it all? We just sang “Jesus, Paid It All,” that’s a wonderful thought to think. Salvation is not just what occurred, salvation is what’s happening now. It’s not just what occurred in your life, salvation is what is happening now. We’ll get to chapter 2 eventually (I hope) and in that chapter and in the thirteenth verse, Paul makes the statement, “For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.” So, it’s not just what God did, it’s what God is doing. Finally, it is God’s intention to make us like Jesus. It is God’s intention to make us like Jesus. Romans 8:29, “For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.” He saved us so that we might be like Him.

Let me tell you about somebody that was energized by their salvation: Polycarp, one of the ancient church fathers. Bishop of Smyrna, AD 155. They came to his home, drug him out of his home, trying to get him to recant his faith. These are his words that he says, “Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my Savior and my King?” As they took him to the bonfire and were about to nail him to the post, he refused that, and here’s what he said, “Leave me as I am, for He that gives me strength to endure the fire, will enable me not to struggle without the help of your nails.” He voluntarily walked up to the bonfire and burnt for the glory of God. Now that is somebody that is energized by their salvation. That is somebody that is excited about their faith. That is somebody that is moved and motivated by what God has done in their heart. Now, on the other hand, Paul writes to the Corinthian church, who had all sorts of issues, all sorts of problems. He writes these words in his second letter to them. He says, “Working together with him (that is God), we also appeal to you, ‘Don’t receive the grace of God in vain.’” Don’t receive the grace of God in vain. What does that mean, to receive the grace of God in vain? It would mean not allowing the grace of God to have its divinely intended result in our lives and thereby making it a ground for sin in our life. Don’t receive the grace of God in vain. Let salvation do its work in you. Let God do His work of salvation in you.

So, our passage today, if you would like to turn there, and be there, Philippians 1, we’re going to be in verses 6-11. Our passage will provide better understanding of what God has done, and is doing, and ultimately will do. And we need to remember that obeying Him always produces fruit. Obedience to God always produces fruit. And so, while God will ultimately finish what He starts, failure to realize the truth of this passage in our life, failure to realize the full possibilities of God’s wondrous salvation, will lead to a life that is less honoring to God and it could lead to forfeiture of reward when we stand before Him one day in heaven.

Now, here in this passage Paul begins this deeply personal letter, which we talked about last week, where he is literally pouring out his heart to the church. It was a love where fellowship, thanksgiving, and joy were expressed. Paul came to Philippi on his second missionary journey, the year is about AD 49. It is the first time that the gospel has come to Europe and they have planted a church there and when Paul gets

there, Paul does what he always does, he preaches the gospel. Now, I would, that when I preach the gospel, I had the same effects that he had. Let's just rehearse those as we spoke about them last week. The Bible says that as he began to minister there in Philippi, there was lady by the name of Lydia and God wondrously opened her heart so that she could be saved. Not only her, but her whole household. There was a demonized girl (demon-possessed girl) that was there, she was gloriously saved because of the preaching of Paul and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because she experiences salvation, a riot broke out. I don't know that many riots broke out with my preaching, but nonetheless as Paul preaches a riot breaks out, they're dragged off to jail. Paul is not alone, Silas is there, Timothy's there, Luke is there. As they're in the jail cell, they start singing, raising their praises to the God of heaven and miraculously an earthquake takes place. The Philippian jailor is saved, and all of his household. Man, what a powerful ministry there in Acts 16 as the apostle Paul tells the glorious Good News of Jesus Christ. Last week, we saw that he partnered with them in the gospel and he ultimately shares (or he informs them) that he is praying for them. Today, we are going to actually see what that prayer looks like that's spoken of there in verses 3-4. Last week, we saw three spiritual realities that God allows us to experience when we participate in the gospel. Let's remember them, there was fellowship, there was thanksgiving, and there was joy. And they partnered together, and they experienced all of those characteristics and qualities as God's people. So, with a thankful heart (v. 3), with a joyful spirit (v. 4), and with a gospel focus (v. 5) Paul continues to share his heart with them. He's going to remind them what the gospel provides. Here's the three things that the gospel provides: security, love, and focus. So, if you have your Bibles (1:6). If you don't have a Bible, there's one in the pew rack in front of you, that's page 569 in that blue Bible. Follow along with me.

“I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.”

Which we just sang about—wasn't that awesome! A proper understanding of God's salvation should energize a believer. Let me say that again, the gospel should energize believers because of the effects that it provides. You know, we're going to go look at three energizing results in just a second. But if you'll look at that first verse. If that little phrase, “Will carry it on to completion.” If that is not true. If that is not correct. If

that is not right. Then we will leave this place a most miserable people. We will live † our life wondering, “Am I saved? Am I not saved? Did I do something to lose it? What do I have to do to lose it? or Am I saved—do I know, that I know, that I know, that I have got salvation within me?” So, let me give you three energizing results of salvation.

### Conclusion Transcript

So, we've looked at three energizing effects. The gospel should energize us because it secures a confident hope (that God is going to finish what He started). The gospel should energize us because it supports an expressive love, and the gospel should energize us because it gives us a spiritual focus. So, believer, a proper understanding of the gospel should energize us. What are the reasons keeping you from fulfilling and enjoying the full effects of God's salvation? Full effects of God salvation. How do you go from unmotivated and apathetic to energized over your salvation? How do you go from that point where you're in a state of apathy and you cannot be moved? How do you go from that point, to a point over here you're excited and energized about what, not only God did, but what God is doing? What will it take to get to a higher level of excitement, motivation about what God has done for you and in you? Through this passage, through these few verses, you've been provided a better understanding of what God has done for you and in you. While we bring nothing to salvation's table but sin, we do have responsibility to respond. We do have a responsibility to respond. Let's remember obedience to God always bears fruit. Failure to appreciate and act on God's purposes for you concerning His wondrous salvation will lead to a dishonoring lifestyle and maybe one day when we stand before Him, loss of rewards.

So, Bro. Tony, what should I do? Well, let me give you a few little action points. First, if you're troubled with losing your salvation, you have trouble with hanging on to your salvation, if you have trouble with any of those thoughts (which, by the way, are improper thoughts). Because it is He that saves you, it is He that will keep you. We need to, number one, lean into the faithfulness of God. Lean into the faithfulness of God. Realize and be energized by the fact that your salvation is acquired and secured, kept for time and eternity by His faithfulness. The faith that saves you is the faith that keeps you. We can cry out like Jonah and like David, “Salvation is of the Lord!” Amen? Now, you may still be sitting there thinking, “You're obviously excited, Brother Tony, about the fact that God saved you (and I am by the way), but I just don't have that much faith. I just don't have that much belief that God can do that.” Can I tell you how to remedy that? You just need to saturate yourself with the Word of God, by every method imaginable. Through the faithful preaching of God's Word in God's house, through podcasts, broadcasts, daily Bible

reading, teaching. Any way that you can get God's Word, you need to get God's Word. That will build you up in the faith. How do I know that? Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ." You want to get to the point where you believe God is faithful to keep you? Get into His Word. He will build your faith up through His Word.

The second action point: Follow the biblical pattern expressed in Paul's prayer. Look there with me at verses 9-10, it begins with the initial evidence of salvation and its love. Now, what do we need to do with that? We need to love one another, in word and in deed. We not only need to love one another, we need to love the Lord our God, with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and we love our neighbor as yourself. 1 John 3:11, "For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another." Now, what kind of love is that? It is love that is informed by truth. It is love that is informed by the Word of God. Look there in verse 9, "That your love will keep on growing in knowledge." It's love that's foundation is the Word of God. Sometimes we have to say hard things. Sometimes we have to say difficult things, but we speak the truth in love. Colossians 1:10, "So that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God." When you're loving and when that love has a basis in the Word of God, then you're able to live your life, and see everything before you, the way that God sees it, and you are able to discern properly. Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God." I want you to think about this, this is a little practical word here. If we could fathom this passage and we can fathom the fact that salvation is not just what God did, but what He is doing, and that God is working in us. It's the difference between burning for Jesus and burning out. And I say that as kind as I can, possibly. It's the difference between burning for Jesus and burning out. You see, this passage is not us producing results for Him, it is Him producing results in us. Is it any wonder that He said over there in verse 8, He says, "I deeply miss you and I hold you in my heart" and the way that I'm doing that is with the "affection of Jesus Christ?" It is Him working in us. Burn for the glory of God as He works through you.

Third action point. While living in the here and now, focus on the there and then, that's verses 10-11. Focus on the there and then. His goal, He has several goals in mind. One of His goals is your purity. 1 John 3:3, "And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure." He has another goal for you, your blamelessness. Psalm 119:80, "May my heart be blameless regarding your statutes, so that I will not be put to shame." And then He has another goal, that you will be standing before Him bearing all the fruit of righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made the one who did not know sin to know sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." And He did that, all for His glory.



God does have a wonderful plan for your life—to make you like His Son. That should excite, that should energize you. Go with me for minute in your mind's eye, I want you to just think about the future and think about that one day. One day, we will be in heaven. Great day! Right? Revelation 7:10, "And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Won't that be a wonderful day? Can I share this with you? God's seated on His throne right now. Why can't we rejoice in His salvation right now? Why do we have to wait until then? Why can't we be energized about it right now? D. L. Moody said, "It is our privilege to know that we are saved." It is our privilege to know that we are saved.

As a child of God, I am energized by what God has done in me. So unworthy. And yet, in His grace He saved me so long ago, and yet in His grace He chooses to work in me, even in this moment. Maybe you are here, and you don't share that excitement because you have never trusted Him. One of the greatest preachers that ever lived, Charles Spurgeon, spoke about the greatest enemy that you have. Here's what he said, "The greatest enemy to human souls is the self-righteous which makes men look to themselves for salvation." May not be Satan that is your greatest enemy. It may be yourself, because you think that you can do something to better yourself, so that you can stand before God. We bring nothing to the table except our sin. Jesus paid it all, all to Him we owe! There is no one that can save you except Jesus. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved." Here's what He did. Romans 5:8, "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners (that's what we bring to the table, while we were still sinners), Christ died for us." What do you need to do? "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation." In a moment, we'll have a formal invitation. But, my invitation to you right now, is right there, right now. If you don't know Him, you need to accept Him. While you were still a sinner, Jesus died for you. All you have to do is believe what He did. Believe that He died for your sins. Believe that He rose again from the grave. Turn from those sins and accept Him and invite Him into your life and He will save you.

## APPENDIX I

### SERMON 3: THE JOYOUS ADVANCE (PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18)

#### Introduction Transcript

I'm going to talk to you about what I feel like is one of your greatest fears. Because it's one of my greatest fears. I think it's a universal fear that Christians have and that is sharing our faith. So, I want to talk to you about that this morning. Sharing our faith, witnessing, or whatever you want to refer to it as. In this passage, Paul is going to refer to it as advancing the gospel and so I want to talk to you about that this morning. Sometimes, when we think about those things, we start conjuring up all sorts of scenarios that are not pleasant. We fear rejection. We fear failure. We feel that we may lose a friend. We feel that we may make an enemy. We feel that maybe we just do not know enough biblical information (theological facts). We're not close enough to God that we can share our faith successfully. So, I want to talk about that this morning. From the Book of Jeremiah 32:27, all of this is geared to each of us personally, to show us that because Jesus lives within us, each of us, that we do have the capacity to share our faith, even though we might not think we do. "Look, I am the LORD, the God over every creature. Is anything too difficult for me?" Jeremiah 32:27.

Let me ask you a few questions. As you seek to faithfully share the gospel with those around you, do you think about circumstances and forces that may come against you? What do you do? Can anything actually stop the advance of the gospel? This passage will speak to that. As we continue a series of questions, I just want you to think about somebody that you know. Maybe a school mate. Maybe a fellow employee. Maybe a family member. Maybe a spouse. Maybe a child. Maybe a parent. Maybe a grandparent. That you know, they do not know Christ as Lord and Savior. I want you, during this sermon, to keep them before you, to their picture before you, because we have an obligation to share our faith with those around us. When is something that is insurmountable, not? When is something that is insurmountable, not? Do you believe that God is working, providentially working, in the world to a predetermined conclusion? I'm going to talk about two really heavy theological concepts this morning. One of them is providence. Do you believe that God is working, providentially working, in the world to a predetermined conclusion? Should God's sovereign rule empower my witness? Should God's sovereign rule (we just sang about it), should God's sovereign rule empower my witness? And, finally, can I be expected to have continuous joy? After all, we're going to look at Paul. I'm going to refer to Jesus and the Bible says that they had joy, but I'm not an apostle. I'm

certainly not the Son of God, neither are you. But can we be expected to have continuous joy in our life, even as we share and even as we face circumstances and obstacles that may come against us? Do we have continuous joy?

Our part of the gospel, our part of sharing, our part of witness, our part of advancing the gospel is faithfulness. That's our success, faithfulness. It's God's job to convert, it's not our job to convert. Our job is to be faithful to do what God has called us to do. 1 Corinthians 4:2 says simply this, "It is required that managers (and that's who we are. We're a manager. We're a steward. We are obligated, it is required that managers) be found faithful." That is our duty, that is our obligation. The insurmountable is not insurmountable when God is a part of the equation. Matthew 19:26, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." With God, all things are possible. Providence—God's working in the world (and in this case, in us as we seek to advance the gospel and share the gospel), the sovereign, divine oversight of all things, guiding toward their divinely predetermined end in a way that is consistent with their created nature, all to the glory and praise of God. And we get to be a part of that. We get to be a part of God's handiwork in this world. Ephesians 1:11, "Also, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined (don't have time to go there today, but nonetheless) we have been predestined, according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will." We've been predestined for that. God has a purpose in mind and we are a part of that purpose. God is not only working providentially, He is able to do that because He is sovereign. He is the king of the universe. God is sovereignly in control of everything that happens to us. All things are under His rule and control and nothing happens without His direction or permission. He has power and right to govern all the things, but He does so always and without exception. Psalm 103:19, "The LORD has established his throne in heaven (how many of you believe that Jesus is on His throne? Well, He's established it in heaven) and his kingdom rules over all," and we are a part of that kingdom. And He is sovereign. He is sovereign over us. He is sovereign over every situation. He is sovereign over every circumstance. He is sovereign over every opponent that we might face. And joy, by the way, is something that every believer should have. After all, it is a fruit of the Spirit. By the way, when Paul refers to the fruit of the Spirit, that is singular. These are not fruits of the Spirit, even though there're more than one thing that is mentioned, this is seen as a singular thing that every believer has. Let me read that. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law" (Gal 5:22-23). Do you have that person in your mind? You know they're lost. Is it possible that I could have the courage to share my faith with them? Is it possible?

Let me remind you of the story. God mightily brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. You remember the Ten Plagues and how God mightily shown His hand.

And as they leave Egypt they stand at the precipice of the Red Sea. There are all sorts of obstacles. And, by the way, there are all sorts of obstacles to you sharing the gospel. There are all sorts of obstacles, there is Pharaoh's army, there's the mountains, there's the desert, and there is the Red Sea that is before them. What are they to do? What are they to do? They can't go in any direction. The Lord must provide an answer, and He does. Exodus 14:13-14, "Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. (Now listen to this part. Listen to this part. I'm nervous about sharing my faith with my fellow employee. I'm nervous about sharing my faith with my loved one. I'm nervous about sharing my faith with my fellow classmates.) The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent." Now, we're not stressing the silence part, we're stressing the part that says, "The LORD will fight for you." They stood back, and they watched the Lord give the victory. That's an awesome illustration of the power of God working, and us allowing it to work.

Now, let me give you a tragic illustration and this is from my life. I was saved when I was fourteen years of age. I'd been a church member way longer than that. I began going to church nine months in my mother's womb. I've gone to church all of my life. I knew my Bible inside and out. Sang in the choir. Did everything there was to do in church. Got saved me when I was fourteen, entered high school, have a head full of knowledge about God and God's Word and for some reason didn't allow God to speak through me. Didn't allow God to work in me. Missed opportunities to share my faith. I can think of about ten guys off the top of my head that I have totally lost track of, that unless God intervenes, unless miraculously through Facebook or something, I will stand before God one day and give an account for all those individuals that I failed to tell the good news to. It was my obligation. It was my duty. It was my privilege, to have God work in me and to share those things through me, and yet, I refused. That's tragic. Would to God, that I was like the children of Israel at the Red Sea and I would've allowed the Lord to "Fight for me while even I might have remained silent" but I did not do that.

So, as we leave this place (I'll get to the text in a minute), but as we leave this place, you know there will be some here that are not going to share, they're not going to advance as the passage says. They're not going to allow the mighty hand of God to work in their lives. They're not going to get the privilege to reap the amazing benefits. John Piper says this, and this is so true. Think about this for just a second, "God is always doing ten thousand things in our life and you may be aware of three of them." Wow! God is always doing ten thousand things and we may be aware of only three. Well, that's good because I'm sharing three today. So, hopefully we'll walk out of here with three. If you are sharing, if that's not that difficult a task for you, this passage serves as an encouraging reminder that God is with you in everything you do as you share your faith. "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's

supply,” Hudson Taylor. God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply. Some, like me in high school, won’t comply today. Amazingly enough, I got to the point in high school where I did share my faith. And you say, “Well that’s good.” Well, its good, but it’s not good because many of the times I shared it, I shared it for the wrong reasons. We’re going to see that in this passage today. I had the right message, but I had the incorrect motives, when I share that. 1 Thessalonians 2:4, “Instead, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but rather God, who examines our hearts.” There’ll be some of us that are unwilling to advance the gospel. We will never be amazed (“I stand amazed in His presence,” but we will never be amazed) that God could actually do something in us and through us for His glory. Sovereign God working providentially in this world. I found this verse in the Book of Judges. Deborah, the judge, is telling Barak this, she says, “Spring into action, for this is the day the LORD is handing Sisera over to you! Has the LORD not taken the lead?” Has the LORD not taken the lead? Think about that.

You’re there in the Book of Philippians 1. The last two weeks we’ve looked at the preface. Two sermons on the preface (vv. 1-11). Today and next week, we’re going to look as Paul describes his current situation, his present circumstance. And then, those next few weeks, we’re going to look as Paul instructs God’s people on how to live a holy life. We already know that he’s faced many difficulties there in Philippi, as a matter fact, 1 Thessalonians 2, this is his description of his experience, “On the contrary, after we had previously suffered and were treated outrageously in Philippi.” That’s his experience, that’s his testimony. So far, we have seen that partnering with one another, with other believers, brings the spiritual realities of fellowship, thanksgiving, and joy. And he reminded them that the gospel brought about three things: one, a secure salvation, two, a genuine love, and, three, a spiritual focus. Last week, we sought to better understand our salvation, so that we might be energized for a holy life and we saw three results from that. It secured a confident hope because I know God finishes what He starts (v. 6). I know this, it supported an expressive love because I can see God working (vv. 7-8), and then (vv. 9-11) it supplied a spiritual focus because God is making me like His Son. He’s making me more like Jesus. Now, today (vv. 12-18), Paul’s rejoicing to know that the gospel is going to advance no matter what. It’s going to advance despite circumstances. He’s going to experience joy as he sees the sovereign God of the universe work providentially in him. That is going to outweigh everything he is going through, which we’re going to see in just a second. It’s going to outweigh his imprisonment and the less than pure motives of, I hate to say, some opposing preachers. So, if you’re there in Philippians 1, follow along with me beginning with verse 12:

“Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ. Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly. To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. These preach out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. Yes, I will continue to rejoice.”

So, as we look at our passage today, here’s our purpose. Believers can rejoice in the face of circumstances, knowing that the gospel will advance through their or our faithful proclamation. See, we can rejoice, no matter what we face. All those scenarios that you can conjure up. Man, they’re not going to like me anymore. They’re going to hate me. I’m not going to say the right words. I’m not close enough to God. I don’t have enough biblical or theological truth to do this. Any of those circumstances pale because we know that the gospel will advance because all our part is—is to be faithful. That is our part. Be faithful in doing, so God takes care of the rest. He “takes the lead.” Stand back and watch the Lord bring the victory.

So, let me give you three uplifting certainties when you allow the gospel to advance through you. Now, this is significant for all of us because the very last words of Jesus was this, “Make disciples.” That’s the command. How do we do that? We go, we teach, we baptize. We go, we teach, we baptize. Make disciples. If we fail in our part, people die and go to hell. People die and are separated from the grace, this amazing grace that we just sang about. People die and live for an eternity apart from His grace, His love, His mercy, His patience, His longsuffering. We have to do our part in advancing the gospel. So, let me give you those three uplifting certainties when you allow the gospel to advance through you.

### Conclusion Transcript

So, we’ve had three certainties. The gospel can advance because of God’s providence. The gospel can advance through us because of God’s sovereignty. And the gospel can advance through us, initiating overwhelming joy. See, we can face circumstances, but we can rejoice knowing that the gospel will advance, and we will be those that are trailblazing. So, what are the reasons that keep you from letting God advance the gospel through you? What are those reasons? Fear? I don’t know enough? I lack confidence? Providential and sovereign God is able to overcome all of those.

Why do you allow circumstances and people to distract you from the singular mission of telling others about Him? Why do we allow that? What will it take for us to trust in a sovereign God who is working providentially in us, around us, and, hopefully, through us?

In this passage (vv. 12-18), we saw that we have an awesome opportunity to allow the mighty hand of God to work in and through us, if we faithfully proclaim His gospel. We may not have the right motive, God can fix that. Do you have the right message? The message is Christ. Pleasing the Lord should motivate us. He's the One that reads our heart. Pleasing Him should motivate us. "Spring into action, let the LORD take the lead!" Spring into action, let the LORD take the lead. How do I do that? Number one. Trust the providential hand of God. Trust the providential hand of God. John Flavel said this, "Providence is wiser than you, and you may be confident it has suited all things better to your eternal good than you could do had you been left to your own option." God's much wiser than us. God sees the end just as surely as He sees the beginning. John MacArthur says this, "Since Scripture imparts salvation, effective evangelism depends on the faithful proclamation of the Word. God will prepare the soil and bring forth the fruit. We must be faithful to plant the seed." That is our part. Being faithful.

Secondly, remember God is sovereign. There is no opposition that can stand against you that God cannot overcome. He will either remove your opponents or He will use them for His glory. 1 Chronicles 29:

"Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty, for everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to you. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom and you are exalted as head over all. Riches and honor come from you and you are the ruler of everything. Power and might are in your hand and it is in your hand to make great and give strength to all."

That is our promise.

Third, look for joy as the fruit of your faithfulness. Despite your circumstances. Despite those that may oppose you, know that, if you are faithful, God will bring joy into your life. And it's a joy that you can choose, and continue to choose, and continue to choose, despite circumstances, despite opposition.

"Joy is distinctly a Christian word and a Christian thing. It is the reverse, it is the opposite, of happiness. Happiness is the result of what happens. Happiness is the result of what happens. Joy has its springs deep down inside and that spring never runs dry, no matter what happens. Only Jesus gives that joy. He had joy, singing its music within, even under the shadow of the cross" (S. D. Gordon).

The Lord had joy.

In your efforts to tell others about Christ, circumstances, people may deter you. But know this, an interesting quote by Arthur W. Pink, “God is working out His eternal purpose, not only in spite of human and satanic opposition, but by the means of them.” Wow! God uses even those that oppose Him. God uses them to advance His message. Obstacles are only opportunities. Opposition is only an opening. And fear and uncertainty are only occasions for joy.

See, the gospel is not bound, it is not chained. For those of us that have accepted Christ as personal Lord and Savior, we’ve come to the realization that we are actually bound to Christ, we are in chains to Him. That’s a joyous thing. You may be here today as an unbeliever. You’re not in chains to Christ, you’re in chains to your sin. Can I tell you something? Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” ‘That’ is your problem. All have sinned. The consequences of that sin? “The wages of sin is death.” Not a very good consequence, huh? The solution to that is, “But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” and “But God proves his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” So, what is our response? Lost person, here’s your response. “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” And what is your assurance? “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Let’s pray.



## APPENDIX J

### SERMON 4: IN CHRIST ALONE (PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26)

#### Introduction Transcript

Philippians 1. We're going to be in verses 19-26. Philippians 1:19-26. Quickly, I want you to fill in the blank here. First thing that pops in your head. The first couple of things that pop in your head, for me to live is (blank). For me to live is (blank). At one time in my life, I would have filled that in with baseball. For to live is baseball. My life revolved around baseball. I was going to be a baseball coach. I was a baseball player. And so my life was consumed with baseball, for me to live is baseball. At another time in my life, I would fill that in with getting married, for me to live is getting married. I did that (been there, done that, still am). There are a lot of different things that you might fill in there, so feel free to fill that in, think about that. Now, let me ask a question that Leonard Ravenhill asked in response to that, how you filled that blank out. "Is what you're living for, worth Christ dying for?" Is what you are living for, worth Christ dying for? We are not saved by God to be put up on a shelf like we are a knickknack or something. We were saved for a purpose. We were saved for a reason. God has a plan for our life.

So, with that in mind, let me ask you a few things. Is your confident hope right here and right now, and for the future? Is your confident hope built on what we just sang about, "Nothing less than Jesus's blood and righteousness?" Is that what your confident hope is built upon? Secondly, do you strive to honor Christ with your life, specifically in this text, with your body? Do you strive to honor Christ with your life, with your body? Do you strive honor Christ with your life? Your body? Third, do you see death as ultimate gain or ultimate loss? I know we're going to have a gamut of answers for that question this morning. It makes no difference if you're lost. It makes no difference if you're saved. There are going to be a variety of answers for that question. Do you see death as ultimate gain or ultimate loss? Fourth, is there fruitful labor in your life? As a believer, as you live on this earth, is there fruitful labor in your life? And, finally, are you helping others to progress in their walk with the Lord? That is, in your walk, are you helping others to progress in their walk? This text is going to talk about that.

So, with that in mind let me assure you of several things. One, you can have a confident hope. You can have a confident hope, right here, right now, and in the future after you die. Psalm 42:5, the psalmist says this, "Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my

Savior and my God.” Put your hope in God. Christians, you belong to the Lord. Christian, you belong to the Lord. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says that, “Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.” Your body is the temple of the living God, so we must glorify God with our body. Third, death (however you answered that question before, let me assure you of this), death is part of the victorious Christian life. Now, let that sink in for a minute because death gives us the heebie-jeebies sometimes, and sometimes we don’t want to talk about it. Sometimes, we don’t want to even approach it. But I assure you from the Bible, death is part of the victorious Christian life because Jesus conquered death. So, it is part of our heritage as a believer to have the thought that we will conquer death just like Jesus did. So, 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says this,

“So we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. In fact, we are confident, and we would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to the Lord.”

Whether I am here or whether I am there, my goal in life is to be pleasing to the Lord. It’s part of my life. It’s part of my heritage. Fourth, God saved you to produce fruit. God saved you to produce fruit. That is not optional. That is one of the purposes why we were saved. It is why Jesus died, so that we might have fruit. Let me paraphrase Thomas Watson. He says, “Fruitfulness is the difference between a healthy tree and a hollow tree.” Fruitfulness is the difference between a healthy tree and a hollow tree. Words of Jesus in the Book of John, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain.” He said, “I appointed you to produce fruit.” That is not an option. That is why “I saved you.” Not to put you up on a shelf to sit, soak, and sour, but to serve Him and produce fruit. Fifth, discipleship to Christ, discipleship for Christ, can be difficult. Many times, it is difficult, but it is incomparably joyful. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, when I read this before, but when I read it again, I thought, “Huh!” That never dawned on me, that never quite appeared to me as I’ve read that before. It says this, “For who is our hope or joy or crown of boasting in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming? (Now, I would think that as I read that verse quickly that my hope, and my joy, and my crown, would be the Lord Himself as I stand before the Lord, but that is not what Paul says, he continues). Is it not you? (Is it not you?) Indeed you are our glory and our joy!” Paul says that when I stand before the Lord one day and I give an account for what I have done in this body, part of my glory, part of my joy, part of my reward, will be those that I affected with my life. My hope, my glory, my joy is ‘you’! Discipleship is difficult, but it is overwhelmingly joyful.

Two tough words to hear. I've heard them. Maybe you've heard them. You might hear them in a hospital. You might hear them in a family meeting around a table. Here's the two words, "No hope!" No hope. I remember when my minister of music in Dayton, he was diagnosed with cancer and he was there in the hospital and the doctors came out after a long and lengthy wait, about half a day. And the doctor came out and that is what he said. "No hope." No hope. And I thought, "Man, you don't have the perspective that I do. You don't have the perspective that this family has, because Merv has all the hope in the world." Cancer may have eaten away at his body, but he has hope beyond this life. No hope? Proverbs 18:14, "A person's spirit can endure sickness, but who can survive a broken spirit?" Who can survive a life without hope? In 1 Peter (we're going through that on Sunday nights), Peter was well aware of the fact of the people's situation that he was writing to. In his first epistle, in that first chapter (in those first few chapters), he writes to a people that are under immense pressure and persecution. They are feeling a sense of tribulation in their life. They are being abused by those that are over them, their masters, they are being threatened by an unbelieving spouse (that's there in 1 Peter), they are being ridiculed by skeptical neighbors. And even on the horizon, there loomed the possibility that the government would begin persecuting them. Peter wrote that book during the time that Nero ruled the world and it was a very real possibility that eventually they would come under his thumb. Here's what Peter writes, in the midst of all of that. In the midst of all of that, where someone might have said, "No hope!" "No hope!" Here's what he said, "Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you."

Jeremiah is one of the most interesting characters in the Bible. I'm intrigued by the prophet Jeremiah (so much so that I named my first child after Jeremiah) and he's, he's interesting, in this sense, if you read the Book of Jeremiah or you read the Book of Lamentations, you will find out quickly that this is a guy that has many moods. Sometimes he's crying, sometimes he is happy, sometimes he is depressed, many times he is ready to cash it all in. And then at other times, he is just rejoicing in the face of all sorts of obstacles. You may find yourself where Jeremiah found himself one time. In the Book of Lamentations 3:18, and you can walk out of here today with no hope, you can walk out of here without your hope being energized, you can walk out of here stuck, in a place where you don't want to be. Much like Jeremiah, here's what he said, "My future is lost, as well as my hope in the LORD." Now, that's surprising because you wouldn't figure a child of God would even utter words like that. Now, let me read that again, "My future is lost, as well as my hope from the LORD." That's verse 18. By the time you get to verse 21, Jeremiah has realized something. That hope is not so much a feeling as it is a proper focus on God and, for our text today, the Son of God. That's why, just after three verses he says, "My future is lost, as well as my

hope from the Lord,” he utters these words, “Yet I call this to mind, and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD’s faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness! I say, ‘The LORD is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in him.’” Hope is not a feeling, hope is a focus on an object, and the object is a Person, and the Person is God. And when you focus properly on that, then you will have hope. You want hope today? We’re going to find that in this passage. We’ll see a great testimony of one who has hope in the midst of all sorts of situations.

