

Of First Importance:
The Power and the Promise of the Sermon Introduction

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODCUTION

Statement of the Problem

“What’s the best way,” asked a young preacher of an older one, “to get the attention of the congregation?” “Give ‘em something to attend to,” was the gruff reply.¹ Preachers are challenged to obtain and hold the attention of their hearers. John Medina, whose research interests focus on genes involved in human brain development and psychiatric disorders, offered suggestions on how “communicators of the gospel” can engage and hold the attention of their audiences more effectively. Medina spoke at a forum for church leaders in 2006 to share some of his insight. Medina stated that the most important principle is what he called the “well duh” principle: Make it interesting. Jennifer Gilnett said, “God created us so that if we are interested in something, we will learn it better.”² The pressure to engage an audience is real for some who stand in the pulpit each week to deliver the message of the Lord.

¹ John Albert Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 98.

² Jennifer Gilnett, “Brain Science, Attention Spans, and Ministry,” *Response* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 35.

The world's need to hear the Gospel is urgent, just as it was in Martin Luther's, Augustine's, or Paul's era.³ Believers have been given the command to "go and make disciples" (Matt. 28). Some ministers might be challenged to find ways to hold the attention of their audiences so that the message of Jesus can be heard. The purpose of this study is to examine the preaching of various influential ministers with reference to their ability to hold the attention of an audience in order to develop a plan to improve the introductory skill of the pastor of Brumley Baptist Church.

Description of the Problem

According to Noel Holston, "live, uninterrupted" coverage of sporting events was something networks would strive for and brag about. However, it seems that live television moves at too slow of a pace. Live broadcasting requires a patience that many viewers do not seem to have.⁴ Seemingly, the American attention span has decreased. The *Short Attention Span Film Festival* features the work of sixty-one artists, filmmakers, and technicians who primarily work in the television or computer industry, where two minutes is the length of a German opera. Jerry Carroll believed that some of the short films are not worth watching, but their brevity is the beauty of the form.⁵

³ Albert Mohler, *He is Not Silent* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2008), 133.

⁴ Noel Holston and Staff Writer, "NBC Plays to Short Attention Span," *Star Tribune* (July 31, 1996), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/426714219?accountid=12193>.

⁵ Jerry Carroll, "Don't Blink, You'll Miss It/Short Attention Span Festival Limits Films to Two Minutes," *San Francisco Chronicle (Pre-1997 Fulltext)*, (Sep. 26, 1996), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/303495152?accountid=12193>.

Even the definition of attention span seems to change rapidly. An attention span is the length of time a person can concentrate on a task, activity, or idea without being distracted or the mind wandering.⁶ People with long attention spans are able to concentrate and absorb details in a conversation or meeting and as a result are able to make informed and intelligent decisions rather than those with a short attention span.⁷ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defined an attention span as the length of time during which one (as an individual or a group) is able to concentrate or remain interested.⁸ Although there is no scientific consensus, some experts believe a normal attention span is three to five minutes per year of a child's age. This means that a five-year old should stay on task for at least fifteen minutes.⁹ Steven Yantis, a professor of psychological and brain sciences at Johns Hopkins University stated, "In fact, scientists don't even use the term 'attention span.'"¹⁰

Some might argue that being distracted is not a flaw. In other eras, distractibility was not considered shameful. Rather, it was praised as autonomy, exuberance, and

⁶ "Attention Span Reducing Due to Modern Gadgets Analysis," *AllAfrica.com* (June 13, 2012), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1020432765?accountid=12193>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, eleventh ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003), Logos Research Systems (accessed January 2014).

⁹ Valerie Strauss, "Short Attention Span Theater: Educators at All Levels Mix Activities into Classroom Discussions to Keep Students Focused on Subject at Hand," *The Washington Post* (Nov. 19, 2002): 0, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/409343523?accountid=12193>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

versatility. To be brooding, morbid, obsessive, or easily mesmerized was thought to be worse than being distracted.¹¹ In *Moby-Dick*, Starbuck tried to distract Ahab from his monomania with evocations of family life in Nantucket. Under the spell of “a cruel, remorseless emperor” -- his own single-mindedness -- Ahab stayed his fatal course. Ahab's doom came from his “undistractibility.”¹² While some might argue the pros and cons of distraction, its existence is evident.

Importance of the Problem

Elias Aboujaoude, director of Stanford University’s Impulse Control Disorders Clinic, stated, “If our attention span constricts to the point where we can only take information in 140-character sentences, then that doesn't bode too well for our future.” Aboujaoude continued, “The more we become used to just sound bites and tweets, the less patient we will be with more complex, more meaningful information. And I do think we might lose the ability to analyze things with any depth and nuance. Like any skill, if you don't use it, you lose it.”¹³ The value in getting one’s attention is evident in numerous areas of life. Hearing the message of the Gospel is one of those areas. Ministers need time in the pulpit to declare the council of the Lord to their congregants. With shorter attention spans, this task has become difficult for some.

¹¹ Virginia Heffernan, “When Did Attention Get that Span,” *International Herald Tribune* (Nov. 22, 2010): 15, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/807577310?accountid=12193>.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Benny Evangelista, “How's Your Attention Span? A Reliance on Computer Programs could be Spell-Checking our Brains Out,” *Townsville Bulletin* (May 14, 2010): 210, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/276277060?accountid=12193>.

Shorter attention spans also impact the church. A minister is charged with sharing the Good News of the Gospel. This is the most important message that man will hear. The destiny of his eternal soul hangs in the balance of how he will respond to the call of the Word. If a minister cannot get his attention, he might not hear the message. As Paul says in Romans 10:14, “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?”

The Problem in Biblical Perspective

John F. Kennedy said the only reason to give a speech is to change the world.¹⁴ Perhaps no other kind of speech contains the potential for changing the world than does a sermon. Preaching is the human presentation, through the Holy Spirit’s power, of God’s acts of salvation through Jesus Christ.¹⁵ This proclamation of God’s revelation functions as God’s chosen instrument for bringing individuals to salvation by grace, although its message of a crucified Messiah seems to be foolishness to people of worldly wisdom and an offense to Jews (1 Cor. 1:21–23).¹⁶

¹⁴ Alexei Kaptelev, *Presentation Secrets: Do What You Never thought Possible with Your Presentations* (Indianapolis, IN: John Wiley, 2011), *eBook Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2014).

¹⁵ Craig Skinner, “Preaching,” C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, and T. C. Butler, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), Logos Research Systems (accessed January 2014).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Preaching is a characteristic of Christianity.¹⁷ Telling the story of God dates back to the beginning of Jewish oral history. Accurate oral histories were common in the Ancient Near East where writing materials were expensive and difficult to carry.¹⁸ The first Christian preachers and audiences, as well as background and spiritual affinities, were Jewish.¹⁹

Proclamation often is viewed as proclaiming the gospel message—the “Good News” of salvation and transformation through Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10; Luke 24:47; Eph. 1:13).²⁰ Good news bears repeating and being reminded of what believers have in Christ can be beneficial.²¹ Oswald Chambers stated, “Jesus Christ obtained His illustrations from His Father’s handiwork, from sparrows and flowers, things that none of us dream of noticing; we take our illustrations from things that compel attention.”²²

John Broadus said, “Preaching is peculiar, and is a peculiarly Christian institution.”²³ God has chosen the foolish things of the world to share His message (1

¹⁷ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 1.

¹⁸ Robert James Utley, *Old Testament Survey: Genesis–Malachi* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 63.

¹⁹ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 9.

²⁰ D. Story, *Engaging the Closed Minded: Presenting Your Faith to the Confirmed Unbeliever* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 14.

²¹ Lawrence O. Richards, *The Bible Reader’s Companion*, electronic ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 886.

²² Oswald Chambers, *The Moral Foundation of Life: A Series of Talks on the Ethical Principles of the Christian Life* (Hants, UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1936).

²³ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 1.

Cor. 1:27). Men and women have been given the commission to share the gospel of God. Individuals should use their gifts and abilities to share this message. The kind of preacher one becomes could depend on the mental image of what a preacher is. John Koessler stated that listeners are more conscious of a speaker's image than they are of a sermon's line of reasoning or biblical content.²⁴ Seemingly, for better or for worse, style has overtaken substance in some areas. A minister who is engaged with culture likely will realize this and adjust his delivery accordingly. Koessler believed that a preacher's goal is to arrest attention and speak the truth.²⁵ Paul explained the need for diligent practice to improve Timothy's skills in the public reading of the Scriptures and in motivational teaching (1 Tim. 4:13–15). Paul noted that such responsibilities involved "hard labor" (1 Tim. 5:17).²⁶

Paul emphasized the need for careful attention to principles of communication in preaching. While he refused to adopt some of the cunning word craftiness of the secular rhetoricians of his day (2 Cor. 4:2; 1 Thess. 2:3, 5), he adapted his preaching to a variety of audiences and needs.²⁷

²⁴ John Koessler, "Prophet, Priest, or Stand-up Comedian: The Priestly Role of the Sermon," *Preaching* (July 2013): 23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Skinner, "Preaching," 1323.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Preaching is focused on the nature and will of God and His claims on all people. Expressed in prophecy, declaration, or teaching, it includes the proclamation of the way of salvation to unbelievers and instruction about the faith to believers.²⁸

The Old Testament mentions several prominent preachers. Noah, who warned of the impending flood and proclaimed God's ark of safety, was called a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). Solomon described himself as a preacher who taught "words of truth" (Ecc. 1:2; 12:9–10). At God's direction, Jonah made a preaching mission to Nineveh, declaring God's judgment and mercy (Jon. 3:2). Like Jonah, all of the prophets of the Old Testament were regarded as preachers.

In the New Testament, the gospel advanced in the area of preaching. The zeal generated by Pentecost, coupled with growing persecution of the young church, led the disciples to preach everywhere in the known world (Mark 16:20). With a sense of urgency, Jesus and the apostles preached in homes, by the seaside, on the temple steps, and in the synagogues. John the Baptist called for repentance in preparation for the Messiah's appearance (Matt. 3:11–12).²⁹

Through their preaching and teaching, the apostles and New Testament prophets laid the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20).³⁰ The gospel message is not a fable that

²⁸ Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009), Logos Research Systems (accessed January 2014).

²⁹ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, R. F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison, eds. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995), Logos Research Systems (accessed January 2014).

³⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 441.

men devised to deceive others. Rather, it is based on the historical truth of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.³¹ The Holy Spirit guided the passionate preaching of the first Christians. He brought about understanding in the lives of the hearers. Broadus believed that the key reason some worship services are cold and lifeless and the sermons within those services are without impact, is that the Holy Spirit is not present to give warmth and life.³²

Many words in the Bible convey the idea of preaching. Perhaps the most characteristic (occurring over sixty times) is *kēryssō*, “to proclaim as a herald.” Preaching is heralding; the message proclaimed is the glad tidings of salvation. While *kēryssō* indicates something about the activity of preaching, *euangelizomai*, “to bring good news,” (from the primitive *eus*, “good,” and the verb *angellō*, “to announce”), a common verb, used over fifty times in the New Testament, emphasizes the quality of the message itself.³³ These words add aspects of what a sermon should be and what a sermon should do. In particular focus is the idea that a sermon should lead people to respond to the call of God. Whenever the objective (of speaking the Word of the Lord) is used for the introduction, the preacher should convey a sense of intense earnestness.³⁴

³¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 758.

³² Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 17.

³³ R. H. Mounce, “Preaching,” D. R. W. Wood, et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 950.

³⁴ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 102.

Humans are responsible for the knowledge they have. God holds mankind responsible only for that which they know or could know (Rom. 1 and 2).³⁵ Dan Crawford, British missionary to Africa, said, “The heathen are sinning against a flood of light.”³⁶ There is a need to carry the gospel to all men, for this is the only way they can be saved. Humans are not progressing religiously—they are progressively evil. Since Genesis 3, humanity has shown a propensity for sin.³⁷ God’s attitude toward the sin of mankind is not one of tolerance. He does not hold man accountable for what may be reasonably expected of him in view of man’s nature as a sinner. If God did, His holiness and purity would be soiled by complicity with one’s guilt. God hates man’s sin. His wrath is a holy aversion to all that is evil. Wrath is as essential to divine righteousness as love and mercy.³⁸

Since preaching calls for faith, it is important that its issues are not obscured with eloquent wisdom and lofty words (1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1–4).³⁹ Albert Mohler stated, “Time is

³⁵ Robert James Utley, *The Gospel According to Paul: Romans*, vol. 5, *Study Guide Commentary Series* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 1:20.

³⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 519.

³⁷ Utley, *The Gospel According to Paul*, Ro 1:21.

³⁸ Edward E. Hindson and Woodrow Michael Kroll, eds., *KJV Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 2209.

³⁹ Mounce, “Preaching,” 951.

short, God’s wrath is certain, and eternity hangs in the balance.”⁴⁰ People cannot believe unless they can hear, and they cannot hear without a preacher (Rom. 10).⁴¹

In some instances, church attendees quit listening to the pastor before the pastor finishes preaching. Perhaps, part of this is due to the short attention span created by the media. In addition, some believe that if individuals talk enough, they will come to discover important truths.⁴² The objective is and should be to establish a connection between the pastor and those in the pews that begins from the first words of the message.

The way a minister introduces a sermon is significant. His opening words set the tone for the story he wishes to tell.⁴³ If the preacher is to speak for God, he must go to the place where God has spoken most clearly, the Bible.⁴⁴ All four gospel writers were charged with telling the story of Jesus and each of them introduced the “greatest story” in different ways. The four gospel books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—tell the story of Jesus. In some ways the four books are quite similar. In other ways they are quite distinctive. The first three gospels, called the Synoptics (which comes from a Greek word

⁴⁰ Mohler, *He is Not Silent*, 138.

⁴¹ David S. Dockery, “The Pauline Letters,” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, David S. Dockery, ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 550.

⁴² Roger Ellsworth, *Opening Up James, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 56.

⁴³ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 166.

⁴⁴ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 18.

that means they saw the ministry of Jesus from a similar point of view), have much material in common. For example, over 600 of Mark's 661 verses are in Matthew. Approximately 380 verses in Luke are similar to Mark's material.⁴⁵ Matthew's gospel does not begin with a straightforward introduction. Rather, it begins with a genealogy, a description of the ancestors of Jesus. This might seem to be a strange way to begin a story, but it is an important way of leading into the most important story ever told.⁴⁶ The gospels are a unique literary genre. They are not biographical. They are not historical narrative. They are a selective theological, highly structured literary type. Each of the gospel writers chose from the life events and teachings of Jesus to present Him to their target audience uniquely. The gospels were evangelistic tracts.⁴⁷

Each of the four gospels has its own emphasis. Matthew's book is called "the gospel of the King" and was written primarily for Jewish readers. Mark's book, "the gospel of the Servant," was written to instruct Roman readers. Luke wrote primarily to the Greeks and presented Christ as the perfect "Son of man." John's appeal is universal, and his message is, "This is the Son of God." No one gospel is able to tell the entire story.⁴⁸ Each of the writers shaped the telling of his story to accomplish particular

⁴⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, Darrell L. Bock, Christopher L. Church, and James E. White, "The Gospels" in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, David S. Dockery, ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 397.