If you are there in the Book of Philippians, Paul’s continuing to describe the salvation and hope, not only his present situation, but he’s turning the corner to look at the future and hope. We’ve seen some of the benefits of salvation and partnering in salvation: fellowship, thanksgiving, joy, security of knowing that God will finish what he starts, a genuine love (I can actually see God working in people, I can see God working in you, that is a joy to me), a spiritual focus (because I know this, I know this above anything else I may know, God is making me more like His Son every day and I can rejoice in that). So, last week we saw that we can faithfully proclaim the Lord, we can faithfully proclaim His truth, because of God’s providence, God’s sovereignty, and God’s overwhelming joy. So, as Paul thought about Christ, he’s going to express a confident hope in the future, whether he is set free or whether he is executed. It makes no difference, he’s going to have the same hope.

So, follow along with me beginning with (1:19),

“Because I know this will lead to my salvation through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don’t know which one I should choose. I am torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ—which is far better—but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. For I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that, because of my coming to you again, your boasting in Christ Jesus may abound.”

“Because of Christ” (I like that song). Because of Christ we can have a confident hope regardless of the future. Because of Christ we can have a confident hope regardless of the future. So, I’m going to give you three reasons why we need to magnify the Lord because we have a hope, a confidence. We can’t very much have a proper Christian walk without hope and we can’t very much share our faith, lest we have a hope. How can we give hope, when we have no hope? Right? Psalm 65:5, “You answer us in righteousness, with awe-inspiring works, God of our salvation, the

hope of all the ends of the earth.” So, because of your confident hope in Christ you need to magnify the Lord in three specific ways.

### Conclusion Transcript

So, because of Christ we can have a confident hope. So, we need to: honor Him in Your body, we need to bear fruit in our life, and we need to have others experience joy because of our service. So, what keeps you from placing Christ first in your life? Why isn't Jesus number one? Are you experiencing (since obviously you're here and, like Paul, we have to stay right now? So, in light of that are you experiencing) the more fruitful work that Paul spoke about? Three, if being prepared to die is the means to really living, are you really living? Are you really living?

Maybe, it just might be, that as a believer, maybe we need to refocus our faith. And realize that it's ('It's.' 'It's' is a big word. It's everything that I have, everything that I hope to be, every good gift that comes from above. 'It's.') all because of Christ. It's all because of Him. And it is because of Him that I can have a confident hope now. It is because of Him that I can grow. It is because of Him that I can affect others. And it is because of Him that I have a hope that one day I can stand before Him and not be ashamed. Anything but living for Christ alone is to live as a lost person. Let me say that again, really clearly. Child of God, anything but living, except Christ alone, is to live as a lost person. I'm not saying you're not saved. What I am saying is, you may be living like you're not. Ephesians 2:12, Paul says this, he characterizes the saved life, before saved, and he characterizes the saved life, after salvation, and he says it this way, "At that time you were without Christ . . . without hope and without God in this world." Without hope is a characterization of somebody that's without God. Is that the way you're living, child of God?

How do I fix that? What do I do? Remember, hope is not a feeling as much as it is a focus, on a Person. So, what do we need to focus on? Three things. First, honor Christ in your body. Your body is the temple of the living God. Paul said it this way, Romans 12:1, "In view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your true worship." Present your bodies, as a living sacrifice. Holy and acceptable to God. It's like a telescope, a telescope can take something that is far away, like a star, Alpha Centauri, a star that is so far away and, yet, if you just adjust it a little bit, you can bring that far away object into focus, so that it looks like it is just right here. That's the way our lives are, see, when our lives are brought into focus, others can actually see God because of us. Honor Christ in your body.

Secondly, focus on the fruit that God desires to bring about through you. It's not just the preacher's job. It's not just a minister's job. All of us are ministers in a sense. Focus on the fruit that God desires to bring in you. That is the work of the Lord

that He will always bless. That is the work of the Lord that He will always bless. Colossians 1:5-6, “You have already heard about this hope in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. It is bearing fruit and growing all over the world, just as it has among you since the day you heard it and came to truly appreciate God’s grace.” It begs the question. I’m always asked this question when I talk about this topic. “Well, what’s fruit? How do I know if I’m bearing it, I have no idea?” I think it manifests itself in three ways: fruit is either the attitudes that you express, such as fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. It is either those attitudes that you express, Christlike attitudes, fruit of the Spirit; hence, it also consists of righteous deeds. If you still are there in the Book of Philippians, look at 1:11, “Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and the praise of God.” So, it is not only righteous thoughts, righteous attitudes, but it’s righteous actions. And it’s also bringing people to Him. I think all of those are fruit. So, focus on the fruit.

Third, and maybe the most significant, I think, for us today. Prepare to die, so that you might live. Prepare to die, so that you might live. One of my favorite stories from the Bible is found in John 11. I preach this sermon, I preach that passage at a lot of funerals because much hope. It’s a story about Jesus and it’s a story about His good friend Lazarus. Lazarus has died, and it seems like there is no hope at all and yet, you know the story. Jesus, you know that when Jesus comes to the graveyard, He just cries out and says, “Lazarus come forth!” And he comes up, out of the grave. Right? If He had said just, “Come forth!” Every person in the graveyard would’ve got up and got out of their grave. So, He had to be specific, “Lazarus, come forth!” Well, in that story, you know, he had two, Lazarus had two sisters, Mary and Martha, and they had their quirks. And, of course, Jesus had to address those quirks and one of the things that He said was this, “I Am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” I Am the resurrection, and the life! Let’s go back to the first thing that I said today. Remember, I said, “Fill in the blank with this, for me to live is blank. How did you fill that out? You could’ve filled it out this way, for me to live is money, for me to live is to get a raise, for me to live is to be established one day financially. For me to live is money, to die is to leave it all behind. For me to live is fame, for me to live is prestige, for me to live is to be the jock in high school, that is the “be-all, end-all.” For me to live is fame, to die is to be forgotten. Man, I feel that, dude. That was me in high school. That’s long since forgotten. How did you fill in that blank? Jonathan Edwards is one of my favorite historical characters in church history. At the age of nineteen years, Jonathan Edwards wrote down *Seventy Resolutions*. He said, “These seventy resolutions I am going to attempt to live by and I am going to attempt to use them to keep me focused on Christ.” He wrote them when he was 19 and for the next 36 years of his life (he died at the age of 55), for the next 36 years of his life, he got those seventy resolutions out, at least once a week, for 36 years and he read them

in order that he might be focused. I find two of those resolutions absolutely amazing. Resolution six, he says, “Resolved: to live with all my (life) with all my might ... while I do live.” To live with all my might while I do live. For me to live is Christ. Resolution nine, “Resolved: to think much, on all occasions, about my own dying, and of the common things which are involved with and surround death.” For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain.

I want to tell you about my dad this morning. I think I have a little time to do this. My dad, one of the most matter-of-fact people that I have ever encountered in terms of what he thought about death. He told us three kids, he told his nine grandchildren, he told those he worked with, he told those he went to church with him, he told them about death and dying and he did not mind expressing that, one iota. I never asked him why he was prone to do so. But I have in my own mind’s eye, exactly why he did that. He was one of seven children, who were children of sharecroppers, who grew up in the Great Depression. At the age of twelve, his dad stepped on a nail, got tetanus, and died an excruciating death there in their home. That is so far removed from us, we can’t even think or imagine having tetanus. My dad had to watch that. He lied about his age when he was fifteen and joined the Merchant Marines in World War II. He lived through World War II, he was in the army in Korea, lived through that and he was a homicide investigator for 35 years. He met people on the worst day of their life. Much of his life was surrounded by death. In the midst of that death, somehow, someway, God spoke to his heart in the midst of all of that hopelessness that he experienced and somehow, someway, God gloriously saved him. And he didn’t mind talking about it one bit. And he spent most of his life talking about what it meant to be in Christ. I remembered as the years passed, and he began to get older and the ravages of death and dying began to affect his body. He had diabetes, he had heart disease, he had a disease called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (which is a lung disorder) and, last, but not least, he had Alzheimer’s. I remember one of the last conversations that he had about death that was cogent and coherent. We were watching Jordan play a baseball game, much of my family was around me, my dad was sitting in front of me. My cousin was also sitting in front of me and that particular time I had an aunt that was dying in the hospital, she was just going to live a couple of days. And I remember, I was overhearing this conversation, I remember my cousin saying, “Wow, Uncle Neal, it doesn’t look too good for Aunt Louise, does it?” And he turned and this is what he said, it’s not that he had to muster it up, it’s not as if he had to think about it, this is just him and the way he was, he looked at her and he said, “Louise has lived a good life, she’s given her life to Christ, everything after this is just reward! Everything after this is just heaven!” And I’m just sitting here smiling and the next few words, I had to literally get up and walk away. Because here’s what he said, “I find at this time in my life, with everything that I’ve experienced, and find that everything I’m going through

now, and everything that I have to look forward to.” He said, “It’s just dawned upon me, this wonderful fact, that one day, to die and go to heaven and I’ve just realized this in this last little while, I have more friends and I have more family in heaven, than I have here now.” And I thought to myself, “For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.” Somewhere along the line, in all that stuff that he had, all the experiences that he had, I never heard my dad one time say, “I’m scared of whatever.” Not once. Except this, he told my mother this, she shared this with me later. He never spoke this to me, he never said this to the family. He said,

“You know, Ruby, I can think of a lot of ways to go, I can think of a lot of different ways to die, and I hope that when my time comes that, that whatever, which way the Lord chooses, I hope that he doesn’t choose this one. I just dread Alzheimer’s. I dread it with every fiber of my being. It’s not something that I would choose on my worst enemy. That is something that I dread, that it’s something that I fear.”

Hey, it just so happens that’s what took his life.

Hebrews 2:15 says this, this is what, this is what Jesus came to do, this is what God enabled us to experience, “And to free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.” I saw at the end of life that even though my dad, once upon a time said, “That’s what I fear.” God eventually took that fear away. God eventually took that fear away. The song “In Christ Alone” has this phrase in it, “No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me, from life’s first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.” George Whitefield said this, “Take care of your life and the Lord will take care of your death.” Take care of your life and the Lord will take care of your death.

Lost person, the Bible says this in Hebrews 9:27, “It is appointed unto men once to die and after that, judgment.” Are you prepared to die? Christian, are you prepared to die? Because you really can’t live until you’re prepared. For some, that’s just a hard thing to talk about. We should talk freely about it because Jesus gave us victory over death. I’m going to close with this, because I think this is pretty significant. You know if Jesus says something one time, that’s enough. But if He says it a multiplicity of times, I think He wants us to get the point. And it’s significant that in each Gospel, He says the same thing. That doesn’t happen all the time. Here’s what He says: Luke 17:33, “Whoever tries to make his life secure will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.” Matthew 10:39, “Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life because of me will find it.” John 12:25, “The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” And then the last one, the fourth Gospel, Mark 8:35, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will



save it.” Paul said, “For me to live is Christ!” For me to die, that’s icing on the cake. That’s not ‘in Christ,’ that is ‘with Christ.’ So, lost person, trying to do everything in your life, to save your life, preserve your life. Jesus said, in all four cases, every time He said it, “You’ll lose it.” What you need to do is lose your life to Christ, then you’ll find it. Then you’ll be saved. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

## APPENDIX K

### SERMON 5: A LIFE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL (PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30)

#### Introduction Transcript

John Piper says, “The gospel is not a way to get people to heaven; it is a way to get people to God. It’s a way of overcoming every obstacle to everlasting joy in God. If we don’t want God above all things, we have not been converted by the gospel.” Say that last part again, “If we don’t want God above all things, we have not been converted by the gospel.” Jesus said it this way, “The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me and whoever doesn’t take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

What does it mean to be worthy? God above all things! What does it mean to be worthy? What does it mean to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ? Am I living a life that is worthy of the gospel of Christ? Am I living in a way that God would be proud of me, and what I am doing? Does worthy of the gospel mean that, somehow, I can earn God’s favor? Well, let me assure you, a life worthy of the gospel is not at all about earning God’s favor. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us, “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” A life worthy of the gospel is revealed in several ways. One of those ways is in the way you treat fellow believers. 3 John 1:6, “They have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.” A life worthy of the gospel is revealed, not only in the way you treat fellow believers, but a life worthy of the gospel sees and acts on God’s calling to serve Him right now, in this moment! 1 Thessalonians 2:12, “We encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to live worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.” A life worthy of the gospel is both growing and is fruitful. Colossians 1:10, “so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.” God above all things! Living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. A life worthy of the gospel is found in your own personal calling. The one standing before you today is not the only one that is called of God. We each have a calling before God. Ephesians 4:1 says in light of that, “Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to live worthy of the calling you have received.” Live worthy of the calling you have received.

I am reminded of the story of the prodigal son. You remember that story, one of the most familiar in the Bible. The youngest had received his inheritance and he had taken it, and he had went and blew it all on a sinful lifestyle. There in a pigpen, in a foreign country, he came to his own senses, his right mind, the Bible says, and he had this thought, “You know, there are hired hands in my father’s house who are living better than I am.” He made his way back to his father, and when he came to his father, here’s the words that he said, “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’” I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Is it possible to get to a place where we are worthy, and we are worthy of the gospel of Christ? Jesus said this about a church in the Book of Revelation. Revelation 3:4, He says, “But you have a few people in Sardis who have not defiled their clothes, and they will walk with me in white, because they are worthy.” Because they are worthy, they will walk with me!

Lost person, how tragic, to know that your very best effort to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ will never be. Because you can’t earn it, as we just sang about. You don’t deserve it, the prophet Isaiah said this thousands of years ago, “And all our righteous acts are as filthy rags.” A polluted garment. The best we can do is not enough. Tragic as well, child of God, to know that your life is not honoring to God. Not worthy of the calling that we have been called to. Not worthy of the gospel of Christ. Psalm 4:2 says this, “How long, exalted ones, will my honor be insulted? How long will you love what is worthless and pursue a lie?” How long? Lost person, here’s where you need to be at the end of this message. Jesus and His disciples were fishing. They had fished all night. They had not caught any or many fish. And at that point, they’re just ready to call it in and these words Peter says and here’s where you need to be at the end of this message, lost person. He says, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night long and we’ve caught nothing. But if you say so, I’ll let down the nets.” That’s where you need to be at the end of this service. Peter said, “We’ve tried it our way, now we’re going to try it Your way!” Lost person, you need to quit trying it your way. You need to start trying it God’s way and do what the Master says. Child of God, here’s where you’ll want to be today. I’m reminded in the Book of Matthew, Jesus told a story, and in Matthew 25, he’s painting a picture of us standing before Him one day and hearing these words (wouldn’t this be nice to hear one day when you stand before God? Have you ever thought about that moment? When it’s just you and He?) “Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share in the Master’s joy.” That’s where we need to be at the end of this sermon. We need to be in a place where we can say confidently, “I can stand before God and those are the words that I am going to hear, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’”

If you’re there in the Book of Philippians, we’re going to look at an obligation today, that Paul is going to talk about, that each one of us have. Each one of us has this

obligation because we are a citizen of heaven. Philippians 3:20 says this, “But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for the Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, let’s back up a little bit and let’s just see where we have been. If you take the Book of Philippians and you divide it up into parts, you’re going to come up with five parts. Here’s what the five parts of the Book of Philippians are: you have a greeting, which is 1:1-2. And then Paul is going to voice some of his concerns about the church there in Philippi, that is 1:3–2:30. Then he’s going to exhort them to live for Christ, that’s 3:1 all the way down to 4:9. He’s going to thank them for their support, 4:10-20, and then he’s going to have some concluding remarks, which is 4:21-23. We’ve covered the greeting, that was those first two verses. We’ve dug into the second part, which is all of his concerns, and we’ve looked and examined the word of thanksgiving and prayer that he had in verses 3-11. We’ve talked about the joy that he was experiencing as he talked about the progress of the gospel and he talked about all of those circumstances that he faced and the attitude that he had. And here’s what his attitude was, “For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain!” That was his attitude, and so last week we saw that because of our confident hope in Christ, we need to magnify Him in three specific ways. We need to honor Christ in our body, verses 19-21. We need to bear fruit for Christ in our lives, that is verses 22-24. And we need to bring the joy of Christ to others because of our service, that is verses 25-26. Now Paul is going, is beginning, or is introducing, an exhortation for us to live in a Christlike fashion or to have a Christlike character. That’s going to run all the way to 2:18. Now, we’re only looking at verses 27, 28, 29, and 30 today. He’s going to urge them to do this, be true to the faith. Be true to the faith. So far, all he has done is given them information. So far, all he has done is tell them what is going on in his life. So far, all he has done is telling them about his circumstances and the people that oppose him. Now, with the message today, for the first time (I think this is providential since this is vision Sunday), for the first time in the Book of Philippians, he gives us a command. He gives us a specific command. We’re going to see that in just a second in verse 27. But before that, let’s read the passage. There in 1:27:

“Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel, not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your salvation—and this is from God. For it has been granted to you on Christ’s behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are engaged in the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have.”

A life that is worthy of the gospel of Christ should display certain characteristics. So, I’m going to give you three characteristics of a believer who is

living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Now this is significant for two reasons. Significant for two reasons. Both of them are in the future. Lost person, significant for you, because one day you are going to stand before God and unless things change, you are going to hear these words, “Truly I tell you, ‘I don’t know you!’” Those are the words that you will hear. That’s not my thoughts. That is not something I ‘thank up.’ Those are the words of Christ. “Truly I tell you, ‘I do not know you!’” Saved person, this is true in our futures. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless.” Living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ and we’ll have to give an account for what we’ve done in this body, whether good or worthless. So, let me give you those three characteristics of a believer who is living worthy of the gospel of Christ.

### Conclusion Transcript

A life that is worthy of the gospel of Christ should display certain characteristics. A life worthy of the gospel of Christ is characterized by perseverance, is characterized by courage, and it’s characterized by suffering. So, are you living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ? Is your life noted by perseverance—that is, standing firm for the gospel? Standing firm in your faith? And are you (am I?) courageously suffering for Him? If Christ is worthy, if Christ is worthy, He and His gospel are worthy of our worthy life. If He is worthy, now, as far as I’m concerned, He is. So, if Christ is worthy, He and His gospel are worthy of our worthy life. Eternity will bear that out. You know how I know that? I can go to the last book in this Bible and I can go to 5:12 and this is what I am going to read, “They said with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” You see, eternity will bear out the fact that He is worthy. So, we need to live a life worthy of His gospel. If Christ is worthy, failure to live worthy of the gospel is to live as if you are unredeemed. Say that again, failure to live a life worthy of the gospel is to act as though unredeemed. Scriptural proof, Romans 1:21. He’s characterizing lost humanity and he says this is the way that they act. “For though they knew God, they did not glorify (they did not honor Him. They did not give Him His worth. They did not glorify) him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened.” So, how exactly am I going to live my life worthy of the gospel of Christ?

Live in such a way, live in such a way to show the worth of Christ and His gospel. Live in such a way to show the worth of Christ and His gospel. What do people see when they see you? Would they ever imagine that you are a child of God? What would be their diagnosis? A saved person or a lost person, looking at your life? Would they see a believer that is striving together with other believers for the sake of

the gospel? Wouldn't it be nice if you could write the world a letter? We could just sit down and write a letter to the world, for the whole world to read. And we might tell the world, "This is what I think about Jesus. This is what I think about the gospel." Wouldn't that be nice, to write a letter to the world and let them know that? And let them understand that? 2 Corinthians 3:3, "You show that you are Christ's letter, delivered by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God—not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." You don't have to write a letter, you are one! "You are writing a Gospel, a chapter each day, by deeds that you do, by words that you say. Men read what you write, whether faithless or true; say, what is the Gospel according to you?" Live in such a way to show the worth of Christ and His gospel.

Secondly, realize that you are saved, and they can't win! Realize that you are saved, and they can't win. We have all these scenarios in our head, we have all these excuses in our head, why we don't do what we need to do. Let me just give you this one thing that Paul said in regards to that. Do you realize, it is our very weaknesses that God uses to advance His gospel? Right now, it's through the foolishness of preaching. But, in a personal way, in our personal witness it's this. 2 Corinthians 12, "I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong." For when I am weak, then I am strong. Yea, but Bro. Tony, I am afraid! 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love."

Third, maybe the most difficult one. Receive the gift of suffering. Receive the gift of suffering. Affliction is a donation from God, embrace it! Now, I'm not saying go out and look for it. Who in their right mind wants to suffer? Right? But since we know that is part of the Christian faith, part of my obedience is to embrace it. We talked about this last Sunday night. 1 Peter 4:1, "Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh (command), arm yourselves also with the same understanding—because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin." It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ both to believe and to suffer. Can we accept the first gift of grace and not the second? Can we? Really?

How shall we understand our worthiness of the gospel of Christ in light of our sinfulness? There's only one word. Here's what it is, 'grace.' That's the only way we can understand it. John Piper again says, "Grace is the pleasure of God, to magnify the worth of God, by giving sinners the right and power to delight in God, without obscuring the glory of God."

So, lost person. Living your life worthy of the gospel of Christ has nothing to do with earning salvation. Quite the opposite. None of us will ever be worthy of what Christ did for us. Spurgeon says, "Jesus Christ does not save the worthy, but the

unworthy. Your plea must not be righteousness, but guilt.” God created us to be with Him. That’s evident from the first page of the Bible. God created us to be with Him. But sin has separated us from Him. There’s no amount of work we can do to be acceptable to Him. The Old Testament is a history of people trying to be acceptable to Him through works. The New Testament is a history of people trying to be acceptable to God, through works. Even up until today, people try to be acceptable to Him through good works. The only good work that will save you is the good work that the Son of God did for you on the cross, when He shed His blood on your behalf, so that you could be saved. That is the only good work. Everyone who trusts in Him has eternal life, and life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever. Living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Let’s pray.

## APPENDIX L

### SERMON 6: A HEART DRIVEN BY UNITY (PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4)

#### Introduction Transcript

The smaller we become, the more room God has to work. The smaller that we become, the more room God has to work. The president of the Southern Baptist Convention recently said this:

“Chief among my passions for the SBC at this time is that we reinforce our identity as a gospel people, putting the gospel above all. We do not find our unity in worship styles or in views on eschatology or in political positions. We find our unity in the gospel. Whatever preferences we have must be secondary to this unifying standard.”

The gospel, a unifying standard. Do you value that unifying standard, the gospel, among the people that you worship with, your church family? How is that expressed, if you do value that? Secondly, why is Christian unity so important? How does the Bible define unity? What is the one factor that binds unity, holds unity together? What is that one ‘thing’ that holds that altogether? What will be the eventual outcome of a people that are unified, unity?

Let me give you some insights into what the Bible says about unity. First, unity is not simply a notion believed, it is an effort to be achieved. It’s not something that we just think about in our head, it is actually an effort to be achieved. Paul says this in the Book of Ephesians 4:3: “making every effort (that is endeavoring, that is eager to maintain, being diligent) to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” He said, we need to make every effort to uphold unity in our church. It’s not something just to be believed, it is something to be achieved. Secondly, unity is important because Jesus thought it was important. Unity is important because Jesus thought it was important. How do I know that? Well, this is what He prayed for His disciples in John 17:21-23:

“May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. “May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.”

Third, unity is found in knowing and becoming like Jesus. Unity is found in knowing and becoming like Jesus, that is: reaching Christian maturity. Ephesians 4:13, “Until



we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness." Love is the binding force of unity. Colossians 3:14, Love is the 'thing' that holds it all together. "Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." Paul said, "Above all things, put on love, because that is the perfect bond, that is the perfect means to hold unity together." Finally, unity leads to God's blessing, that is, eternal life. Psalm 133:1-3, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! (How good and pleasant that is when brothers live together in harmony.) . . . For there the LORD has appointed the blessing—life forevermore."

This week I received a text from a friend of mine. He was telling me about a church and I'm going to leave the name of the church out to protect the innocent and I'm going to insert a particular name, but I just want to read you a portion of that text, to kind of give you an idea of what's going on in that church. "Dude, allegations were made on the youth guy for having a relationship with a student. It was enough that the cops had to get involved. The pastor fired the youth guy, the deacons then fired the pastor and then hired back the youth guy." I'm thinking, "Wow! I don't necessarily want to be a part of that church." That's not unity, that is disunity. Unlike that church, the California redwoods are an amazing species of tree. It may, in fact, be the largest living thing on earth. Many of them stretch above three hundred feet tall. Many of them are over twenty-five hundred years old. The amazing thing about the redwood is this, it does not have a tap root. Their roots do not go down, they go out, at the most, maybe five to six feet deep. But the reason they stand and the reason they weather the storm is because their roots intertwine with one another. And they support one another. Their system of unity sustains them, they need each other, they do not stand alone.

If you're here today and you're without Christ, you're lost, you're not part of this unity that I'm speaking about (Jesus would describe you in). He gave a series of parables in Luke 15. That first parable that He gave, He described a man who had a hundred sheep and one of the sheep was lost. And he left the ninety-nine in order to go and find the one. (Luke 19:10) says this about Jesus and His mission, "The Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost." If you're here today without Christ, let me tell you this, Jesus, right now, in this moment, is seeking you, in order to save you. He's walking up and down every pew in order to find you, in order to bring you to Him. What a wonderful thing it would be if you were the fulfillment of that parable. You remember, it says that he found the lost sheep and it says that he rejoiced with his friends. (Luke 15:7) says this, "I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need repentance." Lost person, He is seeking for you today.

Child of God, how great would it be, how awesome would it be, to be an answer to Jesus's prayer that we just looked at, how awesome that would be to be an

answer to Jesus's prayer today! I'm not talking about making this a goal in your life. I'm not talking about let's just work toward this. What I'm talking about is making this a reality today. Making a, making you a fulfillment of Jesus's prayer. Continuing in John 17, He says this, "Protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we (Father, Son, and the Spirit) are one." Jesus wants you to be one just like the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is one. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to walk out of here today knowing that I am an answer to Jesus's prayer? How sad, on the other hand, when our response to unity is less than His prayer!

Our passage for today, there in the Book of Philippians. Philippians 2. Paul's thoughts turned from the need to withstand pressure from the outside to a deeper look at those inward attitudes that are to depict Christians. We are in the first of three major sections of the Book of Philippians. Within that section, there are four parts, we talked about this last week and let me just rehearse it real fast. Thanksgiving and prayer 1:3-11, joy in progress of the gospel 1:12-26, exhortation to Christlike character (that's where we are right now), and, then, later on he's going to discuss his future plans 2:19-30. So, we're talking about Paul's exhortation to the Philippians, that they personify a Christlike character. Last week, we saw that that involved a unified stand, that they should all stand together. This week, we're going to see that means having a unified mind. Last week, we saw that a life worthy of the gospel of Christ will faithfully display certain qualities, and so I gave you three of those qualities. A life worthy of the gospel of Christ is characterized by perseverance, that's verse 27, a life worthy of the gospel of Christ is characterized by courage, that's verse 28, and then a life characterized by the gospel of Christ and, even though this is difficult, it's a life of suffering, that is verses 29-30.

So, now, in today's passage, remembering verse 27 and you can look at that, there, in your Bible, your, your workbook, as it were. He exhorts, in verses 1-4, he exhorted them to unity, and so he's going to continue that thought and he's going to go beyond this discussion about standing together for the faith of the gospel and he's going to press into them the need for a unified mind (whatever that is) focusing on the blessings, the responsibility, and the success of Christian unity.

Follow along with me in 2:1:

"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

Believers with a heart driven by unity will consistently (there's the key word, 'consistently') display specific attitudes. If you have a heart driven by unity, you are going to display specific attitudes. Now, I'm going to give you three crucial features

that tell us what a heart of unity is, but before that, “Why is this important for us?” Well, it’s important for lost people, in this sense, let me talk about where you’re at today. Ephesians 2, we’re going to use the same verse for the significance, both lost and saved. For the lost person this is ‘significance’ because it describes your location right now. Because you’re not experiencing this unity, you have no idea of this unity that I’m talking about. Ephesians 2:12, “At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.” Lost person, that is where you are at right now. That is your location. That’s where God finds you today. Where? “Excluded from the people of God and all of His promises. Without hope, and without God, in this world.” That is where you are at. Now, that’s less than optimal. That is not good. That should be a concern to you. Now, on the other hand, child of God, let me read the rest of that verse because this is your location. “But now in Christ Jesus” (now I could stop right there and that would be enough to shout. That would be enough to get past our ‘Baptist,’ and go over into a little bit of ‘Pentecostal.’ Right?). “But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Man, in Christ Jesus, you were far away, but you have been brought near to God, by the blood of Christ. “For he is our peace, who made both groups one.” He hath made both groups one. He hath caused us to come together as many people and He has made us one. That is something to rejoice about, and He did all of that in Christ. So, let me give you those three crucial features of a heart driven by unity.

### Conclusion Transcript

Believers with a heart driven by unity will consistently display specific attitudes. Those three crucial features that we talked about, a heart driven by unity. A heart driven by unity will recall unity’s blessings. A heart driven by unity will fulfill unity’s responsibility. Make my joy complete! And a heart driven by unity will strive for unity’s success. So, do you appreciate, do you appreciate the blessings of being a part of a community of grace? Are you striving to fulfill your responsibility to be of one mind? Does your walk resemble God’s plan for unity?

Let me encourage you to be a unifier, and one that seeks unity. I’m going to say this real slow, so that it sinks in: Two Christians are better than one, when they are ‘one.’ Two Christians are better than one, when they are ‘one.’ 1 Corinthians 1:10, “Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united (perfectly joined) with the same understanding and the same conviction.” How sad on other side of unity or to be on the other side of unity. Unity is not optional for the Christian. It is not optional. It is an integral part of our life as God’s people, so much so, that if love is the thing that holds it all together, John addresses that, he says,

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

Unity is not artificial, it is based on the truth of Christ, His love, His Word, His salvation. I ran across this quote by A. W. Tozer and I thought, “This goes so perfectly with this thought of unity, this goes so perfectly with that church that my friend texted me about.” Here’s what he says, “One hundred religious persons knit into a unity by careful organization do not constitute a church any more than eleven dead men make a football team.” See, we can come together, we can be together, that doesn’t necessarily mean we have unity. In order to get your heart, my heart, to a place where it is driven by unity, you and I are going to have to take certain actions.

First, you need to repeatedly celebrate the blessings of unity. All those ‘ifs’ that he talked about—if there’s any of ‘this,’ if there’s any of ‘this,’ if there’s any of ‘this,’ and there is! We need to continually recycle that in our mind. Paul said it this way, to another church, the Ephesian church, he says, “Making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” One! The answer to Jesus’s prayer.

Next, there needs to be a tangible exchange of joy between you and other believers as you faithfully strive to fulfill your responsibility of being one mind. You see, all of these thoughts about what God has done for me and what God is doing in us, it should just ‘well-up’ within us this joy and you should feel that. And it should ‘well-up’ within you joy, and I should feel that. But the fact is, you may be more of a burden than you are blessing. You may be more like glue in the gears than grease in the axles. Paul says, “I wrote this very thing so that when I came I wouldn’t have pain from those who ought to give me joy (Ouch!), because I am confident about all of you that my joy will also be yours.” A life worthy of the gospel is marked by, not only a unified stand, but also a unified mind. That is, the same outlook, the same humility, the same consideration. Steadfastness in both of those depends on unity and, by the way, unity depends on you. So, finally, you must diligently seek unity by humbly serving others at a cost to you. Humbly serving others at a cost to you. In that way, when we do that, we are like God. Ephesians 1:9, “He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together (in other words, it is God’s goal to unite all things) in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth.”

My first pastorate was in south Texas. I was the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Cuero for four years. We left there and went to Calvary Baptist Church (I know that’s amazing to go to Calvary—Calvary). Calvary Baptist Church in Dayton, Texas, where I became the associate pastor. When I came there, we were running

about four hundred in Sunday School. By every outward appearance, that church seemed to be growing, it seemed to be thriving, it seemed to be alive, but underneath, man, there was this seething cauldron of disunity. So much so, that one year after I came, the senior pastor split that church, for less than biblical reasons. Now, I was reminded of that, this past week, not only because of this passage about unity, but because of two things. It was twenty-four years, last Tuesday, that we moved to Dayton to begin that ministry position. Also, last Saturday night, that man who was our pastor, passed away. You know, this week, I have experienced the whole gamut of emotions when I think about that whole experience. I think about anger and grace. I've thought about forgiveness and I've thought about failure. I've thought about hurt and I've thought about healing. I've thought about death and I have thought about life. And almost (I just thought about this! And almost) a quarter of a century has passed, and I know two things for sure. Here's what I know, "Unity reaps not only temporal benefits, unity reaps eternal benefits. Disunity reaps consequences that I cannot even explain, that agonize the soul and that I still live with today." Does Jesus's, does Jesus's heart hurt, when our hearts are not driven by unity? Does His heart hurt? You know, in the midst of all that, I was left to pick up all the pieces. In the midst of all of that, I'm sure it passed through my mind, "Where's Jesus in all of this?" Quoting a great Scottish preacher, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, this is what he said (I wish I would have thought about this at that time, and I am encouraging you at this time to think in this way), here's what he said, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet, the distance makes no difference; He is praying for me!" Can I assure you of one thing today? Jesus is praying for you. He's praying that you 'be one,' just as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one. And He's continually doing that on our behalf. And so, Paul says, "Make my joy complete!" And I'm telling you, "Make my joy complete!" And you should be telling me, "Make my joy complete!" By let's being of the same mind, the same focus, the same outlook, the same humility, the same consideration.

Lost person, I was reminded of the Book of Colossians (Barb can be coming and will close) he says: "So that you may walk worthy of the Lord (same thing he told the Philippian bunch, he tells the Colossian bunch). So that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him (and here's the reason why. Saved person, this is what He's done for you. Lost person, this is what He wants to do for you). . . . He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." And all of God's people should say, 'Amen!' And lost person, what you should say is, "Man, that sounds good. I want that! I want to be rescued! I want to be transferred out of darkness! I want to be a part of the kingdom of His Son. I want redemption. And I want forgiveness of sin." Well, you can have that, and you can have that right now! Let's pray.

## APPENDIX M

### SERMON 7: THE GREATEST EXAMPLE (PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11)

#### Introduction Transcript

“It’s not great talents that God blesses, but great likeness to Jesus.” Those are the words of Robert Murray M’Cheyne. It’s not great talents that God blesses, but great likeness to Jesus. The book, *In His Steps*, that was written by Charles Sheldon, I believe about 1896. It takes place in a railroad town by the name of Raymond. The main character in that fictitious work is the Reverend Henry Maxwell. He’s the pastor of the First Church of Raymond, he challenges his congregation for a year, to not do anything in their life without asking this question first and foremost— “What would Jesus do?” Young people not too long ago wore wristbands ‘W. W. J. D.,’ “What would Jesus do?” Well, that book preceded that movement by a hundred years and so, the premise of that book is “What would Jesus do?”

So, let me ask a few questions. “What would Jesus do?” That is a good question to ask. That’s a good start but that’s really not good enough. That question should be followed up by this question, it’s not enough to know what would Jesus do, we must ask the question “What did Jesus do?” What did Jesus do? And then we must follow that question with this question, “What would Jesus demand us to do?” So, “What would Jesus do? What did Jesus do? What would Jesus demand us to do?” So, if I’ve got those first two questions down—“What would Jesus do?” and “What did Jesus do?”—is it actually possible for me to come to understand, to know, what Jesus thought? I mean, if I’m supposed to react by what would Jesus do, then I must be able to think like He thought, so, what would Jesus do, plus what Jesus did do. So, now I must finally ask the question, “What can I do?” What can I do exactly? Because, by the way, you and I are not Jesus. So, I must ask that question ultimately, “What can I do?”

So, let me give you some crucial assertions on how, “What would Jesus do?” or “What did Jesus do?” It is the Word of Christ, not my, not my imagination that should decide how I should be guided. It is the Word of Christ. 1 John 2:6 instructs believers and this is what John tells those believers, “The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.” Now that is in a context of obeying His commands, that is verses 3-5. In other words, walking like Jesus walked always points back to Scripture. So, me answering the question, “What would Jesus do? I have no right to decide what Jesus would do apart from what Scripture informs me that He did. The gospel tells us: Jesus walked on the water, Jesus rebuked the winds and the waves,

and they obeyed. He healed the sick, He fully restored the injured, He raised the dead to life, He answered prayer, He accepted worship, He forgave sins, He declared Himself to be the eternal Son of God, He died as a perfect sacrifice for my sin. So, “What did Jesus do?” Well, therein lies the heart of the gospel because what would Jesus do is, in fact, what Jesus did and that’s recorded for us in Scripture. The third insight that I want to give you is Jesus’s demands. “What would Jesus demand?” Jesus demands total obedience and whatever ‘it’ is. He demands total obedience. Luke 6:46, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don’t do the things that I say?” Fourth assertion, mature believers can understand God because they have the Spirit of God in them and He controls them. So, the question is, “What can I do?” Can I think the thoughts of Jesus? Well, Paul assures us that we can have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:16, “For who has known the Lord’s mind, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” We have the mind of Christ. I want you to remember that little word ‘mind’ because that’s an important word for today, ‘mind.’ We have the mind of Christ. Finally, I can’t die for a person’s sins, neither can I forgive them as God forgives them. So, in what way, shape, or form can I be like Jesus? Well, I can be a servant like Him! Mark 10:45, he writes, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” I may not be able to give my life a ransom for many, but I can serve as He served.

The Bible records for us a story in John 12. Jesus has traveled to Bethany to the home of His dear friend Lazarus. The preceding chapter, He had just raised Lazarus from the dead. I have no idea what that was like, but that must have been an exciting time to have your life restored. Amen? And so, here in John 12 they meet together and they’re there in that home in Bethany and this woman by the name of Mary, she takes her precious, costly perfume and out of love and service to her Lord—here’s what she does. She breaks that open and she anoints Jesus. She washes His feet with her hair, so much so, that (12:3) says this, “So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.” As I thought about that, I thought we could actually say that this way, “The house was filled with the fragrance of her service.” The house was filled with the fragrance of her service. Her service was less about cost and more about Christ. Less about cost and more about Christ.

In that same story, many of the disciples, all of them were probably there, one in particular, by the name of Judas Iscariot. He looks at that act of service with disdain and here’s what he states, I’m paraphrasing here, he says, “Man you could have sold that for a year’s salary.” You could have sold it. You wasted it on the Lord. Selfishness above service. You’ve just wasted it on the Lord. He thought more about the money than he did the Master. Verse 6 gives us some insight into this character Judas. It says, “He didn’t say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief.” He didn’t care about the poor. He didn’t care about the Lord. He didn’t care about service.

Now, why didn't Judas deliver on his service to the Lord? Quite frankly, he couldn't. He couldn't. Romans 8:8 give us insight into why he couldn't. Here's why he couldn't. Now, remember I told you remember that little word 'mind?' Romans 8:8, says this, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Verse 7, "The mind-set of the flesh (which is, by the way, what Judas had, the mind-set of the flesh) is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so." It is unable to do so. Lost person (if we have somebody here that is lost today), man, when the Spirit begins to move in your heart today, you need to respond to God's free gift of grace. You will not be saved by acts of service, acts of works, because Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that, but when you are saved, when you are saved, you will serve. We are created unto good works.

So, Christian, God saved you to serve. God saved you to serve. You need to determine today that as God's servant you will sacrificially seek the highest joy of those you serve and thereby just as we saw Paul last week say this, "Make my joy complete!" It's a service that is leading us to joy. Failure to determine to serve today is a life, we will see, that is detached from lordship. Failure to serve is a life that is detached from lordship. It is choosing obstinance over obedience. You say, that's pretty stringent. That's pretty hard. When we read the text today, we'll see that that's exactly what it is, it is obstinance over obedience. It is the difference between regret/sadness as opposed to joy.

If you're there in Philippians 2, this is one of the four great Christological passages. When we get to a passage like this or one of the other three, I always make it a point to refer to the other three because we really need to get a handle on these four passages, if we want to know Christ. We really need to get a handle on these passages if we want to know what Jesus did and who Jesus is. This passage is one of those four great Christological passages and I'll just say this about 'this,' it is Jesus the Servant. The second passage is John 1:1-18 that is Jesus the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God and the Word was with God." The third passage is Colossians 1:15-20, that is, Jesus is Preeminent, above everything. And then the last one is Hebrews 1:1-4, and that is this, Jesus is the final and supreme revelation of God because "God has spoken in these last days through His Son Jesus Christ." Theologically rich, and many preachers, when they get to a passage like this, they want to just not talk about the doctrine, as if it's not practical or as if you can't apply it. Can I tell you this? Doctrine is very applicable, and doctrine is very practical, as we will see in this passage. So, we're in the first big portion, the first large unit, where Paul is explaining his concerns. That started with the very first verse and we'll go down through 2:30. We're in the third section of that, where Paul is exhorting them, he's encouraging them to be like Christ, to exhibit Christlike character. That is 1:27 and that will go to 2:18. We've talked about a unified stand. We talked about a unified mind last week and today we will see the ultimate expression of that, the ultimate



example of that, and that will be our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So, last week we saw that believers with a heart driven by unity will consistently display attitudes, specific attitudes, and we saw three crucial features of a heart that is driven by unity. Here's, here they are: a heart driven by unity will recall unities blessings (that's 2:1), a heart driven by unity will fulfill unities responsibilities (that's 2:2a), and then a heart driven by unity will strive for unity success (2:2-4). Then, our passage today, Paul's going to exhort them to unity and this unity will be based on some proper attitudes or, better yet, a proper attitude. He's talked over and over again about being of one accord, being of one mind, and now he's going to emphasize that point in verse 5. He's going to turn to the ultimate model of humility and servanthood in verses 6-11, our text for today, focusing on the determination, the humiliation, and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, if you have your Bibles follow along with me Philippians 2:5:

“Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. For this reason (your Bible may say ‘therefore,’ for this reason) God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

To achieve unity and to experience joy, you must consistently pursue Christ's example of service. To achieve unity and to experience joy, you must consistently pursue Christ's example of service. I'm going to give you three vital keys for pursuing Christ's example of service, but before we get to the text, let me just ask this question again. “What did Jesus do?” Man, when we figure that out, that should motivate us. Child of God, that should get, that should compel us to fulfill that, a life of service. He tells us here in verse 5 to let this mind, adopt this attitude, let this mind be in you. Colossians 1:21-22, Paul tells the church, “Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds expressed in your evil actions. But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him.”

Now, let me just point out some indicators in this passage that should really motivate us. Because he said, once upon a time you were alienated and hostile in your mind to God, and that was displayed by your evil actions. Once upon a time, but we've experienced Christ since then, right? So, now we're no longer alienated. We're no longer hostile. So, as a believer, man that ought to just give us reason to shout! We are, we are not an enemy of God. Now, for the lost person. There's your desire for today. You are an enemy. You are hostile to God. You are alienated from Him, but He

desires to reconcile you by the death that He died through His physical body and He wants to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him. But you're going to have to do something today. You're going to have to do something. So, let me give you those three vital keys for pursuing Christ's example of service.

### Conclusion Transcript

So, to achieve unity and experience joy, you must consistently pursue Christ's example of service. Those three vital keys to doing that: we must follow Christ in His determination. We must mirror Christ in His humiliation. We must hallow Christ in His exaltation. So, you love Christ, you've given your life to Him: Are you determined to adopt the same attitude that He had? Can you confidently say that "my life is characterized by humility, both inwardly and outwardly?" Be careful how you answer that question because if you answer it really hard, in the affirmative, you may have countered your humility. Since God exalted Jesus as Lord, isn't that the very thing that we should do, isn't that the very thing that we should get to do?

Let me encourage you today to follow the pattern of the humble Christ, ultimately bowing before Him in worship. 2 Corinthians 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." You know, the antithesis of humility, the antithesis of what Jesus did in lowering himself, is pride. That's the antithesis of that. Failure to adopt this attitude, the servant attitude and its ensuing actions is to succumb to the way of Satan. How so? Isaiah 14 characterizes the opposite attitude that Jesus displayed here, that Paul is characterizing. Isaiah 14, just listen to this, listen to Satan's way, "You said to yourself 'I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the gods' assembly, in the remotest parts of the North. I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'" That's the opposite of Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the Most High and I'm going to become like one of them. Satan said, "Now here I am down here, I'm going to lift myself up and I'm going to be God."

People who love unselfishly, to spread joy and promote unity, that, that's what chapter 2 is about. We're going to see some other individuals in the next few weeks. It is just pictured with different people who are all about joy and unity. So, in order to achieve this unity and experience this joy, how can we pursue this example? Now, we've been commanded to. Don't you just love it when you're as a parent. I just love this, when I was a kid and sitting in my parent's home and they would tell me to do something and I had no idea to do it and/or how to do it. And maybe they didn't elaborate, it was just one of those, "Well, you just do like I told you to do!" Well, "I don't know how to do it." "Well, just do it anyway!" Aren't you glad that God doesn't do that? And God does not do that. So, here's what I want you to do. This is active,

this is not passive. Actively cultivate that attitude. What is that attitude? The mind of Christ. What is that? The mind of a servant. I want you to actively cultivate the mind of a servant. You say, well, where do I start? There's a good place. Daniel 1:8, it says this of that great prophet, "Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank." What? In a nutshell, here's what, he determined to obey the Lord. He determined to obey the Lord. That's going to involve two things. I think, we'll never know, "What would Jesus do?" if we don't "Know what Jesus did." So, I'm going to give you a long-term goal and a short-term goal. Here's the long-term goal. I want you, over the next month, to read the Gospel of Mark. That is not difficult. That's a half a chapter a day. Half a chapter, there are only sixteen chapters, half a chapter a day, find out what Jesus did, in order that you may do what Jesus did. Secondly, as you're doing that, here's the short-term goal. As you're doing that, ask the Spirit to make you more like Jesus. Ask the Spirit to make you more like Jesus. Christlikeness happens neither by accident nor osmosis. It does not happen by accident and you're not going to put this Bible under your pillow at night and lay down on it, and somehow it's going to seep through the pillow into your head. It doesn't happen that way, you have to be active.

So, now we saw what he determined to do. He adopted this mind-set. He became a submissive servant so that He might save sinners. So, mirroring Christ in humiliation may mean veiling ourselves with the needs of others just like he veiled His deity with flesh. We may need to veil ourselves with the needs of others giving up our freedom to act independently. Giving up our rights, living with less than and experiencing shame, just as He did to fulfill God's mission. So, here's the second thing I'm going to ask you to do. First thing, actively cultivate that attitude. Second thing, stretch yourself as you humbly serve. Stretch yourself as you humbly serve. You can serve in the world, serve at school, serve on the job, serve at the Bowie mission. Serve out there in the world somewhere. Serve at church, there are, there offerings to take, there are cars to park, there are classes to teach, there are songs to sing, there are a choir to cantata. All of those things are wonderful to do. Luke 22, Jesus said this, there they're sitting at the table, they're having a meal and they're fellowshiping together. He's just washed their feet, He says, "But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at the table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves" [ESV]. But you'll notice I said (I didn't just say humbly serve), I said, "Stretch yourself as you humbly serve." So, there could be a difference between being a helper and a servant. A lot of people help, that doesn't necessarily mean they serve. You've got to stretch yourself. I'm up to about 12 miles a week in running and so what that constitutes is, I run about four 5K's a week, which is 3.11 miles a day. You know when I'm about to that first mile, I'm feeling pretty good, my head's, my head's right

and I'm thinking, 1 mile, I'm feeling good. Feeling right. Weather's fine. Feeling awesome. But you know, when I get to about the second mile, the weather seems a little bit hotter than it was before and I began to wrestle, in my mind is wrestling, and my body is wrestling, and by the time I get to 2.7 miles, you know what? I'm having this epic struggle in my mind, man it'd be so easy to quit. It'd be so easy to just stop and just pull over, off to the side. It would be so easy to do that, but you know, at that point, then I have to dig deep within myself and it can be a physical thing, it could be a mental thing, and, by the way, it can even be a spiritual thing, and it may be all of the above, but somehow I have to stretch myself in order to finish that task. That's the kind of service I'm asking for. That's the kind. That's what I mean when I say, "Stretch yourself as you humbly serve." Oh, what kind of service is that? Well, that's service with no reward. That's service with no recognition and that's service that means you may have to give up something significant that you would not have otherwise. Stretch yourself!

Third, just like mirroring Christ in His humiliation, you need to mirror Christ or God in your exaltation of Christ. In order for that to occur, you need to bow before Him as Lord in every area of your life. That's church, school, work, home, marriage, family, finance, politics, the list is endless there, in the areas of our life. But we need to bow before him in every area of our life. Some theologians like to make a distinction between Jesus as Savior and Jesus as Lord. I don't. He is Savior and He is Lord. He's both of those things. Sometimes preachers say something like this, "Well, you just need to make Jesus Lord!" Well, that's impossible, God already did that. He is the Lord. We don't make Him the Lord, we acknowledge His lordship. He's the Lord! He gave Him a name that was above every name. So, pray tell, how can you recognize Him as the Savior and not as the Lord? You can't! You can't. So, purpose to live for the Lord. 1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts regard Christ as Lord." Realize He's the Lord in everything. Romans 10:12, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all." And when you know what the Lord expects, obey. Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things that I say?"

As I'm summing this up, I thought of that great hymn that we sing. It says, "Oh that with yonder sacred throng, we at His feet may fall! We'll join the everlasting song and (do what? we will) crown Him Lord of all. We'll join the everlasting song and we'll crown him Lord of all." He descended that we may ascend. He was born that we might be born again. He became a servant that we might become sons and daughters. He became like us so that we could be like Him. He emptied Himself so that we might be filled. He came to serve us in order to save us. He died that we may live.

That last part of that verse there in Philippians, "For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of

Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” God is inviting you, saved or lost, to that today. To bow. You know, when we are describing that event that’s going to happen in the future, when every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess, you know, in that moment of time, it will be too late for some people. They will do that, but it will be too late, and they will die in a Christless eternity. See, we as humans, we will either bow our knee here or we will bow our knee there, but we will bow our knee. How much better, how much more joyful, to do it here? To humbly submit to Him before death or before the Lord’s return. Here’s the promise, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as (What? It didn’t say Savior, he said Jesus as) Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Let’s pray.

## APPENDIX N

### SERMON 8: WORKING IT OUT (PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13)

#### Introduction Transcript

To paraphrase the Scottish preacher/poet George MacDonald, “If you do not obey Him, you will not know him. . . . Obedience to Christ is Christianity. . . . If you do not learn that, you are a mere groupie of the kingdom of heaven.” You are a mere groupie of the kingdom of heaven. You know, in our obedience, our pursuit of obedience, sometimes we offer various and sundry excuses in order not to obey the Lord: “It’s hard, Lord, I’m afraid, I might get pushback if I do this, people are the problem, Lord, you just don’t understand, I’m not talented enough.” Or we might succumb to the lowest form of excuse, “Lord, I’m just not going to do that!”

Well, in regards to our obedience (and then we’re going to find out obedience that leads to growth) in response to that, is salvation, which by the way is where all of that begins. Is salvation all of God or does man have some sort of requirement in believing the gospel? Is the Christian life a matter of passive trust or is it fully, active obedience to the Lord? Is our growth all of God’s doing? Some of our doing? Or is it a combination of all of the above? You do not have to raise your hands here, but how many of you would be interested in Christian growth? How many of you would be interested in Christian growth? What does Christian growth look like and, by the way, how do you measure that? How do you measure if you are growing or if you are not?

So, let’s affirm some truths in regards to our obedience/growth. In salvation, which is where all of that begins, we acknowledge God’s sovereignty and human responsibility in all that. John 6:44, “No one can come unto the Father unless the Spirit draws him,” and yet in Acts 16:31 he says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” So, we can’t come unless God woos us, but we’re commanded to come, nonetheless. There’re two extremes to avoid. On the one hand, some people have this notion in regards to obedience or in regards to growth: “Just let go and let God.” Let go and let God. “I can’t, but God can.” That’s one extreme. The other extreme is that we are so active, we are so involved in doing our daily Bible study, doing our daily Bible readings, doing our prayers, doing our faithful duties, that we forget that it’s God that is working in us. It is the Holy Spirit that is working in us. Romans 8:14, “For all those who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s Son.” Sometimes, we forget that we’re supposed to be led by God’s Spirit. The Christian life is a combination of God at work, and it is that, and it is us at work, as well. Romans 9:23 and what if, speaking about God as the Potter, Paul says, “And what if he did this to

make known the riches of his glory on objects of mercy that he prepared beforehand for glory.” He made us for a reason. He made us for His glory. He intends for us to obey. He gives us the ability to obey. He intends for us to grow and He gives us the ability to grow. In regards to that growth, it is a Christian essential. 2 Corinthians 3:18 (we are being transformed, it talks about a process), we “are being transformed into the same image (that is the image of His Son).” So, slowly but surely, I am becoming more like Christ every day, or I should be, and yet on the other hand, Romans 8:29 states this, that God, “Predestined (all believers) to be conformed to the image of His Son.” That’s not a transformation, that is a finished product. He expects us, at the end, to look like Jesus, to be like Jesus. Growth is not just about facts or Bible knowledge; Christian growth is about being like Jesus. Being like Jesus. 2 Peter 3:18, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:2, “Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow up into your salvation.”

Let me give you a poor example of obedience. The prophet Samuel had given King Saul a task. God had told him, and he related it to the king as he went to battle with the Amalekites, that he should utterly destroy them. He should obliterate them, wipe them off of the planet. Samuel is delayed, and by the time he gets there, he finds this to be true: that Saul had only partially obeyed the Lord and partial obedience is really not obedience at all. He says, nonetheless, “I obeyed the Lord” and Samuel says, “No, no, you didn’t,” and these are the words that he says. I want you to pay (particularly) particular attention to a couple of words that define his disobedience. He says, “Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination (or witchcraft), and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.” Wow! Did you hear the way that He defined his disobedience? He called it rebellion and defiance.

Let me give you a good example of God working in us and God working through us. I used this example a couple of weeks ago, but I left out the last half on purpose. You remember, as the children of Israel have come out of Egypt, God has gloriously delivered them. Pharaoh has finally said, “You know I’m going to let you go,” and they’ve taken all of the treasures of Egypt with them. And they came to the Red Sea. There they are at the Red Sea. Pharaoh’s army is in hot pursuit. Mountains on one side, desert on the one side, the sea before them. Here’s what Moses says to the people, “Don’t be afraid. Stand firm and see the LORD’s salvation that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you must be quiet.” That’s where we left off the last time. You get all that. It’s the Lord’s salvation. It’s what He is going to accomplish, and He is going to fight for you and then at the end of that verse, he says, “You must be quiet.” But then listen to verse 15, “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Why are you crying

out to me? Tell the Israelites to break camp. As for you, lift up your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.” Obedience, but you see God at work. It’s the Lord’s salvation. He will accomplish it. He will fight for you, but you also see us, and them, working out that salvation. Break camp! Lift up the staff! Stretch out your hand! Divide it and go through! God at work, and God working in us, and us working it out.

Now, as we work our way through Philippians today, the message, quite frankly, may fall on some deaf ears. Not necessarily because you’re not trying to hear. It’s not necessarily because you don’t want to hear. It’s necessarily because you can’t hear. 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 describes that. It talks about the fact that we really can’t respond to God unless He begins a work in us first. He says, “But the person without the Spirit does not receive what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand (and, by the way, if you can’t understand, you can’t obey. He is not able to understand) it, since it is evaluated spiritually.” So, lost person, let me give you some good news today. Let me give you some hope. It may be that you are not able to understand and not able to obey, but as that verse continues, he says this, “The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything.” He can understand everything and, therefore, he can obey, and here’s the reason why, because he has the mind of Christ. That is your hope today. You may not be able to understand and obey right now, but if God prompts you and God begins to move in your heart, you need to respond to that today, so that you can evaluate everything, and God will gloriously give you the mind of Christ. Now, saved person, there are some here that I know that this is true of, and you need to just take that to the next step. It says, “But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.” You see, believers are able to understand because the Spirit of God lives within us, and some have come to the point where they’re able to distinguish between good and evil because they are mature in their faith. And yet, there are some believers that this is true, the rest of that passage in Hebrews 5, “Although by this time you ought to be teachers. You need someone to teach you the basic principles of God’s revelation. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant.”

Now, if you’re there in Philippians 2. Often this passage is misinterpreted, because it will say there in our text to ‘work out’ our salvation with fear and trembling and so, people take that one word ‘work’ and they will start attaching things to it. This text does not say work for your salvation. The text does not say work at your salvation. The text does not say work up your salvation. The text says ‘work out’ your salvation. There’s a difference between those four and it specifically says ‘work out’ your salvation with fear and trembling. We’re continuing there in the first large unit of Philippians where Paul is explaining all of those things that are a concern to his heart. We’re in that third section of that first part. He’s exhorting them to be like Christ. He



wants them to exhibit a Christlike character. We've talked about a united stand. We talked about a united mind. Last week, he gave us the greatest example of all and that is the example of Christ. Today and next week, we'll conclude this section by talking about a command to obedience and the first one is to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Last week, we saw to achieve unity and experience joy, you must consistently pursue Christ's example of service, and we saw three vital keys for pursuing that example: we must follow Christ in His determination, that is verse 5, we must mirror Christ in His humiliation, that is verses 6-8, and then we must hallow Christ in His exaltation, verses 9-11. So now, today, we're beginning with verse 12, but Paul is really going back to his primary concern, the thought there in 1:27, "Live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ." He's going back to that thought, but more importantly than that, he's identified and applied what he feels like is the major thrust of this attitude that Jesus had. Describes a lot of things that Jesus thought, and He did, but that one thing that he wants to focus on is this, it's found in verse 8 and that is obedience. Obedience. It is a responsibility to the church. It is a responsibility of all of us. It is one of the single most important ingredients to the Christian life and our growth as a disciple of Christ. He turned from the ultimate model of humility and servanthood, verses 6-11, and he's going to focus now on our obedience, our responsibility, and God's purpose for us.

So, if you're there in Philippians 2 beginning with verse 12, follow along with me please. "Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose." Your Bible may say, "According to His good pleasure." So, in order to grow, you need to faithfully live out what God is doing in you. In order to grow, you need to faithfully live out what God is doing in you. I know not where you are today. I don't know whether you're saved or lost. I would suppose that most of you are saved. I don't know where you are on that path, but I know that this is true of all of us. Luke 11:28, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it." Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. For those that keep it today, that is, He tells us here we're blessed. Ultimate blessing for the lost person to hear the Word of God and to keep it, that means a brand new life and that's awesome. For the child of God to hear the Word of God and to keep it, that's to live in victory. Now, the opposite of this is true. If there's ultimate blessing for either saved or loss, there is also ultimate misfortune for saved and lost. For the lost person, to not hear the Word of the Lord and keep it, you are still destined to a devil's hell. For the child of God to not hear the Word of God and keep it, that means a life of defeat and a life of not being what God wants us to be. So, let me give you three clear avenues to the path for Christian growth.

## Conclusion Transcript

So, in order to grow, you need to faithfully live out what God is doing in you, and we looked at these three clear paths of Christian growth: adopt a consistent pattern of obedience, embrace a constant responsibility for your faith, fasten yourselves confidently to God's purpose. Does your life, does my life, exemplify daily, even instant obedience? Are you taking responsibility for your faith, it's growth? Do you fasten yourself constantly to God's purpose for your life? Well, what is that?

Let me give you some confidence in your pursuit to obey Him. Jesus, in John 14, He told His disciples this, "If you love me you will keep my commands." The very next chapter, He tells them this, "You are my friends if you do what I command." Man, that should encourage us, believer! To be a friend of God and (what does) what is the requirement to be a friend of God? To obey Him.

Some here may be unmoved. (Ti 3:3) says, "For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another." Can I point out something here? It says this in that passage, "For we too were once" (were once) and he lists a lot of different things that we were once. One of those things is disobedient. That's what we were once, that characterized our life when we were lost. So, why should that characterize our life when we're saved? Well, the answer is, it shouldn't. That's what we were once, but now we are supposed to be obedient. James 1:22, "But be doers of the word and not only hearers." Why is that important? Because if that's the way we live our life, if we're just content on hearing the Word, if we're just content on 'over hearing' the Word and not 'under hearing' the Word, if that's what we're content on, James tells us we're just "deceiving ourselves." We're deceiving ourselves.

So, I want to instantly, daily obey the Lord. I want to be responsible for this new life that Jesus has given me. I want to grow! I want to find out God's purpose, God's will for my life and I want to fasten myself to that. So, let me point you in that direction, to obey Him and to grow. First, initiate exact obedience. Initiate exact obedience. In a moment, we're going to participate in the Lord's Supper. It's a time of reflection. It's the time to ponder. It's a time to think about what Jesus has done for us. But the gospel does not simply prompt you to mere reflection, the gospel does not prompt you to just reflect. The gospel requires a response, every time. Not some of the time, most of the time. The gospel always requires a response. Obedience is always full, it is never partial. It is always right, it is never wrong. It always leads to blessing, never sorrow. It always initiates growth, it never restricts it. You need to be like Samuel. You remember when Samuel was a young man and the Lord kept speaking to him and He spoke, and He spoke, and he was just dumbfounded, and he didn't know who was speaking, till Eli told him that's the Lord talking to you. He said, "The next time the Lord comes to you need to respond in this fashion" and here's what he said,

“The LORD came, and he stood there, and he called as before, ‘Samuel, Samuel!’” Samuel responded, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” So, we need to commit to obey what we hear. I don’t know if this is true, of you, but I know that this is true of me—I flip what Samuel said on its head. Instead of saying, “Speak, for your servant is listening,” many times I say, “Listen, Lord, for your servant is speaking.” Now we need to say, “Lord, what do you want?” Commit to obey it fully. How do we do that? Here’s how we do that, as you’re hearing it preached, as you’re hearing it taught. Highlight it, underline it, check it off, put a sticky note on it. “I need to do this!” It may be that you may need to pray right then, in that moment, “Lord, help me to do that.” You don’t need to wait till the invitation. You don’t need to wait till after. You don’t need to wait till sometime in this week, when I can think about it. Maybe you need to just pray, right then, “Lord, help me to do that, right now, in this moment. So, initiate exact obedience.