⁴⁶ Iain D. Campbell, *Opening Up Matthew, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2008), 22.

⁴⁷ Robert James Utley, *The First Christian Primer: Matthew, Study Guide Commentary Series*, vol. 9 (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 3.

⁴⁸ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Matt.

purposes. For example, Matthew focused on Jesus as the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. Mark presented Jesus as an active Person, a powerful Minister, and a Suffering Servant. Luke portrayed Jesus as the Savior for all people. John specifically explained the purpose in writing his gospel (see John 20:31). He wanted his readers to understand that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The knowledge of who Jesus is and what He has done is deeper because more than one gospel is available.⁴⁹

The majority of every gospel account of Jesus' life is concerned with events that took place in Jerusalem during the week before Christ's death. One can distinguish what took place each day of that week and sense not only the growing tension, but the anguish and subsequent triumph of its culminating events: the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ None of the four gospels is a biography in the modern sense of the word. In fact, the apostle John doubted that a complete biography of Jesus ever could be written (John 21:25). There are many details about the earthly life of Jesus that are not provided in the gospels.⁵¹ Each author of the gospels told the same story, but told it in different ways. This is evident from the first words, or the introductions, of each story.

The New Testament provides the same assurances. Since the beginning of the Christian church, the pattern was to rely on Scripture completely. Preaching has been the

⁴⁹ Blomberg, Bock, Church, and White, "The Gospels," 397.

⁵⁰ Lawrence O. Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, electronic ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 597.

⁵¹ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Matt.

heart of what the church is and what the church does. The disciples came with no obscure or abstruse doctrine. They were to be “witnesses” of those things which they had seen and heard. They were moved by the Holy Spirit to tell their story of Jesus Christ in the most effective way, to reach men’s hearts.⁵² Even while the disciples waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit in obedience to the command of Christ, they prepared themselves to preach. They prayed and spent time alone with God.

A. B. Bruce stated:

Besides praying, the waiting disciples doubtless spent part of their time in reading the Scriptures. This is not stated; but it may be assumed as a matter of course, and it may also be inferred from the manner in which Peter handled Old Testament texts in his address to the people on the day of Pentecost. That Pentecostal sermon bears marks of previous preparation. It was in one sense an extempore effusion, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but in another it was the fruit of careful study.⁵³

The apostle Paul made the gospel the central focus of his writing and ministry. The major purpose which Paul displays in Romans 1:16–6:10 is to set forth, precisely and step by step, the five key elements of that message which he called “the gospel.”⁵⁴

Furthermore, the entire New Testament consists of the words of God given from the Holy Spirit. The claim for inspiration in the New Testament is derived from the fact that Jesus

⁵² H. T. Sell, *Studies in Early Church History* (Willow Grove, PA: Woodlawn Electronic Publishing, 1998).

⁵³ A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve or Passages out of the Gospels, Exhibiting the Twelve Disciples of Jesus Under Discipline for the Apostleship* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), 539.

⁵⁴ B. E. Northrup, *True Evangelism: Paul's Presentation of the First Five Steps of the Soul-Winner in Romans* (Logos Software, 1997).

promised His disciples that He would guide them into “all the truth” by the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ The truth that is proclaimed in the New Testament must be preached and proclaimed, and perhaps the best way to do that is in a verse-by-verse account of what the Lord has said.

The Problem in Contemporary Thought

Research has been conducted that addresses a range of brain processes which allows a person to focus on a single task and remain focused. However, further research is needed for more understanding. Multiple factors contribute to the ability to stay focused. Patricia Carpenter, professor at Carnegie Mellon University's Center for the Neural Basis of Cognition, stated, “It is not something hard-wired into the brain.”⁵⁶ Debra Van Dalen, sixth-grade teacher at Greenville Middle School in Wisconsin, noted, “Time of day, day of year, special events, age of child, weather, interest in subject matter, surroundings, diet, health, exercise, chemistry of the group, peer relationships, room temperature -- these are just some of the factors that impact attention.”⁵⁷ John Ratey, an associate clinical professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, used the phrase “acquired attention deficit disorder” to describe the way technology is affecting the brain.⁵⁸ Recognizing that the American public and media seem to have a relatively

⁵⁵ N. L. Geisler and W. E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, rev. and expanded (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 97.

⁵⁶ Strauss, “Short Attention Span Theater,” <http://search.proquest.com/docview/409343523?accountid=12193>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Evangelista, “How's Your Attention Span,” <http://search.proquest.com/docview/276277060?accountid=12193>.

short attention span, Anthony Downs suggested that a systematic “issue-attention cycle” operates with most key public issues.⁵⁹

According to the issue-attention cycle hypothesis, most crises do not reflect changes in conditions as much as they show a systematic heightening of public interest in, and then boredom with, various major issues. Downs commented that the cycle is based both in the nature of certain domestic problems and in the way major media interacts with the public.⁶⁰ The conclusion of this research is that not only do individuals quickly tire of a subject, but the public as a whole has developed a sense of attention deficit.

Florence King explained that society gives obsessive attention to disasters and tragedies so that many seek respite in forgetfulness.⁶¹ This boredom is not contained strictly within vain pursuits. Problems with attention also are prevalent within the educational community. A poll of 1,000 students conducted for the technology company, Olympus, revealed that they were unable to concentrate during lectures, with a third of the students confessing that they could concentrate for only ten minutes.⁶² Results of a study in the British Educational Research Journal revealed that only two percent of

⁵⁹ Carol A. Bodensteiner, “Predicting Public and Media Attention Span for Social Issues,” *Public Relations Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1995): 14, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/222385774?accountid=12193>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Florence King, “Honey, I Shrunk the Attention Span,” *National Review* (June 26, 1995): 72, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/229692892?accountid=12193>.

⁶² “University Students’ Average Attention Span of just 10 Minutes,” *Asian News International* (Jan. 12, 2010), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/436082554?accountid=12193>.

college students stated that no part of the lectures they listened to were boring. In fact, thirty percent stated that most or all of their lectures were boring, leading them to daydream, doodle, color in letters on handouts, pass notes, talk to the person next to them, or find ways to leave the lecture.⁶³ Lecturing could be compared to delivering a sermon. After all, lecturing has been defined as any time a teacher is talking and students are listening or, in the case of preaching, whenever a preacher is speaking and congregants are listening.⁶⁴ In the media, messages and images tend to be delivered quickly, breeding a short attention span.⁶⁵ The length of this span places the importance on the speaker being able to obtain one's attention quickly.

Based on the culture and background of the day, the skill to engage an audience and keep them listening is important. Andres Tapia, associate editor for Pacific News Service, in an article titled "Reaching the First Post-Christian Generation," noted that "baby busters" (people born between 1963 and 1977) increasingly are rejecting "modernism" (the assumption that truth is rational and objective) in favor of "postmodernism" (truth is subjective and relative). Tapia explained:

According to experts it is no longer enough to present the gospel's propositional truths. Rather, experts say another communication device effective for reaching this generation is storytelling. Evangelist Leighton Ford ... stresses the power of

⁶³ Sandi Mann and Andrew Robinson, "Boredom in the Lecture Theatre: An Investigation into the Contributors, Moderators and Outcomes of Boredom amongst University Students," *British Educational Research Journal* 35.2 (April 2009): 243-258.

⁶⁴ Joseph Lowman, *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988), 96.

⁶⁵ Anne Newel, Interview by free-lance writer, *Storyteller 'Storytelling is an Exercise in Stretching the Attention Span.'* (May 1994), Chicago Tribune (Pre-1997 Fulltext), July 17, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/283858834?accountid=12193>.

narrative preaching, particularly stories focused on Jesus. The use of personal stories where the teacher makes him or herself vulnerable is ... an effective means of connecting with these young adults.⁶⁶

Tapia believed that there are people who are going to be more receptive to evangelistic techniques that employ emotive avenues rather than “propositional truths.”⁶⁷

Research for this project was conducted on those who have been able to obtain the attention of an audience. Adlai Stevenson once opened an address to students at Princeton with these words, “I understand I am here to speak and you are here to listen. Let’s hope we both finish at the same time.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Andres Tapia, “Reaching the First Post-Christian Generation,” *Christianity Today* (12 September 1994): 21.

⁶⁷ Story, *Engaging the Closed Minded*, 92.

⁶⁸ Ellsworth, *Opening Up James, Opening Up Commentary*, 56.

CHAPTER TWO
PROJECT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Summary of the Project

Description of the Project

The preaching style and content of some influential preachers was analyzed with a view toward applying their techniques to a contemporary pulpit and audience. The objective of this application measured the congregation's attention on the current preacher (the project director). Particular attention was given to the introductions of sermons. Haddon Robinson believed that the way in which a minister enters into the pulpit can reveal valuable information about him to the audience.⁶⁹ The men studied for this project are effective preachers who have differing styles. Some of their stylistic skills were employed in order to gauge the effectiveness of these styling tools in the current ministry context of the author.

Sermon preparation requires the clergy member to bridge a historical gap of more than 1,600 years between contemporary and biblical times in order to interpret and apply

⁶⁹ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1980), 166.

Scripture to contemporary life.⁷⁰ Ministers who were successful in gaining and holding the attention of others were researched.

The Rationale

Karl Barth stated that the gospel (spoken word) and the Bible (the written word) serve as vehicles to transport the hearer to Jesus (the revealed word).⁷¹ Sermons should direct one to Jesus. The mandate of Scripture is to preach Christ, and Him crucified (1 Cor. 1:23, 2:2). The message is important. This aspect of the message addresses the content, as well as the delivery. The anticipation is that a well-delivered sermon, from introduction to conclusion, will have the most impact for the gospel in the lives of the congregants.

Another important aspect of the message has to do with those who are hearing it. Hearing God's saving message has a history. When Moses returned from exile for killing an Egyptian, God knew His people were hurting (Exod. 4).⁷² God knows what His people need to hear. The Old Testament contains numerous examples of prophets who carried the right message at the right time to God's chosen people. An effective minister will seek the Lord in order to determine what the people need in his area of influence.

⁷⁰ Daniel Roland, "Interpreting Scripture in Contemporary Times: A Study of a Clergy Member's Sense-Making Behavior in Preparing the Sunday Sermon," Order no. 3308636, Emporia State University (2008), in PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304813235?accountid=12193>.

⁷¹ Robert Smith, Jr., *Doctrine that Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008), 48.

⁷² Roger E. VanHarn, *Pew Rights: For People Who Listen to Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 6.

While the sermon preparation must begin in the Scriptures, the message must begin with the audience. Michael Lukaszewski believed that during the first five minutes of a sermon, a preacher needs to find common ground with the audience, which does not happen by providing context for a passage or even sharing a personal story.⁷³ Rather, it comes from sympathizing with the situations of individuals in the audience. In addition, one should resist the temptation to believe people care about the sermon simply because a minister is delivering it or because it is in the Bible. A passion for a topic does not translate to the congregation automatically. They need to know why the message matters. They need to understand why they should listen. During the introduction, an audience forms impressions of the speaker that often determine whether or not they will accept his message.⁷⁴ Therefore, emphasis was placed on the introduction during this study.

When a man preaches in a biblical manner, he communicates a concept.⁷⁵ The concept is not chosen by the preacher or by the audience, but by the direction of the Holy Spirit. God's perfect Word is the standard, and the things that are addressed there become the things that are addressed from the pulpit. The hope for preachers is that what is addressed in the pulpit becomes what is addressed in the pews. Preaching is exhortation, given in the hope that a change in the mind, and ultimately a change in the actions and lives of the hearers, will take place. This concept is twofold. The concept,

⁷³ Michael Lukaszewski, "The Two Most Important Words in a Sermon," *Preaching Rocket* (blog), June 25, 2012, <http://therocketcompany.com/preaching/2012/06/25/the-two-most-important-words-in-a-sermon/>.

⁷⁴ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 159.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

first and foremost is the gospel. As Charles Spurgeon said, “Take your text and then make a beeline to the cross.”⁷⁶ A faithful preaching of the Word will find a picture of redemption in Scripture. Jesus is the theme of the Bible. Jesus is there, in every verse on every page.

The second part of the concept is found through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of the passage within its own context.⁷⁷ Hermeneutics is an important part of expository preaching. A verse cannot mean something different to modern hearers than it did to the original audience. A minister should determine the original meaning and then carry those principles to the modern day audience. Once these principles have been determined, they can be translated into situations that apply to individuals in their daily lives. This process begins with an effective introduction. If a preacher loses his hearers at the beginning of a message, it is likely that they will not glean enough from the message to get to the point of application.

Truth is complete, final, unchanging, and applies to everyone equally. Truth is not capricious nor is it relative and determined by individuals or cultures.⁷⁸ The truth of Scripture rises above outside props. Truth is higher than any culture, nationality, or background. The truth of God’s perfect Word does not need support from other sources. J. Calvin stated, “For the truth is vindicated in opposition to every doubt, when,

⁷⁶ Lewis Drummond, “The Secrets of Spurgeon’s Preaching,” *Christianity Today* (blog), June 3, 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/juneweb-only/52.0.html>.

⁷⁷ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 22.

⁷⁸ D. Story, *Christianity On the Offense: Responding to the Beliefs and Assumptions of Spiritual Seekers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998), 35.

unsupported by foreign aid, it has its sole sufficiency in itself.”⁷⁹ The Bible is sufficient for the knowledge of eternal destiny and for use in daily lives as well. The statement of faith of the Evangelical Theological Society is: “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs [original documents].”⁸⁰ This indicates that the basis for one’s faith is perfect. The original giving of Scripture by God was perfect. The term in Scripture is God-breathed (from *theopneustos*), which is translated “inspired by God” in its only New Testament usage (2 Tim. 3:16).⁸¹

The Goals

The study of the aforementioned objectives was conducted in the following manner. The initial part of this project was a study of the preaching styles of Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Billy Sunday. These men were chosen based on several factors, including but not limited to, the influence of their ministry, preaching style, and historical standing. The project director anticipated finding several characteristics that he could refer to from their preaching. Attention was given to the introductions of the sermons preached by these men. Second, the project director surveyed his congregation to gauge his own ministry context. This survey became a baseline for the ability to gain and hold

⁷⁹ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁸⁰ R. L. Harris, *Exploring the Basics of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 10.

⁸¹ N. L. Geisler and W. E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, rev. and expanded (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 34.

the attention of the congregation. Peter had to learn to listen before speaking.⁸² The project director believed that this was an important step in order to establish the current attention level before any new skills or techniques were introduced. Third, once a baseline was established, the project director preached a series of sermons to his congregation highlighting the new skills gleaned from the study of other styles. After each sermon, the survey was taken again to judge the effectiveness of each skill on an individual basis.

The Strategies

The Setting

The setting for the survey and sermon series was Brumley Baptist Church in Conway, Arkansas. The sermon series was based on the book of Genesis, particularly the areas of Genesis that address hearing and applying the Word of God. The series was conducted over a period of eight weeks. The book of Genesis was the next book the author had placed on his preaching calendar. By keeping with routine, the desire was that it would facilitate the most accurate research from the congregation.