Secondly, exercise responsibility for your faith. Exercise responsibility for your faith. Your resume ain’t complete! Your resume ain’t complete! God is responsible for supplying everything you need according to life and godliness and we are responsible for taking all of that, all that He has worked in, and work it out to His glory. Growth is not a means to an end. It’s not a means to an end, and what I mean by that is, the very thing that we’re going to find out in this book, Paul came to this conclusion, in the third chapter, he’s going to say this, that the greatest thing, the most important thing, in his path to obedience, his path to growth is this, “The surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” That’s growth. ‘That’ is growth. Growth is found in your pursuit of Him. Colossians 2:19, tells us that Christ feeds us, he holds us together, and we “grow with growth from God.” I don’t often do this, but I’m going to (I’m going to) check up on you right now. Last week, I challenged you to begin reading through the Gospel of Mark. Take a half a chapter a day, finding out, figuring out, who this Jesus is. Well, a week is passed. Do you know Him better? Have you asked the Spirit to make that so? You haven’t began that? I’m going to ask you to begin that today, again, read through the Gospel of Mark, half a chapter a day.

Third, resolve to fulfill God’s purpose in your life. Discerning God’s will. We look at that sometimes, we go, “Man, that is so hard. That is so difficult. That is such a daunting task, to know what God’s will is for my life.” Young people may say, “So, you’re asking me to figure out who I’m supposed to marry? Where I’m supposed to go to school, right now, in this moment?” No, that’s not what I’m asking you. What I’m asking you is to do what we know God already wants us to do. I know some of you very well. Some of you I don’t know hardly at all, but I know this for sure, I can tell you at least six things from God’s Word that is His will for your life because God’s Word specifically tells us, “This is His will for you.” Here’s what they are: 2 Peter 3:9, “He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” It is God’s will for you to be saved, if you are lost. Second thing, Ephesians 5:17-18, “So

don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. And don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled with the Spirit." The second thing that is God's will for you is that you be filled with the Spirit. Third, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, "For this is God's will, even your sanctification." Which has to do with your personal holiness and your purity. He says this is God's will for you. 1 Peter 2:13-15, "Submit to every human authority because of the Lord. . . . For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good." In other words, God's fourth thing that is His will is that you be submissive. Fifth, 1 Peter 3:17, "For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be for God's will, than for doing evil." Fifth thing that is God's will for our life is that we suffer and, man, that's hard. Sixth thing, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "Give thanks in everything; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Here's God's will for your life this morning. I can say with absolute one hundred percent authority, it's God's will for you to be saved. It's God's will for you to be Spirit-filled. It's God's will for you to be sanctified. It is God's will for you to be submissive. It is God's will for you to suffer, and it is God's will for you to say thanks. I may not even know you, but I know that God is working in you, so that you can, at least, work out those six things in your life.

You remember, way back in chapter 1, you remember this verse that we looked at? He says here, God's working in you so you can work it out. He said this in verse 6, "I'm sure of this (I am confident of this) that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to its completion until the day of Christ Jesus." The Lord works in and we work out. God worked in Moses, he worked it out, leading Israel. God worked in David, he worked it out, slaying Goliath. God worked in Paul, he worked it out, writing most the New Testament. God worked in Billy Graham, and he worked it out, preaching to an estimated 215 million people. God worked it in Cassie Bernall, she worked it out, as a martyr at Columbine High School. Working 'in' us, working it 'out.'

Lost person, can I tell you the best example of this is God's Son. God worked 'in' His Son and He worked it 'out' as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Christ was obedient to the Father, even though it meant going to the cross. Titus 3:5, "He saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Let's pray.

## APPENDIX O

### SERMON 9: SHINE YOUR LIGHT (PHILIPPIANS 2:14-18)

#### Introduction Transcript

“God put us on earth to shine as lights not to adapt to the dark.” God put us on earth to shine as lights not to adapt to the dark. David Brainerd was born in 1718, he was orphaned at the age of fourteen, he was saved at the age of 21. It could be argued that he is the most influential, greatest American missionary that has ever existed. In 1742, at the age of 24, he became a missionary to the American natives in New England. His life can be characterized by a lot of tribulation and turmoil. He suffered from tuberculosis, starvation, loneliness, depression, he slept on straw, he lived in a wigwam, he traveled 3,000 miles on horseback. In his lifetime, the greatest missionary and, yet, only had 150 converts to his claim. He inspired people like William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Jim Elliot. The schools of Princeton and Dartmouth were founded because of him (who were both theological institutions when they began). He died in the home of Jonathan Edwards of consumption at the ripe old age of 29. America’s greatest missionary died when he was 29, he only was a missionary for four years. You would look at the life and you would say, “He accomplished so much, in such little time. Why do that? Why have that as your goal?” This is what he wrote in his diary, “I want to burn out in one continual flame for God.” I want to burn out in one continual flame for God.

So, how brightly is your light shining this morning? How brightly is your light shining this morning? Jesus did not tell us to be light. Jesus did not tell us to have light. Here’s what Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. . . . In the same, way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” So, on the one hand, you have light and shining that light in this passage. And on the other hand, in this passage, contrasting that is the attitude of grumbling and complaining. Are you a grumbler? You don’t have to answer that out loud, I’ll just let you look in the mirror of your soul. Are you a grumbler? Are you a complainer? Is that how people would characterize you? Exodus 16:2, 6-8, it’s one of those occasions where Moses is interacting with the children of Israel and they’ve been complaining. Here’s what it says,

“The entire Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. . . . In the morning you will see the LORD’s glory because he has heard your complaints about him. . . . ‘The LORD will give you meat to eat this

evening and all the bread you want in the morning, for he has heard the complaints that you are raising against him? Who are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD?”

Did you hear how that passage started? It said this, “The entire Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron,” but that’s not how the passage went. The passage went this way, your complaints are about ‘Him!’ Your complaints are not against us, but against Him. Shining a light versus grumbling and complaining. So, in regards to shining that light: are you striving to be both pure and blameless (which this passage will speak about that) before God and others? See, God desires that in our life. God desires progress towards purity and progress towards blamelessness. 1

Thessalonians 3:13, “May he make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. Amen.” And in Matthew 5:8, the words of Jesus in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” Is that what we’re striving for? Purity and blameless as we stand before Him? In regard to shining that light, are we holding forth the Word of life? Are we holding forth the Word of life, and exactly what does that mean? We’ll find out, but 1 Peter 1:23 says this, “Because you have been born again (that excites us! because you have been born again)—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God.” That’s how we were born again. Then, last but not least, are you pouring your life, are you pouring your life out as a sacrifice? That’s part of shining our light. Are you pouring your life out as a sacrifice? “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.” This is your true worship.

Lost person, if you are here today, I urge you to listen to God’s Word. Respond to God’s Word. Respond to the light that you are being given. Jesus talked about it this way in His gospel. The Gospel of John, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Anyone who believes in him is not condemned.” Anyone who believes in Him, lost person. Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned. That’s not the rest of the verse, “but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. This is the judgment: light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.” He that believes is not condemned. He that believes not is condemned already. Respond to the light that you are given this morning. Saved person, as that passage continues, it says this, “But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.” If you are living by truth, you’re going to respond to the light, you’re going to live by the light, and therefore you’re going to shine your light, as the passage is going to teach us today. But the opposite of that is also true: anyone who

does not live by the truth is not going to come to the light. Saved person, you do not want that to be the characterization of your life. Lost person, you do not want that to be the characterization of your life. We've been given light, we need to respond appropriately to the light.

Let me give you an example of two groups in Scripture that respond to the light that was given them, or better yet, those that do and those that don't. The first one is found in Numbers 14, it's the nation of Israel again. They're characterized, not by light, they are characterized by darkness. It says this since, "Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: 'How long must I endure this evil community that keeps complaining about me? I have heard the Israelites' complaints that they make against me (and the summation of that is this, He says everybody that's under the age of 20, you're all going to die and here's the reason why) . . . because you have complained about Me.'" That's not the path to take. That's not what we want to be about, right? On the other hand, in the Book of Acts, there's a group of people from Berea and here's, here's Paul's, here's what Paul said about them in Acts 17: "The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the Word with eagerness (they responded to the light that was given them, they received the word with eagerness) and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."

So, if you have your Bibles with you, then in Philippians 2 we're thinking about several contrast and comparisons in just these few five verses. We're thinking about belief versus unbelief. Joy versus complaining. Light versus darkness. Those that believe the Word, those that don't believe the Word. Sacrifice versus selfishness. As I walk away from this passage, I could sum it up in one question and this is what it would be. Do you whine, or do you shine? Do you whine, or do you shine? That's what Paul, in a nutshell, is saying in just these few short verses. We're still in that first large section of the Book of Philippians. We will finish the third section today where Paul is exhorting them to be like Christ. We talked about a unified stand, a unified mind, the example of Christ. Last week, we had a command to obey and the obedience was to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Today, we cover that last command. That will close up this last section and it is this: it is a command to obey to stop complaining. It is a command to obey to stop complaining. So, previous we saw, in order to grow you need to faithfully live out what God is doing in you and I gave you, last week, three clear paths, three clear avenues to Christian growth. One, adopt a consistent pattern of obedience. Embrace a constant responsibility of your faith. And fasten yourself confidently to God's purpose. So, now in this passage, this week, Paul turns his attention to those that were neither humble, nor did they live in obedience. Their life is characterized by vanity and selfishness that appears in the form of grumbling, murmuring, complaining, any of those, and arguing. He's recalling the history of Israel. He's drawing from examples, specifically Deuteronomy 32 and he's bringing that into the life of the church. He's recalling the fact that Israel, who had

been gloriously saved, is not doing what we were commanded to do last week. What were we commanded to do last week? Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. He's recalling the fact that Israel failed to work out their salvation. They failed to work out their salvation, instead they grumbled. He turns from the ultimate model of humility and obedience to focus on our witness and the sacrificial service of our faith. If you're there, Philippians 2:14,

“Do everything without grumbling and arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, by holding firm to the word of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor for nothing. But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me.”

Serve in a way that shines His light and love on a lost world. Serve in a way that shines His light and His love on a lost world. Going to give you three actions that we must take in order to shine that light, but before we get there, let me just show you the significance of these five verses. Sometimes, when we look at the Old Testament, we may have this thought of, “I'm so thankful that I'm, I'm living in the age of grace. I'm so thankful that I'm not living back there because it seems like that God is totally different than the God that appears in the New Testament” (I assure you, they're the same God, but nonetheless). We might say, “Well, you know God was somewhat brutal, God was somewhat matter-of-fact, God did not tolerate anything in the Old Testament, I'm just so glad for grace.” Well, certainly we're glad for grace. We're, we're glad for mercy. We're glad for the long-suffering of God. But for all of us here, saved or lost, we must remember this, God is not just gracious, and God is not just merciful, and God is not just longsuffering—God is holy, God is righteous, and God is just. As a matter of fact, we might look at the Old Testament and go, “I'm so thankful that I wasn't there.” Well, let me give you a New Testament passage and this should kind of get our attention because He speaks to a church and, by the way, we're a church and so it's significant for us. He's telling the church at Corinth who, by the way, has just had all sorts of problems, all sorts of issues pertaining to unity and what they believed and here's what he says, 1 Corinthians 10:10-11, “And don't complain as some of them did, and were killed by the destroyer (the destroying angel).” He said, “Don't be like that” because the destroying angel came and killed all of them. Did that get their attention? I'm sure it did. Does that get our attention? I hope that it does. “These things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come.” In other words, we're supposed to learn from that. We're supposed to pay attention to that. So, that does not happen to us because, by the way, God is gracious, God is merciful, God is long-suffering, but



God is still holy, God is still righteous, and God is just. So, you're there in Philippians 2. Let's get three actions we must take to shine as God's light.

### Conclusion Transcript

So, serve in a way that shines His light and His love on a lost world and, so, we saw three things there: serve joyfully in everything, shine intensely everywhere, and sacrifice totally for everyone. This is kind of a pointed question for those that are in church a lot. Because church work can be a lot. Have you lost your joy in serving Jesus? Have you lost your joy in serving Jesus? Have you been faithful to offer God's life through His Word, putting it forth? Are you living sacrificially for God and for others? So, let me encourage you in your effort to make all those questions a present reality. Ephesians 5:8 is a word of admonition, this is a word of encouragement to God's people: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light." That's an encouragement, man. You were in darkness, but now live as children of light. But the bottom line is grumbling/complaining reveals a lot of things, but at its root is an unbelieving heart. Psalm 106:24-25, "They despised the pleasant land they did not believe his promise. They grumbled in their tents and they did not listen to the LORD." Grumbling is the heart's response to God, not circumstances, not people. Now, we may want to point the finger at people and we may want to point the finger at circumstances, but in reality, we're pointing our finger to God.

Have we forgot His promise? As a matter of fact, C. S. Lewis says this, "Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others." The passage that Paul used from the Old Testament is Deuteronomy 32:5. Here's what it says, "His people have acted corruptly toward him; this is their defect—they are not his children but a devious and crooked generation. Is this how you repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Isn't he your Father and Creator? Didn't he make you and sustain you? Remember the days of old." So, how do we remedy grumbling? Well, here's how we do that, we need to check our motives. Each of us needs to check our motives. How do I do that? Well, every morning, I have to check my sugar. It takes a little bit of time, but it's, it's not really bothersome. But I have to do that every morning and I'm assuming at this point, I'm going to have to do that for the rest of my life, and if it's between a certain thing then I'm okay, but if it gets a little bit high, then I should have concern. It's like the check engine light, on your vehicle. You just drive, and you just drive, but if that light comes on, all of a sudden, what do you do? I've got to check that. Well, we need to check our motives. Let me give you four sources that are absolutely infallible. You'll say, well, I may grumble sometimes. I may complain sometimes, but I don't know that I will classify myself as a grumbler or a complainer. Well, don't ask me. Don't ask your neighbor. Husband, don't ask your wife. Wife,

don't ask your husband because all of those are fallible. I'm going to give you four infallible resources to ask: first of all, pray to God. Pray to God. 1 Samuel 16:7, "The LORD sees the heart." I don't know if I am. I don't know if I am. The Lord does, the Lord knows the heart. Secondly, look to Jesus, which is what he commanded us in this passage. Pray to the Father, look to the Son. I'm pretty sure, I'm pretty confident, where I'm standing, Jesus was not a grumbler. Jesus was not a complainer. Third, submit to the Spirit and why I say that is simply (the Spirit, that just conjures up all sorts of things, right?) the Spirit has three basic tasks. Here's what His Spirit, here's what His tasks are, "He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment." So, he will convict me. He will convict you. So, submit when He convicts, and, fourth, consult the Word. Ephesians 4:29-30, "No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear." And then I find this really potent, a lot of people take this and just use this, in a passage, where he says, "No foul language should proceed from your mouth, only that thing that should edify people." He concludes that thought by saying, "Don't grieve the Holy Spirit." Oh! So, check your motives.

Secondly, present the life-giving Word. Present the life-giving Word. You know in a church like this, every church that I've pastored. Man, I can get up and preach on the Word of God and everybody's like, "Amen. That's right, we believe." Any positive adjectives that you could describe the Word of God with, I'm sure all of you would wholeheartedly agree. Man, it's infallible. It's inerrant. It is right. It is pure. Any and all of those things, but I think many times, we believe that the Word of God is the Word of God, but then in practice, sometimes we wonder, "Is this really practical? Is this really sufficient?" Acts 5:20, he told the disciples, I want you to "Go and stand in the temple, and [I want you to tell] the people all about this life." How do you do that? Tell them all about this life. See, Vance Havner described it this way. Great evangelist, he said Christians, conservative Christians, are like this sometimes, "We can be as straight theologically as a gun barrel, but we can also be just as empty." We believe all the right things, but we are somehow devoid of the Word of God. So, how do you present this life-giving Word? Two things: first, ask God to let you shine like a star at work, at school, at sports, at home. Ask God to do that. Secondly, look for an opportunity to put forth His Word. For what? For a witness, for an encouragement, maybe to comfort somebody. Ask God for the opportunity. I'm pretty sure He'll give you one. If you're sensitive, He will give you one.

Third, sacrifice yourself for others. Sacrifice yourself for others. "You yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built up to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." You know, preachers are characterized or caricatured sometimes as just getting up and asking people, and God's people, for any and everything. We ask for all sorts of commitments. I'm going to, I'll ask you for your time. I'm going to ask you for your

energy. I'm going to ask you for your money. I'm going to ask you for your talents that you may have. I'm going to ask you for all those plans. That I'm going to ask you to commit some certain things, and I'm not denying that the Word of God sometimes says commit. I did not grow up in a church where we talked a lot about commitment. We used a totally different word. We used the word 'surrender.' That's the word that my preacher used and just about every other preacher that I could remember that was in that pulpit. They always talked about surrender. See, in its essence and, I think here, surrender applies more than commitment. Surrender is all about God, commitment is all about me and what I'm going to do. Surrender just says, "I give up all my rights." Commitment says, "This is, this is what I'm going to do! I am in control here. I'm going to commit this!" Surrender says, "You have it all!" Somehow, I don't think when we're talking about sacrificing ourselves, when Jesus said this, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." I don't think He was asking for commitment there. Hey, would any of you like to commit to taking up your cross and "follow me?" He wasn't asking for a commitment. What He was asking for was surrender. Surrender. See, the sacrifice here—sacrifice yourself for others. The sacrifice is not your things. The sacrifice is 'you.' Paul said, "I'm being poured out as an offering" and you'll notice I said sacrifice yourself for others, because when you sacrifice yourself, you don't (the preacher and the church and God's kingdom doesn't) have to worry about your money. It doesn't have to worry about your family. It doesn't have to worry about all those other things you want to commit to, because it already has all of you.

Unsaved people complain, Christians rejoice. The world whines to God, the Christian witnesses to the world. The world is twisted and distorted, the Christians stand straight because he measures himself by the Word of God. The world is selfish, the Christian life is a life of sacrificial service. "The night is nearly over, the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." Saved person, put on the armor of light.

Lost person, there's two roads you can take today. Proverbs 4 speaks about those two roads, says it this way, "The path of righteousness is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday." There's a path that you can take, right there, the path of righteousness, it's lighted like dawn. It shines brighter and brighter every day. That's one path. Then the other path, "But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom; they don't know what makes them stumble." You're here today, and, "Man, I just don't know why my life doesn't work. I don't know why I stumble and fall. I just don't know why I cannot make it." Let me inform you. You can't make it because of your sin. That's why you can't 'make it.' Your sin has separated you from God. You're alienated from Him. As this says here, "The way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom." That's all you can hope for, in this life, and the next, is the darkest gloom. But can I tell you, God has provided for you? He's provided the perfect

sacrifice for your sin, His Son. He gave His life for you. If you would just respond to Him in repentance and faith, He will save you and you will be on the path of righteousness like the light of the dawn. Amen? Let's pray.

## APPENDIX P

### SERMON 10: THE EXAMPLE OF THE SERVANT (PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30)

#### Introduction Transcript

Being a servant of Christ is not an option. If you are not a servant of Christ, you cannot rightly call yourself a Christian. If you are not a servant of Christ, you cannot rightly call yourself a Christian. At St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, there is only one door (not like Southside, there is only one door) into the worship center. Over the door is a hand-lettered sign that reads this, 'Servant's Entrance.' Servant's entrance, there is absolutely no way in that building except through the servant's entrance.

Did you know that the entrance to heaven is a 'Servant's Entrance?' The entrance to heaven is a servant's entrance. James and John were, were arguing amongst themselves, who was going to be first in the kingdom of God, and Jesus had a way of setting people straight and he set them straight. In the Gospel of Mark 10:43-44, he says this, "Whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be slave to all." So, in all of our serving, here in church, outside of church, and all of our serving, whose servant are we ultimately? It is to the Lord, that true service is directed. Colossians 3:23-24, "Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord your Christ." You serve the Lord your Christ, and that is where ultimate service is due. So, how do we serve the Lord if that is where ultimate service should lead to? Service to the Lord should be based on knowledge: if I know the Lord, and I know that He is holy, and I know that He is righteous, and I know that He is just. Hebrews 12:28 tells me how I should serve Him, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful. By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe." That's how we serve, with reverence and awe, because we know that the Lord is holy. As we serve, is it appropriate (is it appropriate, the text is going to help us today: is it appropriate?) to follow the example of other great servants of God? Is it appropriate to follow the example of other great servants of God? A worthy testimony is worthy of following. A worthy testimony is worthy of following. Paul in the Book of 1 Corinthians 11, here's what he says, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ," and in this book, in the next chapter of the Book of Philippians, verse 17, he's going to say, "Brothers, join in imitating me." Follow me, as I follow Christ. So, how long does a servant of God serve? How long does a servant of God

serve? I've never actually thought about that. I immediately thought of a hymn that we used to sing. You remember this one, "We'll work till Jesus comes, we'll work till Jesus comes, we'll work till Jesus comes, and we'll be gathered home." The gist is, man, when this life is over, we just get to lay it all down, enjoy the splendor of heaven. I thought about that. How long does a servant of God serve? Once God's servant, always God's servant! Let me read a passage from the Book of Revelation 22. When it's all said and done, here's what it says,

"and there will no longer be any curse. (Amen?) The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more; people will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever."

His servants will worship Him, and it says we will also reign with Him. How long are we going to serve? Forever and ever and ever. So, if you're a child of God, you just better get used to it. It's because that is what heaven is going to be like.

Jesus contrasted service to Him by talking about servants. He talked about the faithful and wise servant, as opposed to the wicked servant. The faithful and the wise servant immediately did what the master said, and Jesus tells us that, in that instant, God blessed him. The wicked servant, who was really no servant at all, procrastinated, put it off, because he really didn't think the master was going to show up, and at the end of that, judgment swiftly fell. He records that for us in Matthew 24, he says this, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give them food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom the master finds doing his job when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all possessions." Pray tell, why would we not want to experience the continued blessing of God? Why would we not want to be called His faithful servant? On the other hand:

"But if that wicked servant says in his heart, 'My master is delayed,' and he starts to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards, that servant's master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

As I said, he's characterized as the wicked servant, but he is really no servant at all. He did not obey the Lord. He thought the Lord was not true to His Word. You know, you can experience the hand of God's blessing, lost person, today. You can experience that. If you obey Him. You follow His Son, which we'll talk about in a minute or the alternative to that is to experience the judgment of God and be categorized as a wicked servant.

The prophet Isaiah gave us a great example of what a servant should be. He also gave us a great example of what a servant should not be. In Isaiah 42, he gives us the picture of a Servant. He's called the Servant of the LORD, the Suffering Servant of the LORD, to be exactly correct. Isaiah 42:1-4 says this is the One that I've chosen, the Spirit of God is upon Him, He's going to come and He's not going to be flashy, He's not going to show off. He is going to dispense salvation as the LORD desires and He is going to be absolutely faithful in His service until the end. This is what it says in Isaiah 42:

“This is my Servant; I strengthen him, this is my chosen one; I delight in him. I have put my Spirit on him; he will bring justice to the nations. He will not cry out or shout or make his voice heard in the streets. He will not break a bruised reed, and he will not put out a smoldering wick; he will faithfully bring justice. He will not grow weak or discouraged until he has established justice on the earth.”

That is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the Messiah that he is speaking about. That is the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. What a beautiful picture of service. In that same chapter, he gives us the picture of a servant that is, is not so faithful, the nation of Israel. Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations, and yet they lived in such a way that they were unfaithful. Here's what it says in verses 18-20, of them, “Listen, you deaf! Look, you blind, so that you may see. Who is blind but my servant, or deaf like my messenger I am sending? Who is blind like my dedicated one, or blind like the servant of the LORD? Though seeing many things, you pay no attention. Though his ears are open, he does not listen.” Man, that is not the way that I want to be characterized in regards to the commands of the Lord. Am I hearing what He says? Am I doing what He says? Am I responding in the way that would please Him?

As I'm thinking about service and being the proper servant, I immediately thought of a quote I heard a long time ago by Adrian Rogers. This is what he simply says, in regards to what we offer to the Lord, “Don't give God instructions, just report for duty.” Don't give God instructions, just report for duty. If you have your Bibles, you're there in Philippians. Today, we conclude with the first large portion of the Book of Philippians, the first large unit. That began with 1:1 and will go all the way down to 2:30. In all of that, we looked at four different things. In 1:1-11, Paul's thanksgiving and prayer on behalf of the Philippians; 1:12-26, Paul's joy in the fact that the gospel was progressing; and then 1:27-2:18, Paul's exhortation to the Philippians to have this Christlike character in their life; and then today, concluding this first unit, is the fourth section and that is Paul's future plans (vv. 19-20). Previously, we saw that to we needed to serve in a way that shines His light and His love on a lost world, and we gave you three actions we must take in order to shine that light. What they were: to serve joyfully in everything (2:14), shine intensely

everywhere (vv. 15-16), and sacrifice totally for everyone (vv. 16-18). Now, out of all of that, some of it pretty intense, it seems like Paul's turning the corner here to something that is rather mundane. Something that may, as we read it, seem quite ordinary about sending two people, Timothy and Epaphroditus, on a mission. He is sending them to the Philippians and we might look at that and say, "Well, so what?" Paul also has the thought of getting out of jail and possibly returning and seeing the Philippians face-to-face, but in these verses (this is not mundane, this is not ordinary at all), I would look at it as extraordinary, because they give us great examples of servanthood: their heart, their hardships, and their honor. Follow along with me, beginning with verse 19:

"Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be encouraged by news about you. For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know his proven character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father. Therefore, I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon.

But I considered it necessary to send you Epaphroditus—my brother, coworker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need—since he has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick. Indeed, he was so sick that he nearly died. However, God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also in me on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. For this reason, I am very eager to send him so that you may rejoice again when you see him, and I may be less anxious. Therefore, welcome him in the Lord with great joy and hold people like him in honor, because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up what was lacking in your ministry to me."

We need to follow faithful examples of service to God. We need to follow faithful examples of service to God. So, in a moment I'm going to give you three keys for accessing faithful service to God. Three keys for accessing faithful service to God. As I look at this and I think about service and I think about us Christians and our, which should be our faithful service, and maybe lost people, and the hope that you could faithfully serve the Lord. John 12:26 tells us exactly what that looks like and, and the importance of following Jesus. We sing a lot about following Jesus, and we'll follow everywhere, "Wherever He leads I'll Go," "Follow, Follow, I Will Follow Jesus." John 12:26, "If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there my servant also will be (let that sink in for just a minute, "Where I am, there my servant will also be," well, where He was, was a cross, where I am, there My servant will also be). If anyone serves me (here's the good part), the Father will honor him." If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. So, let me give you those three keys for accessing faithful service to God.



## Conclusion Transcript

So, develop the heart of a servant, endure the hardships of a servant, and live in a way to receive the honor of a servant. So, we need to follow faithful examples of service to God and we gave you those three keys for accessing faithful service to God. Do you realize that the pursuit of this heart of a servant is a constant and an endless pursuit? So, that begs the question, are you and I willing to go the extra mile to be the servant that God expects? Are you and I willing to go the extra mile to be the servant that God expects? I don't think it's accidental that Jesus would describe following Him, He illustrates that by saying "Take up your cross." The cross is, is not this burden that I carry in life, that, that's not the cross. I know that we've reduced it to that and we say, "Well, that's just the cross that I bear." No, that's not the cross in Scripture. The cross in Scripture always implies death. Following Jesus means following Him in death, and so I don't think that's accidental. Whoever said serving God was easy? It's not. Where did we ever get the notion that service to God is somehow casual? Service to God takes effort, and it takes energy. Did you see that although their lives had complications, they all lived in such a way that they all received honor? They all had issues, they all had problems, and yet they served the Lord in such a way that somehow God elevated them.

All these individuals in chapter 2 have something in common. There's much to learn from the lives of faithful servants. To turn up our nose at their testimony is to turn up our nose at the work of God. We can learn something from Paul. We can learn something from Timothy, and we can learn something from Epaphroditus. You remember this old song that we used to sing, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" There's one little phrase in there that I think stands out in regards to this little section of Scripture, "Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?" Man! Man. I've gleaned three tactics from their lives for being a faithful servant. These will prove beneficial, not only for us as we serve others, but for us individually, as we seek to be the servant of God, that God wants us to be. This is what they did, and I know that this is what we can do.

First, count the cost and pay it. Count the cost and pay it. There's some obvious attitudes that mark that type of servant. But the type of servant that will count the cost and pay it, I think, is typified in three different ways. Number one, they are willing to be sent anywhere. They are willing to be sent anywhere. I know that that just scares some people, but the servant of God is willing to be sent anywhere. Isaiah 6:8, after Isaiah saw this glorious vision, there's some words that come from the throne, "Then I heard a voice of the Lord asking: Who should I send? Who will go for Us?" And Isaiah said "Here am I. Send me." I think it's also characterized by somebody that is willing to serve any one. We're willing to serve anyone. Acts 8, Philip's preaching there in Samaria and he is preaching to the multitudes, man. People

are getting saved, wonderful thing, and then all of a sudden in the midst of that, you know what God says? “I want you to go out in the middle of nowhere. I want you to go out to the desert and I want you to speak to somebody.” And we find that story in Acts 8, where he leaves their multitudes to go talk to one man, an Ethiopian eunuch, and explain to him what the scroll of Isaiah says. He’s willing to leave the crowd, to go to one individual, and by the way, his skin color was different. He’s willing to serve anyone, anywhere. I’m thinking about Jesus, too. You know, Jesus sitting with the woman at the well. That’s not what He was supposed to be doing. That’s not apropos. She’s not exactly the type of woman that you want to be caught with at the well, and, by the way, it says that he gave her something to drink and I’m sure He drank, and you know what? They were drinking out of the same ladle. Well, that’s kind of disgusting. Well, a servant is willing to go anywhere, and he is willing to serve (or she is willing to serve) anybody. You know, that may be somebody of a different skin color and that may be somebody that doesn’t use the same language that you use. By the way, that may be a bunch of rowdy kids on Wednesday night that are tearing the walls down. That just may very well be that—‘servant.’ And third, they’re willing to sacrifice anything. Said anything? “I don’t want to be a martyr.” Well, we don’t have to go that far. Be willing to sacrifice anything. Maybe that just looks like being a regular giver. You say well, “I can’t afford to be a regular giver.” This is not a sermon on tithing, but let me just throw this in, you can’t afford not to give. God will bless you immeasurably. A servant is willing to sacrifice anything. Paul said in 2:17, “I am already being poured out as a drink offering.” Count the cost and pay it.