The Series

Several weeks before the session, a letter was sent to the church congregation explaining the process. The director believed a detailed explanation of the project, as well as the entire Doctor of Ministry program, would be helpful to the congregation. Providing additional detail allowed for some context of why the project director chose

⁸² Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 19.

this particular subject and application. During the time the project was implemented, the project director preached through the book of Genesis.⁸³

The Evaluation Tools

Surveys

A qualitative study was conducted with the congregation using similar versions of an assessment survey. Before the sermon series began, a survey was given to all congregational participants in order to establish the effectiveness of the project director before any skills were added from the research of this study. The minister knew the attention scale of his congregants. Once the data was tabulated, the sermon series was preached to the congregation. Each week one skill was added to the message. For example, the research might reveal that movement on the stage results in a higher attention span. If that is the case, the preacher might utilize movement significantly the first week. A survey would be conducted after that message to judge the effectiveness of movement only. This would continue over the subsequent weeks.

The surveys were constructed to determine the importance of multi-sensory appeal. The three areas were attention, comprehension, and retention.⁸⁴ These surveys were conducted on a weekly basis, culminating in a final survey at the conclusion of the series. The same structured survey was given each week. At the conclusion of the

⁸³ Information on the sermons preached will be contained within the Implementation portion of this research project, including all sermon research and outlines.

⁸⁴ Rick Blackwood, *The Power of Multi-Sensory Preaching and Teaching: Increase Attention, Comprehension, and Retention* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 23-24.

project, all data was collected and used for comparison. Since the surveys were identical, the collection and comparison of data was facilitated easily. The anticipation was that the skills of some of the influential preachers of the past would translate to higher attention rates in this contemporary time.

Demographics of the Project

The Ministry Context

The ministry context for this project was Brumley Baptist Church (BBC) located in Conway, Arkansas.⁸⁵ Brumley Baptist Church averages sixty people in attendance during Sunday morning worship services. BBC has a consistent setting for ministry and there is no outstanding church debt. Presently, BBC is not handling any major difficulties. The project director, in his mid-thirties, has served as pastor of BBC since February 2012.

One of the project director's goals since becoming pastor of BBC has been to ensure that BBC is up to date in as many ways as possible. The church has accomplished a significant amount of work on the physical plant of the church in order to bring the building's electrical system into code. Two projectors and a computer system were installed in the sanctuary to help with worship and vacation Bible school. The majority of the congregation is retirement age. One reason the church members called this pastor to BBC was in hopes that the church could impact more people in the younger demographic.

⁸⁵ <http://www.brumleybaptistchurch.org/>.

The Project Director

The project director serves at BBC as a bi-vocational pastor. He has been serving in this capacity for slightly more than two years. He also has been employed full-time since 2004 as the high school principal at Conway Christian School in Conway, Arkansas.⁸⁶ A passion for teaching, whether in the classroom or in the pulpit has characterized the project director's life. The results of this study will be utilized in both contexts to help him attain and hold attention while teaching and preaching the gospel.

The Project Participants

Participants of this project consisted of members of BBC. A random selection of attendants was made each week. Surveys were placed into bulletins that were distributed before Sunday School. The members of the meeting who received a survey were asked to complete it and place it in the offering plate at the end of the service. Although the project director altered his delivery method each week, the congregation was not told of the changes to be made. The project director believed that by conducting this "blind" research, the results would be more accurate. If the congregation knew that the pastor intended to be more animated one week, they might over-emphasize that trait. The author wanted them to observe the sermon as a whole and make conclusions based on that. The participants were given the same survey to complete each week (see Appendix A). Since the sample size was small in numbers of people and amount of time that would be evaluated, the survey was constructed in a simplistic manner. A small series of rated

⁸⁶ <http://www.conwaychristianschool.org/>.

questions was used to determine how well the introduction, and the skills involved from the researched men, captured the attention of the members of BBC.

The project director focused upon the following three prominent ministers: Charles H. Spurgeon, Billy Sunday, and John MacArthur. Spurgeon, known as the “Prince of Preachers,” had a significant amount of influence on the people of his time, as well as on preaching itself. Sunday was one of the first influential American evangelists and did a significant amount of work to advance preaching in America. MacArthur was a modern preacher with a definitive style and significant influence. These men have many things in common such as their love for preaching and love for the Lord. Each one had an impact on their hearers and on the world as a whole. However, these men also utilized different methods in their preaching. The project director examined what made them different, yet effective, in the hope that he could utilize these skills in his own preaching ministry.

Seemingly, it would be impractical to copy all of the stylistic variations that Spurgeon, Sunday, and MacArthur brought to the pulpit. Certainly, there are many factors that contribute to gaining and holding the attention of an audience. The first few moments of various sermons were studied as a springboard to holding attention for the duration. The introduction to a message is among the most important elements of sermon preparation. Listeners are going to decide in the first thirty to sixty seconds whether to tune in or tune out what a minister is saying. Seldom does a pastor capture his audience if

his introduction is weak.⁸⁷ An introduction should command attention.⁸⁸ Robinson believed that ministers should not assume an audience eagerly awaits hearing from the Lord. This simply is not the case.⁸⁹ Rick Warren noted that the attention span in modern society has been reduced dramatically.⁹⁰ During the course of this study, certain time-tested techniques were isolated in order to garner attention from those in attendance.

Charles H. Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was England's best-known preacher for most of the second half of the nineteenth century.⁹¹ Discouragement is an occupational hazard of ministry, and many of God's workers are disheartened by small crowds and meager results. Charles Spurgeon could teach them a lesson. From the beginning, multitudes came to hear Spurgeon. When he assumed his London pastorate in 1854, the church had 232 members. Soon, so many were crowding his auditoriums that he sometimes asked his members not to attend the following Sunday in order to accommodate newcomers. He seldom preached to fewer than 6,000, and on one occasion

⁸⁷ Eugene Mason, "Powerful Sermon Introductions," *Pastor's Edge* (blog), October 22, 2011, <http://pastorsedge.myshopify.com/blogs/edgeblog/4391312-powerful-sermon-introductions> (accessed June 18, 2014).

⁸⁸ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 160.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Rick Warren, "Preaching to Shortened Attention Spans," *Preaching* (2012): 1, <http://www.preaching.com/sermons/11574242/> (accessed August 5, 2014).

⁹¹ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon: Treasury of David* (Philadelphia: OSNOVA, 2012), 1.

his audience numbered approximately 24,000—all before the invention of microphones. During his lifetime Spurgeon preached to approximately 10,000,000 people.⁹²

Spurgeon also became history's most widely-read preacher.⁹³ More materials have been written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author of any generation. The collection of his Sunday sermons stands as the largest set of books by a single author in the history of the church. He is called the "Prince of Preachers."⁹⁴

Ironically, Spurgeon himself is a testimony to the power of a small church. On Sunday, January 6, 1850, a blizzard hit England. Fifteen year-old Charles was unable to reach the church he usually attended. He turned down Artillery Street and ducked into a Primitive Methodist Church, finding only a few people standing around the stove. Even the preacher was unable to arrive. A thin man stood and read Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The speaker, trying to find something to say, kept repeating his text. Finally, he spied young Charles in the back. Pointing his bony finger at the boy, he cried, "Look, young man! Look! Look to Christ!"⁹⁵

⁹² Staff, "32 Things You May not Know about Charles Spurgeon," *Patheos* (blog), January 30, 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/borntoreform/2013/01/32-things-you-might-not-know-about-charles-spurgeon/> (accessed November 14, 2014).

⁹³ William Shisko, "The Riches of Spurgeon," www.opc.org (April 1998), <http://www.opc.org/OS/html/V8/Spurgeon.html#part2> (accessed September 15, 2014).

⁹⁴ Staff, "32 Things You May not Know about Charles Spurgeon," <http://www.patheos.com>.

⁹⁵ Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day: 365 Amazing and Inspiring Stories about Saints, Martyrs & Heroes*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997).

The young man did look, and Spurgeon later said, “As the snow fell on my road home from the little house of prayer, I thought every snowflake talked with me and told of the pardon I had found.” Arriving home, his mother saw his expression and exclaimed, “Something wonderful has happened to you.” Robert Morgan believed this proved that “smaller ponds often yield the biggest fish.”⁹⁶ Before he was twenty, Spurgeon had preached more than 600 times.⁹⁷

In 1854, just four years after his conversion, twenty year-old Spurgeon became pastor of London's famed New Park Street Church. The congregation quickly outgrew their building, moved to Exeter Hall, and then to Surrey Music Hall.⁹⁸ When Spurgeon arrived at New Park Street Church in 1854, there were 232 members. By the end of his pastorate thirty-eight years later, that number had increased to 5,311. Altogether, 14,460 people were added to the church during Spurgeon's tenure. The church was the largest independent congregation in the world.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Morgan, *On This Day*, electronic ed.

⁹⁷ “32 Things You May Not Know about Charles Spurgeon,” *Patheos* (blog), January 30, 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/borntoreform/2013/01/32-things-you-might-not-know-about-charles-spurgeon/> (accessed November 14, 2014).

⁹⁸ “About Charles H. Spurgeon,” *The Spurgeon Archive*, <http://www.spurgeon.org/aboutsp.htm> (accessed March 1, 2014).

⁹⁹ “32 Things You May Not Know about Charles Spurgeon,” <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/borntoreform/2013/01/32-things-you-might-not-know-about-charles-spurgeon/>.

Through the 1850s, he was “The Youthful Prodigy” who seemed to have stepped full-grown into the pulpit.¹⁰⁰ At the age of twenty the largest halls in London were filled to hear him. At twenty-one the newspapers spoke of him as “incomparably the most popular preacher of the day.”¹⁰¹ When he was twenty-three, 23,654 people heard him at a service in the Crystal Palace.¹⁰² In these venues, Spurgeon frequently preached to audiences numbering more than 10,000. In 1861, the congregation moved permanently to the newly constructed Metropolitan Tabernacle.¹⁰³

In the 1860s, Spurgeon’s work might be described best in terms of “The Advancement of Gospel Agencies.”¹⁰⁴ As word spread of his abilities, he was invited to preach throughout London and the nation. No chapel seemed large enough to hold those who wanted to hear the “the preaching sensation of London.”¹⁰⁵ He preached to tens of thousands in London’s greatest halls—Exeter, Surry Gardens, Agricultural. “Fits of depression come over most of us,” Spurgeon once told his students. He continued, “The

¹⁰⁰ “Banner Authors: Charles H.,” *Banner of Truth*, <http://banneroftruth.org/us/about/banner-authors/c-h-spurgeon/> (accessed March 17, 2014).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Staff, “Charles Spurgeon,” *Christianhistory.net* (August 8, 2008), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/pastorsandpreachers/spurgeon.html>.

strong are not always vigorous, the joyous are not always happy.”¹⁰⁶ Spurgeon himself was living proof, for he often suffered agonizing periods of depression. One of the worst occurred when he was twenty-two years old. His congregation had outgrown its building, so Spurgeon arranged to rent Royal Surrey Garden’s Music Hall, London’s most commodious and beautiful building, for Sunday night services. Surrey Hall usually accommodated secular concerts, carnivals, and circuses. Using it as a place of worship was unheard of in its day, and the news spread rapidly through London.¹⁰⁷

On Sunday morning, October 19, 1856, Spurgeon preached at New Park Street Chapel and stated:

I may be called to stand where the thunderclouds brew, where the lightnings play, and tempestuous winds are howling on the mountain top. Well, then, amidst dangers he will inspire me with courage; amidst toils he will make me strong; we shall be gathered together tonight where an unprecedented mass of people will assemble, perhaps from idle curiosity, to hear God’s Word; see what God can do, just when a cloud is falling on the head of him whom God has raised up to preach to you ...¹⁰⁸

That evening 12,000 people streamed into Surrey Hall and an additional 10,000 overflowed into the surrounding gardens. The services started, but as Spurgeon rose to pray, someone shouted, “Fire! Fire! The galleries are giving way!” There was no fire, but

¹⁰⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: Complete and Unabridged*, new ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 17.

¹⁰⁷ “Banner Authors: Charles H.,” *Banner of Truth*, <http://banneroftruth.org>.

¹⁰⁸ “Charles Spurgeon: Finest Nineteenth Century Preacher,” Christianitytoday.com (August 8, 2008), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/pastorsandpreachers/spurgeon.html?st art=2> (accessed March 9, 2014).

the crowd bolted in panic, and in the resulting stampede seven people were trampled to death and twenty-eight were hospitalized.¹⁰⁹

The young preacher, reeling in shock, was carried from the pulpit to a friend's house where he remained in seclusion for weeks. He wept by day and suffered terrifying dreams at night. Spurgeon later said, "My thoughts were all a case of knives, cutting my heart to pieces."¹¹⁰ At last, while meditating on Philippians 2:10, the Lord's Word began to restore his soul. This disaster, horrible as it was, vaulted Spurgeon to overnight fame as a preacher the world wanted to hear.¹¹¹ People such as Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone, members of the royal family, members of Parliament, author John Ruskin, Florence Nightingale, and General James Garfield who became president of the United States, attended his services.¹¹²

In 1861 his congregation, which kept extending his call, moved to the new Metropolitan Tabernacle which seated 5,600.¹¹³ The institutions he founded, and for which he remained responsible, included a college to train pastors, a publications

¹⁰⁹ Morgan, *On This Day*, electronic ed.

¹¹⁰ John Piper, "Charles Spurgeon: Preaching through Adversity," *Founders Journal Online* 23 (1996): 1, <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/journal/fj23/contents.html> (accessed March 2, 2014).

¹¹¹ Morgan, *On This Day*, electronic edition.

¹¹² "32 Things You May Not Know about Charles Spurgeon," <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/bortoreform/2013/01/32-things-you-might-not-know-about-charles-spurgeon/>.

¹¹³ "Charles Spurgeon: Finest Nineteenth Century Preacher," Christianitytoday.com, August 8, 2008, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/pastorsandpreachers/spurgeon.html?st=art=2> (accessed March 9, 2014).

enterprise (with a weekly published sermon and a monthly magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*), an orphanage, a Colportage Association to spread Christian literature, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle itself, opened for the church he served in 1861 and was capable of holding approximately 6,000. The congregation grew from 314 in 1854 to 5,311 in 1892.¹¹⁴

Spurgeon was preeminently a preacher. He preached more than 600 times before he was twenty. His sermons sold approximately 25,000 copies per week and were translated into twenty languages.¹¹⁵ Through disciplining himself to adopt a precise, lucid, zestful, and sometimes colloquial style of thought and delivery, Spurgeon sought to sharpen the aptness of his presentations. He linked them to his hearers' needs, using ideas phrased to arrest and hold their attention.¹¹⁶ Devoted to the Scriptures, disciplined prayer, and godly living, Spurgeon exemplified Christian commitment when he stood in the pulpit which gave power to his preaching.¹¹⁷ Craig Skinner stated:

Before congregations drowning in a maelstrom of sermonic words and ideas, Spurgeon placed solid planks of biblical doctrine shaped to enable a firm grip from even the weakest in the faith. He sought to preach to the common people with an

¹¹⁴ "Banner Authors: Charles H.," *Banner of Truth*.

¹¹⁵ Piper, "Charles Spurgeon: Preaching through Adversity," 22.

¹¹⁶ Craig Skinner, "The Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Baptist History and Heritage* 19, no. 4 (October 1, 1984): 16-26. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 8, 2014).

¹¹⁷ Lewis Drummond, "The Secret of Spurgeon's Preaching," *Christianitytoday.com*, June 3, 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/juneweb-only/52.0.html> (accessed February 10, 2014).

uncommon clarity, taking George Whitefield, the open-air evangelist of a previous century, as his major model.¹¹⁸

In keeping with the Reformed tradition of Protestant orthodoxy, Spurgeon also argued for the perspicuity of Scripture. The Bible is an understandable book and should be read and studied by believers. Christians, guided by the Holy Spirit, can comprehend all that is necessary for holy living and salvation. Spurgeon expressed that the Bible “speaks the language of men.”¹¹⁹ Spurgeon stated:

Often, when I come in at the door and my eyes fall on this vast congregation, I feel a tremor go through me to think that I should have to speak to you all and be, in some measure, accountable for your future state. Unless I preach the Gospel faithfully and with all my heart, your blood will be required at my hands. Do not wonder, therefore, that when I am weak and sick, I feel my head swim when I stand up to speak to you, and my heart is often faint within me. But I do have this joy at the back of it all—God does set many sinners free in this place! --1894, Sermon #2371.¹²⁰

Spurgeon’s wife once said, “His grandest and most fruitful sermons were those which cost him most soul-travail and spiritual anguish; not in their preparation and arrangement, but in his own overwhelming sense of accountability to God for the souls to whom he had to preach the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.”¹²¹ Spurgeon understood the daily frustrations and disappointments which pastors experience from “lukewarm” church

¹¹⁸ Skinner, “The Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon,” 16-26.

¹¹⁹ Duncan S. Ferguson, “The Bible and Protestant Orthodoxy: The Hermeneutics of Charles Spurgeon,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 4 (December 1, 1982): 455-466. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 8, 2014).

¹²⁰ Emmett O'Donnell, “Spurgeon Quotes,” *Spurgeon Gems*, <http://www.spurgeongems.org/quotes1.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2014).

¹²¹ Charles Ray, *A Marvelous Ministry* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Pub., 1985), 25.

members.¹²² Spurgeon explained, “Those incessant knocks at our door, and perpetual visits from idle persons, are so many buckets of cold water thrown upon our devout zeal. We must by some means secure uninterrupted meditation, or we shall lose power.”¹²³

Charles Spurgeon was not unnoticed in the secular press. His sermons were published in the Monday edition of the *London Times* and *New York Times*. However, he was criticized by traditional Protestants. His dramatic flair (pacing the platform, acting out biblical stories, and filling his sermons with sentimental tales of dying children, grieving parents, and repentant harlots) offended many, and as a result he was called “the Exeter Hall demagogue” and “the pulpit buffoon.” Spurgeon replied, “I am perhaps vulgar, but it is not intentional, save that I must and will make people listen. My firm conviction is that we have had enough polite preachers.”¹²⁴

When it came to declaring the gospel in a relevant fashion to the common masses, seemingly Spurgeon was a master.¹²⁵ He typically read six substantial books per week and could remember where and what he read. He produced more than 140 books such as *The Treasury of David* (which was twenty years in the making), *Morning and Evening*, *Commenting on Commentaries*, *John Ploughman's Talk*, and *Our Own Hymnbook*.¹²⁶ For an average sermon, Spurgeon took no more than one page of notes into the pulpit, yet

¹²² Piper, “Charles Spurgeon: Preaching through Adversity.”

¹²³ John Piper, *Brothers, We are not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 60.

¹²⁴ Galli and Olsen, “Introduction,” 102-03.

¹²⁵ Drummond, “The Secret of Spurgeon's Preaching.”

¹²⁶ Piper, “Charles Spurgeon: Preaching through Adversity.”

he spoke at a rate of 140 words per minute for forty minutes.¹²⁷ He often worked eighteen hours in a day. The missionary, David Livingstone, asked him, “How do you manage to do two men's work in a single day?” Spurgeon replied, “You have forgotten there are two of us.”¹²⁸ Devoted to the Scriptures, disciplined prayer, and godly living, Spurgeon exemplified Christian commitment when he stood in the pulpit which gave power to his preaching.¹²⁹

Perhaps, one of the most remarkable facts in connection with the publication of Spurgeon's sermons is their sustained popularity since his death. Sermons, either separately or in volumes, are not looked upon as the most desirable literature.¹³⁰ Nearly a century after Spurgeon's death, there is more material in print by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or deceased.¹³¹ He was consumed with the glory of God and the salvation of men.¹³² Spurgeon, while testing acoustics in Agricultural Hall in London, rang out over the empty building, “Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away

¹²⁷ “32 Things You May Not Know about Charles Spurgeon,” <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/borntoreform/2013/01/32-things-you-might-not-know-about-charles-spurgeon/>.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Drummond, “The Secret of Spurgeon's Preaching.”

¹³⁰ Ray, *A Marvelous Ministry*, 77.

¹³¹ Drummond, “The Secret of Spurgeon's Preaching.”

¹³² Piper, “Charles Spurgeon: Preaching through Adversity,” 22.

the sins of the world!” A workman up in the ceiling heard the message, was convicted, went home, knelt before the Lord, and found salvation.¹³³

Spurgeon saw the value of preaching to the common people in their own language and in a way that captivated their interest. He understood the sophistication of the Established Church and its irrelevance to his own social setting.¹³⁴ Jesus Christ was a master communicator. The Scriptures often say, “And He spoke to them a parable.” One should put truth in the language of the audience such as Christ did, through human interest stories.

Spurgeon said to a Methodist critic, “If I ever find myself smoking to excess, I promise I shall quit entirely.” The man asked, “What would you call smoking to excess?” Spurgeon answered, “Why, smoking two cigars at the same time!”¹³⁵ Speakers who hold an audience’s attention use stories from everyday life. Christ, being an effective communicator, said things that likely caused people to smile, while at the same time making a point that would impact their lives for change. He was speaking truth and using humor to make His point. When people are laughing, it is an indication that they are listening.

Relevancy, communicated through language, stories, humor, and other ways, should be found throughout the entire message, not only in the first thirty seconds. The Scriptures were written in the context of the people of that day. The minister, through a

¹³³ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), 1318-19.

¹³⁴ Drummond, “The Secret of Spurgeon's Preaching.”

¹³⁵ Piper, *Brothers, We are not Professionals*, 93.

proper application and use of the Scriptures, should know how that truth is relevant to his congregation.

Robinson explained that introductions also surface needs from within the congregation.¹³⁶ Spurgeon was effective at discovering the needs of those to whom he preached. He was able to connect with them on a personal level. One of the ways he did so in his introductions was through the use of quotes. Some might say that Spurgeon was the master of the pithy quote. His published sermons, as well as his books, are significant sources for ideas, expressions, illustrations, and axioms that make biblical truth clear.¹³⁷

Spurgeon was not afraid to preach sternly. In a sermon on Acts 26:28, he said, “Almost persuaded to be a Christian is like the man who was almost pardoned, but he was hanged; like the man who was almost rescued, but he was burned in the house. A man that is almost saved is damned.”¹³⁸ On certain subjects, he was incapable of moderation: Rome, ritualism, hypocrisy, and modernism, the last of which became the center of a controversy that would mark his last years in ministry. The “Down-Grade Controversy,” as it came to be known, was started in 1887 when Spurgeon began claiming publicly that some of his fellow Baptist ministers were “down grading” the faith.¹³⁹ This was the late nineteenth century when Darwinism and critical biblical

¹³⁶ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 161.

¹³⁷ John MacArthur, “Foreward,” Spurgeon.us, accessed August 15, 2014, http://www.spurgeon.us/forward_intro.htm.

¹³⁸ Shisko, “The Riches of Spurgeon,” www.opc.org.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

scholarship were compelling many Christians to reevaluate their understanding of the Bible. Spurgeon believed the issue was not one of interpretation but of the essentials of the faith. He proclaimed in his monthly publication, *The Sword and the Trowel*, “Our warfare is with men who are giving up the atoning sacrifice, denying the inspiration of Holy Scripture, and casting slurs upon justification by faith.”¹⁴⁰ The controversy took its toll on the denomination (which censured Spurgeon) and upon Spurgeon, whose delicate health deteriorated even more during the year-long affair (he suffered from recurring depression, gout and other health issues).¹⁴¹ John Calvin cherished and preached truth because “wherever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown.”¹⁴² When the preacher declares the mighty acts of God in Christ, he speaks so that God may say these things Himself.¹⁴³

Few men have made the contribution to homiletical literature than was made by Spurgeon. He produced 135 books and edited twenty-eight, in addition to other shorter works. But in spite of this output, Spurgeon stated, “The quarry of the Holy Scripture is inexhaustible; I seem hardly to have begun to labor in it; but the selection of the next

¹⁴⁰ Lewis Drummond, “The Secret of Spurgeon’s Preaching,” christianitytoday.com (June 3, 2005), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/juneweb-only/52.0.html> (accessed February 10, 2014).

¹⁴¹ Galli and Olsen, “Introduction,” 103.

¹⁴² Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, 22.

¹⁴³ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 7.

block, and the consideration as to how to work it into form, are matters not so easy as some think.”¹⁴⁴

Billy Sunday

Mass evangelism is an American phenomenon if it is defined as using means on a large scale. Interestingly, America did not produce mass evangelists until Charles Finney, who began his career not as a mass evangelist but as a revivalist.¹⁴⁵ One of the earliest mass evangelists produced in America was the baseball player turned preacher, Billy Sunday.

Sunday (1862-1935), was born near Ames, Iowa, the son of a tenant farmer and wife. He spent most of his teen years in an orphanage, working as a hired farm laborer. A talented baseball player with impressive speed, he was signed to a contract with the Chicago White Stockings (also known as Chicago Cubs) in 1883 and spent seven years in the National League setting a record for most stolen bases.¹⁴⁶

In 1886 after a night of carousing in Chicago, Sunday was converted to Christianity at the city’s Pacific Garden Mission. One Sunday afternoon in Chicago, a group of ballplayers entered a saloon. When they emerged, they saw a group of people playing instruments, singing gospel hymns, and testifying of Christ’s power to save from

¹⁴⁴ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 188.

¹⁴⁵ Glyn Evans, “A Survey of Evangelism in America,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 165-72.

¹⁴⁶ “Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals,” www.wheaton.edu (ISAE Hall of Biography), March 17, 2014, <http://www.wheaton.edu/isae/hall-of-biography/billy-sunday> (accessed March 17, 2014).

sin. Memories of a log cabin in Iowa, an old church, and a godly mother raced through the mind of one of the ballplayers. Tears came to his eyes. He said, “Boys, I’m through! Going to turn to Jesus Christ. We’ve come to the parting of the ways.”¹⁴⁷ Some of his companions mocked him, but others were silent. Only one encouraged him. He turned from the group and entered the Pacific Garden Mission. Later, the ballplayer explained what had occurred:

I called upon God’s mercy. I staggered out of my sins into the outstretched arms of the Saviour. I became instantly a new creature in Him! The next morning at practice, my manager, Mike Kelly, greeted me and said, “Billy, I read in the paper what occurred yesterday. Religion isn’t my long suit, but I won’t knock you, and I’ll knock the daylights out of anyone who does.”¹⁴⁸

The converted ballplayer was Billy Sunday, who became a world-renowned evangelist.¹⁴⁹

Becoming active with the YMCA and a local Presbyterian Church, Sunday married in 1888 and retired from baseball in 1890 in favor of preaching the gospel. After a full-time stint with the YMCA, Sunday served three years under the tutelage of evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman before launching his own career in 1896.¹⁵⁰

Local press reported, “Center fielder Billy Sunday made a three-base hit at Farwell Hall last night. There is no other way to express the success of his first

¹⁴⁷ Morgan, *On This Day*, electronic ed.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 277.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

appearance as an evangelist in Chicago.”¹⁵¹ This was Sunday's first public appearance as a preacher in the late 1880s. The report also stated, “His audience was made up of about 500 men who didn't know much about his talents as a preacher but could remember his galloping to second base with his cap in hand.”¹⁵² This was just the beginning for Sunday. Until Billy Graham, no American evangelist preached to as many people or observed as many conversions, an estimated 300,000.¹⁵³ Between 1896 and 1935 he preached an estimated 20,000 sermons.¹⁵⁴

Because of Sunday, American evangelism took a decidedly patriotic turn. He was a blend of the Roosevelt ideal of Americanism and physical fitness. In content, Sunday appeared to be the weakest of all the evangelists, but the strongest in delivery.¹⁵⁵

Someone wrote that Sunday put that same “vim and vigor” in his preaching that he put into his baseball career.¹⁵⁶ Much of his success was due to his wife, Helen Amelia Thompson. She organized the campaigns and did much of the advance work. She even tried to better Sunday's vocabulary in her letters to him, deliberately including

¹⁵¹ “Billy Sunday: Salty Evangelist,” Christianitytoday.com, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/evangelistsandapologists/sunday.html?start=2> (accessed March 5, 2014).

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ “Billy Sunday: Salty Evangelist,” Christianitytoday.com.

¹⁵⁴ “Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room (Topics in Chronicling America - Billy Sunday: Athlete and Evangelist),” Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/topics/sunday.html> (accessed March 12, 2014).

¹⁵⁵ Evans, “A Survey of Evangelism in America,” 165-72.

¹⁵⁶ “Ball Players at Sunday's Sermon,” *Evening World (New York)*, August 29, 1904.

words that he would have to search for the definition.¹⁵⁷ Sunday's preaching style was as unorthodox as the day allowed. His vocabulary was so inappropriate (e.g., "I don't believe your own bastard theory of evolution, either; I believe it's pure jackass nonsense"), that Christian leaders cringed, and they often publicly criticized him. However, Sunday did not care. He stated, "I want to preach the gospel so plainly that men can come from the factories and not have to bring a dictionary."¹⁵⁸

Sunday's preaching style, which included colorful, bombastic antics and well-planned theatrics, gained him fame and attention. Before each of Sunday's crusades, an advance team of at least twenty specialists descended on the town to arrange publicity, music, and business support. The team recruited thousands of church volunteers. At the center of such strategic planning was Sunday's wife, Helen.¹⁵⁹ Sunday said, "I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I have a foot. I'll fight it as long as I have a fist. I'll butt it as long as I have a head. I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old and fistless and footless and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to Glory and it goes home to perdition."¹⁶⁰ As one newspaper reporter wrote, "Sunday was a whirling dervish that pranced and cavorted and strode and bounded and pounded all over his platform and left

¹⁵⁷ Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, "Introduction" in *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 74.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁵⁹ James P. Eckman, *Exploring Church History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 90.