Secondly, put yourself last. Put yourself last. Let me reiterate these verses from early on in chapter 2, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourself. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Let me give you two challenges, here they are: before this day is over, before this day is through, forego something that you desire and plan to do. This is what’s on my agenda. This is what I’m going to do. Forego that. 2 Corinthians 4:5, “For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’s sake.” Secondly, before this week is over, do something for someone without them knowing about it. Do something for somebody without them knowing about it, and, by the way, without them ever knowing about it. That’s what servants do. Matthew 6:3-4, “Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving maybe in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” So, count the cost and pay it. Put yourself last.

Here comes the ‘tuffy,’ embrace a life of hardship. I remember standing before Brother Don Stephens and I said, “Brother Don, God’s called me to preach.” Terrie standing there, right next to me, he’s shaking his head, he says, “There anything else you can do?” I said, “I don’t think so.” He said, “Well, if there is, you need to do it!” I

knew what he was saying. He was saying something under the table. What he was saying under the table was, “You’re choosing a difficult path, if there’s anything that you can do, other than that, please do that.” Embrace a life of hardship, and if you’re going to serve the Lord, you need to embrace a life of hardship. Serving God is not easy. It is hard. It is extremely difficult at times. But I’m going to tell you something, young people, I’m going to tell all of you something, that you might not see on TV because they would paint the Christian life like, like a bed of roses, I’m going to tell you about the thorns. Here, okay, you may be misunderstood. You may be hated. You may be despised. You may be looked down on—all because you want to serve the Lord. What I’m asking this morning is, do not run from that. Do not run from that. When your service is the most difficult, God may be doing his deepest work in your life. When the service is the most difficult, that’s when maybe God is doing His deepest work. You ever had one of those ‘woe is me’ moments? You, you’re Elijah, you’re sitting under your juniper tree, “Lord, I’m the only one serving you. It’s just me and it’s just me and You. Nobody understands, nobody cares.” And then I read a passage like this, 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. Paul describes his life:

“Are they servants of Christ? . . . With far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, many times near death. Five times I received the forty lashes minus one from the Jews. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, danger from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, and dangers from false brothers; toil and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and without clothing. Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my concern for all the churches.”

Oh, woe is me. Man, Paul said, “You want to see a servant, there’s a servant.” Don’t run from hardship. Secondly, see His glory beyond your pain. See His glory beyond your pain. God uses you to build His work and He uses His work to build you. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, “For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

Rendering faithful service to God will not come without spiritual, even literal, blood, sweat, and tears. Faithful servants don’t seek honor for themselves, they seek honor for their Lord. “Those who honor me I will honor them” (1 Sm 2:30). He will reward every faithful servant with a ‘crown of righteousness’ (2 Tm 4:8). Any hardship we suffer now in serving Christ will be well worth it when we see His face and hear these words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of the Lord.”

There is, just as we spoke before, that church that had the one entrance that had over it ‘Servant’s Entrance’—there is only one entrance into heaven and that is the ‘Servant’s Entrance.’ Hey, Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus. You know what? There’s another Person in chapter 2. I left Him out. I left Him out to the end because He’s the greatest example of servanthood that there is. There is only one entrance to heaven and that’s the ‘Servant’s Entrance.’ The great example of our Lord, who laid aside His rights, took on the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, the death on a cross. Jesus had the heart of a servant. Jesus endured the hardships of a servant. Jesus lived His life in such a way that He received the honor of a servant. Jesus died His death in such a way that He received the honor of a servant. Jesus conquered death, hell, and the grave, and lived again to receive the honor of a servant, and Jesus, or God, said, “I’m going to give Him a name, that is above every name, the name ‘Lord,’ and at that name, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” See, if we’re going to go to heaven, lost person, if we’re going to get there, we’re going to have to follow the path of the Servant, we’re going to have to have His heart, we’re going to have to endure those hardships, and, ultimately, then we will receive the honor of being forgiven, having redemption, and getting to spend an eternity with Him in heaven. How do we do that? Bible says, “If thou will confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved!” Let’s pray.

## APPENDIX Q

### SERMON 11: GENUINE FAITH (PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11)

#### Introduction Transcript

To paraphrase Jonathan Edwards, one of my favorite people in church history, “What moving, or activity or motion, is to life, holiness is to genuine faith.” What moving is to life, holiness is to genuine faith. Jonathan Edwards was one of the great movers and shakers of the Great Awakening, the greatest revival that has ever swept across America. God used him mightily to deliver the gospel message during that time. That occurred in 1740, about 1740, or so. About 1746, he wrote *A Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections* to deal with a problem that arose from the Great Awakening. That problem was that many people looked at their salvation and they thought they were saved because of their intellect or because of what they knew, or they thought they were saved because they had this emotional experience, and so he wrote that piece to counter those two incorrect views. Now, obviously God does use our mind and he does use our emotions when we want to respond to Him and saving action, but he came to understand that it was the sovereign grace of God that saved a person. It was grace and grace alone that moved in the life of a person. The religious affections that he talked about, he went on to explain there are twelve proofs that describe a Christian (that would give somebody a), characterize a Christian walk and what those twelve fruits were, were in fact the fruit of the Spirit there in the Book of Galatians.

So, is it possible that you could actually be mistaken about your salvation? Is it possible that you could be mistaken about your salvation? Scripture commands us to not to be deceived about our salvation. 2 Corinthians 13:5, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. Or do you yourselves not recognize that Jesus Christ is in you?—Unless you fail the test.” Are you hanging your hope of salvation on a past event? And what I mean by that, are you looking back and thinking, “Well, I was baptized. Well, I walked an aisle. Well, I took a preacher by the hand and I cried some tears.” Are you looking back at a past event as your salvation experience? John 1:12, “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name.” It’s belief on the name of Jesus that saves a person. Belief on the name of Jesus. Are you trusting in your goodness? Whatever that motivation for that goodness is, that’s of little consequence, but are you trusting in your goodness? Romans 3:20 says, “For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law.” Nobody. There’s no amount of good that you can do to stand

with a clean slate before God. Are you trusting in the facts that you know to save you? In regard to salvation, facts without faith is absolutely meaningless. Facts without faith is absolutely meaningless. Hebrews 4:2, “But the message they heard did not benefit them, since they were not united with those who heard it in faith.” They heard the message, but it didn’t do them any good because it was not somehow united with faith. Are you feeling secure because of your religious activity? Religious activity does not a Christian make. 2 Timothy 3:5, Paul telling Timothy that there were some there in the church, they, they had a lot of religious activity going on, but he said, “Some hold to the form of godliness but they deny the power thereof.”

There’s a parable about the kingdom of Heaven that Jesus told. He told about ten virgins who took their lamps and they went to meet the groom. He describes those ten virgins and He says five of them were wise and five of them were foolish. The wise ones had their lamps and they had their oil. The five foolish had their lamps, but they didn’t have the oil. That parable is described for us in Matthew 25:1-13, here’s what it says:

“When the groom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. In the middle of the night there was a shout: ‘Here’s the groom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all the virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’ The wise ones answered, ‘No, there won’t be enough for us and for you. Go instead to those who sell oil, and buy some for yourselves.’ When they had gone to buy some, the groom arrived, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. Later the rest of the virgins also came and said, ‘Master, master, open up for us!’ He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you!’ Therefore, be alert, because you don’t know either the day or the hour.”

There were some there that were prepared. Those that were prepared entered into blessing. They were prepared because they had a genuine faith that the groom was going to come again. That the groom was a man of his word. Those that were unprepared, they were shut out from the blessing of God. The master in the end of that story says this, “I do not know you.” I do not know you.

There are two disciples that are described in Scripture for us. We know them both well, Judas and Peter. They had experienced a serious fall. Judas betrayed Him, and Peter denied Him. They had committed, both of them, high treason against the Lord on that very night that they sat down and had the supper with Him. Jesus responded to both of them, matter of fact, He both told them I’m doing something, and I want you to do something. Here’s what He said to Judas, “What you are doing, do quickly.” Matthew describes the rest of that account. Matthew 27, it says this of Judas, “Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, was full of remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. ‘I have sinned by

betraying innocent blood,' he said. . . . Then he went out and he hung himself." One thing about that, it says Judas was full of remorse. Your Bible, your Bible may say, "He repented himself" if you're using the King James. The ESV says something like, "He changed his mind." We don't need to think about that as repentance because it's a totally different word than the word that is normally used for repentance. It literally means that Judas was sorry for what he had done, but he was totally—instead of his remorse and his repentance being Godward, his remorse and his repentance was 'Judas-ward'—he was totally overwhelmed with grief for what he had done.

Peter, on the other hand, here's what Jesus said to him. He predicted that he would deny Him, He says, "But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." After Jesus's arrest, Peter denies Him three times, says in the Bible, "The Lord turned" and He simply looked at him and it says Peter's response was that he "went out and he wept bitterly." The difference between Judas and Peter is, whereas Judas's repentance or change of mind was not toward God, it was toward himself; Peter's shame, and Peter's remorse, and Peter's repentance, was Godward because we know in John 21:15-17 he restores Peter. "Peter, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." "Peter, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord, you know that I love." "Peter, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." "Feed my sheep." And he spent the rest of his life feeding the Lord's sheep.

If you're there in Philippians 3, we know that we have, we left off where Paul had given some magnificent examples of what it was to be a servant. Paul warned the Philippians here, beginning with chapter 3, that there are certain people that profess to be servants, but in fact they lack genuine faith. So, Paul had to counter those that were bent on undermining the ministry and he had to confront, eventually, those that were causing disunity in the church. So, 1:1–2:30 (which is the end of chapter 2) was the first large unit. We finished that. That was Paul's explanation of all the things that concerned him. Today, we begin with the second large unit, which is 3:1–4:9. That's Paul's exhortation for Christian living. His exhortation for Christian living. We're in the first section, which is 3:1-21 where Paul exhorts them to avoid false teachers. The first subsection, that Paul explains to us his experience, which is 1-16. Last week, we saw that we need to follow faithful examples of service to God and we saw three keys for accessing faithful service to God: develop the heart of a servant, endure the hardships of a servant, and live in a way to receive the honor of a servant. So, now Paul turns to Christian living. He's going to provide a look at what genuine salvation is. That's what we're interested in this morning. What is genuine salvation? And Paul is going to use his testimony as a theological and practical basis for what that salvation looks like. So, if you're there with me, 3:1 and we'll read down through verse 11:

“In addition, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write to you again about this is no trouble for me and is a safeguard for you.

Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh—although I have reasons for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.

But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith. My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.”

So, we must examine. We must examine the genuineness of our faith and upon sincere examination, God will reveal where we stand, and we need to respond accordingly, today. We need to respond accordingly, today. So, I’m going to give you three key abilities that flow from genuine faith. We must allow the microscope of God’s Word to examine our hearts closely. So, just think about a microscope. We’re going to allow the Word of God to probe us. Allow ‘it’ to inform us. We’re going to allow the Holy Spirit to zoom in and, upon examination, you may walk out of here and know, “I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that my faith is genuine.” I know that I’m saved, and I know that God is working in my life. That’s good, and what your response needs to be, at the end of the day, at the end of the service, you will need to bow your head and say, “Thank you, Lord, for what you have done in my life” and “Thank you, Lord, for what you are doing in my life,” and “Thank you, Lord, for what you are going to do in my life.” As, as we are under the microscope, you may walk away and say, “Yes, my faith is genuine, but I’m not exactly where I need to be with the Lord. Somehow my, my spiritual progress has been stunted.” What you will need to do today is, you, you will thank God for what He has done for you, and then you will ask God to forgive you for not being what you need to be and where you need to be with Him and not progressing in the manner that would be appropriate and glorifying to Him. You may examine yourself today and you may come to the understanding that your faith is not genuine. Your faith is not genuine. How will you know that? Well this, this verse here that I’m going to read should be (it’s not the text, but it should be) hovering above us this whole day. Here’s what it is, 2 Corinthians 5:17. The greatest argument, or one of the greatest arguments, for a genuine faith is a



changed life. A changed life. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (he ‘is’ a new creation); the old has passed away, the new has come!” And so, at the end of this, you may, after examination, come to the conclusion, “My life has really not changed!” Well, if you’re in Christ, a changed life will occur, no if’s, and’s, or but’s, it will occur. So, let me give you three key abilities that flow from genuine faith.

### Conclusion Transcript

So, we must examine the genuineness of our faith and, upon sincere examination, God will reveal where you stand, we stand, and we need to respond accordingly. So, we had three key abilities that flowed from genuine faith: genuine faith is able to distinguish true faith from false faith, genuine faith is able to grasp that God is not impressed by religion. Jesus plus anything—‘no Bueno.’ Genuine faith is able to fathom what is theirs in Christ. So, how confident are you that your salvation is genuine? How confident? Are you fully trusting in Christ alone for your salvation? If you were standing before, right now, and He were to ask you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” What are you going to say? Why should I let you into heaven? Our answer, it will be very key. Why should I let you in heaven?

In fact, some people do not like examining. We’re commanded. Examination! Eternal destinies hang in the balance. God thinks it’s essential. James 1:22-24, “But be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was.” Here’s the point. Right now, we’re examining, and God may be doing something in your heart. You say, “What does that mean?” Well, that means, that could mean that your heart’s pumping out of your chest. That could mean that your mouth’s getting dry. That could mean that you’re getting, your palms are getting sweaty. It could be that you’re getting nervous and you it could mean that you don’t know what’s coming over you. Well, you could be like the man in James and not do anything about it and you’ll walk away from the mirror of God’s Word and you’ll soon forget what you look like. It’ll pass, or you can be a doer of the Word. God thinks it is essential. You need to as well. Psalm 119:59-60, “I thought about my ways and turned my steps back to your decrees. I hurried, not hesitating to keep your command.”

So, how do we understand if our faith is genuine and, if it is, how do we progress in that? First of all, test your testimony. Test your testimony. One of the most effective tools that we have to express the genuineness of our faith is the story about how Jesus gave us eternal life and how He has enriched our lives since that point. I think it is very important for every Christian to be able to articulate what God has done for them. John said this in his first Epistle, it’s the basis of his writing, he says

this, “We proclaim to you what we have seen and what we have heard.” That’s his testimony. So, testifying about his relationship to Jesus Christ. Well, here’s what I want you to do this week. Even think about it right now. Write out your testimony. What does that look like? I’m not asking you to write a thesis. I’m asking you to write this: what was my life before Christ (that’s the first point), second point, how did I come to Christ, third point, how has my life been since I came to Christ. Just a couple of sentences on each one of those, pretty easy. Now, the examination part may come in, when you sit down to do that, and all of a sudden, it is an epic struggle to write something down on a piece of paper and it may be, the fact that, that paper may be blank. And that may be a determining factor in recognizing that your faith is not genuine. You should be able to articulate something, “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, behold, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.”

Secondly, graduate from testimony to the gospel. Make no mistake about it, your testimony, as important as it is, is not the gospel. It simply reveals the effects of the gospel. They are not the same. A testimony is not the gospel. So, let’s take a test. If, while writing your testimony this week, or if, while you’re thinking about it right now, there are a whole lot more I’s in it, than there are He’s in it, then it may be more testimony than it is gospel. Psalm 3:8, “Salvation belongs to the LORD.” Salvation belongs to the Lord. God makes no promise that He will use my story as His power unto salvation. He made no promise, but He did make this promise because the gospel is enough. The gospel is not about me, it is about fully trusting in Jesus. Romans 1:16, “For I’m not ashamed of the gospel, because ‘it’ is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” It is the proclamation of the person and the work of Christ and how people can appropriate those benefits. So, we’re going to graduate from testimony to gospel. So, what does that look like? What’s the difference? There’s a really good story in the Bible that describes that, the man that was born blind, it’s in John 9:24-25. It says, “So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, ‘Give glory to God. We know that this man (that is, Jesus) is a sinner.’ He answered, ‘Whether or not he’s a sinner, I don’t know. One thing I do know: I was blind, but now I see!’” Can I tell you, that is a marvelous testimony? Once I was blind, but now I see, but he could not articulate the gospel to the Pharisees. He says, “I don’t know if that man’s a sinner or not,” but he said, “Once I was blind, but now I see.” Let’s move from testimony to gospel.

And third, cherish what is yours in Christ. Cherish what is yours in Christ. Being in Christ Jesus, that’s an amazing thing! It’s amazing reality! Are you and I able to fathom that? It’s literally mind-blowing to be in Christ. United to Christ. Bound up in Christ. Here’s what that means for you. 2 Timothy 1:9, “He gave us grace in Christ (now if I stop there, everybody would say, “Amen, I like that!” Let me continue. He gave us grace in Christ) Jesus before the ages began.” He didn’t just give us grace at

the moment when we needed it and decided that I got to have that. He gave us grace before He ever flung this earth into orbit. Wow! So, what I want you to do this week is, either read Ephesians 1 or 2, or both. Four times, in both of those chapters, are these two words ‘in Christ’ and so, as you make that list, just thank God for what He gave you in Christ or thank God for what He did to you in Christ.

Lamentations 3:40, “Let us examine and probe our ways, and turn back to the LORD.” That’s scary. That will expose hypocrisy. It will expose the fact that we might be nominal in our Christianity. It may expose the fact that it’s going to answer this question—“Where does my confidence lie?” Is it lying in what I have done and what I . . . “Salvation is of the Lord.” Don’t rob Him of His glory. It’s going to confront me with questions about whether my faith is genuine or not. Whether my love is genuine. Whether my walk is genuine. Whether my sanctification is genuine. It will bring me (many would say, “Well, you’re just going to cause doubt”), no, it will bring assurance and it will bring conviction. What a blessing it is when that is exposed in a timely fashion.

Spurgeon, “You will find all true theology summed up in these two short sentences: Salvation is all the grace of God. Damnation is all the will of man.” Damnation is all the will of man. So, let me ask this question: “If you were to stand before God right now, today, and He says to you, ‘Why should I let you into heaven?’ What are you going to tell Him?” How are you going to articulate that? Because when the God of the universe asks you that, there will be a response. How and what are you going to say? You say, “Well, I believe!” James 2:19, “You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder.” Belief? Jonathan Edwards tell us intellectual assent is not enough, emotion is not enough. You have to have faith in some facts. See, I can believe that that pew is going to hold me up. I can believe that I can, I can put all my weight down on that pew because that’s what pews do. They hold people up. I can think about that, I can even diagram that. I can have a theology of that, but you know what? Until I go and sit in that pew, I have not expressed faith in ‘that.’ That’s why he says the devils believe. And they tremble. That they have, they’re more orthodox than we are, but they do not believe. “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.” Let’s pray.

## APPENDIX R

### SERMON 12: PURSUING THE PRIZE (PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16)

#### Introduction Transcript

We never grow closer to God when we just live life. It takes deliberate pursuit and attentiveness. We never grow closer to God when we just live life. It takes deliberate pursuit and attentiveness, attentiveness. William Borden was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1887. He's the son of a millionaire silver magnet. Upon graduation, graduation from high school, at the age of 16 (some of you seniors will be encouraged by this), his parents gave him a trip around the world. He had the opportunity to interact with different peoples, different cultures, and it inspired within him the, the feeling that maybe God was calling him to the mission field. This is what he wrote in his diary at the age of sixteen, "I have never thought very seriously about being a missionary, but when I look ahead a few years it seems as though the only thing to do is prepare for the foreign field." To be, not mistaken, his dad was quite upset with that thought that his son would forfeit all those millions of dollars to go and minister to people on a foreign field. One of his best friends, closest friends, said, "Man, don't throw your life away!" He took his Bible, in the top leaf, he wrote this, 'No reserves.' No reserves. At the age of 18, his father died. Many job offers came his way, the opportunity to run that silver business, and yet he forsook all of that. At that moment, he took that Bible out again, right below 'No reserves' he put this, 'No regrets.' No reserves. No regrets. December 1912, at the age of 25, he set sail for Cairo, Egypt, there to study Arabic and to study the Islamic faith, with the opportunity to go to China and minister to the Muslim people there. Three months in, Borden contracts spinal meningitis and he dies. When he saw the writing on the wall, he took that same Bible out, where he had previously wrote, 'No reserves,' under that he had wrote, "No retreats" under that he wrote, 'No regrets.' No regrets. On his tombstone there in Cairo, this is the words that appear there, "Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation of such a life." Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation of such a life. Life for Christ, for him, was a race, and he was pursuing that race, and he was pursuing the prize of growing in Christ with all the zeal that he could muster, dying at the ripe old age of 25. No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.

Kind of begs the question, "Why grow, when we get to heaven, won't we be perfect?" Why grow, when we get to heaven, won't we be perfect? There's a tension in the Bible between heaven and the reality that we face here. I find that in 1 Peter 1:4 and 1 Timothy 4:10. Here's what it says on the one hand, "And into an inheritance that

is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,” and on the other end of that spectrum, “For this reason we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God.” On the one end, we have a glorious inheritance, but we don’t get that yet. Right now, we have to, we have to live here, so the reality of heaven does not dismiss the responsibility of living out the Christian life with fervent passion and zeal. So, what’s the big deal, spiritual growth is hard? I’ll be the first one to say, “Spiritual growth is hard.” But spiritual growth for the child of God is, is as inevitable as physical growth is. Think about that for just a second. Spiritual growth should be as inevitable as physical growth is. It is a built-in desire within the child of God. “Well, I don’t have that desire”—it is a built-in desire for the child of God to grow. 1 Peter 2:2, “Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow up into your salvation.” They are naturally desirous of food and they will make it known that they are hungry. Spiritually speaking, we should be the exact same way. So, what are you doing in regards to your growth in Christ? I immediately wrote, “You need to find your purpose.” That’s true, but I think the Bible is self-evident what our purpose is. Let me read this from Romans 8:28-29. We latch on to these two verses for a lot of different reasons; I don’t want to miss the reason for this morning. “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. (So, we have a purpose. What is the purpose? Because we need to find out what our purpose is.) For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” We need to find our purpose. What is our purpose? Our purpose is to be like Jesus. Our purpose is to be like Jesus, it is to be more like Him every single day. So, you’re telling me, brother Tony, that in this life we will reach perfection? No, all you have to do is ask my wife and you know that is not true of me. I’m sure that’s not true of you, either. 1 John 1:8-9. Perfection is a goal in this life but it’s, it’s not an achievement. It’s our goal but we know that we’re not going to achieve that in this life. 1 John 1:8-9, “If we say that, ‘We have no sin,’ we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” So, when does growth in Christ stop? It’s a lifelong process. It is a lifelong process. 2 Peter 3:18, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” I love that verse because it’s in the present active indicative. You say, “I don’t care about that, what does that mean to me?” Here’s what it means to you, but grow, continue to grow, continue to grow, and grow, and grow, and when you’re in your twenties—grow, and when you’re in your thirties—grow, and when you’re in your forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties—grow. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The key to pursuing Christ and the key to pursuing Christlikeness and the growth that we get on the way there, the key to that, the key to obedience, the key to compliance with that, is the Spirit. If you’re here and you’re lost today, all of these

words that I'm saying to you, they may, they may just be like water off a duck's back, it does not register, what, what I'm talking about, pursuing Christ, being more like Christ. Why is that? 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, Paul describes several types of people. One of those is this person, "But the person without the Spirit (the lost person, the person without the Spirit) does not receive what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually." So, lost person, what I'm saying to you is this, "It is impossible for you to be more Christlike or to pursue Christ, if you have not never, if you have never been born again, those things are spiritually understood." What about the saved? Continuing, still in 1 Corinthians, "The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything." The spiritual person can evaluate everything because the Spirit of God lives within him. But not everybody that has the Spirit of God living within them is going to be obedient to the Spirit. It continues the thought, in chapter 3, "For my part, brothers and sisters, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still worldly." See, the lost person, he just can't, he or she, cannot respond because the Spirit of God does not live within them. The saved person has the capacity to, because the Spirit lives within them and they're able to understand everything. But we still have that sense of flesh within us. We still have that spirit of rebellion in us and sometimes we just don't want to do what God wants us to do. Right? He says in that instance, "As babes in Christ. I gave you a milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not ready for it yet."

Paul was well aware of the struggle that a Christian went through. If you think about all the things that Paul said, many times he illustrates it with the use of athletics and athletic metaphors. 1 Corinthians 9:26, he says the, the pursuit of Christlikeness in this life is like, "A boxer beating the air." He says it's like this, Ephesians 6:12, "For our struggle (our wrestling) is not against flesh and blood." He says this at the end of his life, as he's taking a spiritual survey about everything that he has done for the Lord. Was fixing to give his life for Christ. 2 Timothy 4:7, he says, "I have fought the good fight (I have ran the race), I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Now, he was well aware of those positive aspects of pursuing Christ and growing into Christlikeness on the way, but he also knew the other half of that. Galatians 2:2, see earlier examined his life, he said, "I want to be sure I was not running, and had not been running in vain." As he assessed his life, he wanted to make sure of one thing, this race that he was running, he wanted to take stock, so that he would know beyond all shadow of a doubt, that he was not doing what he was doing in vain. That it actually meant something, that it actually accomplished something. He looked at those same people that he said that to, the Galatians, and he wrote this about them in 5:7, "You were running well. Who prevented you from being persuaded regarding the truth?" You were running well, but somehow, some way, you got off track, you veered

off, and you're not running so well anymore. 1 Timothy 1, he described a couple of individuals (you can look up their names in that chapter), but this is what he says about them as they were running, or at least appeared to be running, "Some have rejected these (that is, faith and a good conscience) and they have shipwrecked their faith." They have shipwrecked their faith.

Shipwreck or pursuit? Shipwreck or pursuit? A. W. Tozer, he said, "To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's great paradox of love." We found Him, right? We got saved! We're His. And yet, even though we're His, we still pursue Him. What a paradox! If you're there in Philippians 3, we have begun last week, the second large unit of Philippians (3:1–4:9). It's Paul's exhortation to the church there, to Christian living. In that first section (3:1-21), he's going to talk about false teachers. We'll deal with that some next week. In that first subsection that we looked at last week, Paul explains his experience, he says, "Man, I have a lot of things in my life that I could 'toot my horn about,' but all those things, I just count them as waste, for the purpose of knowing Christ. That's what I want to know. I'll just jettison it all, just so that I can know Christ." So, today, he's dealing with the latter half of that. He's going to talk about true zeal (Barb talked about that earlier, we should be zealous. We should be passionate about God). Well, that's what he's going to talk about. Last week, we saw that believers must examine the genuineness of their faith and upon sincere examination, God will reveal where you stand, and you need to respond accordingly. That's what we did last week. We saw that: genuine faith is able to distinguish between true and false faith. Genuine faith is able to grasp that God is not impressed by religion, and genuine faith is able to fathom what is theirs in Christ. So, as Paul delves deeper into Christian living, he's going to provide for us a look at what true salvation is and he turns to what it means to be zealous about our Christian life. What should occupy our thoughts and our focus if we are a genuine Christian? If we are a genuine, real, authentic Christian, what should occupy our thoughts and focus?

Philippians 3:12, follow along with me:

"Not that I have already reached the goal or am already perfect, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let all of us who are mature think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this also to you. In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained."

You must, I must, we must pursue spiritual growth on the way to the ultimate prize. In order for this to be a reality, it will involve action today and every day for the rest of our lives. Action today and every day for the rest of our lives. I'm going to give you

three faithful paths for pursuing that prize. Proverbs 3:6 says this, “In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.” I’m going to give you three significant paths and all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths. Listen to these words, thinking about verse 14 there where he says, “I pursue as my goal the prize.” I pursue as my goal the prize, think about these words: pursuing, chasing, making every effort, I am all-in, I am putting it all out, I am motivated, I am stretching, I am straining. Do those describe your Christian life, all those synonyms? Proverbs 14:12 says there’s another path, “There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way (or the path) to death.” So, let me give you those three faithful paths for pursuing Christ.

### Conclusion Transcript

You must pursue spiritual growth on the way to the ultimate prize (Christlikeness). In order for that to be a reality, it will involve action today, and every day for the rest of our lives. Three faithful paths for pursuing the prize: we need to pursue the prize by taking hold of the One who took hold of you. You need to pursue the prize by knowing Christ fully at the end. You need to pursue the prize by having the same exact mind-set. So, have you taken hold of the One who took hold of you? That’s, that’s the Christian life. He took hold of me November 1973. He took hold of me. Since that day, the reality of my life should be, “I am taking hold of Him every single day.” Are you going forward in the pursuit of the prize? God promised it to you! He promised it to you, it’s just out there for the taking. Are you taking the truth of this way of thinking, and adopting it, and adapting it to your life?

At the foot of the Swiss Alps lies a marker honoring a man who fell to his death attempting the ascend of the Alps. The marker gives his name, simply Wilhelm and this is the epitaph: “He died climbing.” He died climbing. That should be our testimony, that should be on all of our epitaphs. He died, or she died, climbing. Caleb gave us a word last Sunday night at fifth Sunday singing, and as he read that verse, I thought that, “That verse is perfectly appropriate for this message.” Psalm 4:2, he says, “How long, exalted ones, will my honor be insulted? How long will you love what is worthless and pursue a lie?” So, we can pursue a lot of things, but there’s really only one pursuit that is worthwhile, and that is Christ. The psalmist said this, “My soul pursues you.” My soul pursues you. You know that life’s hard, isn’t it? Life is difficult. Ben shared some prayer requests a while ago about people going through difficulties. One time or another, we found ourself on a prayer list. If you haven’t yet, you’re going to. Know in the process of pursuing there, there are roadblocks that occur, but the psalmist says, “My soul, your right hand upholds me.” See, there will be blockades that come, but it’s His righteous right hand that will uphold us.



We know that on the way to the ultimate prize we must pursue spiritual growth. So, how do we do that? Where do I start? First, passionately capture Christ. Passionately capture Christ. Just let me break that down real quickly. Passionately, that's how we are to capture. That's what I'm asking you, that's how we are to capture. What does that mean? That means zealously, fervently, fanatically, intensely, obsessively. So, man, those are intense words. You know, I thought about that. I'm not softening this at all. We use those words to describe every other thing in our life—we're passionate about our families (and we should be), we are zealous about sports, we're fervent about a lot of things. Why not Christ? Why not Christ? Jesus was passionate about the Father. You know how I know that? John 2 records an incident where He saw something occurring in the house of God and the Bible says He fashioned a whip and He drove out the money-changers and immediately the disciples thought of an Old Testament passage and here they recited in John 2. It says, "And His disciples remembered that it is written: Zeal for your house will consume me." Why cannot zeal consume us? Why cannot, why we lack in fervency? I wonder? Well, what are we to do zealously? We're to capture, appropriate, arrest, apprehend, strive. Picture with me a police chase, can you just imagine a policeman chasing a felon, a murderer? Can you picture him behind the wheel, he's just so casual, right? How does he pursue? With every fiber of his being, with his foot to the floor, totally focused on what's ahead, not thinking about what is behind. Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all of your heart." So, do these two things: first, capture Him in the Word. Capture Him in the Word! He laid hold of you, where do you lay hold of Him? Here (*pointing to Bible*). He's walking with two guys on the road to Emmaus, He's unfolding the Scriptures to them, and this is their witness, this is their testimony, "They said to each other, 'Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?'" You want to take hold of Jesus? Take hold of Him in the Word. Secondly, take hold of Him, capture Him in prayer. Psalm 143:8, "Let me experience your faithful love in the morning, for I trust you. Reveal to me the way I should go because I appeal to you." Find Him in the Word, lay hold of Him there, lay hold of Him in prayer.