¹⁶⁰ Galli and Olsen, "Introduction," 75.

them thrilled and bewildered as they have never been before.”¹⁶¹ He concluded his sermons by inviting people to “walk the sawdust trail” to the front of the tabernacle to indicate their decision for Christ.¹⁶² Sunday’s simple message reached over 100 million people, with approximately one million converts, but his influence extended beyond conversions.¹⁶³

Sunday was known for the “one-liner,” which he would use to clinch his practical, illustration-filled sermons. One of his most famous was: “Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you an automobile.”¹⁶⁴ He used his whole body in his sermons (and other nearby objects, such as his chair, which he would sometimes fling around the stage while preaching). As one newspaper writer stated, “Sunday was a whirling dervish that pranced and cavorted and strode and bounded and pounded all over his platform and left them thrilled and bewildered as they have never been before.”¹⁶⁵ Sunday was an example of what Martin Luther advised when he said, “to stick eyes into ears.”¹⁶⁶ Steve Mandel explained that speaking away from a

¹⁶¹ Galli and Olsen, “Introduction,” 98.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁶³ Eckman, *Exploring Church History*, 90.

¹⁶⁴ “Billy Sunday: Salty Evangelist,” Christianitytoday.com.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 70.

lectern or podium allows the speaker to connect with an audience. This position is more engaging, and audiences feel closer to the speaker without barriers in place.¹⁶⁷

Over the course of his thirty-nine year ministry, Sunday conducted more than 300 campaigns and preached nearly 20,000 sermons, an average of forty-two per month from 1896 to 1935. He probably preached to more than 100 million people, many of whom “hit the sawdust trail.” Some have estimated the number of conversions as a result of his preaching to be approximately one million. However, at least one historian claims the figure to be closer to 1,250,000.¹⁶⁸ Prohibition was a driving force in the ministry of Sunday. The culture surrounding a sermon can help or hinder the telling of the story of a passage.¹⁶⁹ Sunday used the culture around him to spread his message of the gospel.

Sunday's audiences became smaller during the 1920s. As he grew older, religious revivals became less popular as alternative sources of entertainment emerged.¹⁷⁰ Hans Austnaberg noted that there might be much in a preacher's life that the congregants or others are not aware of. When people begin to discover this information, it could become

¹⁶⁷ Steve Mandel, *Presentation Skills: Captivate and Educate Your Audience* (Rochester, NY: Axzo Press, 2009). *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2014).

¹⁶⁸ William C. Kashatus, “Evangelist Billy Sunday Preaches to More Than 650,000 in W-b,” [www.citizensvoice.com](http://citizensvoice.com/arts-living/evangelist-billy-sunday-preaches-to-more-than-650-000-in-w-b-1.1455186), <http://citizensvoice.com/arts-living/evangelist-billy-sunday-preaches-to-more-than-650-000-in-w-b-1.1455186> (accessed March 9, 2014).

¹⁶⁹ VanHarn, *Pew Rights: For People Who Listen to Sermons*, 102.

¹⁷⁰ Kashatus, “Billy Sunday Preaches to More Than 65,000,” www.citizensvoice.com.

a problem for the preaching.¹⁷¹ Sunday's income, family affairs, and health followed the downward spiral of his career. The well-publicized drinking and womanizing of Sunday's sons brought scandal. In addition, the death of their daughter, Helen Sunday Haines, in 1932 added tragedy to the family's circumstances. As the Great Depression worsened, Sunday increasingly grew pessimistic. His health deteriorated and he died from a heart attack in November 1935.¹⁷²

Sunday was known for his style as much as his substance. He was engaging and had the ability to connect with his audience. That level of energy permeates the audience. Hence, the interaction proceeds on a more dynamic, vibrant, interactive level. Enjoyment in front of a group opens dialogue, even if members of the audience have no actual words to say.¹⁷³ Interest is first active, projective, or propulsive. Individuals take interest. To be interested in any matter is to be actively concerned with it.¹⁷⁴ Sunday was interested in and passionate about what he was preaching. This level of passion and interest was portrayed to his audience.

¹⁷¹ Hans Austnaberg, *Improving Preaching by Listening to Listeners: Sunday Service Preaching in the Malagasy Lutheran Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012). *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2014).

¹⁷² Eckard Toy, "The Oregon Encyclopedia," http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/sunday_billy_1862_1935_/ (accessed March 17, 2014).

¹⁷³ Jeffrey P. Davidson, *31 Ways Speech, Movement and Visual Aids Improve Your Presentation* (United States: Electronic & Database Publishing, Inc., 2010). *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2014).

¹⁷⁴ John Dewey and James E. Wheeler, *Interest and Effort in Education* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009). *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2014).

Sunday was known for his enthusiasm and passion on the subject that he spoke on. The authentic emotion of enthusiasm breeds authentic enthusiasm. The opposite is also true. If a minister is not excited about what he is speaking, the people he is speaking to likely will not be excited.

The pressure a speaker places upon himself to capture the audience's attention in thirty seconds should be the same pressure he places upon himself to keep its length to thirty minutes.¹⁷⁵ If one is committed to being an expositor, there will be more to say than can be said in thirty minutes. The Word of God could be compared to a buffet. There is more for the audience to digest from a particular paragraph of Scripture than there is time to serve. However, the art of communicating is to know what to take out of a message. Leaving an audience with a desire to know more is preferable to wishing that the speaker had stopped sooner.

Unusual for American evangelists, Sunday also addressed social issues of the day. He supported women's suffrage, called for an end to child labor, and included African Americans in his revivals, even when he toured the deep South. Sunday made enemies because of this, as well as his support of Roman Catholics (whom he considered fellow Christians) and Jews. Sunday had no sympathy for evolution, but neither did he warm up to Genesis literalists.¹⁷⁶ He stood undaunted against alcohol use. In fact, he bore significant responsibility for the passage of the Prohibition Amendment to the U. S.

¹⁷⁵ R. Larry Moyer, "How to Get Your Audience's Attention in 30 Seconds – and Keep It!" *Preaching Daily* (blog), *Sermon Central*, n.d., http://www.sermoncentral.com/article.asp?article=a-Larry_Moyer_08_06_07&ac=true (accessed February 3, 2015).

¹⁷⁶ Galli and Olsen, "Introduction," 74-75.

Constitution. Likewise, he championed patriotism during World War I, arguing that “Christianity and patriotism are synonyms” and that “hell and traitors are synonyms.”¹⁷⁷ Sunday helped raise millions of dollars for the military effort. Few Christian leaders have had a more significant impact on shaping American culture.¹⁷⁸ Sunday once said, “Here is my first rule in homiletics: Never preach to the intellectual giraffes in your congregation. And the second ... always leave some cookies on the bottom shelf.”¹⁷⁹

John MacArthur

John MacArthur is the pastor and a teacher at Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, as well as an author, conference speaker, president of The Master’s College and Seminary, and featured teacher with the Grace to You media ministry.¹⁸⁰ MacArthur is following in the steps of his father, Jack MacArthur. MacArthur represents five successive generations of pastors in his family. MacArthur has authored several books including *The MacArthur Study Bible*, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, and *The*

¹⁷⁷ Eckman, *Exploring Church History*, 90.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1076.

¹⁸⁰ John MacArthur, “Biography,” *Grace to You*, <http://www.gty.org/connect/biography> (accessed March 2, 2014).

MacArthur New Testament Commentary series.¹⁸¹ The emphasis of his ministry is the study and verse-by-verse exposition of the Bible.¹⁸²

MacArthur's sermons contain significant factual material. However, regarding human interest stories, one finds little factual material. The illustrative material focuses on the biblical story. The passage of Scripture is illuminated rather than a principle from the passage.¹⁸³ MacArthur stated that his ministry is not one of illustration or of motivation, but of clarity.¹⁸⁴ Concerning the subject of attaining and keeping the attention of the people, MacArthur stated:

The first thing is interest. I think it's interesting. I don't know why it's interesting. I've tried to understand and assess that, but I really don't know. People are not going to come Sunday after Sunday, year after year, and listen to me for an hour in the morning and another hour at night if they're not interested in what I'm saying. And that has nothing to do with outlines or illustrations. Outlines serve a purpose and some illustrations capture the moment, but over the long haul in order for people to listen to expository preaching week-in week-out, there has to be a compelling interest to it.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ John MacArthur, "Grace Community Church: Leadership," [Gracechurch.org](http://www.gracechurch.org/about/leadership/), <http://www.gracechurch.org/about/leadership/> (accessed March 2, 2014).

¹⁸² George Thomas Kurian, *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary: The Authoritative Resource on the Christian World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 147.

¹⁸³ Hughes Oliphant Old, "The Preaching of John MacArthur (Excerpt from the Reading and Preaching of Scripture)," April 7, 2010, <http://teampyro.blogspot.com/2010/04/preaching-of-john-macarthur.html> (accessed March 5, 2014).

¹⁸⁴ John MacArthur, "Fundamentals of Expository Preaching: Lecture 1," (video), 17:55 and following, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jCyfWwz3-Y> (accessed March 1, 2014).

¹⁸⁵ John MacArthur, "Preaching in a Post-Modern World (Interview)," www.jcsm.org, http://www.jcsm.org/StudyCenter/john_macarthur/CISv2n2-1.htm (accessed March 7 2014).

MacArthur displayed a commitment to a non-illustrative preaching style. After listening to several sermons, one will understand that he is not overly animated in voice or action. Some might say that standing stiffly with little animation in one's body language and speaking in a monotone voice without making eye contact is a way to deliver a speech that is not effective.¹⁸⁶ MacArthur disagreed with this sentiment.

MacArthur also utilized the method of systematically working through a book or passage. He spent years going through books of the Bible, building on larger themes or metanarratives. This is done for the same purpose that a musical composer highlights certain notes in the early part of the song. In the hearing of a musical theme, the earlier stages are far from being mere means to the latter; they give one a certain mindset and dispose it to anticipate later developments.¹⁸⁷ In this way, perhaps MacArthur's preaching style would work best in a pastoral setting. Preaching to the same group of people continuously would allow for this sort of development.

MacArthur emphasized the content of the message when he stated:

It is vital for every Christian to know how to study the Bible. You should be able to dig into God's Word yourself to glean and to gain all the riches that the Bible contains. I often think of the words of Jeremiah who said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." (Jer. 15:16a). The Word of God is a tremendous resource. Christians should not be handicapped in their own ability to study God's Word for themselves.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶Mandel, *Presentation Skills*, EBSCOhost.

¹⁸⁷Dewey and Wheeler, *Interest and Effort in Education*, EBSCOhost.

¹⁸⁸John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Study the Bible*, *John MacArthur's Bible Studies* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 25.

MacArthur spoke to his own purposes in preaching and teaching when he stated, “The purpose of preaching and the purpose of teaching is to pour truth into your mind, to pour it in your mind in a persuasive way, to pour it into your mind in a convicting way, to pour it into your mind in a clear and precise and definitive way.”¹⁸⁹ All three men set out to accomplish something, and every part of their preparation had this end goal in mind. If a business consistently loses \$2,000 per month, then its business plan is structured perfectly to accomplish just that purpose.¹⁹⁰ In much the same way, if a preaching plan is not designed specifically for the end goal of a pastor, he is destined to fail in the implementation of that goal. The preacher alone is the one who can meet this need.¹⁹¹ He is the one who knows the congregation, and he alone knows his desires for the congregation. He must prepare to guide them in that direction. In fact, when a pastor plans his preaching with this end goal in mind, it often has brought people to talk to the preacher on their own time and in their own way about other things that bother them.¹⁹²

The emphasis of MacArthur’s ministry is the careful study and verse-by-verse exposition of the Bible.¹⁹³ This proclamation of God’s revelation functions as God’s

¹⁸⁹ John MacArthur, “Fundamental Attitudes for Spiritual Maturity Part 3,” (online sermon), March 18, 1990, <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/60-50> (accessed September 25, 2014).

¹⁹⁰ Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching*, 54.

¹⁹¹ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, Ministry Resources Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1972, 1971), 29.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁹³ George Thomas Kurian, *Nelson’s New Christian Dictionary: The Authoritative Resource on the Christian World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 155.

chosen instrument for bringing people to salvation by grace, although its message of a crucified Messiah seems to be foolishness to people of worldly wisdom and a scandalous offense to Jews (1 Cor. 1:21–23). MacArthur said, “An excellent minister will be an expert student of God’s Word.¹⁹⁴ An excellent minister also should be able to reach the people where they are. After all, when God has spoken to people, He has spoken to them where they are.¹⁹⁵ This is an important part of preaching and a strength of expository preaching. God’s word is perfect, and speaks to all situations and issues. A writer for *The Baptist Faith and Message* wrote, “It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction.”¹⁹⁶

Project Content and Design

Spurgeon broke with tradition and convention in that he would not preach “stilted” sermons. As noted, he spoke in common language to common people in a dramatic, eloquent, even humorous way.¹⁹⁷ Redundancy and repetition, in particular, are important because the oral event vanishes immediately and there is no way to refer back as there is with the written word. Repetition keeps the listener focused and provides a way to reinforce the necessary thought processes to follow along on the listening journey.

¹⁹⁴ John MacArthur, *The Master's Plan for the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 92.

¹⁹⁵ Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 27.

¹⁹⁶ <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> seems incomplete.

¹⁹⁷ Drummond, “The Secret of Spurgeon's Preaching.”

In addition, it provides clarification if a word or phrase might not have been heard the first time. Repetition also advances the speaker's point or focus.¹⁹⁸

If there was newness about Spurgeon's method, it was that he strove to be a communicator. Spurgeon did not forget that if a preacher fails to communicate, regardless of ability, sincerity, theology or natural gifts, a preacher has failed. Therefore, he addressed people where they were and spoke simply to their needs. A few years before the death of Spurgeon, an American lecture bureau tried to hire him to come to America to deliver fifty lectures, speaking in the large cities of America. As compensation, the bureau offered to pay all expenses for Spurgeon, his wife, and private secretary, and to pay \$1,000 per night for each of the fifty lectures. Spurgeon promptly declined to earn \$50,000 in fifty days. He stated, "I can do better. I will stay in London and try to save 50 souls."¹⁹⁹

John the Baptist was a model of urgent preaching. Several things about John's preaching were new. There was a sense of urgency. "Hurry," John urged the crowds who came out to hear him, or simply to gaze at the spectacle. John said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt. 3:2). John focused the attention of his listeners not on the distant future, but on the immediate situation.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Kathryn Carroll Mathewson, "Sounding a Sermon: Exercising the Imagination for a More Animated Aurality," Order No. 3450654, Aquinas Institute of Theology (2011), in PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/865260797?accountid=12193>.

¹⁹⁹ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1317.

²⁰⁰ Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 532.

Perhaps, no one is more urgent and focused than Paul when it comes to preaching the gospel²⁰¹ In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Paul says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the *man of God* may be competent, equipped for every good work.” In 2 Peter 1:21, it is used in the plural when Peter describes Old Testament prophets as “holy *men of God*” who “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (NKJV). However, it is used many times in the Old Testament to describe men who proclaimed the word God had given them. MacArthur stated that in using this to address Timothy, “Paul identifies him with a long line of spokesmen for God, extending back into the Old Testament.”²⁰²

Perhaps one of the largest problems is one’s intention for preaching. If preaching is primarily a way of delivering complicated instruction, ministers likely will not be effective.²⁰³ The author’s intent for this study was to become a more effective communicator. In order to judge the improvement of communication, a systematic approach to gathering information was employed. During the research period, the project director was careful to continue to preach the message of Jesus. Daniel Webster, American politician and orator, once spent a summer in New Hampshire, and every Lord’s Day went to a little country church, morning and evening. His niece asked him

²⁰¹ Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 644.

²⁰² Simon J. Robinson, *Opening Up 1 Timothy, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 117-18.

²⁰³ Kenton Anderson, “Does PowerPoint Increase Retention,” preaching.org (blog), February 28, 2014, <http://www.preaching.org/powerpointretention/> (accessed March 10, 2014).

why he went there when he paid little attention to far abler sermons in Washington. He replied, “In Washington they preach to Daniel Webster, the statesman, but this man has been telling Daniel Webster, the sinner, of Jesus of Nazareth.”²⁰⁴

The project was divided into sections of two weeks each. During weeks one and two, the author focused on Spurgeon’s use of common quotes and common language in his introduction. As previously noted, Spurgeon had a passion for unbelievers and used common language. Through the use of the vernacular of the common people, Spurgeon was able to relate to the common man. Section one highlights these particular skills.

During section two, weeks three and four, the preaching skill of Sunday was the focus. Sunday was noted for his delivery style. He is an example of form being greater than substance. The project director attempted to mimic this type of preaching in order to simulate the preaching of Sunday. During the introduction, an emphasis was placed on using passionate language and mannerisms to determine whether or not these skills obtain the attention of the people of Brumley Baptist Church.

During section three, weeks five and six, MacArthur’s style was the focus. MacArthur is known for a straight exegetical style with little personal information included, as well as reluctance to use illustrations. During the weeks when MacArthur was emphasized, the author used no introductory remarks. The sermon began with a reading of the text and proceeded directly into the noted outline.

Spurgeon, Sunday, and MacArthur loved preaching and loved those they preached to. They achieved many of the same results within their preaching. However, there are differences in how they achieved these results. The things that each man did well were

²⁰⁴ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1074.

highlighted in hopes that the project director's own preaching style would be improved within his current ministry setting.

The goal of this type of research was to determine what works well with the people of Brumley Baptist Church. The three men spoke to different people in a different time. To judge their preaching characteristics and be able to highlight the one that made a difference in their preaching would be difficult. The focus of this project was on how they constructed and delivered an introduction, or lack thereof, and how that obtains the attention of the people within the modern day, current ministry context of the author. Knowing this information will allow the project director to be a more effective minister of the gospel while he is within this particular setting.

Spurgeon once preached a sermon entitled, "Now Then, Do It."²⁰⁵ One of the desired outcomes of this project was for the members of the BBC's congregation to possess the tools they need to go out and "do it," which is to live for the glory of God.

²⁰⁵ <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols22-24/chs1375.pdf>.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project was implemented over a period of several weeks at Brumley Baptist Church (BBC) in Conway, Arkansas. Three basic styles of introductions were selected and used in no particular order. Ten BBC congregants were selected randomly to provide feedback on the various types of introductions used. Each one was given a survey (see Appendix A) by someone other than the project director so that he was not aware of which participants were evaluating the sermons.

Components Employed

Time Frame/Modalities

The project was implemented in the fall of 2014 at BBC. The first message was delivered on October 19, 2014. A total of six sermons were delivered to the members present at BBC at various times (Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening). Care was taken to ensure that the normal flow of the week was kept intact in order to obtain honest feedback. Before each sermon was presented, someone other than the project director distributed surveys (see Appendix A) to a random selection of those in attendance to ensure anonymity. Each survey had a total of ten questions, each of which could be scored from one to five for a total score range of ten to fifty with ten being very poor and fifty being excellent. Each sermon was given a total score. A final survey was distributed that allowed for specific comments on the various introduction

styles. This survey also allowed participants to provide comments on things they had noted.

Varying Approaches

Three basic styles were chosen to be modeled based on the preaching methods of Charles Spurgeon, Billy Sunday, and John MacArthur. The first style was that of Spurgeon and was geared toward stories and similar approaches to connect quickly with a common audience. Spurgeon was noted for having a common vocabulary and common approach. He did not always begin with the text, but started from where his audience was. Spurgeon usually took time to explain both the context and the meaning of his text, even if he departed from the text and its context into a more topical message.²⁰⁶ Spurgeon appeared to be a master at declaring the gospel in a relevant fashion to the common masses.²⁰⁷ The second style implemented in this study was modeled after Billy Sunday. Sunday was passionate about his topic from the moment he began to preach. He was known for his arresting “fire and brimstone” preaching style. Someone wrote that Sunday put that same “vim and vigor” in his preaching that he had put into his baseball career.²⁰⁸ Robert F. Martin stated that Sunday was “one of the most acrobatic evangelists of the

²⁰⁶ Phil Johnson, “Spurgeon and Expository Preaching,” *Pyromaniacs* (blog), January 18, 2007, <http://teampyro.blogspot.com/2007/01/spurgeon-and-expository-preaching.html> (accessed November 4, 2014).

²⁰⁷ Lewis Drummond, “The Secret of Spurgeon's Preaching,” *Christianitytoday.com*, June 3, 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/juneweb-only/52.0.html> (accessed February 10, 2014).

²⁰⁸ “Ball Players at Sunday's Sermon,” *Evening World (New York)*, August 29, 1904.

age.”²⁰⁹ One newspaper columnist at the time estimated that Sunday traveled about a mile during each sermon.²¹⁰ During the sermons when Sunday’s style was imitated, the project director attempted to exhibit a high degree of passion during the introduction. The third style of introduction comes from the style, or lack thereof, in MacArthur’s beginnings. MacArthur is noted for a lack of introduction with an immediate beginning into the content of the message. Thus, three distinct styles emerged from the research on the styles of these three preachers.

The introductions of the three styles were implemented over a course of sermons at BBC. Using one particular style modeled after Spurgeon, the deliverer used a story of the modern to attempt to gain attention. One message dealt with the idea of false religion and its effects on individuals. In the opening story, the presenter talked about a false modern religion called Pastafarianism and how it affects people. The following is a sample from that story:

Good morning Brumley. I would ask you to turn to the book of Genesis as we begin our time today. I have a question for you. Does your faith make you look any different? I don’t mean physical looks, but I am asking if your life looks different as a result of your relationship with God?

An Oklahoma woman says the unique hat she wore for her driver’s license picture was religious headwear. Take a look at the photo. She’s wearing a plain-old everyday colander on her head. We don’t make this stuff up. It would be too hard to do that. The woman claimed “Pastafarian” — which is a tribute to the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster — a creation of a Kansas man who says it’s just as

²⁰⁹ Robert Francis Martin, *Hero of the Heartland: Billy Sunday and the Transformation of American Society, 1862-1935* (Bloomington, IN: University Press, 2002), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10018381> (accessed February 6, 2015).

²¹⁰ Steve Inskeep, “Billy Sunday, Man of God,” *NPR Blog*, November 24, 2002, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=854571> (accessed November 5, 2014).

believable as creationism. The state of Oklahoma says people can wear religious headware in driver's license photos as long as there's a clear view of the face.²¹¹

We would certainly say that this woman is very misguided in her beliefs, but I would like for you to note her passion. She does seem to care enough about what she does believe that she is not ashamed to show it to the world. Christians could learn a lesson from that at least.

In our text today, we will look deeply into the life of Noah, and see how he certainly looked differently to an unbelieving world.

The introductions for the sermons focusing on Billy Sunday were structured in content much the same as the sermons modeled after Spurgeon with the differences showing the style of delivery. Following is a sample of a sermon introduction modeled after Sunday:

{Quickly walking to pulpit} This morning we are going to be looking at Genesis again {the volume of voice started at a much higher level than normal.} We have noted the importance God has placed on living a holy life {pacing quickly from one side of the stage back to the other}. In our passage today we will see the result of living by that faith in the life of Noah {moving down from the platform onto the floor, same level as the pews}. I wonder this morning if the folks at Brumley have a life of faith that the Lord would be pleased with? {shouting}. I wonder if the folks here today would be willing to follow the Lord they way that Noah did? {very loudly with finger pointed at various points in the crowd}. Let's look at our text....

One of the introductions modeled after MacArthur's style went directly to the Scripture:

The first meaning of "moral" listed in the massive *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* is: "Pertaining to, or concerned with right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong." To many it seems presumptuous or even ridiculous to suggest that we live in a moral universe. How can the universe be concerned with right and wrong?

But we saw in the first chapter of Genesis that the foundation of our universe is not laid on inert and nonliving matter. Dead rocks have no concern with right conduct. But God, the personal source of our universe, does!

²¹¹ <http://kdvr.com/2014/09/08/woman-wears-colander-on-her-head-for-drivers-license-photo/>.

In the creation of man (Gen. 2) there is a reflection of God's image, giving us ability to distinguish between good and evil, and extending to us the freedom to choose. In Genesis 3 and 4 we've seen the terrible consequences of Adam's and Eve's choice of disobedience. In seeing this we have learned that, in God's universe, there are basic realities with which all must come to grips. Life. Death. Sin.

Now, in the story of the Genesis Flood, we meet two new themes, and face two new realities. We meet judgment. And we find the good news of salvation. In these chapters we have the proof that ours truly is a moral universe. God, who created and who even now sustains all, truly is concerned with right and wrong.²¹²

Overall, the sermon series was well received. Each of the sermons concluded with a time of invitation and reflection. If one had not known that the project was being implemented, nothing would have seemed out of the ordinary manner of service. The congregation seemed happy to participate in this type of research. All participants completed their respective surveys and returned them promptly. The project director was pleased with the attention and responses received from the congregation.

²¹² Richards and Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary*, 38.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The following results from the research are specific to the research and the setting of this particular study at Brumley Baptist Church (BBC). The participants of the study provided significant feedback and a clear representation of what they preferred in a sermon introduction. The style of John MacArthur, with little to no formal introduction, scored the lowest in total, averaging thirty-seven out of fifty. Many felt that, in comparison, the move directly to biblical content was too quick with not enough audience engagement. The second place style was that of Billy Sunday, scoring only slightly higher at thirty-nine out of fifty. The project director believes, based on the comments of the individuals, that both the personality of the church and the personality of the pastor, do not lend themselves to an openly passionate style. While there are times when both the minister and the congregation are passionate, the majority of the time is spent in a low-key disposition.

The style of Charles Spurgeon was preferred, scoring forty-six out of fifty. Multiple comments by participants were made regarding how they liked the story at the beginning of the message, which engaged the speaker to the congregation, and then led directly to the biblical content. Building a bridge from the person in the pew to the biblical message is an important part of a sermon, and in the setting of BBC, this style was the favorite of the people.

The author discovered in the research and preparations for this project that pulpit work is producing the results that it is designed to produce.²¹³ In other words, Spurgeon, Sunday, and MacArthur had a specific goal in mind when they began to plan their preaching. Jesus' trained ears could hear a beggar's cry above the shouts of the throng.²¹⁴ People are called upon to listen attentively to God's Word, to his Son, and also to words of wisdom. Christians must not only listen to God's word, but also put it into practice. Those who refuse to listen to God's Word or to correction are condemned.²¹⁵

Attention is not possible without a conscious effort, although interest frequently is. People have certain interests in which they are absorbed. However, attention is an effort of will. Oswald Chambers believed that people are held responsible by God for the culture of attention.²¹⁶ The people of BBC certainly align with this basic philosophy. They paid more attention to the duration of the sermon when attention was garnered at the outset. When the speaker had a concrete plan to begin the message, the people of BBC gave more effort and they were inclined to listen to the content of that message.

²¹³ Stephen Nelson Rummage, *Planning Your Preaching: A Step-by-Step Guide for Developing a One-Year Preaching Calendar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), 55.

²¹⁴ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), 1081.

²¹⁵ Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009), 24.

²¹⁶ Oswald Chambers, *The Moral Foundation of Life: A Series of Talks on the Ethical Principles of the Christian Life* (Hants, UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1936), 43.

The following story is relayed from a pastor in Bolton, England. David Harrison has a new way to hold the attention of his congregation. He hangs a human skeleton from the pulpit whenever he preaches. The pastor said, “If you don’t rivet their attention, you are lost.”²¹⁷ Inattentiveness leads to regression and susceptibility to the temptation to sin.²¹⁸ Sermons generally should have an introduction used to draw attention.²¹⁹ Henrietta Mears said, “You must give to the Bible attention with intention, and it is intention that will necessitate attention ... We must know what we are about.”²²⁰ What God wants is more than simply hearing the words spoken. He wants the one hearing to listen intently to what is said, understand it, and do it.²²¹

John Broadus explained that connecting with the audience is paramount. Listeners have a natural aversion to abruptness and appreciate a somewhat gradual approach.²²² Jesus taught His greatest truths through stories and illustrations, such as the parables of the Unforgiven Servant in Matthew 18:21–35 and the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37. These and other parables are word pictures drawn from the lessons and circumstances of daily life. Jesus’ purpose was to teach truths concerning the kingdom of

²¹⁷ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1076.

²¹⁸ Thomas Nelson, *The Woman’s Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 97.

²¹⁹ John Albert Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 97.

²²⁰ Nelson, *The Woman’s Study Bible*, Ac 20:9.

²²¹ Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 83.

²²² Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 97.

God in a way that was relevant, yet understandable to His audience. Parables served this purpose best.²²³ The style of interaction can affect who will be accepted as leader and how well he or she leads.²²⁴

Two important truths were learned regarding the idea of presenting a compelling introduction. The first truth is that style matters. People noticed the different styles that were employed during the project. They noted similarities and differences in the way the introductions were presented from the pulpit. They also developed opinions about the components they liked and disliked from those differing styles. The second truth is that content also is important. If the presenter did not have something of importance to say, it did not matter in what style he said it. These truths were gleaned primarily from one-on-one conversations during the course of the project. Both of these academic truths became evident within the written feedback the author received from BBC, as well as the verbal feedback.

Style Matters

The people of BBC were united in the basic fact that the way the project director gave an introduction had an impact on the way they heard the rest of the sermon. This came through in both positive and negative feedback. One senior church member asked for the pastor to please stop all the “jumping and yelling” he has been doing (in reference

²²³ Dan Story, *Engaging the Closed Minded: Presenting Your Faith to the Confirmed Unbeliever* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 92.

²²⁴ Emory A. Griffin, *Getting Together: A Guide for Good Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 113.

to the style of Billy Sunday). That was not a style that appealed to them and they way they wanted to be introduced to a sermon.