Secondly, go forward pursuing the promise. William Borden says, "Man, there is no retreat, I have no regrets." Don't allow the past to cripple you: the past can haunt you and weigh you down, but don't let the past cripple you, that is behind. Don't allow the future to frighten you: that's where faith comes in. God's will is not always easy. Salvation is a gift, right? Salvation is a gift. Discipleship. Will salvation cost you nothing? Discipleship will cost you everything. Luke 14, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." David Livingstone, the great missionary to Africa, he had spent his whole lifetime in Africa. He came home to

England and they said, “Man, what are you going to do now?” Here’s what he said, “I am ready to go anywhere. Provided it be forward.” I am ready to go anywhere, provided it be forward.

Third, apply what you know, which was the last verse that we looked at. Knowledge is only as good as the application of the knowledge. “But as for you (Paul wrote), continue in what you have learned and firmly believe.” It seems so easy, doesn’t it? It seems so easy—obey, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus.” Seems so easy, so why is it so hard? Why is it so difficult? Realize obedience is not optional, it’s not optional. Luke 11:28, “He said, ‘Rather, blessed are those that hear the word of God and keep it.’” Realize obedience is always personal. I can tell you what God’s Word says about a particular thing, it would have application universally to all of us, but discipleship is always personal. In John 21, Peter’s talking to the Lord about John, “When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, what about him?’ ‘If I want him to remain until I come,’ Jesus answered, ‘What’s that to you? As for you, you follow me.’” I don’t know what God’s plan, specific plan, is for your life, other than to be like Christ. But you’re in your own lane, I’m in my own lane, and what He tells each of us is, “Follow in your own lane.”

1 Corinthians 9:24-26,

“Don’t you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air.”

William Borden, my first illustration, he had become so much like Christ, even at the age of 25, that one of his best friends at his funeral had these words to say, “No one would have known from Borden’s life and talk that he was a millionaire, but no one could have helped knowing that he was a Christian.” Nobody could have helped knowing because he was pursuing, zealously so, with every fiber of his being. So, what does that look like, to pursue Christ and to grow? What is that going to bring about in your life: you’ll glorify God, you’ll provide evidence that your salvation is real, you’ll adorn and make visible the truth of God to other people, you’ll bring assurance to yourself that your salvation is true, you’ll keep yourselves from sorrow and insecurity by fulfilling maturity that God desires for you, you’ll protect the cause of Christ from reproach, you’ll experience joy in your life, you’ll be equipped to minister to others in the name of Christ, and you’ll enhance your witness to a lost world.

So, isn’t it a wonderful thing that God has laid hold of us? But what about that person that’s here that, you’re thinking, “God’s never laid hold of me.” Can I tell you, He’s walking up and down each aisle here and He’s searching to lay hold of you? You

may have come to church today with no thought of being laid hold of God by God, but He had every thought of that for you today, if you are lost. John 15:16, “You did not choose me.” I didn’t choose Him in November of 1973, He chose me. I had no clue. I was clueless. “You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask in the Father’s name, he will give you.” Paul, on his road to Damascus, he had no thought of God, he had no idea that God was about to apprehend him, and he had a great light shone, and he had an encounter with the living Lord of the universe. Could that be you today? You had no thought, whatsoever, that God was desiring to lay hold of you today, but here He is, and He wants to lay hold of you. The Bible says, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe that God had raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Let’s pray.

## APPENDIX S

### SERMON 13: REACHING THE PRIZE (PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21)

#### Introduction Transcript

“If your own needs and comfort are what consume you, you will accomplish little or nothing for God’s kingdom.” Let me repeat that, if your own needs and comfort are what consume you, you will accomplish little or nothing for God or His kingdom. Joel Osteen’s book, *The Power of I Am* on page 156, these are his words, “We’re supposed to live an abundant life, it’s because we are children of the King. It was put there by the Creator. But here’s the key. You have to give God permission to prosper you.” Begs the question, “I have to give God permission?” What is God? Is He a butler? Is He a child? Is He a rag doll? Talk about diminishing the sovereignty of God. God is in control! God is the one in charge. We do not manipulate God by what we want or desire. That is not the God of the Bible. He is in charge, not us! The Book of Hebrews, 11:36-40, tells us about many of the Old Testament saints that were horribly persecuted and even killed for their faith, and I don’t think I would say to a one of them, “You aren’t living the abundant life.” The abundant life has nothing to do with your physical make-up here or what you’re going through. You can still have the abundant life. Many of them gave their life for the cause of Christ living the abundant life. Did they declare that their sufferings were over and then escape their pain and live happily ever after? No! I do not think so, God is totally in charge.

What is the purpose of the gospel? The gospel is not a quick cure for all of life’s problems. Just let that sink in for just one second. What is the purpose of the gospel? The gospel is not a quick cure for all of life’s problems, the reason that I know this is John 16:33. It says, “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. (Amen?) You will have suffering in this world.” So, we can have peace and we can also suffer in this world. So, the gospel has more to do than our comfort and our delight and our desire. Can our focus be wrong in our pursuit of Christ? You can actually pursue the world under the guise of pursuing Christ. Luke 9:23, the words of Jesus, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Are our needs, our desires, our wants, the top priority in salvation? God’s intent, God’s goal, is not to service us as much as it is to make us like Christ. That, that is His end goal, is to make us like Christ. Romans 8:29, “For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” That’s God’s plan, to make us more like Jesus. Are we seeking the wrong things in our walk? Our prayers could possibly reveal that. When we flourish as God’s people, we

flourish as believers; we flourish as Christians, when weakness overwhelms us. That's when we flourish. Paul said this in 2 Corinthians 12:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.’ Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Have we misunderstood what it means to pursue the prize? Have we misunderstood what it means to reach the prize? Jesus has not replaced ‘follow me,’ nor has He sought to improve on it, that is the basic obligation for every Christian. Sum it up in those two words: ‘follow me.’ Matthew 9:9, “Follow me, and he got up (that is Peter) and followed him.” Jesus hasn’t changed that, He hasn’t sought to improve that.

Over twenty times in the Gospels, on many different occasions, Jesus gives the command ‘follow me.’ Lost person, today you are going to have to follow that command. You’re going to need to follow that command. It calls for total abandonment. We just sang about that. It calls for total abandonment. He must be all that you desire. He has to be. He’s the Lord. If you reject that, you will not reach the prize of Christ, as Savior and Lord, you will only reach Him as Lord and judge. Saved person, you started well, you totally abandoned yourself to Him. You’re on the right track. So, let me encourage you in that. Colossians 2:6, “So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him.” So, you’ve started off good, continue on that path. Well, maybe that’s not the case, you started well, but maybe you’ve fallen off the path. I’m going to read a verse of Scripture and I’m just going to let it hang out there. It’s not my habit to not explain Scripture. It’s not my habit to not interpret a verse, especially one like this, but I think for today I’m just going to read this verse and just let it stand, as it is, and just let it percolate, in your being. You started out well, child of God, but somehow, somewhere, your pursuit of Christ, your attempt to reach Him, has fallen short. Hebrews 10:26, “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” Let me read that again, I know you’re thinking, “That just begs some explanation.” I’m not going to explain it; I want the Holy Spirit to explain it to you. “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

Peter, in the Bible, you know him well. His life is like a roller coaster. He has many highs, he has many lows. He left it all to follow the Lord. He left all of his knit nets, he left all of his boats, to follow the Lord, for some three and a half years. He walks on water, and yet he sinks. He makes this glorious confession that, “You’re the Christ, the Son of the living God” and within the next few verses Jesus says you’re under the control of Satan, what is wrong with you? He gets the experience of being

there when Christ is transfigured, and yet we find him asleep in the garden. He denies the Lord and then he is restored. Jesus prays this on behalf of Peter. I think he prays this on behalf of us, as well. “Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.” Pentecost comes. Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit of God. He’s energized, he stands to preach. His cowardice is replaced with boldness. His arrogance is replaced with humility. The fact that he’s so unstable is replaced with steadfastness. His impulsiveness is replaced with purposefulness. His weakness is replaced with power. The fact that he is a loudmouth is replaced with a prophetic voice. You know what? He has become Christlike! That’s what he has become, he has become Christlike. These are his words in his first epistle, “For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his footsteps.”

So, if you’re there in the Book of Philippians, we’re in chapter 3. We’re well over halfway through this epistle of Paul’s. We’ve talked about pursuing the prize. Today, we’re talking about the procedure that one must take in order to reach that prize, which the prize is Christlikeness. We want to be like Him, Romans 8. We’re in that second large unit, which is 3:1–4:9. Paul’s exhorting them to Christian living. He has exhorted them to avoid false teachers. That’s where we are, this first section 1-16, he explains his experience, all those things that he held dear that now he says are rubbish. Now we’re in the second subsection where Paul is going to talk about the characteristics of false teachers and he is going to expose them. We saw that you must pursue spiritual growth on the way to the ultimate prize. In order for this to be a reality, it will involve action today and every day for the rest of your and our lives. And I gave you three faithful paths for pursuing that prize: You’ll need to pursue the prize by taking hold of the One who took hold of you. You’ll need to pursue the prize by knowing Christ fully at the end. And pursue the prize by having that same mind-set. So, Paul’s going, he’s been digging, now he’s going to dig deeper into Christian living. They’re absolutely, unequivocally, no shortcuts or gimmicks ‘To be happy.’ We’re all attracted to sermons that talk about how to have a happy life, how to have a happy marriage. Can I tell you, there are no shortcuts, there are no gimmicks to any and all of that? It is a lie of the devil to think that fulfilling our desires and our needs is God’s and Christ’s first and ultimate obligation. And only then will we be happy, if he fulfills all of those things. As I said before, God is not a genie in a bottle that we can rub and make all of our dreams come true. He does not bow the knee to us. Philippians 2:10, “Every knee will bow” to Him. This passage has this blaring neon sign in front of it that says this, “Beware of a man-centered theology!” Beware of a man-centered theology. The primary focus of salvation, justification, sanctification, glorification, is not us. The primary focus of all of those things is Christ. He is the focus of everything.

So, you got your Bibles, 3:17-21:

“Join in imitating me, brothers and sisters, pay careful attention to those who live according to the example you have in us. For I have often told you, and now say again with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction; their God is their stomach; their glory is in their shame. They are focused on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself.”

You and I must understand that reaching the prize of Christ requires specific actions (spelled out in this text). My desire is that we activate our correct thinking and act on that today. Not just activate our correct thinking and walk out of here doing nothing, but activate our correct thinking and act on that today. So, I’m going to give you three down-to-earth elements (I really thought about that in light of this last one, but three down-to-earth elements) for reaching the prize of Christ. God’s given us two wonderful sources, resources to, to do this. The objective source is the Word of God. Trust that you have a copy of that today. The Word of God, for the believer, Colossians 2:3 says this is a real possibility: “In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” 1 Corinthians 2, “But we have the mind of Christ.” Think about that. I can actually know the mind of Christ and I can actually know all the wonders and the treasures of God and He’s already revealed them, and they’ve been encapsulated in a book that we can read and it’s the objective Word of God. But He’s also given us a subjective resource, the Holy Spirit. If you’re a believer, the Holy Spirit lives within you and He takes the Word of God, the objective Word, and He speaks to us and He applies it in our life. 2 Corinthians 3:18, “We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image (Christlike) from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.” So, we have the Word and the Spirit working for us today. Marvelous, child of God, amen? Lost person, you have those two same resources working for you today. The Word of God is being preached, “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” The Spirit is also working in you, to show you sin, the way of righteousness, and the judgment to come. That is His function and that is what He is going to do as God’s Word is opened for us today. So, let me give you those three down-to-earth elements for reaching the prize of Christ.

#### Conclusion Transcript

You must (I must) understand that reaching the prize of Christ requires specific actions. My desire is that we activate our correct thinking and act on that today. I gave you three down-to-earth elements (the last one’s a little play on words with the down-to-earth thing): You must follow godly examples. You must flee from ungodly

enemies. And you must focus on heavenly expectations. Do you follow the example of others, who follow the example of Christ? In order to reach the prize, are you distancing yourself from the enemies of the cross of Christ? You have to be discerning. Do your heavenly expectations activate a passion to reach the prize of Christ?

So, are you well on your way to reaching the prize? What is stopping you? What is stopping you? Are you in a valley? Hit a dry spell? Your hope is waning? Your faith is fleeting? Well, just like any other race in the Bible or anything that has a start and a stop, Jesus said this in the Book of Luke, “But Jesus said, that no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” Don’t quit now! Don’t, don’t start over, just keep plowing away. Just keep pursuing, keep reaching, for the prize. We are not satisfied with just pursuit, I want to reach it. Do you want to reach it, Christ and Christlikeness? 1 Corinthians 9:24, “Don’t you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize (*pointing to crowd*)?” And that would be each one. This one. That one. That one. That one. That one. Only one receives the prize. Run in such a way to win the prize. So, let me give you some ways to run to win the prize.

You can run to win the prize by: prizing the prize. Cherishing the reward. Matthew 13, think about this, think about Jesus, think about how wonderful it will be, to be with Him one day. Think about that whole pursuit to reach Him, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.” I stand, total abandonment, I left it all, I sold it all, for the pearl of great price. So, how do I prize the prize? First, follow those who pursue Christlikeness. Paul said, “Follow me. Imitate me, as I follow Christ.” You see, Christ is the standard, but Paul says, “Yeah, I’m not perfect, but I’m trying, follow me.” It’s the same way, matter of fact, Paul said, ““Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’—and I am the worst of them.” Secondly, don’t only follow those that follow Christ, live your life in such a way that you will be followed. (1 Tm 4:12) “But set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.” So, prize the prize.

You can reach the prize by: treasuring the truth. The text said this was true of those that were enemies of the cross of Christ: desire was their God, shame was their glory, and this world was their home. Our desire is for truth, the ability to discern truth from error. John 17:17, “Sanctify them by thy truth; thy Word is truth.” So, how do we do that? Number one, read it. Get you a plan. Do that ‘YouVersion thingy’ that all of our students do. I spend half my time just agreeing with them, I accept your invitation to, to do the YouVersion thing and that’s fine, we need a plan. We need to, we need to read the truth. Psalm 119, “I walk freely in an open place because I study your precepts.” Secondly, not only read it, hear it. Every opportunity. Every opportunity. I never grow tired of this illustration. Ever slopped hogs? When you, when you slop



hogs and you have this bucket of slop and you throw it out there, what does the hog do? I don't know if I should or not. No! A hog, before it even hits the ground, his nose and snout is in that slop and that's the way we should be about the Word of God. "Man, just one more time, let me hear just one more time, preaching God's Word, Podcast, whatever it takes, read it, hear it. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the message of Christ the Word of God." Third, it's not enough to read it, it's not enough to hear it, you have to obey it. You have to obey it. John 18:37, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." So, we read it. We hear it. We obey it. And last, we should speak it. Speak it. Garbage in, garbage out; what comes in, will come out. Ephesians 4:25, "Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor."

So, prize the prize, treasure the truth, and, last, cherish Christ's coming. A life reaching for the prize lives in anticipation of His coming. I spent a good portion of my life fearful that Jesus was going to come back. Hadn't got married yet, hadn't had kids yet, hadn't had grandkids yet, and seen my grandkids get married yet. We should live in anticipation that Jesus is coming again. So, be prepared. "For this reason, you must also be ready; for the Son of Man is coming in an hour when you do not think He will." Oh, He would never come today, that's when He's coming, when you don't think He will. Live your life so that you're not ashamed, "And now, little children, remain in relationship to Jesus, so that when he appears, we can have confidence and not be ashamed in front of him when he comes" [1 Jn 2:28 CEB]. And be comforted by these words, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, "So encourage each other with these words" [CEB]. We live, we cherish the fact that Jesus is coming again.

So, we're talking about pursuing, striving, reaching, taking hold, apprehending. Paul reduced the Christian life to this: "This one thing I do." We all want to glorify God, right? I do (at least one person in here does). We all want to glorify God, right, yes? We can only do that to the degree that we are like Christ. We can only do that to the degree that we are like Christ. Think about these commands that I'm fixing to say. We, we tend to take them as, "Well, these are coming from God and we should just do them." That's true, but you know Somebody else did them before we were told to do them. We're commanded to reach the lost, but this was Jesus's commission, Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." So, when we do that, we're being Christlike. We're told that we should be spiritually mature and maturing. 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." What, we're supposed to die to sin and live to righteousness? Well, it's not like Somebody else hadn't done that before, because His name was Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." He's done it all. I thought about this, I know this guy's a kind of a mystic, that's okay. Watchman Nee, this was a guy that lived a hundred, or so, years ago and this is what he says in regards to Christlikeness. "God is not seeking a display of my Christlikeness, but a manifestation

of His Christ.” See, the question’s not, “How Christlike can I be?” The question is, “How much can people see Christ in me?” Hmm?

Lost person, let’s talk about you reaching for just a second and I’ll be through. You are in sin. Psalm 18:16, “He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he pulled me out of deep water.” That’s what He did for every believer. That’s what He’s desiring to do for you. You’re in deep water. You’re in sin. You’re in death. We got a problem. Job 37, “The Almighty—we cannot reach him (hmm, that’s a problem)—he is exalted in power! He will not violate justice and abundant righteousness.” I am deep in sin and I have a problem. I cannot reach Him. God had a plan. Acts 17, “From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so that they might seek God and perhaps they might reach out and find him, for he is not very far from each one of us.” You know why that is? I can’t reach Him, but He is forever reaching for me. God sent His Son. Psalm 57:3, “He reaches down from heaven and saves me.” And He promises salvation to those who repent and believe. “Let my plea reach you, rescue me according to your promise” [Ps 119:170]. Now is the time to do that. Now is the time to respond. Salvation is today. Deuteronomy 30:11, he’s talking about choosing life, “This command that I have given you today is certainly not too difficult or beyond your reach.” Lost person, it is not beyond your reach. It is as close as the words on your lips. It is as close as this moment in time. If you would just avail yourself of the opportunity that God is giving you. As we pray.

## APPENDIX T

### SERMON 14: STANDING FIRM IN UNITY AND PEACE (PHILIPPIANS 4:1-7)

#### Introduction Transcript

“Once a declining church goes below one hundred in attendance, its days are likely numbered. The average life expectancy is ten years.” Those are the words of Southern Baptist Convention president of LifeWay, Tom Rainer, who does a lot of research: Most recent stats from LifeWay Research show this to be true: 9 percent of churches are plateaued, 56 percent of Southern Baptist churches are declining (56 percent), 35 percent are growing, 61 percent of Southern Baptist churches have less than one hundred members in worship. Now, let me repeat what he said at the beginning, “Once a declining church goes below one hundred in attendance, its days are likely numbered. The average life expectancy is ten years.” You say, “Well, that’s quite a few that are below one hundred, 61 percent.” And you might even plead the case, “Maybe we have always been that way or churches that I know of that, that are true of, have always been that way. That may be the case, but let me remind you what the Book of Revelation 3:1 says about the church of Sardis, “Thus says the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works; you have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead.” You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead. Simply because we turned the lights on, and we’re occupying pews, and we’re doing things, that does not necessitate the fact that we are a healthy and vibrant church, accomplishing something for the kingdom of God. Once a declining church goes below one hundred in attendance, its days are likely numbered. Man, when I read that, it just jumped off the page at me, “Its days are likely numbered.”

Does it surprise you that I would say that, “Your church, our church is under attack?” Does that surprise you? Well, it shouldn’t surprise us because that fact is substantiated by the very words of Jesus. John 16:33, “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. (That’s all well and good, but) You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.” You will suffer. You will go through trial. You will go through tribulation. Knowing that we are under attack, does that discourage you? What we do for the Lord is not for nothing. What we do for the Lord is not for nothing. 1 Corinthians 15:58, “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always (abounding) excelling in the Lord’s work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” What you do is not for nothing. Since we’re under attack, can we really afford to be asleep? Can we really afford to be asleep? We cannot afford to be spiritually sluggish. 1 Corinthians 16:13,

“Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong.” We cannot afford to be sluggish, if that statement that I read at the beginning is true, and I think that it is, we cannot afford to be lazy. We cannot afford to be asleep. We cannot afford to be struck sluggish. Do we really understand the nature of our battle? We are in an epic battle fighting for the side that has already won. We’re not fighting for the winning side, we are fighting on the side that has already won. It is just our job to obtain, secure, the victory. Ephesians 6:11-14:

“Put on the full armor of God (that’s you) so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. . . . For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. Stand, therefore, with the truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest.”

Back to one of the first sermons. The first sermon that we preached or thereabouts. Do you understand, do I understand, that a life worthy of the gospel is a life that will faithfully stand? A life worthy of the gospel is a life that will faithfully stand. A life worthy of the gospel is a life that is unwavering, it is unflinching, it is totally faithful. Philippians 1:27, you may want to look back at that verse, “Just one thing (Paul said, ‘just one thing’): As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

In the last days, there is a question that comes from the Book of Revelation. People are going through all sorts of calamity upon this earth and it says they’re going to make this statement, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?” Now, that’s a really good question. I know that’s in the future, if that’s your particular theological persuasion. That’s mine! That’s a good question to ask, “Who is going to be able to stand, when the wrath of God is poured out and God judges all the men?” Who is going to be able to stand? I can say with a lot of confidence. I can say with a lot of sincere expectations. I know this is true of me. I hope this is true of you. Jude 24, “Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, without blemish and with great joy.” I know with every fiber of my being that God has made me able to stand on that day. And in that day when I appear before Him, I will be able to stand because I have been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. I hope that is true of you as well. Lost people, on the other hand, when he asked, “Who is able to stand?” Psalm 1:5 simply says this, “Therefore the wicked will not stand up in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteousness.” They will not be able to stand in the judgment because they are not covered with the blood of Jesus Christ. They have never accepted Him as personal Lord and Savior. And that is the only thing, that is the

only thing, that gives us any hope, at all, in standing before Him when judgment comes, is His dear Son.

In the Book of Genesis, one of Jacob's sons, Reuben. Today we're talking about standing. Standing firm in the faith. We can think about a lot of biblical characters that stood for the Lord. We can think about a lot of biblical characters that did not stand for the Lord. One, one of those characters was one of Jacob's sons, Reuben. It talked, this is his testimony, this is the characterization of his life at the end of the Book of Genesis. Genesis 49:4, this is said of him, "Turbulent as water (in other words, this is a tumultuous guy, this is a chaotic guy, this is a guy that is totally unstable. He is not able to stand. Turbulent as water), you will not excel, because you got into your father's bed and you defiled it." That's the reason he was characterized as turbulent, tumultuous, because he slept with one of his father's concubines. He paid the price for that. 1 Chronicles 5:1 says even though "he was the firstborn, but his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, because Reuben defiled his father's bed." He did not stand. Because he did not stand, he paid the ultimate price in this life.

Jesus, on the other hand, I think He is obviously the ultimate example of someone who stood firm in this life. You say, "Well, yeah, but He's God's Son." Yes, He is God's Son, but He's a man empowered by the Holy Spirit of God and He gives us a wonderful example of somebody that stood firm in the face of opposition. It says of Him in the Book of Hebrews, "For consider him (that is, Jesus) who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you won't grow weary and give up." See, we look to Jesus, so that we can draw strength from His example, so that we will be able to stand firm, not growing weary and having the inclination of giving up. It also says in the second verse, "For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross (we're going to talk about joy in just a second, but it says for the joy that was laid before Him, He endured the cross, suffering), despising the shame."

So, we've been talking about over the last few weeks: pursuing the prize (you're there in Philippians 4, we've talked about pursuing the prize), reaching the prize, and that prize is Christlikeness. I want to be like Him. On the way to that goal, believers are going to be deterred. We're going to be detoured. We're going to be distracted. We're going to be discouraged, but we will need to stand, in spite of all those opposing forces that may come against us. In spite of all of that opposition that may deter us, distract us, discourage us, we need to stand firm, fixed, and resolute in our faith. So, you're there in Philippians. We're in the second large unit, which is 3:1–4:9. Paul's exhorting, he's continuing to exhort them to Christian living. In that second section, he's just beginning to make all sorts of miscellaneous exhortations. Encouraging them in many different facets of life. In this first subsection, he's going to exhort them to steadfastness, faithfulness, unity, and to peace. Well, previously, we came to understand that reaching the prize of Christ requires specific actions. My

desire last week was for us to activate our correct thinking and act on that. Not just activate our correct thinking. That, that would be good, but we need to act on what we are thinking and what we are thinking is correct. So, I gave you three down-to-earth elements for reaching the prize of Christ: you must follow godly examples, you must flee from godly enemies, and you must focus on heavenly expectations. So, Paul, as it were, he's begun to dig, about this whole notion of pursuing the prize and reaching the prize and Christian living. He's began digging and now he's going to even dig deeper, touching on various things that we might face in this life as believers. He knew what opposition he faced and so he's going to express that to the Philippians, as well, and whatever they faced it would require steadfastness, faithfulness, standing firm. Some there had failed to stand against disunity and chaos, even though, even though God had promised them peace. They somehow did not embrace that. Instead, they experienced disunity, and it seems as if they were perfectly pleased with that. They had given over to worry and so Paul writes this to stem that tide and encourage them to faithfulness. Follow along with me beginning with 4:1:

“So then, my dearly loved and longed for brothers and sisters, my joy and crown, in this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

We must stand firm in our faith, not allowing the church to be weakened by disunity and turmoil. Standing firm will require three courageous responses, three courageous responses. There are three things that fight against us that will cause disunity, cause turmoil. The Bible describes them, the Bible illustrates them, they are: the world, the flesh, and the devil. In regards to us, as believers, this is true about each of those: the world, 1 John 5:4, “For everyone born of God (here's the truth, for everyone born of God) overcomes the world (everyone born of God overcomes the world) [ESV]. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. So, when the world comes in against us, church, to disrupt our unity, and togetherness, and our community, the Bible says we have overcome the world. Secondly, the flesh. Matthew 26:41, “Stay awake and pray (this is as Jesus was going into Gethsemane. He urges His disciples to be alert, not be sluggish, stay awake, and pray), so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Now, for sure, our flesh is weak, but we do have something that the lost world does not have. We have the Spirit within us, that competes against the flesh, and so, we should not

succumb to the flesh, we should succumb to the Spirit. And then the last thing that comes against us is the devil. 1 Peter 5:8, another admonition to, to stand firm, to not be lazy, to not fall asleep. 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.” Now, I know that he can devour anyone, but it’s in the context of Christian people. He’s looking to devour you. He’s looking to devour me. He’s roaming around like a, a hungry lion, waiting to do that, and so, we’re urged, “Stand firm. Be alert.” Now, lost people, in regards to those three things that may come against them. You know, for everyone born of God overcomes the world, well, a lost person’s not born of God, they’re not going to overcome the world. The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. They have no Spirit living within them, so they’re not able to overcome the flesh. And then, finally, John 8:44, it says this in regards to the devil. See, we can we can fight against the devil. He urges us to be alert, to know who our enemy is, but in regards to the lost person, He says, in John 8:44, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” [KJV]. He is not your enemy if you’re lost, he’s your father. You will do what he says to do. So, let me give you three courageous responses in order to stand firm.

### Conclusion Transcript

We must stand firm in our faith, not allowing the church to be weakened by disunity and turmoil. My hope is that we will have the courage to do what is necessary, when necessary. It’s not always the case. Standing firm will require three courageous responses: we must stand firm when unity is threatened, we must stand firm when peace is lacking, we must stand firm because peace is promised. So, are you intent on unity, or are you content with disunity? Intent on unity or content with disunity? This is rather probing. This hits me right between the eyes. When peace is lacking because of disunity, is your response ‘yours’ or ‘Christ’s’ (because we are pursuing Christlikeness)? Is it more apt to be what you think or what Christ thinks? Do you believe the Word of God in theory and not in practice? Never! Ah? Do you believe the Word of God in theory and not in practice, and what I am really hitting at is this, “Do you believe the promises of God? The promise of this passage was, “the peace, that is beyond all human comprehension, “will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” That’s a promise. Do you believe that? Are those (*pointing to Bible*) just black ink on white paper or, or did God really say, “This is yours? You can have this?”

So, what will it take for you to stand firm? Strengthen your resolve? What will it take? Will it take the death of a church? When the church falls below one hundred, the average life expectancy is ten years. What will it take? John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, said this about his loved church:

“I am not afraid that the people called Methodist should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which they first set out.”

What he’s saying is, “I have no doubt, in my mind, that they will exist forever, my worry is that they will exist, they’ll turn on the lights, they’ll sit in pews, they’ll open hymn books, they may even have somebody stand behind a podium, but they’ll just be as dead as a doornail.” That was his worry. Isaiah 7:9, “If you do not stand firm in your faith, then you will not stand at all,” he told King Ahaz. So, let me encourage your obedience, “Now we live (we live), if we stand firm in the Lord” [1 Thes 3:8].

So, how do we do that? Let me give you some ways to stand firm in your faith. You can stand firm in your faith by fighting for your family. What would you do for your family? Think about that for just one second. What would you do for your family? Parents what would you do for your children? Children what would you do for your parents? What would you do for your name? Man, I think I would take a bullet for my family. I think I would do whatever it took to protect my family. So, what about your church family? What would you do to keep the unity or the first thing what, what you need to do, what I need to do, we need to be willing to do our part to keep the unity. Ephesians 4:3, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” You say, “well, I’m not the one fighting. I’m not the one causing the problem.” That doesn’t matter, we’re all responsible. Make every effort, each person that’s a part of that church, make every effort to keep the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace. Secondly, be a part of that unity. If you do not have a church home, man, you need a church home. You need to be a part of a ‘unity,’ you need to be a part of a body where you can worship, where you can learn, where you can exercise your spiritual gifts, where you can give to the kingdom of God, where you can do missions and evangelism. You need to be a part of a local body. 1 Corinthians 12:14, “Indeed, the body is not one part but many.” Many of us, make up a part. Be a part.