John Broadus stated, “The living voice will never be superseded as long as it is a voice and not an echo.”²²⁵ Christians have the challenge of communicating the gospel to succeeding generations in a relevant and compelling way. Cultures are not static. They are living organisms that constantly undergo change. No other time in history has undergone such radical changes within a single generation. The world of the late 1990s is quite different in terms of ethics, religion, and social behavior, than the world of the late 1950s, a mere generation ago.²²⁶

Style is significant, but is not the “end all, be all” factor. Certain rules still apply. In music, Handel, Bach, and Chopin had their own characteristic styles, but their genius allied itself with, or rather found itself in, the basic laws of music. Therefore in preaching, effective style is achieved by observing the fundamental requirements of language and the whole context of circumstances.²²⁷

Paul underlined the need for attention to principles of communication in preaching. While he refused to adopt some of the cunning word craftiness of the secular rhetoricians of his day (2 Cor. 4:2; 1 Thess. 2:3, 5), he adapted his preaching to a variety

²²⁵ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 6.

²²⁶ Story, *Engaging the Closed Minded*, 89.

²²⁷ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 203-204.

of audiences and needs. In the synagogue, Paul spoke to Jews about the special dealings God has with His people (Acts 13:16–41) but, to the Greek philosophers he presented a living God as a challenge to their love for fresh ideas, quoting from their own writers as he did so (Acts 17:22–31).²²⁸ Leaders need to exhibit a passion for what they are doing if they expect the same level of passion from those they lead.²²⁹ Jim Petersen observed, “Christian evangelists are given to extremes. Either we say nothing and let an opportunity slip past us, or we say too much and drive people away.”²³⁰ The very nature of the Christian faith demands effective preaching which is essential to Christianity.²³¹

The apostle Paul gave the following instructions in Colossians 4:6: “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Dan Story explained that more often than not, at least initially, one’s sincerity, tone of voice, and ability and willingness to listen attentively and respectfully will count as much in an encounter as what is said.²³²

John Piper noted that a broken heart will love like Jesus, and the power of the love will be proportionate to the fearfulness of the nearness to destruction. The keener the memory of an awful rescue, the more naturally ministers pity those in a similar plight. He

²²⁸ Craig Skinner, “Preaching” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England, eds. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1323.

²²⁹ Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership that Matters* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2014), 78.

²³⁰ Story, *Engaging the Closed Minded*, 86.

²³¹ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 7.

²³² Story, *Engaging the Closed Minded*, 85.

explained that the more pastors understand how undeserved and free was the grace that plucked believers from the flames, the freer will be the benevolence to sinners.²³³

Brad Bridges said that people begin to listen to a man in the pulpit long before he begins to speak.²³⁴ This characteristic was exemplified most by Billy Sunday who used his whole body (and other nearby objects, such as his chair, which he would sometimes fling around while preaching) during his sermons. When people become blind and deaf spiritually, God sometimes uses unusual means to get their attention. Ezekiel preached two more action sermons to warn them that judgment was at hand. The prophet lived the message he was declaring.²³⁵ His actions in the morning portrayed the people who were packing to go into captivity, while his actions in the evening portrayed the futile attempt of King Zedekiah to escape. God knew what would occur and nobody could alter His plans.

Ezekiel's actions at his meals portrayed the terror the people would experience in spite of their believing that the worst had passed. The false prophets said that people like Ezekiel and Jeremiah were "doomsayers" and their dire predictions would not occur. But God's Word never fails, and it is fulfilled on time.²³⁶

²³³ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 117.

²³⁴ Brad Bridges, "7 Ways to Begin Your Speech with a Bang," *Strategic Leadership* (blog), n.d., <http://www.bradbridges.net/2014/11/10/7-ways-to-begin-your-speech-with-a-bang/> (accessed November 11, 2014).

²³⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *With the Word Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), Eze 12:1.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

The New Testament reveals a silence concerning the outward forms of corporate worship and a radical intensification of worship as an inner, Godward experience of the heart. The silence concerning outward forms is obvious in the fact that the gathered life of the church is not called worship in the New Testament. Moreover, the main Old Testament word for worship (*proskuneō* in the Greek Old Testament) is virtually absent from the New Testament letters. Its usage clusters in the gospels (twenty-six times) and in the book of Revelation (twenty-one times). However, in the epistles of Paul it occurs only once in 1 Corinthians 14:25, where the unbeliever falls down at the power of prophecy and confesses God is in the assembly. This does not occur at all in the letters of Peter, James, or John.²³⁷

Connecting with the particular passions of a group of listeners cannot be overemphasized. Passions often can be channeled for God's glory. If the audience cannot relate to the speaker, they likely will not relate to the message. Connecting with the audience first will not only build rapport, but eliminate both the physical and mental obstacles between the speaker and the audience. Bridges believed that each person in the audience will ask the question, "Can I relate to the speaker, his background, and the information presented?"²³⁸

Wilfred Grenfell developed three loves, the first being sports. He swam in cold rivers and sailed the Irish Sea. At eighteen years of age, he found another passion when a doctor showed him a human brain that had been preserved chemically. Grenfell decided

²³⁷ Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, 230.

²³⁸ Bridges, "7 Ways to Begin Your Speech with a Bang," <http://www.bradbridges.net>.

immediately to become a physician. While in medical school, he developed his third love. Passing a large tent one evening, he ducked in, thinking it was a circus. Rather, it was a revival meeting, and an aged man was droning on in prayer. Grenfell started to leave when another man leaped up and announced a hymn “while our brother continues his prayer.”²³⁹ The man, D. L. Moody, proceeded to preach in such a way that Grenfell was converted immediately. He had found his third love, the Lord.

Those passions, sports, medicine, and God, led Grenfell to volunteer with an organization called Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen. The mission sponsored a mercy ship that ministered to thousands living on boats and along the North Atlantic coastline. The work spread to Newfoundland, and on August 4, 1892, Grenfell sailed into the waters of Labrador to begin a lifetime of ministry.²⁴⁰

John Wesley was denied the privilege of preaching from the pulpit in the church. However, with evangelistic fervor he took his father’s tomb for a pulpit and preached to the people the truths of salvation.²⁴¹ George Whitefield loved field preaching. Returning from a tour he lit a candle and went upstairs to retire, weary after the journey. But, the people gathered in front of the house and filled the street. There on the stairway with a lighted candle in his hand, he preached his last message, retired and was no more; for

²³⁹ William C. Kashatus, “Evangelist Billy Sunday Preaches to More than 650,000 in W-b,” www.citizensvoice.com (March 10, 2013), <http://citizensvoice.com/arts-living/evangelist-billy-sunday-preaches-to-more-than-650-000-in-w-b-1.1455186> (accessed March 9, 2014).

²⁴⁰ Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day: 365 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997).

²⁴¹ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 986.

God took him.²⁴² If a speech is started by cultivating disinterest among the audience, regaining that interest can become difficult for the duration of the speech. If a speaker starts with the audience's undivided attention, the likelihood of keeping their attention increases.²⁴³

John Knox, who cried out in his earnestness, "Give me Scotland or I die," carried with him this zeal to the close of his ministry. Often, he would be supported by attendants in order to reach the pulpit. However, when he arose to speak the divine passion so filled his soul that one of his friends said, "So mighty was he in his yearning that I thought he would break the pulpit into bits."²⁴⁴ This is the sort of passion that a speaker should convey to the audience. After all, if he (the speaker) does not care, it is likely that the listener will not care.

People might doubt that they will hear anything new in a speech. A speech should begin with something that causes their heads to look up and remember what was said.²⁴⁵ A speaker should prepare well and be equipped to vary speech patterns. For example, Bridges explained that a speaker should be prepared to speak louder at certain times. A speaker should be able to build to a powerful moment in the message. Repetition should be used wisely. Words should be enunciated by emphasizing consonants, which can be

²⁴² Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 455.

²⁴³ Bridges, "7 Ways to Begin Your Speech with a Bang," <http://www.bradbridges.net>.

²⁴⁴ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1669-670.

²⁴⁵ Bridges, "7 Ways to Begin Your Speech with a Bang," <http://www.bradbridges.net>.

practiced by saying a sentence in an emphatic way.²⁴⁶ These components will help to hold the interest that was attained during the speaker's introduction.

Howard E. Butt, Jr. noted that too many churchgoers tend to regard sermon-listening as an end in itself, so that sermon-listening might be one of America's greatest sins. At historic New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., Butt rebuked sermon-listening as an "escape." He affirmed, "God wants transformation from listening into living."²⁴⁷ However, it is not sufficient to receive the Word; one must respond to it in active obedience. The command is clear, "Do not merely listen to the Word ... do what it says (James 1:22). One must "become," or "keep on becoming" (*ginesthe*), a doer of the Word and not just a hearer. Ronald Blue said the growing numbers of "sermon-sippers who flit from one doctrinal dessert to another like helpless hummingbirds are deceiving themselves."²⁴⁸ The introduction should serve as a motivation to hear the sermon, as well as listen to it. In other words, audience members should be drawn in and shown how the content will relate to their daily lives.

Numerous comments were made by participants of this study regarding the importance of gestures. Many noted the value in appropriate gesturing by the speaker, and the discontinuity of inappropriate gesturing. In particular, several comments were

²⁴⁶ Brad Bridges, "10 Intentional Public Speaking Gestures," *Strategic Leadership* (blog), n.d., <http://www.bradbridges.net/2014/10/20/10-intentional-public-speaking-gestures/> (accessed November 5, 2014).

²⁴⁷ Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, 1628.

²⁴⁸ J. Ronald Blue, "James" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, eds. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Jas 1:22.

made that the style of Billy Sunday was just “too much for their taste.” Audiences from small churches to large ones have reported that the idea of the way something is said is just as important as what is said. Audiences likely will respond positively to those speakers who have something important to say and can say it in an interesting way. Broadus explained that the excellence of style in Christian preaching has been at its zenith when it sensed the intellectual and emotional dispositions and tastes of a given age and relates itself to them effectively. Whenever preaching has failed to do so and becomes merely imitative of another age or some prophetic hero, like Spurgeon, it has lost its power.²⁴⁹

Content Matters

An additional truth that BBC participants alluded to in a majority of the feedback was the importance of content in the introduction. The church members gave particular attention to what was said, as well as how it was presented.

The introduction of a presentation has two chief objectives: to interest the hearers in the subject and to prepare them for understanding.²⁵⁰ The first rule of effective communication comes from Scripture (James 1:19).²⁵¹ Piper noted that becoming a biblical theologian means that more pieces fit together into a mosaic of the divine design. In addition, doing exegesis means querying the text about how its many propositions

²⁴⁹ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 204.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁵¹ Dan Story, *Engaging the Closed Minded: Presenting Your Faith to the Confirmed Unbeliever* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 84.

cohere in the author's mind, and through that, in God's mind.²⁵² Haddon Robinson said that all preaching involves a "so what?"²⁵³ Those who hear a message need to know that the content applies to them, that it has something profound to do with their lives. An introduction should introduce and orient the congregation to the message.²⁵⁴ Introductions provide information about what is coming next, therefore, content is important.

There were several personal components noted during the crafting and implementation of the project at Brumley Baptist Church. One was the joy that being part of a project of this magnitude brought to the church members. BBC is a small church in a town with three colleges. One of these is a Baptist college that is known for training young ministers. For this reason, BBC has become well acquainted with the idea of having a young preacher come to pastor for a year or two and then move on quickly to seminary or a larger church position. When the author first approached the congregation about implementing this project and his upcoming graduation, several comments were made regarding how much the pastor would be missed after the project was finished. The assumption of some was that the director would leave once he had finished this research. Once the church had been assured that the pastor was staying after the research was completed, the disposition of the church radically changed. The congregants no longer

²⁵² Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, 73.

²⁵³ Haddon W. Robinson and Scott M. Gibson, *Making a Difference in Preaching: Haddon Robinson on Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 88.

²⁵⁴ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 164.

were apprehensive and entered into the research with excitement, thus a significant amount of feedback was offered.

A second element that was noticed from the implementation of the project was the depth of information that BBC participants supplied to the project director. The joy that BBC had shown at the beginning the project carried over to the valuable content they provided on the surveys. The project director not only was able to note surface level amounts of information, but deeper analysis that proved how intently the congregation was listening to the introductions. This feedback, both written and verbal, led to the most significant take away for the project.

Upon conclusion of one of the early sessions of the preaching portion of the project, a young man approached the project director after the service. This young man sporadically attends church services. In talking with him, the author felt confident that he was a believer, but has not progressed in his salvation walk. His knowledge of the Bible is elementary. He had a difficult past and still is tied to many worldly practices by his own admission. He approached the author after the service one Sunday morning and said that he would like to offer some feedback regarding the project. He was asked if he had a survey in his bulletin to complete. He replied that he did not want to complete a survey; he just wanted to talk to the preacher. The preacher agreed as long as he allowed the author to take notes on what he said, which he agreed to. When the young man began, he was blunt and to the point. He stated, "I don't care about those guys in Genesis. They lived so long ago and are nothing like me, why would I care what they did?" That was all the young man wanted to say.

The first inclination was to disregard this young man and his opinion. However, the longer the project director thought about what was said, the more he realized that this is exactly why one would choose this project: to make introductions connect to an average church attender. There were two major applications from this encounter.

First, people in the pew do not care automatically what a pastor is going to say just because he is the preacher. Church members likely are not going to love the syntax of the verse or the tracing of the genealogy as much as the preacher does. Many simply are not inclined to have the same affection for it. Many preachers have wrestled with the passage to be preached and likely have grown to love and respect it. The person in the pew has just been introduced to the passage. The preacher's job is to introduce church attenders to the passage.

Second, the introduction is the only opportunity to encourage the listener to care. As noted previously in this study, the opening seconds of the message are critical in establishing a connection with the passage and the audience. This could make the introduction the most important part of the entire sermon for both the presenter and the listener. Thus, it is vital for the preparer to put as much emphasis as possible on developing this part of the sermon, for his good and the good of those who might not care about the biblical content.

Christian preaching interprets the meaning of God's acts into contemporary contexts. Craig Skinner explained that a sermon becomes God's word to the hearer only as God's servant reconstitutes the past realities of the biblical revelation into vital present

experience.²⁵⁵ Hearing, listening, and understanding are important, but God demands that man “obey” Him. In the New Testament, the one who had ears to hear, really heard (Mark 4:9). The author of Hebrews asserts that “today” is the time to “hear” the gospel and not harden one’s heart against the Lord (Heb. 3:15). Hearing, followed by obedience, is a difficult, but great responsibility, one which all believers should pursue out of love and reverence for the Lord (Rev. 3:22).²⁵⁶

As previously mentioned, the best way to gain the attention of the people is to give the people something to listen to. There is nothing more profound and life changing than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the power of God and the subject of every message preached. The sincere hope of the project director is that this study has aided him in the application of powerful sermon introductions so that the people of BBC have something to listen to.

²⁵⁵ Skinner, “Preaching,” 1322.

²⁵⁶ Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 83.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY

Preaching Evaluation Form

Preacher's Name: _____ Date: _____

Scriptures Used:

1-Poor 2-Fair 3-Good 4-Great 5- Exceptional

Communication

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction got my attention | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Introduction laid foundation for the sermon | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Introduction was relevant to listener. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Sense of momentum? | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Introduction was appropriate | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Delivery

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Language and vocabulary | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Voice inflection/volume | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Eye contact | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Pulpit presence | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Clarity | 1 2 3 4 5 |

APPENDIX B
RETURNED SURVEY RESULTS

Preaching Evaluation Form

Preacher's Name: Bro Billy Date: 10/19

Scriptures Used: Genesis 3-4

1-Poor 2-Fair 3-Good 4-Great 5- Exceptional

Communication

- 1. Introduction got my attention 1 2 3 4 5
- 2. Introduction laid foundation for the sermon 1 2 3 4 5
- 3. Introduction was relevant to listener. 1 2 3 4 5
- 4. Sense of momentum? 1 2 3 4 5
- 5. Introduction was appropriate 1 2 3 4 5

Delivery

- 1. Language and vocabulary 1 2 3 4 5
- 2. Voice inflection/volume 1 2 3 4 5
- 3. Eye contact 1 2 3 4 5
- 4. Pulpit presence 1 2 3 4 5
- 5. Clarity 1 2 3 4 5

86 47/50

Preaching Evaluation Form

Preacher's Name: Billy Crow Date: 10-26-14

Scriptures Used: Genesis 4

1-Poor 2-Fair 3-Good 4-Great 5- Exceptional

Communication

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction got my attention | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Introduction laid foundation for the sermon | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Introduction was relevant to listener. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Sense of momentum? | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Introduction was appropriate | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Delivery

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Language and vocabulary | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Voice inflection/volume | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Eye contact | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Pulpit presence | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Clarity | 1 2 3 4 5 |

86

34/50

APPENDIX C
SERMON RESEARCH AND OUTLINE

Research for Sermon Content

The preaching calendar for BBC had a sermon series on the book of Genesis scheduled during the time of the project implementation. A normal routine during this time ensured that reliable results would be achieved. The following is a sample of the information studied to prepare for these sermons.²⁵⁷

In Genesis 3, there comes a shattering of the idyllic picture of man in Eden. With a sudden jolt the harmony of original Creation is torn with discord; a wild cacophony of sounds among which notes of anger, jealousy, pride, disobedience, murder, and the accompanying inner agonies of pain, shame, and guilt can be heard. God's creation of man as a person stands as the source of good in mankind. Now mankind faces the source of evil.²⁵⁸ From his first appearance in Genesis, Cain tried to compensate for his despair by building a civilization in the land of Nod ("wandering"). Since Adam and Eve had many children, Cain likely married a relative. He had many fine things in his city, but God rejected all of it and gave Adam another son, Seth ("appointed"), to carry on the godly line.²⁵⁹

Cain's genealogy illustrates the tension between God's blessing and spreading sin. Through the achievements of Cain's descendants, humanity began to experience the blessing of dominion over creation. Progress in the arts and technology was, however,

²⁵⁷ The outlines for the sermons can be found in the Appendices section.

²⁵⁸ Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 32.

²⁵⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *With the Word Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), Ge 4:1.

matched by progress in sin as illustrated in Lamech's boastful song of murder.

Meanwhile, God's redemptive creation mandate continued through another son of Adam and Eve—Seth. His genealogy led straight to Noah, to whom the original creation promises were reaffirmed (Gen. 6:18; 9:1–7).²⁶⁰

The consequences of sin became clear in the second generation when Cain, the oldest son, killed his brother Abel. Just as his parents had been expelled from the presence of God in the garden, now Cain was expelled from human society to undertake a nomadic life in the east. Embedded in the curse was the gleam of grace, the “mark on Cain,” symbolizing God's protection.²⁶¹ This is the first direct curse on man. With Adam's sin, the ground was cursed. Significantly, Cain, being a farmer, can no longer use this as his occupation. He is banished into the desert which is the abode of demons, and with it the absence of agricultural activity.²⁶²

“Image” and “likeness” (*selem, demut*) are found together in passages where the essential nature of man is taught (cf. 1:26). Together these make a theological statement: to understand human nature one must see man as originally created, gifted with the “image-likeness” of God. Mankind must not compare his nature with that of any animal, but only with God. One might ask, “What is this image-likeness?” What sets mankind apart is that the attributes of personhood are shared with God. Like Him, mankind has a

²⁶⁰ *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, David S. Dockery, ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 9.

²⁶¹ *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, 9.

²⁶² Robert James Utley, *How it All Began: Genesis 1–11*, vol. 1A, *Study Guide Commentary Series* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2001), 74.

capacity to think, to feel, to choose. This image-likeness makes each human being of worth and value in God's eyes. Man is like Him, and God cares for each one. Verses 1–3 are a reminder, however, that the image which reflected God so well in Adam was warped and twisted in the Fall. Adam passed to mankind, not the unflawed image-likeness of God, but his own imperfection. Man remains like God in many respects. However, he is also like Adam, in desperate need of Christ and His transforming touch.

Many cultures have stories of long lives for ancestors who lived prior to a great flood. Some have suggested that heavy cloud cover (cf. 2:5–6) may have cut off the radiation that is associated with aging.

The curse on nature (Gen. 3:17–19) helps shape the Old Testament's view of work. Some passages suggest work can be productive and satisfying. But, many reflect the fact that work can be drudgery: unending, unpleasant toil that brings neither fulfillment nor profit. At its best, work reflects the joy God found in creating. At its worst, it is a reminder of the burden of Adam's Fall.²⁶³

Genesis 5 sketches the early history of the family of faith. These patriarchs lived long lives with the average age (excluding Enoch) being 912 years. With the exception of Enoch, each biography concludes with the solemn toll of a funeral bell. From Adam onward, death had dominion (Rom. 5:11) thus fulfilling the garden threat, "Thou shalt surely die!"

The patriarchs in Genesis 5 have been referred to as the "ten commitments." These men possessed faith in the promise of Genesis 3:15. They were godly men. Noah

²⁶³ Lawrence O. Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, electronic ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 28.

and Enoch are said to have walked with God. They bore witness against the wickedness of the world (Jude 14; 2 Pet. 2:5). Seth probably was not the third child of Adam and Eve. He was born after the death of Abel. Adam's other children probably had gone the way of Cain leaving no one to perpetuate the holy line. Eve expected Seth ("substitute") to be another Abel in respect to piety (Gen. 4:25). In this expectation she was not disappointed. Seth became the first of a chosen line which would culminate in the Messiah.²⁶⁴

In the days of Enosh ("frail man") "men began to call upon the name of Yahweh" (Gen. 4:26). This marked the beginning of public, organized worship of the Lord. The verse suggests that the name Yahweh was known before Moses. The names which follow, Kenan ("possession"), Mahalalel ("praise of God"), and Jared ("descendant"), are mere names on the honor roll of the faithful.

Enoch was the first man in the Bible said to have walked with God. The text suggests that his walk with God began with the birth of Methuselah his son. His commitment to God was not superficial for it endured for 300 years. He was no hermit. He walked with God in the midst of domestic cares for he begat sons and daughters. Apparently, celibacy is not a prerequisite for a committed life. After living 365 years, "he was not for God took him" (Gen. 5:23). The author of Hebrews provides the inspired commentary on this statement: "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God" (Heb. 11:5).

²⁶⁴ James E. Smith, *The Pentateuch*, 2nd ed., *Old Testament Survey Series* (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1993), Ge 4:25–5:32.

Enoch's son Methuselah ("man of a dart") at 969 years was the oldest man who ever lived. His long life is covered in but three verses. Methuselah's son Lamech ("wild man") uttered a prophecy at the birth of his son Noah ("rest"). He foresaw that in some way Noah would bring comfort to the troubled race (Gen. 5:29).

The pattern of sin and its consequences set in the garden is replayed throughout Genesis in the accounts of Cain, the generation of the flood, and the men of Sodom. The Fall means that humans are predisposed to sin. Though God punishes sin, sin does not thwart God's ultimate, gracious purpose for His human creation. Embedded in the curse was the gleam of a promise that the offspring of the woman would someday lead the human race to triumph.²⁶⁵

If one assumes that in the genealogy of Genesis 5 there are no gaps then 1,656 years elapsed between creation and the Flood. Adam still would have been living in the days of Lamech, the father of Noah. Chart 8 illustrates how the lives of these primeval patriarchs overlapped. Most scholars, however, believe that this genealogy is selective, that names are omitted.²⁶⁶

The opening verses of Genesis 6 paint a dismal picture of human degradation. One manifestation of the corruption of the race was the relaxed attitude regarding marriage. The identification of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:2 is problematic. One interpretation is that they are angels; another, that they are kings. Perhaps, the best interpretation is that the "sons of God" are descendants of Seth. The erosion of marriage

²⁶⁵ *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, 9.

²⁶⁶ Smith, *The Pentateuch*, Ge 4:25–5:32.

standards among the Sethites seems clear. The “sons of God” married indiscriminately for they married the daughters of men (i.e., women from the line of Cain who did not share the spiritual values of the Sethites). They married superficially, for their attraction to these women was based on the sole fact that they were fair. They married polygamously, “whomsoever they chose” (NASB).

Another manifestation of the degradation of humankind is seen in the violence associated with the *nephilim* (Gen. 6:4). The *nephilim* were not giants (KJV), as much as they were tyrants. The word comes from the Hebrew root meaning “to fall upon.” The *nephilim* were those who were bullies who fell upon others to force their will upon them. Genesis 6:4 states, “Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” This violence is emphasized by the narrator in Genesis 6:11. Some believe that the *nephilim* were the product of the marriages previously mentioned. Others think they were contemporary with, but separate from, the marriages. Still another view is that the *nephilim* were the “sons of God.”

Surveying the scene on earth, God declared that man was mere “flesh” (i.e., he was acting on the level of the animal kingdom and not as one made in the image of God). The Judge pronounced the wickedness of man great on the earth. Every intent of the thought of man’s heart was evil continually (Gen. 6:5). Man seemed incapable of even thinking a decent thought. Yahweh “repented” that He had made man. The word does not signify a change of purpose, but a change of feeling. God was “grieved in his heart” (Gen. 6:6) by the corruption of man. In Genesis 6:11–12 the narrator uses the word “corrupt” both nominally and verbally to summarize the conditions which existed. This

term is used of idolatry and sexual immorality. These sins were committed “before God” (i.e., openly, publicly, flagrantly, and presumptuously).

In Genesis 6:3, 7 the great Judge pronounces sentence against His creatures. There are three aspects to the proclamation: 1) “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever” (Gen. 6:3). God will not continue to let His Spirit exercise the restraining influence hitherto exerted upon sin. According to 1 Peter 3:18–20, the Spirit of Christ, through the instrumentality of the pious patriarchs, preached to the disobedient spirits of the old world, 2) “His days shall be 120 years” (Gen. 6:3), (i.e., there would be a grace period prior to the pouring out of judgment), and 3) “I will blot out man whom I have created” (Gen. 6:7). Other creatures tied to the face of the earth will suffer the same fate. The fact that angels are not subject to punishment confirms the interpretation given to the phrase “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1.²⁶⁷

Noah is to be honored for his persistent faithfulness. He labored 120 years constructing a great ship on a waterless plain (cf. 6:3). He must have suffered merciless ridicule from his neighbors, none of whom responded to his warnings of judgment to come. Yet his trust in God did not waiver, nor did his obedience. When man’s faith is tested, often by years of working and waiting, the quality of that faith is displayed.²⁶⁸ The ark had a ratio that, according to modern shipbuilders, represents an advanced knowledge of shipbuilding since it is the optimum design for stability in rough seas. The

²⁶⁷ Smith, *The Pentateuch*, Ge 6:1–7.

²⁶⁸ Richards, *The Bible Reader’s Companion*, 29.

ark, as designed by God, virtually was impossible to capsize. In order to do so, it would have to be tilted over ninety degrees.²⁶⁹

1) A World Fast Ripening For Judgment 4:16-6:22

i) Gods Assessment Of Those Times 4:16-6:7

(a) The Ungodly 16-24

1. Their Indifference To God 16-17
 - i. Indifference To His Person 16
 - ii. Indifference To His Paradise 17
2. Their Independence Of God 18-24
 - i. Moral Disorder 19
 - ii. Marvelous Discovery 20-22
 - iii. Militant Defiance 23-24

(b) The Unworldly 4:25-5:32

1. How The New Seed Commenced 4:23-5:5
 - i. A New Birth 25-26
 - ii. A New Book 5:1-5
4. How The Seed Continued 6-32
 - i. The Patriarchs 6-20
 - ii. The Prophets 21-32
 - iii. A Witness To God's Presence Enoch 21-24
 - iv. A Witness To God's Patience Methuselah 25-27
 - v. A Witness To God's Peace Lamech 28-31
 - vi. A Witness To God's Purposes Noah 32

(c) The Unruly 6:1-7

1. Their Great Apostasy 1-3
 - i. The Final Expression Of Man's Perversion 1-2
 - ii. The Final Exhaustion Of God's Patience 3

²⁶⁹ James M. Freeman and Harold J. Chadwick, *Manners & Customs of the Bible* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1998), 9.

- 2. Their Godless Activity 4
- 3. Their Growing Anarchy 5-7
 - i. God's Discernment 5
 - ii. God's Disappointment 6
 - iii. God's Decision 7
- ii) God's Answer To Those Times 8-22
 - (a) A Man 8-13
 - 1. Energized By God 8-10
 - i. He Was Forgiven 8
 - ii. He Was Faithful 9
 - iii. He Was Fruitful 10
 - 2. Enlightened By God 11-13
 - i. God Reviewing The Earth 11-12
 - ii. God Revealing His Wrath 13
 - (b) A Plan 14-22
 - 1. Finished Work 14-16
 - 2. Faithful Word 17-22
- 2) A World Finally Relinquished To Judgment 7:1-24**
 - i) The Deliverance Of The Godly 7:1-9
 - (a) The Full Commitment Demanded Of Noah 1
 - (b) The Final Commission Delivered To Noah 2-4
 - (c) The Faithful Compliance Demonstrated By Noah 2-4
 - ii) The Destruction Of The Godless 10-24
 - (a) Its Timing 10-16
 - 1. The Further Delay Of The Judgment 10
 - 2. The Final Dawning Of The Judgment 11-16
 - (b) Its Totality 17-24
 - 1. The Extent Of The Flood 17-20
 - 2. The Execution By The Flood 21-24

3) A World Freshly Recovered From Judgment 8:1-9:29

- i) Noah Tarrying 8:1-5
 - (a) While God Remembered 1-2
 - (b) While The Flood Receded 3
 - (c) While The Ark Rested 4-5
- ii) Noah Testing 6-14
 - (a) What Noah Sought 6-12
 - (b) What Noah Saw 13-14
- iii) Noah Trusting 8:15-9:17
 - (a) The Lords Command To Noah 15-19
 - 1. The Command Heard 15-17
 - 2. The Command Heeded 18-19
 - (b) The Lords Covenant With Noah 20-9:17
 - 1. God Spoke Secretly 20-22
 - 2. God Spoke Sovereignly 9:1-17
 - i. The General Provisions 1-7
 - ii. The Great Provision 8-17
 - iii. Its Substance 8-12
 - iv. Its Sign 13-17
- iv) Noah Toiling 18-23
 - (a) Noah The Father 18-19
 - (b) Noah The Farmer 20
 - (c) Noah The Failure 21-23
- v) Noah Testifying
 - (a) By Lip 24-27
 - (b) By Life 28-29

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