Secondly, you can stand firm in your faith by finding the Lord’s focus. You know, often we default when we have to make a special act and have to make this knee-jerk reaction or this, this quick thing. We default many times to our thoughts and our opinions, but we should default to Christ and His Word. That should be our default. That’s not always the case. So, what do we need to do? One, strive to let the Lord shine through. How do you do that? Do what he said in the passage. ‘Rejoice,’ it says it sixteen times in the whole book. Rejoice! How am I able to do that? Psalm 16:11, “You reveal the paths of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy.” How can I rejoice? Well, being in the presence of the Lord causes joy and so I am able to rejoice. Secondly, you know, when he tells us to be gentle, “Let our gentleness, the



gentleness be known.” Think about how you come across sometimes. I need to think about how I come across sometimes. We’re commanded here to be gentle. Jesus told us in Matthew 5, the Beatitudes, “Blessed are the humble (or the gentle), for they will inherit the earth” [v. 5]. How do you and I come across? He says, “Let your gentleness be known to all men.” Well, I hope that’s true of me. I fear that sometimes people may walk away going, “Well, he’s quite abrasive. He’s quite opinionated. He, he thinks quite highly of himself, because he likes to pontificate about a lot of different things.” But I’m commanded to be gentle. Third, in regards to finding the Lord’s focus. Be known for lessening anxiety by being a person of prayer. Lessen anxiety by being a person of prayer. Think about this, Luke 12:22:

“Therefore I tell you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat; or about the body, what you will wear. For life is more than food and body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: They don’t sow or reap; they don’t have a storeroom or a barn; yet God feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than the birds? Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying?”

God takes care of it all. Why do we worry? Why are we anxious? The birds, the ravens, they just understand that their Creator gives them what they need.

Third, you can stand firm in your faith by facing up to your failure. I think my favorite movie of all time is *Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade*. When it gets to that last scene, where they’re there and they’re fixing to grasp the Holy Grail, but he’s going to have to run through the gauntlet. It’s the, it’s the breath of God, the Word of God (or the name of God), and the path of God. And you know, the Nazi sympathizer, he takes his pistol and he shoots Indiana Jones’s father, and he makes this statement, he says, “Now it’s time for you to ask yourself what you believe.” Now it’s time to ask yourself what you believe! I think that’s what Paul is doing right here. We need to ask ourselves what we believe, because He gave us a promise here. God, “God . . . will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” No matter what is going on around you, He said, “That’s yours. It’s yours, if you’ll take it.” The problem is, what do you believe? You’ll have to ask yourself that question. Numbers 23:19, “God is not a man, that he might lie, or a son of man that he might change his mind. Does he speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?” And, secondly, in regards to that promise, do you realize this? You should focus on Christ, because Christ is what we’re pursuing. Christlikeness is what I want. He’s urging me, right here, to believe the promises of God. 2 Corinthians 1:20 (I would be remiss if I did not say this here), “For every one of God’s promises is ‘Yes’ in Christ. Therefore, through Him we also say ‘Amen’ to the glory of God.” All those promises are ‘Yes’ in Jesus, which is the very thing that I am pursuing and trying to be like.

It’s interesting that the first thing that the Gentile church was told in the Book of Acts, the very first thing, they weren’t told, pray, they weren’t told to read the

Bible, they weren't told be faithful to the house of God, they weren't told to tithe. Here's what they were told, "When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he was glad and he encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts" [Acts 11:23]. The first thing they were commanded to do was to stand firm in their faith. If we don't, we will experience disappointment, doubt, discouragement, ineffective witness, we will literally be crushed by our trials, and we will be susceptible to temptation.

I used this verse earlier, but in conclusion, let me ask this, "Is this true of you?" Is this true of you? "Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, without blemish and (with it) with great joy" [Jude 24]. In the creation, in Genesis 1-2, 1 and 2, you know, Adam stood in the presence of His glory. It says, he walked with Him, without blemish, with great joy, but we know that sin entered in, and he fell, and mankind along with them, no longer able to stand in the presence of His glory. No longer unblemished but blemished, and joy has somehow eluded him. But yet Christ came, and He died, and somehow, because of Him, we're able to experience standing with the Lord again. And we're able to experience joy and feel the "Peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension and it's able to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus," and one day we will know that beyond its fullest measure. If you're here, and you do not know Christ, Christ has so much to offer you: peace, joy, forgiveness. If you would just cry out to Him and say, "Lord, Jesus, save me a sinner." Let's pray.

## APPENDIX U

### SERMON 15: GODLY THINKING—GODLY PRACTICE (PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9)

#### Introduction Transcript

“Peace is not the absence of danger, it is the presence of God.” Let me repeat that. Peace is not the absence of danger, it is the presence of God. In 1555, a man by the name of Nicholas Ridley was put in prison by Mary I, known as ‘Bloody Mary,’ the daughter of Henry VIII. He was one of the more famous English reformers. He was jailed along with Hugh Latimer and Thomas Cranmer. Later, they became known as the Oxford martyrs. He was literally burned at the stake for his witness, for the cause of Christ. On the eve of Ridley’s execution, his brother actually offered to remain with him that evening and comfort him and pray for him and these are his words to his brother, “I mean to go to bed and sleep as quietly as I ever did in this life.” I mean to go to bed and sleep as quietly as I ever did in this life. I immediately thought of Isaiah 26:3, “You will keep the mind that is dependent on you in perfect peace, for it is trusting in you.” A horrible (you can go check it out on Google, Nicholas Ridley, a horrible) execution and yet somehow, he experienced the peace of God. How is that possible? Peace is not the absence of danger, it is the presence of God. Is it possible to experience real, sustainable, sustainable peace in this life? We’ll see in this passage that people are products of their thoughts. People are products of their thoughts. Proverbs 23:7, “For it is some, for it is like someone calculating inwardly” [HCSB]. That’s the translation I use, “It’s like somebody calculating in their mind, inwardly.” I don’t know that that conveys as much as some of the older translations. Some of the older translations say this, “As the man thinks in his heart, so is he.” As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. Peace is really contingent on how you think. Peace is really contingent on how you think. Some might say, “Well, isn’t the most important thing in my thought life, the outcome (whether that’s good or bad and I’m hoping that it would be for the good)?” Today, we would ask the question, not “Is it true?” but we would ask the question, “Does this work?” I would say we need to dismiss that question, “Does it work?” and we need to focus on the question, “Is it true?” Because Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way of death.” Its end is the way of death.

Well, isn’t it the most important thing how I feel? Isn’t that really what dictates everything, how I feel about something? Today, we just dismiss truth in order to, to focus on that question, “How does this make me feel?” I think we do need to dismiss feeling, in favor of truth as well. Jeremiah 17:17 or 17:9, “The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?” I can’t even trust my own

heart. So, surely, I can't trust my feelings, but I can't trust truth. If peace (like Nicholas Ridley had), if peace depends on correct thinking, how do I change that? We're going to look at that in this passage. There is an objective truth that we can count on and it comes from God. John 17:17 and 19, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. . . . I sanctify myself for them, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth." This is the objective Word of God and we can base our lives on this Word. It is true! Where did we ever get the idea, where did the Christian community ever get the idea that the Christian life and the mind are somehow disconnected? Sometimes we, we check our brains at the door when we become Christians. Christianity calls for thinking, let me just give you a couple of verses, by the way, we are commanded to think, in the Bible. Isaiah 1:18, "Come now (the prophet says), let us reason together" [ESV]. Come now, let us think together, let us calculate in our minds together. Mark 12:30, not the first time in the Bible, one of many of these, from the words of Jesus and from the Book of Deuteronomy. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." We are commanded to worship Him, to love Him, with the mind that He gave us.

Now, you and I, as believers we have a great advantage, significant advantage, because our life has been transformed by the saving work of Christ and we have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit lives within us. And this life in the Spirit that we have, we can have the peace that passes all understanding, no matter what the circumstances are around us. We can experience the peace of God. Peace is not the absence of danger, peace is the presence of God. Romans 8:6, "Now the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace." The life of the Spirit, the mind-set of the Spirit, is life and peace. I have that advantage. I trust that you have that advantage. Lost people do not have that advantage. Ultimately, for a lost person, their incorrect thinking will ultimately lead to death, spiritual death, and it will ultimately lead to, in this life, a lack of peace. How do I know that? The very next verse that I read, Romans 8:5, "For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit." It is impossible for a lost person to really, genuinely experience peace in this life because they're removed, they are detached from the work of the Spirit in their life. Saved person, you just need to rejoice today because you have a, a distinct advantage. You have the Spirit working in you and the great possibility for change. Now, lost person, you have that same possibility, if you will succumb to the Spirit today and respond to Him in saving grace. He will transform you and He will change you.

Now, Paul, in the Book of Acts, Acts 17. He came to the city of Athens and as he, as he approached the city, the Bible says that he was greatly disturbed. He was disturbed by the idolatry that he saw. He understood quite well that the idolatry was the result of an incorrect thinking. They had never experienced the saving grace of

Christ. As a matter of fact, they didn't even know who Christ was. If you go on further in the Book of Acts, Acts 17:16, it says, "He was deeply distressed when he saw that the city was full of idols." If you go on further in that passage, we find out that it's not as if they weren't concerned about the afterlife or even gods, because they had actually built an altar to an unknown God. Verse 23 it says, "'To an Unknown God.' Therefore (Paul says), what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you." They had built this statue to an unknown God, lest they leave one out, and Paul says, "See that, I'm going to tell you about Him today. I'm going to tell you what His name is, His name is Jesus Christ. And this Man is going to judge the living and the dead." See, God, Paul knew this, God is never going to receive worship that is done in ignorance. Never! He never receives worship that is done in ignorance. Worship is always based on truth. Acts 17, as he comes to the end of that, around verse 31, he's talking to them about the Creator God. He's urging them to repent, which is, by the way, a change of mind. He's urging them to repent because there's One that's going to come, that is going to judge, and this One that is going to judge has conquered death, and His name is Jesus.

Now, Jesus sat at the well, with a woman in John 4. What did I say? God never accepts worship based in ignorance. John 4:22, as Jesus is interacting with the woman at the well (the Samaritan woman) says, "You Samaritans worship what you do not know." In other words, they're going through the motions, they're doing something, but somehow, it's not even hitting the ceiling, as it were, because what they do, they do in ignorance. It is misguided, it is misfocused, it is just not hitting the target. He goes on to say, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth." Those who worship must worship in Spirit and in truth. And through the exchange of ideas and Jesus giving her truth, somehow that truth grasps her being, and her mind is changed, and her life is forever transformed. John 4:39 says, "Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of what the woman said when she testified, 'He told me everything that I ever did.'" See, her worship now is not based in ignorance. It's no longer 'not hitting the mark,' now it is 'hitting the mark' because her worship is based in Spirit and in truth. Her thinking was corrected, and she experienced God's salvation.

So, if you're there in Philippians 4:8-9. Just two verses today. So, we'll only be here an hour and a half or so. So, he begins with this word 'finally' and 'finally' indicates that Paul has reached the conclusion on the matter of standing firm in the faith. What does it mean to stand firm? That word 'finally' means this is it, right here. This is going to sum up all the principles he has stressed. It's going to provide the way to implement this 'standing firm' in their life. 3:1-4:9 that, that second large unit of the Book of Philippians is exhortations to Christian living. He's urging us to live the Christ-life. That first section 3:1-21 he told us to avoid false teachers. That first subsection Paul explained his experience (that you know, I'm of the tribe of Benjamin, I'm circumcised the eighth day). I've done all of these things, but I, I count all of that

as trash, to know Christ. That was 1-16, 12-16, he exposed the false teachers. He says I'm this way, but they're this way. They really just serve themselves, they really just serve their own bellies, as he said. And then 17-21 of chapter 3, the third subsection, he, he tells us about his effort and he exhorts us to pursue and to reach the prize of Jesus Christ. So, now we're in the last section of that last large unit which is chapter 4:1-9. He exhorts them to stand firm in the faith. Last week, we talked about standing firm in unity, faith, and peace, that's 1-7, and then today verses 8-9, stand firm, experiencing grace and peace through godly thinking and through godly practice. So, last week we saw that we must stand firm in our faith, not allowing the church to be weakened by disunity and turmoil. Last week, my hope was that we would have the courage to do what is necessary, when necessary. When, when disunity strikes, we need to have the capability of attacking that and fighting for unity. Standing firm requires three courageous responses, here's what they were: we must stand firm when unity is threatened, we must stand firm when peace is lacking, and we must stand firm because, by the way, peace is promised. It's not just, "Well, maybe so, I hope so, it ought to be that way." No, He promises us peace. You know, peace is a predominant thought in all of Paul's writings. You remember, if we go back, all the way to chapter 1: something that we may look at as incidental; something that we might gloss over and look at, read, and move on quickly from. Philippians 1:2, in his introduction, he says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Man, we would look at that and go, "Well, that's just a salutation, that's just the opening of his letter, there's really not much significance in that." Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does nothing for no reason, and He's purposeful in everything that He does, even in a greeting. Paul said I hope this is true, but may the, may the "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." These two verses today are the answer to that question. These two verses today, Philippians 4:8-9, are the answer to Philippians 1:2, "Grace to you and peace." He's saying, "This is what I want you to have. I want you to have grace. I want you to have peace." And the reader of that letter may have thought, "How do I do that? You're offering this to me. How do I get that?" Well, now here at the end of the letter, he's going to tell us how God provides that. In this passage, the means to that answer, to that prayer appear. Peace is for those who order their lives according to God's will. Peace is for those who order their lives according to God's will. Thus, the previous section, verses 6-7, if you're there, "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." That complements verses 8 and 9. Verses 6 and 7 say when anxiety appears in your life, when worry takes over, the antidote to that is this, pray. You need to pray. When worry overtakes you, when it, when it's just, you know, it's filled you up to here, and as my wife says sometimes, "You're standing on her last

nerve.” What, what you need to do is pray. When life is disorderly, the cure is mental and practical discipline. Mental and practical discipline. Let’s read verses 8-9. “Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.”

So, as we examine this passage today to experience peace, we must think deeply on specific godly qualities and conduct our lives according to them. We have to think deeply. We’re to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. So, we’re to think deeply on these godly qualities and conduct our lives according to them. This calls for us maybe to rearrange our lives and thinking, through discipline. So, experiencing peace will require two disciplined efforts. Only two today, not three points, just two. Two disciplined efforts. Now, I will say upfront, peace will continue to elude us, if we do not think properly. If our thinking is incorrect, we will not have peace. Proverbs 4:23, “Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.” The Good News Translation says it this way, “Be careful how you think, your life is shaped by your thoughts.” Be careful how you think, your life is shaped by your thoughts. Guard your heart, your whole being, as it were, above all else. The idea is to do this with all diligence. That means that you’re pouring every bit of effort into this ‘guarding of the heart’ and the reason that you’re doing that is, it’s the source of life. So, since it’s the source of life, you really need to take care, and for the believer, as I said, that’s a, that’s a present, possible, reality because the Spirit lives within you. You have that distinct advantage. For the lost person, not so much. It’s just going to be pure human effort until you give your life to God, who can help you and give you the ability to obey and to serve Him. So, experiencing peace requires two disciplined efforts. So, let’s look at those.

### Conclusion Transcript

So, to experience peace, we must think deeply on specific godly qualities and conduct our lives according to them. This will call for us maybe to rearrange our life and our thinking through discipline. Experiencing peace requires two disciplined efforts. So, you keep using that word. I’m not really accustomed to that word ‘discipline’ in the church or with the Christian life. Well, maybe we need to get accustomed to it and I’ll point that out in just a second. In order to experience peace, we must think correctly. In order to experience peace, we must act on our correct thinking. So, only you and God know. I’m not privy to it, your neighbor’s not, your spouse is not, only you and God know, but how is your thought life? How’s your thought life? Self-centered? Christ-centered? Uncaring? Corrupt? Chaotic? How much effort are you putting into thinking correctly and acting correctly? When you put your

head on your pillow and it's just you and God, how's that going for you? Are you just overwhelmed with stress, and turmoil, and chaos, and fear, and no faith?

You know Adam, Israel, Saul. All three of those individuals or persons, personages, had mandates from God and yet they did not 'do,' they did not 'practice,' what God said. Adam forfeited his own life, spiritually, and physically, and the life of all of his offspring (welcome to the club). Israel forfeited her life in the desert and had to wander for forty years before obtaining the promise. Saul forfeited his life and his kingdom because he refused to obey the Lord. Romans 2:8, "But wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness." Much better to obey Him. Much better to follow Him. Psalm 119:34, "Help me understand your instruction and I will obey it and follow it with all my heart," he says.

So, how is your thought life? To experience peace, you need to: be responsible for your thoughts. 2 Corinthians 10:5, listen to this one. Sometimes we read this, and we go, "Oh, that's for those people that talk about spiritual warfare all the time. That's for those people that talk about demon possession all the time." 2 Corinthians 10:5, "We are destroying speculations (that's an idea) and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we're taking every thought captive to obedience to Christ" [NASB]. In other words, he says every thought that I think that is incorrect, I am taking that captive. I'm locking it up. I am putting it under lock and key. I am chaining it up because I am doing this for the glorious cause of Christ. So, how do, how do I become responsible for my thoughts? Well, I need to ask myself this. So, ask. Ask, am I listening to the wrong voices? There's three voices that we can listen to: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now, I just say that in passing and maybe young people, maybe some of us that are older, we listen to that, "Well, I would never, I would never listen to the flesh! I would never listen to the world! And, most certainly, I would never listen to the devil! That is just not me. That is not appealing to me whatsoever." Well, do we think that the world is just going to walk up to us and go, "Hey, I'm the world!" Do we think the devil is going to walk up to us and go, "Hey, by the way I'm the devil and here's what I want you to think?" It would be better to ask you this: what do you read? What kind of music do you listen to? What do you watch on TV? What movies do you watch? Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things, whatsoever things, think on these things. So, I must be responsible for the thoughts that I am thinking. Well, I'm watching TV and I saw something that I wasn't supposed to see, how am I supposed to fix that? You cannot help it if a bird lands on your head, but you can help it if he builds a nest there. Turn the channel! Turn it off. You, as a believer, you have that capability. God told Adam this, in Genesis, after he fell, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it': The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life" [Gen 3:17]. So, he listened to his wife. Well, yes, you did, but he listened to his flesh. He listened



to his flesh and he listened to the devil, because the devil said, “Yeah, hath God said?” And all of those things were at play. So, ask, and then secondly, in regards to being responsible for our thoughts (I thought long and hard about this, but I just wrote it down, that’s fine. So, ask, secondly, quit it!): Quit it! Romans 6:12-13, “Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. And do not offer any parts of it (including your mind) to sin as weapons for unrighteousness.” Let me give you a paraphrase. Let me give you the Rogers’ ‘cornbread paraphrase’ of that. Some of us give Satan the length of rope to hang us with and he says, “Do not offer any parts of your body (*pointing to mind*) to sin as weapons of unrighteousness and we’re just constantly handing him the rope to hang us with. He says, quit it! Quit it.

To experience peace, we not only have to be responsible for our thoughts, we need to begin to renew our mind. So, how do I listen to the right voices? Have you ever been in a situation and, you teachers, I could see this in the classroom. You speak, and you’ve asked a question, and all of a sudden thirty people are spouting ideas at you and you’re trying to sort through that host of, of replies. And what do you end up doing? What you end up doing is “Stop, just one at a time! One at a time.” Well, that’s what we have to do. We have to meditate on the Word. There’s a lot of voices, a lot of them, but what we need to do is meditate on the Word. That’s actually a way that ‘dwell’ can be translated. You say, “I just can’t meditate. I just, I just can’t do that, as a Christian.” Hmm, me thinkest thou protest too much, “I just can’t meditate.” How many have ever listened to two songs on iTunes back-to-back? You know what you were doing? You’re meditating on music. How many of you have sat down in front of a TV and watched an athletic event, for, I don’t know, two hours or, I don’t know, the other night 18 innings? Really, what were you doing? Meditating. “Oh, I could never meditate.” Oh, we do it all the time, it’s just the choice of the thing that we want to meditate on. Psalm 119:[97], “How I love your instruction! It is my meditation all the day long.” So, meditate on the Word. That’ll renew my mind. Saturate myself with the Word. I remember the morning that hurricane Alicia hit, Jeremy was approximately nine months old. I remember waking up to the sound of our carport dancing up and down. I looked out the window and I saw about three oak trees in the front yard that are normally this way, that were really bent that way. Could you imagine me thinking, “Well, I’m going to go get the mail now and I’m going to put my umbrella up and I’m going to go to the mailbox and get my mail.” You would say, “Hey brother, you’re a little short up there on top.” Well, yeah, because what’s going to happen? What’s going to happen is, in an instant, I am going to be saturated. I am going to be inundated with everything that a hurricane has to offer. You know what? That’s what we need to do with God and His Word. We need to become saturated with it. Titus 3:5, listen to this, “He saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” He’s just washing me with His Word. R. Kent Hughes, who wrote

*Disciplines of a Godly Man*, he states this, “You cannot be profoundly influenced by that which you do not know.” You cannot be profoundly influenced by that which you do not know. Paul talked about his church. He talked about a husband loving his wife, he said it’s, it’s that way because of this: “To make her holy, cleansing her, with the washing of the water by the Word. So, I’m responsible for my thoughts. I’m renewing my mind, and I’m going to repeat what I know. God’s Word is just full of repetition. Life is just full of repetition. How many of us have heard, “Use it or lose it!” “Repetition is the mother of skill.” Do it over and over again. That’s true and everything, until something becomes muscle memory, but how much truer of the Word of God? And yet, we just dismiss that. We just dismiss it. So, what do we need to do? Discipline ourselves. An undisciplined life (this may sting, stings me. An undisciplined life) is an ungodly life. He says, “Discipline yourself (Timothy) for the purpose of godliness.” And then, secondly, practice the promise. ‘Do this’ and the God of peace will be with you. Do this and the God of peace will be with you.

Saying well, you’re just talking about thinking right. That’s nothing more than Norman Vincent Peale said. That’s nothing more than Robert Schuller said. That’s nothing that some dude on PBS will talk about having the power of positive thinking. No, we’re not talking about that at all. When Paul says, “Do these things,” what he is talking about doing is (*pointing to Bible*) not just positive thinking, making it so. We were saved by faith. We progressed by faith. A transformed mind at the moment of salvation continues to be renewed through our lifetime. Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that, you may discern what is good, pleasing, and perfect will, will of God.” Here’s our goal, be renewed by the spirit of your mind. The greatest commandment. The greatest commandment, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (mind, thought process).” Believer, that is ours for the taking! If we don’t have peace, that’s our own fault. As He said, “I’ll be there with you. I will provide peace and I am the God of peace.”

Lost person, you just can’t grasp it. You just don’t understand that. 1 Cor 2:14, “But the person without the Spirit, does not receive what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually.” Lost person, if there is somebody here that is lost, without Christ, He describes your mind in the Bible. Here’s what He says it’s like: it’s depraved, it’s defiled, it’s futile, it’s ignorant, it’s foolish, it’s that thing that leads to spiritual death, it is hardened to spiritual truth, it is hostile to God, it is focused on the flesh, and it is blinded by Satan. The only hope that you have, lost person, is if you allow the God who is speaking to you right now, if you will say to Him, “Lord, I believe. I repent, come into my life and save me.” And what He will do, He will gloriously transform you and your mind. He will take up residence in you. He will dwell with you, so that you will be able to dwell on these thoughts, that’s what He will do. Let’s pray.

APPENDIX V

SERMON INTRODUCTION, BODY, AND CONCLUSION TIME COMPARISONS

FIGURE 56

PRE-PROJECT AND UNIT 1 (SERMONS 1-5) SERMON TIME COMPARISONS

Sermon	Introduction	Body	Conclusion	Length
Pre-Project Avg.	09 min. 32 sec.	30 min. 56 sec.	05 min. 29 sec.	45 min. 57 sec.
1	8 min. 53 sec.	23 min. 00 sec.	9 min. 40 sec.	41 min. 33 sec.
2	13 min. 48 sec.	22 min. 30 sec.	14 min. 30 sec.	50 min. 48 sec.
3	22 min. 06 sec.	19 min. 58 sec.	11 min. 05 sec.	53 min. 09 sec.
4	17 min. 42 sec.	19 min. 35 sec.	21 min. 38 sec.	58 min. 55 sec.
5	14 min. 13 sec.	24 min. 52 sec.	11 min. 07 sec.	50 min. 12 sec.
Unit 1 Avg.	15 min. 20 sec.	21 min. 55 sec.	13 min. 36 sec.	50 min. 55 sec.

FIGURE 57

UNIT 2 (SERMONS 6-10) SERMON TIME COMPARISONS

Sermon	Introduction	Body	Conclusion	Length
6	16 min. 08 sec.	26 min. 49 sec.	12 min. 07 sec.	55 min. 04 sec.
7	19 min. 59 sec.	22 min. 52 sec.	16 min. 52 sec.	59 min. 53 sec.
8	19 min. 11 sec.	19 min. 26 sec.	14 min. 21 sec.	52 min. 58 sec.
9	17 min. 38 sec.	20 min. 34 sec.	15 min. 31 sec.	53 min. 43 sec.
10	16 min. 03 sec.	18 min. 20 sec.	17 min. 36 sec.	51 min. 59 sec.
Unit 2 Avg.	17 min. 48 sec.	21 min. 36 sec.	15 min. 17 sec.	54 min. 43 sec.

FIGURE 58

PROJECT AND UNIT 3 (SERMONS 11-15) SERMON TIME COMPARISONS

Sermon	Introduction	Body	Conclusion	Length
11	17 min. 18 sec.	29 min. 27 sec.	14 min. 49 sec.	61 min. 34 sec.
12	19 min. 42 sec.	16 min. 00 sec.	15 min. 11 sec.	50 min. 53 sec.
13	17 min. 09 sec.	19 min. 07 sec.	13 min. 10 sec.	49 min. 26 sec.
14	19 min. 56 sec.	24 min. 53 sec.	14 min. 59 sec.	59 min. 48 sec.
15	22 min. 30 sec.	14 min. 46 sec.	17 min. 19 sec.	54 min. 35 sec.
Unit 3 Avg.	19 min. 19 sec.	20 min. 51 sec.	15 min. 06 sec.	55 min. 15 sec.
Project Avg.	17 min. 29 sec.	21 min. 27 sec.	14 min. 40 sec.	53 min. 38 sec.

APPENDIX W

AWBREY AND PARKER INDIVIDUAL INTRODUCTION  
SCORES BASED ON THE SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS  
OF AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION

FIGURE 59

SERMON 1 EVALUATION  
“Keeping It Real” (Phil 1:1-5)—(2018-07-22)

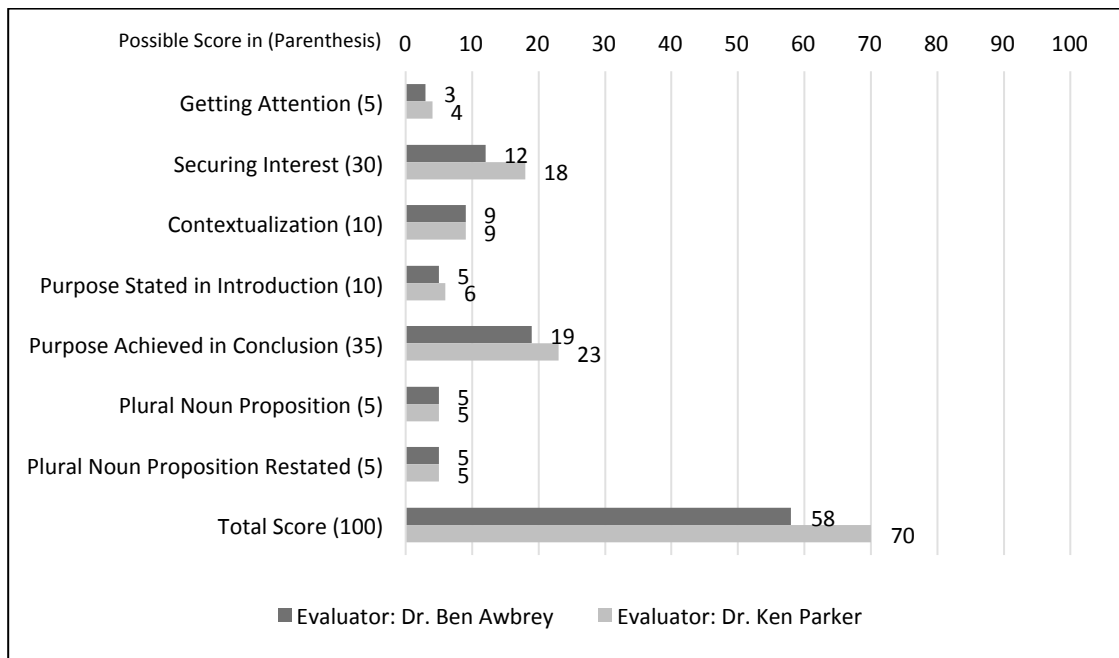


FIGURE 60

SERMON 2 EVALUATION  
 “Energized by God’s Salvation” (Phil 1:6-11)—(2018-07-29)

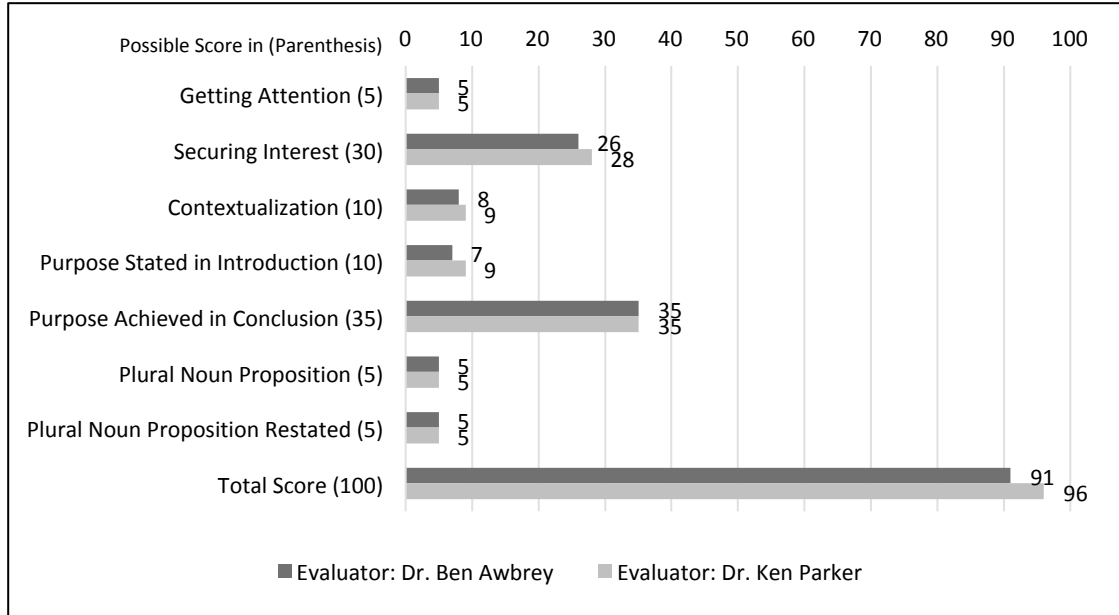


FIGURE 61

SERMON 3 EVALUATION  
 “The Joyous Advance” (Phil 1:12-18)—(2018-08-05)

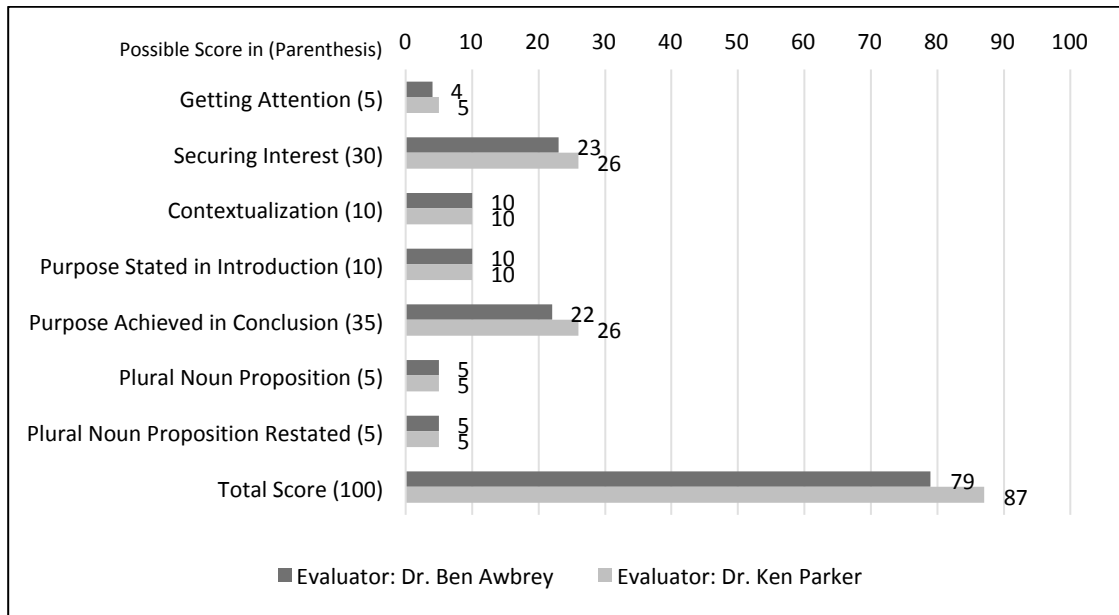


FIGURE 62

SERMON 4 EVALUATION  
 “In Christ Alone” (Phil 1:19-26)—(2018-08-12)

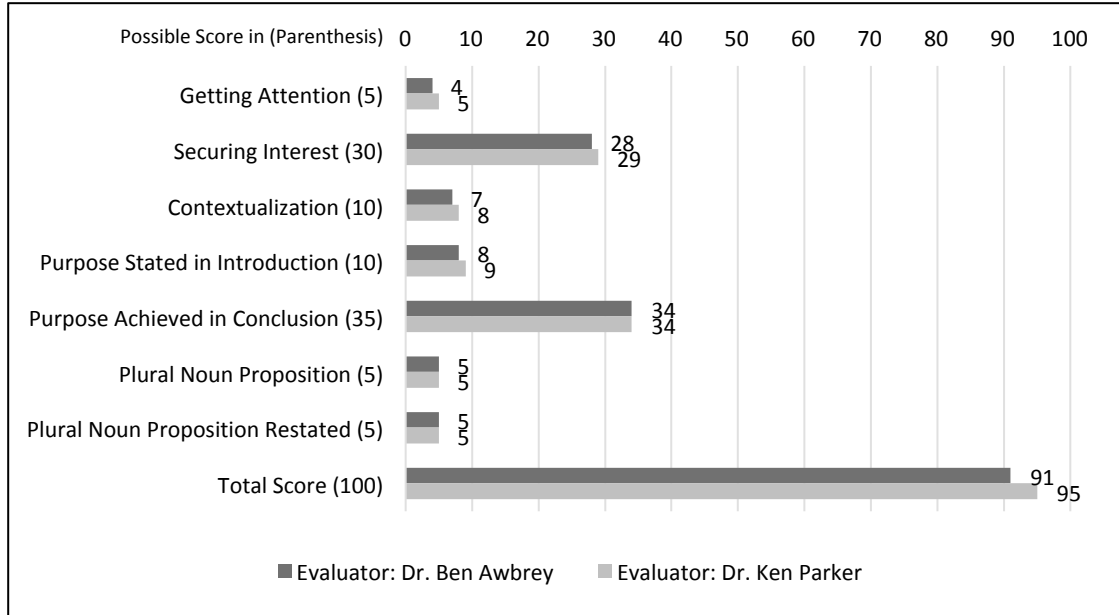


FIGURE 63

SERMON 5 EVALUATION  
 “A Life Worthy of the Gospel” (Phil 1:27-30)—(2018-08-19)

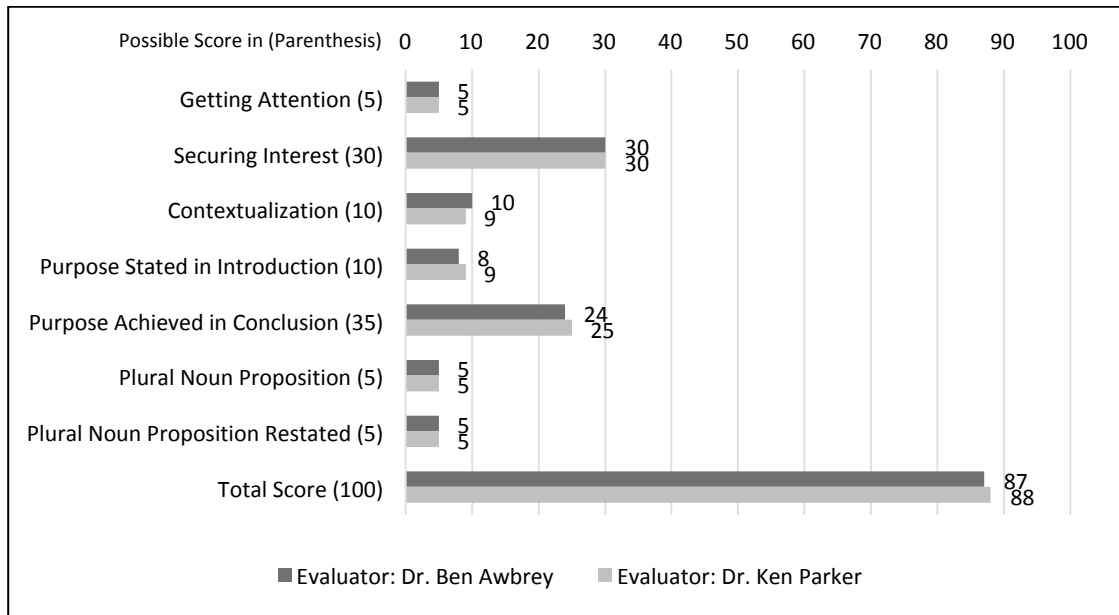


FIGURE 64

SERMON 6 EVALUATION  
 “A Heart Driven by Unity” (Phil 2:1-4)—(2018-08-26)

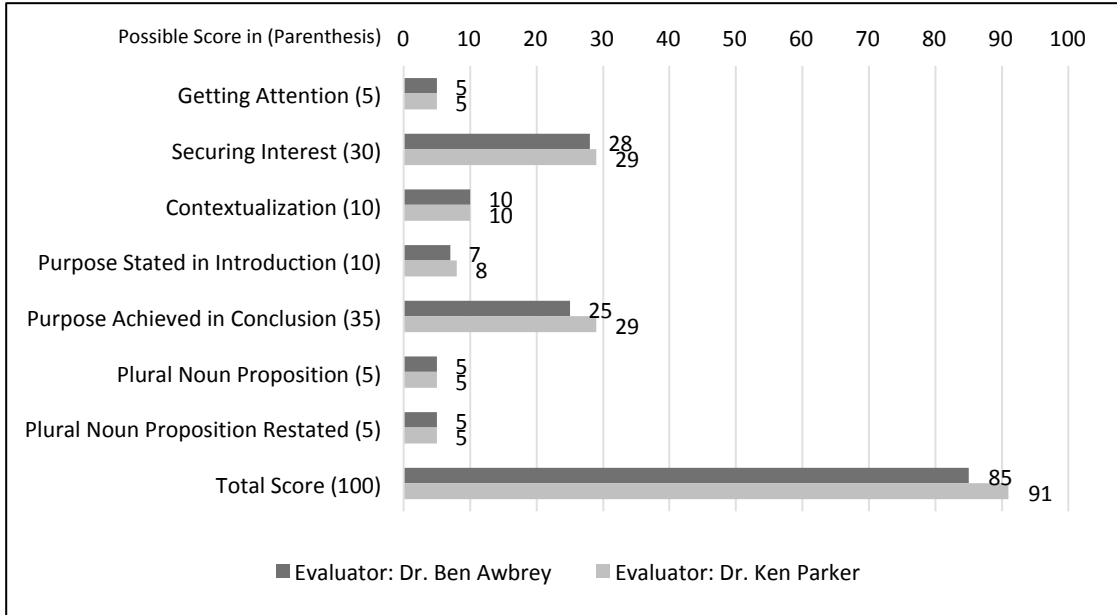


FIGURE 65

SERMON 7 EVALUATION  
 “The Greatest Example” (Phil 2:5-11)—(2018-09-02)

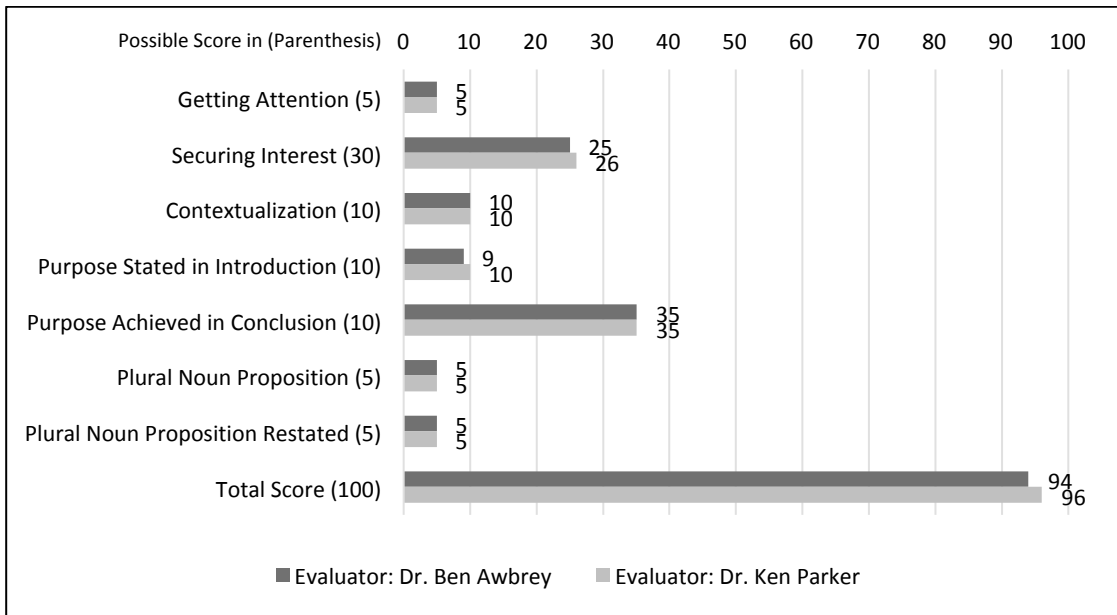


FIGURE 66

SERMON 8 EVALUATION  
 “Working It Out” (Phil 2:12-13)—(2018-09-02)

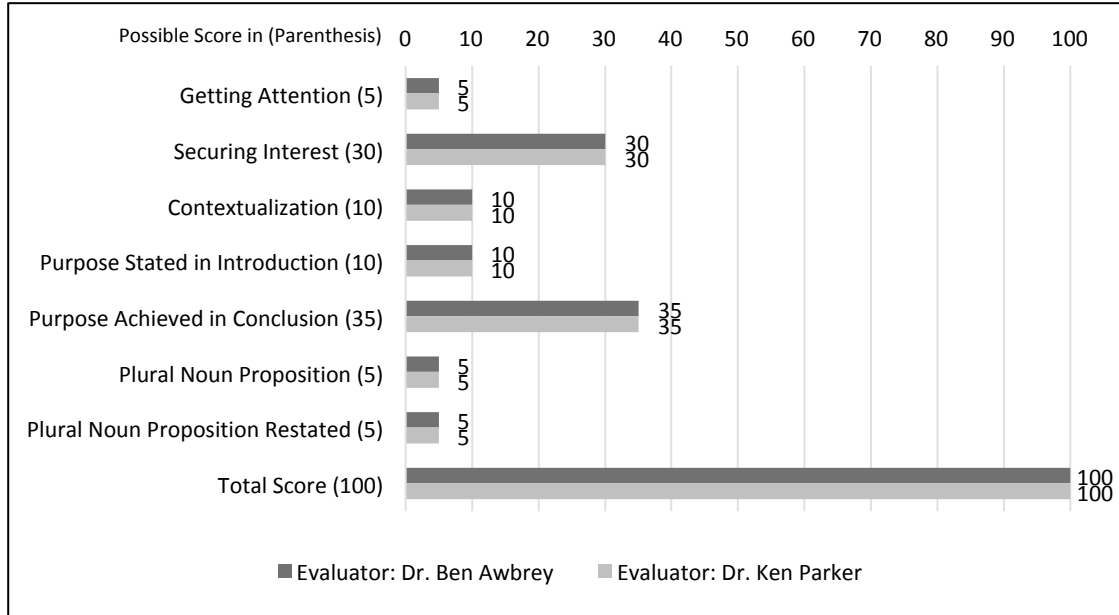


FIGURE 67

SERMON 9 EVALUATION  
 “Shine Your Light” (Phil 2:14-18)—(2018-09-16)

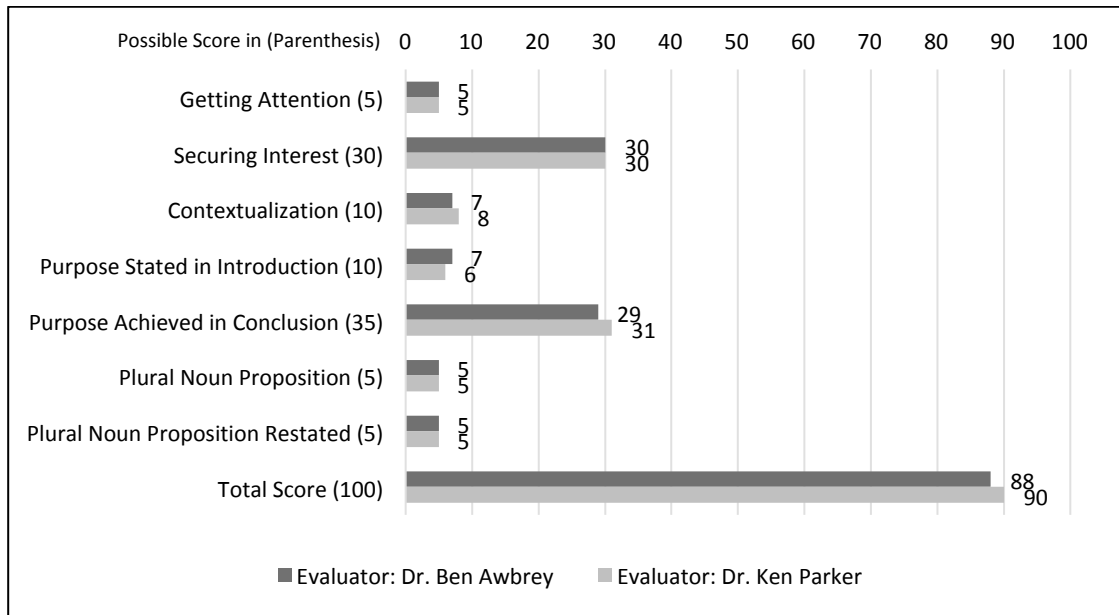




FIGURE 68

SERMON 10 EVALUATION  
 “The Example of the Servant” (Phil 2:19-30)—(2018-09-23)

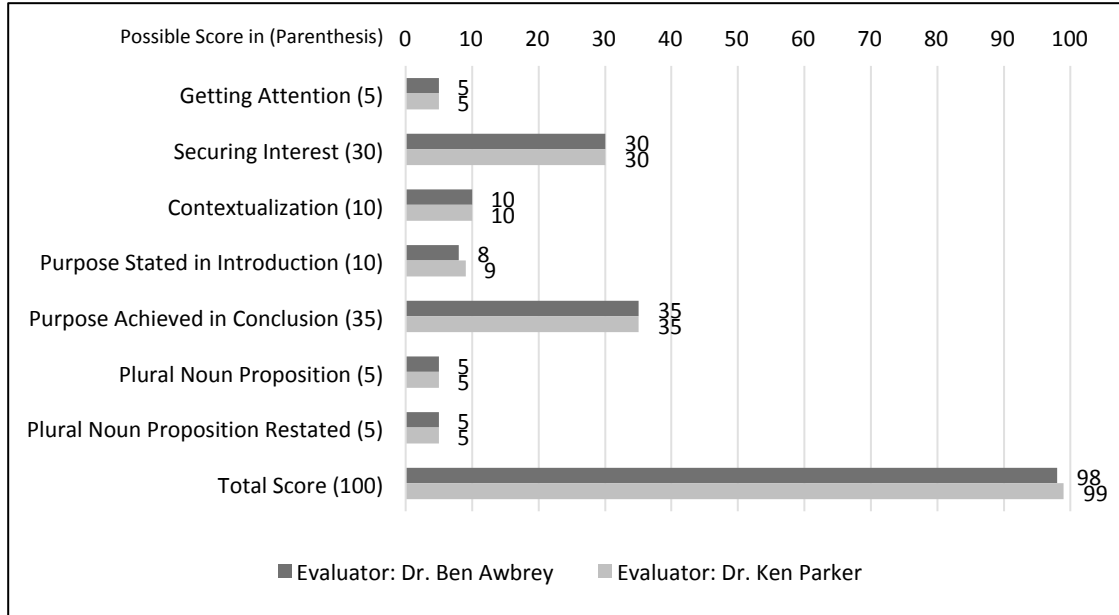


FIGURE 69

SERMON 11 EVALUATION  
 “Genuine Faith” (Phil 3:1-11)—(2018-09-30)

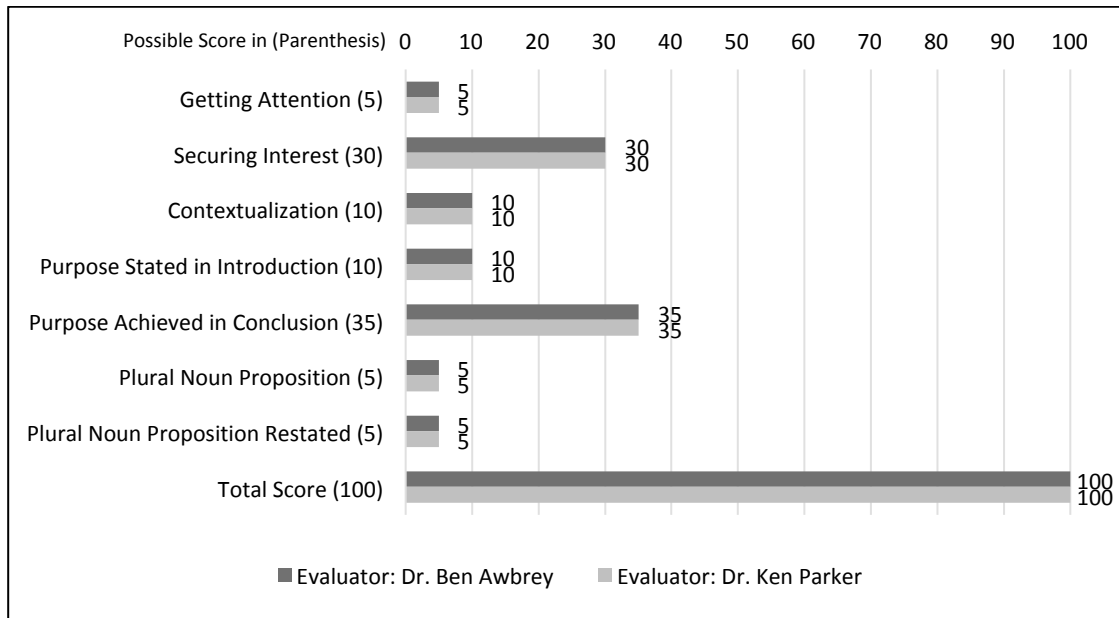


FIGURE 70

SERMON 12 EVALUATION  
 “Pursuing the Prize” (Phil 3:12-16)—(2018-10-07)

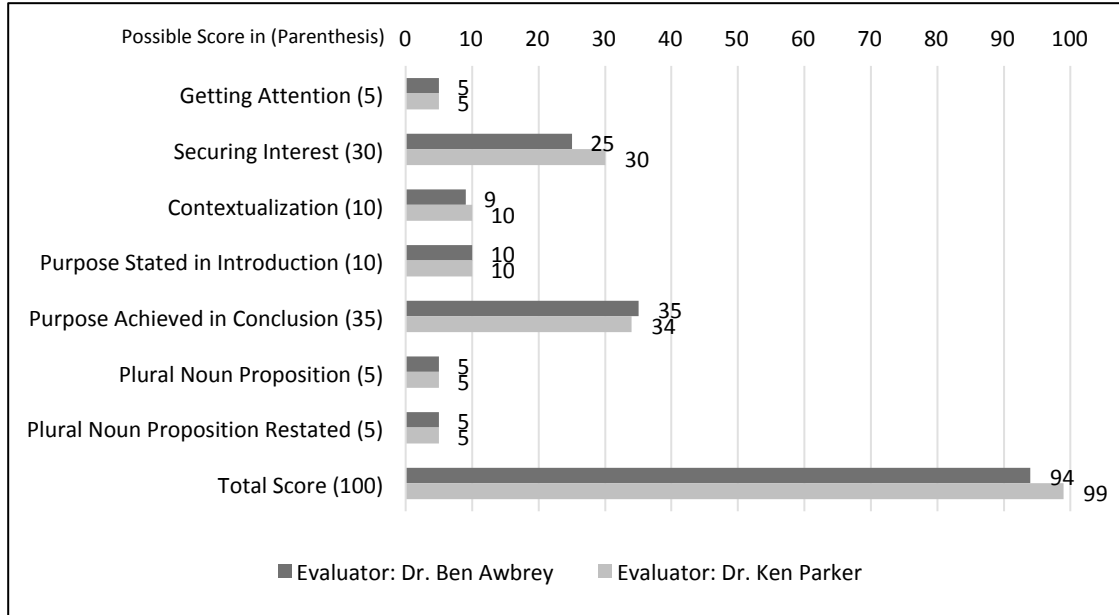


FIGURE 71

SERMON 13 EVALUATION  
 “Reaching the Prize” (Phil 3:17-21)—(2018-10-14)

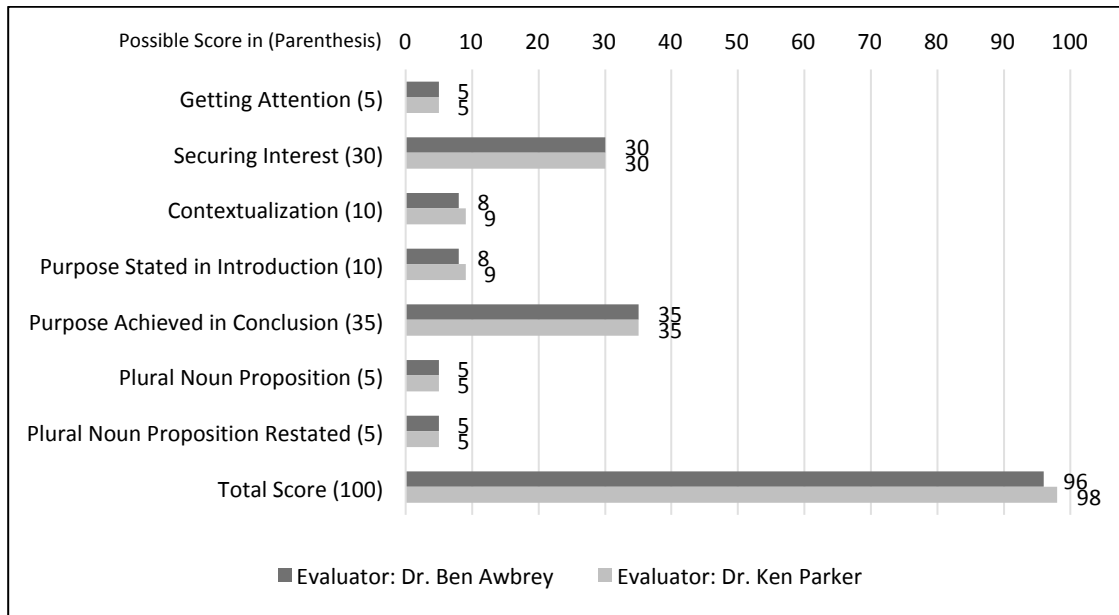


FIGURE 72

SERMON 14 EVALUATION  
 “Standing Firm in Unity and Peace” (Phil 4:1-7)—(2018-10-21)

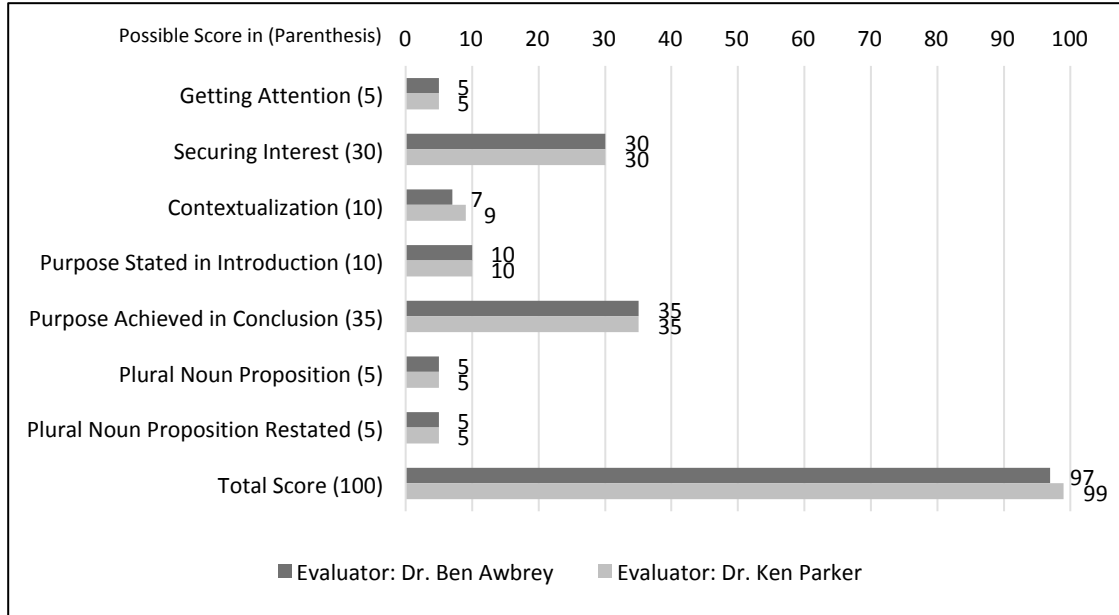
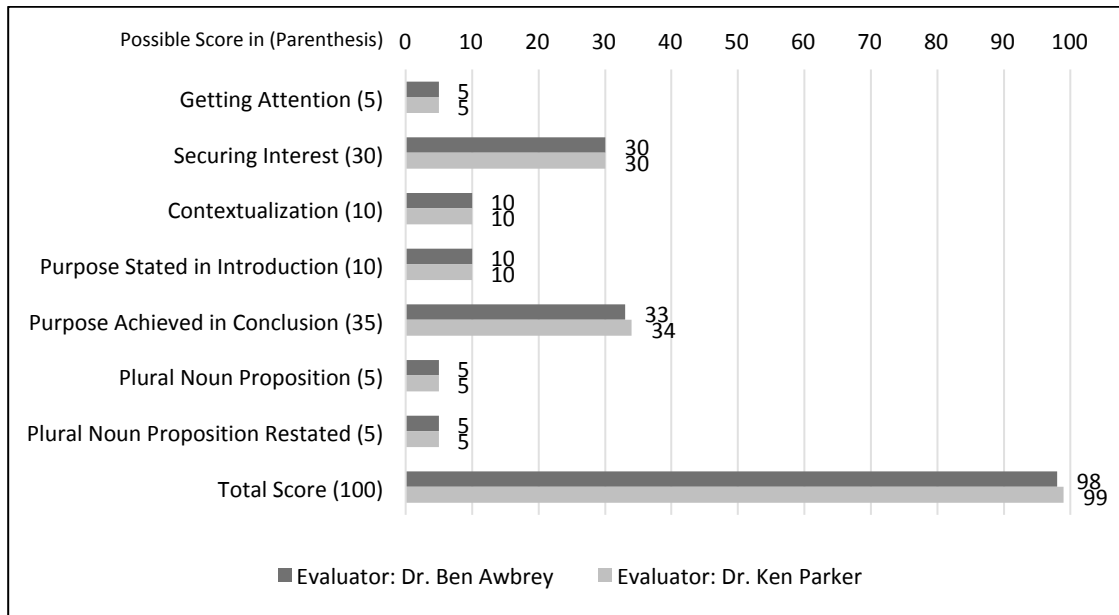


FIGURE 73

SERMON 15 EVALUATION  
 “Godly Thinking—Godly Practice” (Phil 4:8-9)—(2018-10-28)



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## MINISTERIAL

Minister of Music/Education, Kentshire Baptist Church, Houston, Texas (1983-1987)  
Minister of Music, Lake Highlands Baptist Church, The Colony, Texas (1987-1988)  
Minister of Music, Royal Oaks Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas (1990-1991)  
Senior Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Cuero, Texas (1991-1994)  
Associate Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Dayton, Texas (1994-1996)  
Senior Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Dayton, Texas (1996-2008)  
Senior Pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Bowie, Texas (2008-present)

## PROFESSIONAL

Discipleship Director, Trinity River Baptist Association, Liberty, Texas (1994-2008)  
Executive Director, Jeremiah 20:9 Ministries, Bowie, Texas (2008-present)  
Vice-Moderator, Harvest Baptist Association, Decatur, Texas (2011-2012)  
Moderator, Harvest Baptist Association, Decatur, Texas (2012-2014)  
Tellers Committee, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (2003)  
Education Commission, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (2011-2012)  
Trustee, Criswell College, Dallas, Texas (2013-present)  
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Associate Member, Evangelical Theological Society (1987-present)